

British Theatre Guide

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Ballot Box

Tea & Tonic Productions

Paradise in the Vault

5–12 August 2017



Deep in the heady days of 2016, two young unemployed actresses lounge around on their sofa, drinking endless cups of tea and watching mindless television. However, the looming spectre of the EU referendum, as well as a lecherous landlord they can't afford to pay, threaten to disrupt their harmonious existence.

To be honest, I'm actually surprised by the relative lack of politicised theatre surrounding the referendum and other subsequent events of the last year and a half. So it was with great interest that I embarked into the dank subterranean atmosphere of *Paradise in the Vault* to see *Ballot Box*. What I got was a play less concerned about politics and more about the value of friendship and overcoming differences. In that regard, the play is a success, capably acted, and with distinctly formed characters and an arc that is satisfying if unremarkable.

Moreover, the chalk and cheese pair seem such unlikely friends that it makes the whole feel bizarre. The more likeable character, Molly, being a working class, politically uninterested soul whose mother is a dyed-in-the-wool Brexiteer, surprisingly comes across as the reasonable voice in the play. Lydia, the private school educated army brat, conversely embodies everything tiresome about left wing *Guardian*-reading types, prattling on interminably about veganism and the importance of politics. To the point where it feels from the offset that the two shouldn't be friends.

Worst of all, the script simply isn't funny enough. Only a couple of gags elicited a proper laugh from the audience I attended with, and at one stage a character even went so far as to liken the pair of them to *Withnail and I*.

If only.

Reviewer: [Graeme Strachan](#)