

British Theatre Guide

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Kangaroo Valley

Toby Farrow

Southwark Playhouse

(2004)

This play has a similar theme to Melanie Tait's [Vegemite Tales](#) with its investigation of itinerant Australians in West London. Remarkably, its setting, a Shepherds Bush hostel, is even seedier than the *Vegemite* shared house.

Kangaroo Valley features four angry losers who are not so much touring the world as stuck in a rut. The humour derives from sex and manic failure, while Farrow attempts to inject pathos by showing the empty lives of the residents.

It is hard to know who to feel most sorry for. Tica (Chloe Summerskill) is a lap dancer who aspires to become a successful photographer but has no talent other than for attracting drooling men. Norman (Stuart Crossman) is a middle-aged schizophrenic nutter pining for his family, who robs off-licences in his dirty Y-fronts. The two younger men, Chad (Nicholas Gadd) and Jez (William Bowy) are manic-depressive athletes, a skateboarder and a swimmer.

Farrow, who also directs, lets the group run amok on drink and drugs and fail in everything that they attempt.

This play doesn't have any strong direction (in either sense) and is neither a funny comedy nor despite some excesses, does it really aspire to the status of television's *The Young Ones* or the plays of Anthony Neilson. There are some good jokes but these are relatively thinly spread and too often, the actors are reduced to shouting to get across the impression of their desperation.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)