

British Theatre Guide

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Teddy

Tristan Bernays with music by Dougal Irvine

The Watermill Theatre and Sarah Loader for Snapdragon Productions

The Watermill Theatre Newbury

11 January–10 February 2018

Tristan Bernay's sparkling witty script *Teddy* written in verse and rhyme explodes onto Newbury's Watermill stage recreating the spirit of the 1950s in London following the aftermath of the Blitz and the severe austerity that resulted.

The Elephant and Castle is a bombed out landscape that is the 'manor' of our protagonists. Huge poster adverts for Camp Coffee, Birds Custard and Brillo provide the backdrop in Max Dorey's multi-level set with an ominous council sign that warns us to 'keep out'.

But this is a period when rock 'n' roll is emerging as the solace for the teenagers trying to escape their humdrum existence and hit the town on a Saturday night.

Especially since American heartthrob Johnny Valentine and his band the Broken Hearts are playing at a secret venue, and boy are they great. Dylan Wood is the quintessential sexy Valentine in his leather jacket and sings with panache and passion.

In the stellar band Andrew Gallow as Sammy 'the sticks' Smith is a powerful drummer and Freya Parks as Jenny O'Malley plays the bass with attitude. Musical director Harrison White on lead guitar ensures that Douglas Irvine's original numbers literally "rock and roll".

George Parker is the smouldering Teddy of the title all dressed up in his Edwardian clothes with his hair in a "quiff to send you a quiver" determined to have a night to remember.

He meets the feisty Josie, splendidly portrayed by Molly Chesworth, in a derelict church and together they go on a roller coaster adventure that they will never forget.

There is a magical, vibrant chemistry between the two. It's tentative to begin with but grows into a love affair and they own the stage in superb performances.

They dream of escaping to California and achieving the American Dream of driving a Cadillac and touring the coast.

But their night out doesn't quite work out as they need to find money to get into the gig. They decide to rob a pawnbroker, and then there is the situation with the hulk bully trying to chat up Josie and Teddy defending her. All superbly created by Chesworth and Parker.

With a dramatic conclusion, Eleanor Rhode's taut direction and Tom Jackson Greaves's energetic choreography brings a fun, spirited performance that is brimful of energy in an effervescent production that will rock your socks off.

Teddy goes on tour and will be in the Vaults in London from the 29 March.

Highly recommended.

Reviewer: [Robin Strapp](#)