

» Theatre

# Head back to 90s and relive the soundtrack of our lives

‘When you hear a song you are transported back in time’

If you're old enough to wax lyrical about mix tapes, minidiscs and the joys of fast-forwarding then plug yourself into Toot's *Be Here Now*.

Set to a soundtrack of 90s classics, the show is a comic, off-beat take on the changing way we listen to our favourite tunes and how music provides the bittersweet soundtrack to our lives.

Whether it was the thrill of being given a mix tape by someone you fancied – then desperately reading hidden messages in the song choices, or sobbing your heart out to a love song recorded off the radio, the show explores our passion and sentimentality for music.

Terry O'Donovan is one of three performer/devisers who tell the fictional stories of their younger years in music featuring C C Peniston, Tori Amos, R Kelly, Oasis, Blur, Massive Attack and a full dance routine from a Kylie video.

**Changed**

He says: “We were all teenagers in the 90s and it's a look back at those years, how music has changed and how we listen to it differently now.

“Teenage years are about falling in love, house parties, getting drunk, and pop music can really define a time and place in your life. It lodges itself in your brain so as soon as you hear a song you are transported back in time.”

O'Donovan is interested in both the positive and negative power of that – “how it can rose tint things for you, lull you into a sense of nostalgia 20 years on, but if you become aware of that you can celebrate it.”

Toot aims to put audiences at the heart of its work that is both physical and multi-sensory. *Be Here Now* includes immersive, participatory elements with spectators filling in a pre-show form about the track they associate with their first love – some of which will be used during the piece.

They may be handed an object, asked



■ Toot's *Be Here Now* looks at the tracks that stay with us – and how we listened to them

to listen to a track and create a narrative, join a game of spin the bottle or share headphones with a performer.

“There's nothing wrong with the way we listen to music now, but it's amazing how much work and thought we put into mix tapes or into interpreting the reason behind the songs, or spend hours playing tapes, fast-forwarding

and rewinding,” says O'Donovan.

“But the way teenagers relate to music and create their identity based on the music they listen to hasn't changed.”

■ *Be Here Now* runs at Shoreditch Town Hall from June 17 until July 2. Call the box office on 020 7739 6176 or visit [www.shoreditchtownhall.com](http://www.shoreditchtownhall.com).

## Search for personal answers in darkly comic world of the private therapist

**BETWEEN US**  
Arcola Theatre  
★★★★☆

This 75 minute bite-sized guilt-ridden piece provides a fly on the wall experience of Julia's practice with patients Dave and Teresa, then follows her private life where we learn that a therapist's work is never done.

A therapist by day and stand up comedienne by night Julia (Charlotte Cornwell) is the centrepiece around which proud new father Dave (Callum Dixon) and adoptive parent Teresa and adopted child Kath, (both played by Georgina Rich) revolve.

As we become the audience of Julia's stand up show, playwright Sarah Daniels' feminist agenda is present with each story starting with larger, bold comments in order to generate laughter, then shrinking to a more drained performance, reflecting the energy levels required to keep up the illusion that everything is alright.

Daniels unleashes class-based barbs which strike home at the now comfortable E8 audience, but Rich's adoptive parent, well-heeled Teresa, is particularly moving; discovering that love is not always enough and failure is part of life.

Within the confines of the Therapists' room – a soft chair and essential tissues on a raised platform – the audience is drawn into the intimate overlapping and interlinking stories of the characters.

Daniels prompts the audience to ask what love really means, how guilt can wreak personal changes, and how sexism has and hasn't changed since the 1970s.

Providing a darkly comic glimpse into the lives of its protagonists, it forcefully questions how our lives are affected by earlier decisions and events – leaving just as a therapist would, the audience in search of its own answer.

Hazel Baker



■ Charlotte Cornwell  
Picture: Jeremy Abrahams



■ Matthew Marsh as Eugene de Kock  
Picture: Jesse Kate Kramer

## Thought-provoking encounter with an articulate ‘monster’

**A HUMAN BEING DIED THAT NIGHT**  
Hampstead Theatre  
★★★★★

Are those who commit atrocities inhuman? It's reassuring to put distance between ourselves and these ‘monsters’, but no such comfort is in Nicholas Wright's riveting, must-see play. Evil has a name, and a face, and maybe even a soul worth saving.

In 1997, South Africa's infamous Eugene de Kock, serving a 212-year prison sentence for unthinkable crimes, was visited by psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. This representative of Mandela's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission came not to blame, but to understand, even forgive – while remaining emotionally detached.

Jonathan Munby's electrifying production begins in classic horror territory, our devil in orange jumpsuit shackled to the floor – until de Kock himself references *Silence Of The Lambs* with wry irony.

We're primed for savagery, but presented with an articulate tutor, peppering his lecture with self-effacing humour. How reasonable it all is: bombing for a boss demanding results, torturing to giving politicians and vot-

ers the security they desire. “The dirtiest war is the one fought in the shadows,” he reminds us, the unwitting collaborators. What abominable action is taken in our name? Is de Kock right to believe he's just a scapegoat, a cog in the machine?

His fury's reserved for “lies” told by the press and politically savvy wrongdoers escaping justice. He's scornful of their euphemistic language, but uses it himself, chillingly – “pre-emptive killings”. Gobodo-Madikizela expertly draws his confession, yet with each word, de Kock reclaims the narrative.

In this charged two-hander, Noma Dumezweni conveys the struggle of conflicted empathy, while Matthew Marsh is wonderfully ambiguous, leaving us unsure whether his anguished remorse is genuine or masterful manipulation.

It's a searingly intelligent study of a society struggling to heal, placing collective responsibility and reciprocal clemency against an endless cycle of recrimination. Yet Gobodo-Madikizela is adamant that “forgiveness is not forgetting”. Monster or not, de Kock remains caged.

Until June 21.

Marianka Swain



■ Matthew Marsh and Noma Dumezweni  
Picture: Jesse Kate Kramer