

British Theatre Guide

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Buyer & Cellar

Jonathan Tolins

Ryan Hugh Mackey Productions and New Frame Productions with Theatre Royal Plymouth, Joly Black, Parker & Newes Productions and Con Limón Productions / JMF Communications

King's Head Theatre

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Buyer & Cellar is making a long-overdue return, and this sparkling comedy is looking barely a day older than it did first time round.

It has a premise that is so comically unlikely that it might just be true and an irresistible underdog hero, Alex. He is an unemployed actor hired to play shopkeeper in the underground shopping mall that occupies the basement of Barbara Streisand's Malibu mansion home (which, in case you were doubtful, is actually real).

Alex spends solitary days dusting the displays in the various shops in this artificial environment created with meticulous attention to verisimilitude because La Streisand would expect nothing less than perfection in her self-designed home.

As The Lady of the House pays increasingly frequent visits to the mall, over trades and frozen yogurt from the sweet shop, a relationship forms between the impoverished young actor and the multi-millionaire singer, film star and gay icon. The plot goes to improbable places, but with writing this thoughtful and funny, I could forgive it an alien landing in Streisand's extensive car park.

Written in the early 2010s by Jonathan Tolins (whose television credits include *Queer as Folk* and Apple TV's *Schmigadoon*), *Buyer & Cellar* won a slew of awards and enjoyed a record-breaking Off-Broadway run, and as long as Streisand is still breathing, this very funny and occasionally poignant play about friendship, power, fame and loneliness will deserve a life.

Still glowing from their award-winning, Olivier-nominated, show *My Son's a Queer (But What Can You Do?)*, Rob Madge takes the role of Alex and makes it their own.

This Alex is gently camp, sincere, rather adorable and naturally comic in the hands of Madge, looking somewhat younger in an auburn wig (wig designer Craig Forrest) that fits with Alex's enthusiasm and understated naïveté.

This is a comfortably confident and hugely enjoyable portrayal from Madge, a master of the aside and sidelong look, who dishes out the laughs with impeccable timing. This is a performance that could find Madge back in the West End.

Reviewer: [Sandra Giorgetti](#)