

British Theatre Guide

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Just a Bloke

David Watson

Royal Court Theatre Upstairs Young Writers Festival
(2002)

Some of the freshest and most interesting characters in the whole of the Royal Court Young Writers' Festival 2002 are those created by the 17 year-old David Watson. It may take some time before he is the complete product, able to construct a perfect play, but in terms of creating fresh exciting dialogue and interesting, in-yer-face characters, he is a real find.

Jake, played by Daniel Mays is "just a bloke". He is very confused and cannot decide whether he should conform with society and make some easy money by teaching and marking exam papers or whether he should recognise his wilder artistic nature by painting.

Jake lives in an unbelievable dive and does not wish to live a particularly conventional home life. His society is invaded by his brother and cousin and he is forced to face some important decisions. For most people, this might not be particularly life-changing but in this case, the visitors cleverly reflect the two sides of his life and a kind of tug-of-love goes on for his soul.

First, we see Lisa, played by the sassy Sian Brooke. She has worshipped her artistic cousin since she was a 15 year-old. She is now at college and believes that she has an artistic talent that is good enough to attract the attention of Tate Modern. She veers between caring cousin and swooning lover as she tries to sort out Jake and persuade him to give up on his work for a day of fun. Just as it seems that she is succeeding, the third character arrives.

In a fantastic performance, Rafe Spall gives the unlikely Nathan an incredible degree of humanity, making him fully sympathetic and somehow believable. Since he is a larger than life white man with a West Indian patois, tight dreadlocks and all of the latest gear, this is not as easy as it may sound.

Even before he has entered the flat, we have an expectation of a Jamaican hood whose speech cannot help but be hilarious. When Nathan finally appears David Watson has already set up his audience perfectly. Rather than dropping what seems a pretentious act, Nathan just keeps going.

One of the reasons why this play is so interesting is that the wild Nathan is the responsible calming influence for Jake while the seemingly normal Brummie Lisa is the little devilish voice trying to persuade him to live a little.

The plot may be somewhat surreal at times but the characterisation is fantastic. This is a real complement to both David Watson and director Ramin Gray, not to mention all three actors.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)