

# British Theatre Guide

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

## Ulster American

David Ireland

Traverse Theatre Company

Traverse Theatre

3–26 August 2018



*Ulster American* is a somewhat uncomfortable mix between genre and subject matter. The production directed by Gareth Nicholls veers between situation comedy, farce and black comedy, creating great laughs but not always for the right reasons.

The issues that it takes on could not be more important or timely. Misogyny, The Troubles and Brexit are a powerful triple zeitgeist that seem here to stay for the long-term.

The underlying situation that generates the comedy sees Jay, a high-profile, egotistical Hollywood actor played by Darrell D'Silva, shipped in to London to star in a West End play.

The opening salvoes feature Robert Jack taking the role of nervy director Leigh, simultaneously attempting to gee up and dampen down the enthusiasms of his highly opinionated star.

In a bout of macho bonding, they even discuss the prospect of raping historical females, though in highly theoretical terms. This contrived set-up inevitably comes back to bite them later in the evening.

The arrival of playwright Ruth, passionately portrayed by Lucianne McEvoy, seems to be a natural palliative calming the men down.

However, the Northern Irish woman, who survived a fatal car accident on the way to Belfast airport, turns the meeting into a far more explosive affair.

For reasons that are inexplicable, the Catholic American actor was completely unaware that the term Fenian referred to his own co-religionists and, by extension, his role is that of a Protestant paramilitary. Predictably, he revolts, distressing the wittering director and antagonising the playwright, who gives as good as she gets.

Some of the plotting is, at best, pedestrian but the themes, of which there are a few too many for a short piece, are important and fight through the humour allowing viewers to explore important issues in a witty but at times enlightening fashion.

Reviewer: [Philip Fisher](#)