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3 Stars

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Review: Do You Have A Secret Crush at The Lost Theatre

3 / 5 stars

Do You Have A Secret Crush at The Lost Theatre

THE consequences of appearing on confessional talk shows can be catastrophic but they rarely end in murder.

By [Neil Norman](#)

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Excellent performances from all in Do You Have A Secret Crush

Yet in 1995 after an appearance on The Jenny Jones Show in New York, this is precisely what occurred. A young man travelled from a small town in Michigan to meet a person who claimed to have a secret crush on him and the encounter took place before a live TV audience.

Assuming he was meeting a woman, Jonathan Schmitz was horrified when his admirer turned out to be a young man named Scott Amedure. The audience lapped up his embarrassment and humiliation, oblivious to the potential consequences.

Based on these events, Ronnie Larsen's play begins as a comedy of cross-purposes before sliding towards its tragic denouement.

On a minimal set, director Robert McWhir and his eight-strong cast relate the story with speed and efficiency, including a nerve-racking and courageous seduction scene.

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Awash with pop songs from the era and with a handful of **live** numbers from the wonderful Dave Lynn as the fraying local drag diva Sally, it is technically complex and inventively staged, only occasionally betraying its humble budget.

The TV studio in which *The Jill Johnson Show* (the names have been altered) is recorded is particularly well done, complete with monitors and a “live” audience, namely the theatregoers.

The Nineties gay scene and small-town attitudes are conjured up with minimal resources and fleshed out by excellent performances from all, particularly Chris Britton as the excitable Stanley and Richard Watkins as Lee, the straight object of his desire.

Praise too for Ruth Petersen as TV hostess Jill Johnson and Helen Stirling as Stanley's mum for bringing depth and emotional colour to roles that might have been two-dimensional caricatures.

It is a flawed but intriguing satire that manages to scrape away the camp humour and media cynicism to reveal a human tragedy lying in wait beneath.

DO YOU HAVE A SECRET CRUSH? at the THE LOST THEATRE Until 21 August
Tickets: lambcofringefestival.co.uk