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Back to Hill Valley High to celebrate the magic of film

Marty and Doc's adventures brought to life at screening

SECRET CINEMA PRESENTS: BACK TO THE FUTURE

Secret location, east London
★★★★

It didn't get off to the best start, with the first week of shows cancelled and angry fans taking to social media in their droves to vent their frustrations.

Although they were never given a clear reason for the delay, the sheer scale of this latest immersive cinematic journey nestled in a built-up urban east London enclave goes some way to explain how organisers may have come unstuck.

But it's this sheer ambition which makes *Back to the Future* the best offering Secret Cinema has come up with since it started out 10 years ago, and allows it to emerge from the backlash bolder, more imaginative and stronger than ever.

Set in a secret location, a ten-minute walk from the meeting point, fans – who are all given characters before the event – are transported back to the 1950s at the annual fair of Hill Valley, the town in which the 1985 blockbuster that made Michael J Fox a household name is set.

After being forced to hand over any phones or cameras, a farmyard menagerie greeted us at the entrance, before we explored quirky cabins belonging to Doc and Marty's downtrodden dad George – you can even hitch a ride in one of the glisten-



■ The secret location was transformed into the fictional town in which *Back to the Future* is set

ing vintage cars cruising around the site.

There's discoveries to be made at every turn, such as the diner – in which Marty sees his dad getting bullied by school jock Biff – where you'll find juicy burgers and a selection of alcoholic, and non-alcoholic, shakes.

Then there's the actual cinema showing 1950s films, or the fun fair with vintage rides such as a Ferris wheel and hook-a-duck stall, but the stand out highlight for us was the Hill Valley High School.

Lockers adorned with

teenage graffiti and pictures of heartthrobs line the entrance corridor which gives way to a school hall with a live band belting out 1950s classics and suitably dressed-up disco lovers dancing the twist and jitterbug. Actors are dotted around the venue mingling with the crowd before launching into impromptu dance routines.

This was all before the main event – the film, which was projected onto a hugely realistic mock up of the iconic Hill Valley clock tower featured in the film, with

scenes, such as Marty going back in time in Doc's car, brought to life by actors in front of the crowd.

The only thing that stops you momentarily forgetting you're not back in the 1950s is the high-rise buildings and a well-known high street store in the backdrop. Of course, many people complain the ticket price which is in excess of £50 is too much "to watch a film". But it's so much more than that – these events are like mini festivals celebrating the magic of cinema.

Aimee Brannen



■ Nicholas Campbell and Oskar Brown Picture: Niels Bouman

Love stories that don't quite meet played with tenderness

BETWEEN
King's Head Theatre

★★★★☆

Oskar Brown's original and striking play captures a sense of what it means for live, vital lovers to play with one another, love one another, and lose sight forever.

Directed by South African, Geoffrey Hyland, with a cast of South African actors, the play tells three timeless and country-less love stories which almost meet. Oskar Brown and Nicholas Campbell leap across the stage, vividly, physically changing from part to part.

They are two children, sweetly and sometimes cruelly discovering sexuality as they grow up with one another. They are lovers with an unfathomable sexual silence between them. They are a master and his pupil; a young actor living and playing the part of a lover.

Often, I could not keep track of which love story was running at full pace into which love story. It did not matter: the place, the time, the context were almost irrelevant.

Each scene contained a boisterous, physical, frank, unadulterated expression of

love, or an almost love. Campbell is excellent, playing the part always of a young lover. He is sulky, petulant, monosyllabic, and deeply earnest. As a young boy learning to read Shakespeare's sonnet 23, he toys with but could not quite meet the eye of his tutor, living the part of an "unperfect actor on the stage" who cannot frankly declare his love.

Writer and actor Brown excels at playing the weightier and more sorrowful roles; he is slower and more tender. You believe him more when he is standing there, yearning, with heavy limbs and heavier knowledge, than when he is running around as a schoolboy, crude and lost.

Perhaps this could be any love story, with lovers grasping at early, shy passion and its accompanying shadow of dull loss.

But it also captured a love between two men: virile and tactile. The play introduces itself to the audience as one of sadness; its lovers leave before they can say why and boyish intimacy makes way for a heavy-handed silence.

But more than anything, the play is a joyful celebration of love, even lost love.

Anna Behrman



■ Ellie Nunn, left, takes the title role with Ruth Redman Picture: Roy Tan

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

King's Head Theatre

★★★★☆

The incendiary power of *A Doll's House* remains indisputable, but less well known is another late-19th-century drama featuring a young woman torn between risky independence and unhappy domesticity.

Oscar Wilde's effervescent *Lady Windermere's Fan* differs vastly in tone, but *Ruby In The Dust's* production, transposing the action to the 1930s, emphasises the similarly subversive thinking of this strikingly

modern play. It's anchored by a star turn from Ellie Nunn (daughter of Sir Trevor and Imogen Stubbs), forgoing the title character's usual bleating priggishness.

Hers is a feisty, full-blooded heroine, charmingly awkward, flirting with confident Lord Darlington, affecting when confronting her husband's possible infidelity.

The only bum note is *Lady Windermere* sporting an inexplicably vampy scarlet robe while asserting her Puritanism.

Linnie Reedman's psychologically grounded approach to material often played archly yields mixed results

elsewhere, with her cast sometimes floored by Wilde's quicksilver shifts from satire to melodrama.

Ruth Redman doesn't entirely convince as shrewd, smouldering survivor Mrs Erlynne, but fares better with her rush of maternal feeling and fierce condemnation of moral absolutism.

Ruari Cannon nails Darlington's laconic charisma, though squanders several bon mots ("I can resist everything except temptation" begs to be savoured), and both he and Steven Clarke's *Windermere* snatch their words when gearing up for grand speeches.

Neither match Nunn's

organic passion, muting the love triangle. The supporting cast is more consistent, with joyful turns from Graham Hoadly's randy old boy Augustus, Jo Ashe's worldly wise Duchess and Nathan Lubbock-Smith's catty, scandal-mongering politician. Reedman balances incisive – and uncomfortably relevant – commentary on society's gender-based double standards and tendency to condemn fallen heroes while relishing salacious details with droll music cues and giddy period songs, making the evening as pleasurable as it is provocative.

Until August 23.

Marianka Swain

Evening with Nunn's *Lady* is pleasurable and provocative