
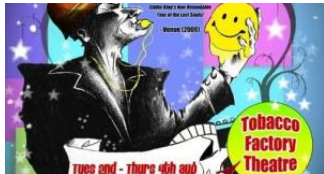


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Review of Pills, Thrills & Bellyaching - Eddie King and the Death of Rave (event/135534/pills-thrills-bellyaching-eddie-king-death-of-rave/)



"Dark and delicious, like chocolate"

by Arthur Duncan (user_view.php?uid=13839) for remotegoat on 04/08/11

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"PILLS, THRILLS & BELLYACHING" Presented by Darkstuff Productons
at The Tobacco Factory, Bristol
August 2nd - 4th 2011

At The Tobacco Factory Theatre; the latest escapade by Darkstuff Productions started unusually late, 8.30pm, following-on from the reception attended by many of Bristol's theatrical milieu, celebrating for the opening night of another enticing season linking 2011 through to 2012.

Of the substantial number who stayed for the show, (subtitled 'The Death of Rave') this reviewer was perhaps the most ancient, born much too soon to be included among even the first wave of Ravers in the later 1980s. However, last winter I was impressed by 'Darkstuff From The Crypt,' so despite missing the intervening "Eddie King" offerings on the theme of Rave Music and its effects upon 'fin de siecle 20e' society, I welcomed this opportunity to savour an unfamiliar sub-culture.

The show is made up of short monologues by various writers, performed 'en promenade' partly in the spacious 'L-shaped' bar and part in the usual performance area. To begin, the hubbub of hotly vibrant conversations in the bar was powerfully curtailed by Gerard Cooke's undeniable voice performing as 'Eddie King' dramatic creation of author Phil John. 'Eddie' is the protagonist of the whole series of Rave-related events Darkstuff has produced.

Decorated with a fantasia in body paints on face and bared torso, Cooke reveals diverse aspects of his adopted character, a fictitious but enthusiastic advocate for the Rave generation. A distinctly northern accent boasts King's pride in his Everyman ancestry and joy in his spirited defence of the controversial Rave phenomenon that drew masses of young people from far & near, to congregate into obscure barns or abandoned mansions where they gave vent to Dionysian urges, fuelled by Ecstasy and pills of many colours in their pursuit of what exactly? Why surely, Pleasure; that nebulous aspiration, desired by all humanity.

King's other persona, alternately delivered by Cooke in his natural, well-educated tone, gives us maturer reflections on the achievements of Rave - if any - in the latter years of Mrs Thatcher's "No such thing as Society" mission to make us all little capitalists. But in those financially precarious

days, oppressive materialism had not subdued youthful lust for self-expression. Perhaps it unleashed desire for freedom, unconstrained by rules. Gerard Cooke carries the responsibility of his role admirably.

But one of the downsides of Rave is represented by David Lane's marathon piece performed by Nic Rauh as mother of a son lured into the oblivion of a drug-hazed nirvana. An inspired concept, placing a woman out of her comfort zone searching through Rave parties up and down the land for her beloved missing offspring. Perhaps Lane implies the loss suffered by all mothers when children leave to discover other worlds beyond the limits of apron strings. This is another powerful performance, in which Ms Rauh conveys in an understated, realistic interpretation, the woman's anxiety, determination, desperation, and final resignation, in an episode - like that of the Eddie King pieces - perhaps too long for best dramatic effect but bravely acted.

Next, Helen K. Parker invigorates the evening with a monologue for two actors, "For Real love." This is given a convincing and hypnotically compelling performance by Anna Westlake, who talks, whilst her incapable friend, beautifully performed by silent Francesca Wraith, muted by over-dose or misadventure and at last, left to sleep her sorrowful way to druggy death. How often have drugs so robbed good parents of their hope, before their child was full grown?

Equally moving as Parker's words in this scene, is a casually mimed coda involving a passing stranger and a jacket; a gentle touch presumably initiated by director Anna Girvan whose exquisite invention and attention to detail has been noted throughout this and in her other productions also.

In the Tobacco Factory, walking to & fro between the bar & theatre spaces, cleverly incorporates an unannounced interval that led seamlessly into the second half of the performance. Overwhelmed by hyper-energetic, Ali Watts, performing as a hard living but happy "Glasgoburgh" soldier, home on leave, who among the convivial crowd in the theatre bar would guess that "Passion" was written by a woman, Gill Kirk? Her name is Scottish right enough, as is Ali's, but the outpouring of the soldier's passion is pure masculine. Ms Kirk must have observed the species very closely, and Watts has too, so authentic is the character they've created. He sustains Kirk's lengthy spiel that yet allows for brief intrusions of improvised chat with people in the bar. Watts makes himself utterly "a' hame" and 'though apparently on the extremity of self control, is actually never near losing it; the essence of fine acting.

We are all led back into the theatre for the finale piece, 'Ashputtel' and who would guess that this extended anecdote for solo raconteuse was written by a man - Simon Harvey Williams? The oddly named Ashputtel is played simply by Corrinne Curtis with her typical, 'girl-next-door' honesty, speaking her many, many lines as if freshly sprung into her head.

Curtis engages her listeners' ears with a tone that is naturally clear, and as alluring as bird song. This is not a skill learned at drama school, it is a gift of oratory that many politicians die for lack of - an ability to speak, command full attention throughout and be fully understood. Her movement is also a pleasure to watch, not exaggerated nor especially graceful, just natural. In her story, Ashputtel loses her companions at a Rave but meets a man from whom she wants nothing but absence. With this superbly plain tale, she keeps us enthralled to the end of the show - and was anyone not satisfied? I doubt it.

Music composed by Rarg was excellent, it being unobtrusive yet accentuating the varied moods created for each scene in the theatre by Matthew Graham's lighting design.










Pills, Thrills and Bellyaching is an unusual, diligently performed piece of theatre magic. Only until this Thursday 4th August at The Tobacco Factory, so be quick - it's all the Rave.

Event venues and times

finished Tobacco Factory Theatre (venue/644/tobacco-factory-theatre) | Raleigh Road, Southville, Bristol, BS3 1TF

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