

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## Cluedo 2 – The Next Chapter

Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran

JAS Theatricals, Gabriel Creative Partners, The Araca Group and Lively McCabe Entertainment

The Lowry, Salford

2–6 April 2024

As the board game Cluedo has been around for 75 years and inspired a movie and [a previous stage production](#), it is safe to assume audiences will know what to expect from *Cluedo 2 – The Next Chapter*. To be on the safe side, the backdrop to David Farley's set is a copy of the map-like board on which the room names light up to show where the action is taking place. Even so, there are a few surprises.

In 1968, a fading career turns out to be the least of rock star Rick Black's (Liam Horrigan) problems—on the eve of releasing his new album, he is found shot / stabbed / bludgeoned / strangled (the killer obviously was not taking any chances of survival) to death. In the remote location, there are any number of suspects: Mrs Peacock (Hannah Boyce), a predatory wife who retains her previous married name, grasping manager Colonel Mustard (Jason Durr), designer Miss Scarlett (Ellie Leach), who bears a striking family resemblance to the previous owners of the decaying Graveney Manor, and Reverend Green (Gabriel Paul), Black's former songwriting partner who mysteriously reappears having found religion while in the army. Not to mention various hangers-on like Professor Plum (Edward Howells), so-called because he isn't that bright, and the cook, Mrs White (Dawn Buckland), as well as Wadsworth (Jack Bennett), a method actor who is permanently typecast in the role of a butler and is attending the manor to film a commercial.

In act one, too much effort is made to squeeze humour out of links to the board game and the 1960s setting; as a result, the cast seem to be trying too hard. Contrary to expectations, rather than dour Brits, Colonel Mustard is a finger-lickin' Texan and Reverend Green a Vietnam veteran. There are, therefore, a lot of gags built around the Yanks misunderstanding English idioms (spanner / wrench) which go on too long. So too does a running gag involving Reverend *Hal* Green being mistaken for the Right Reverend *Al* Green. The lack of response to the gag suggests I was one of the few people in the audience familiar with the works of Soul Doctor Al Green, but that's modern education for you.

The show becomes less reverential in act two, and the pace quickens. Director Mark Bell maintains a larger-than-life tone throughout. Scene changes are undertaken by the cast in slow motion dance style, and plot developments are marked by them freezing in shock / horror pose or mugging to the audience by peeking out around scenery.

In act two, Bell pushes the technique to the maximum, and the tone moves towards farce / *Scooby Doo* cartoon style. Basically, it is a chuck in a joke and see if anyone laughs free-for-all, including synchronised tea-drinking. During a chase sequence, the cast pose behind portraits they carry on stage. Contrary to the period when the play is set, there is an impassioned feminist demand that consideration be given to the possibility the killer could be female as well as male.

The cast seem to be having a good time and Hannah Boyce is a stand-out, moving from poised trophy wife with a cut-glass accent to almost incomprehensible Glasgow fishwife.

*Cluedo 2 – The Next Chapter* is a diverting entertainment. It does, however, feel like an admission of defeat that, to be really funny, the show has to move away from the concept of being a tribute to the board game towards a straightforward silly farce.

**Reviewer:** [David Cunningham](#)