

The American nightmare

TRUE WEST
Tricycle Theatre
★★★★☆

‘W’ hat kinda people kill each other most? Family people.” Buttoned-up screenwriter Austin (Eugene O’Hare), housesitting for his mother, and estranged brother Lee (Alex Ferns), a petty thief belligerently mythologising his drifter existence, embody the dangerous intensity of blood bond from their first appearance, frozen in tableau in a too-bright Californian home and framed exquisitely by Max Jones’ arresting widescreen shutters.

Phillip Breen’s revival of Sam Shepard’s 1980 masterpiece makes exceptional use of such cinematic visuals, underscoring the tension between the cultural ideal of the authentic West, represented by Lee’s misty-eyed frontiersman tall tales, and Hollywood exploitation.

Austin embraces the American Dream’s commercialism as he strives for a lucrative development deal, but when producer Saul (marvellously unctuous Steven Elliot) is seduced by Lee’s more



■ Steven Elliott and Eugene O’Hare in *True West*
Picture: Pete Le May

“real” story, he drops Austin’s project and suggests the brothers collaborate on a screenplay.

The resulting sibling rivalry culminates in a frenzied orgy of destruction, but Breen’s production is most effective in the disciplined build-up, savouring each charged statement and Pinteresque pause, rich with menace.

The central pair superbly evoke a seething hinterland, shared history an almost visible barrier between them. O’Hare’s neurotic Austin unravels in memorable fashion, while Ferns’ bully is terrifyingly capricious, one moment wheedling, the next swapping rabid jocularly for calculated violence.

They envy and romanticise

one another’s lives, slip into a peculiar role reversal, and emerge hopelessly disillusioned. Both seem doomed to inherit their father’s alcoholism as they numb the pain of thwarted ambition, a fact their mother (nuanced Barbara Rafferty) recognises in a moment of agonising pathos.

Breen also captures the pitch-black satire of Shepard’s piece, which encapsulates Picasso’s belief that every act of creation is first an act of destruction. Chaos is heralded by the increasingly cacophonous howl of coyotes – those prowling beasts luring domestic pets from civilisation to savagery. That divide has never seemed so fragile.

Until October 4.

Marianka Swain

Must-see propaganda posters

DESIGNING THE 20TH CENTURY:
LIFE AND WORK OF ABRAM GAMES
Jewish Museum, Camden Town
★★★★☆

Even if Games’ name doesn’t immediately ring a bell, this is a must see.

It’s more than likely that at least one of his works will be embedded in your psyche. His designs as official propaganda poster designer during World War Two, such as Grow Your Own and Join the ATS (banned for being too glamorous), are especially entrenched in many people’s sense of British history.

Games produced iconic images that continue to influence and shape the posters around us today. Walking around the exhibition it is incredible how each work makes an immediate and lasting impact. Any poster must fulfil a brief and Games sought to deliver it as simply as possible. The message much be explicit and immediate – he’d test out posters on his family and if his young children didn’t understand the message at first glance, it was scrapped.

I tested myself, guessing the message each poster was meant to convey before reading the information – and Games’ bold, clear and often witty images succeeded every time.

The Jewish Museum is the perfect location with work exhibited on three levels (be sure not to miss his beautiful window, made to commemorate Jewish servicemen). Simply walking through the museum to get to the exhibition – seeing the striped uniforms and videos of survivors on display – helps contextualise Games’ work. Horrified by the footage from the concentration camps, he produced around 1/5th of his work for charities without asking for a fee. His poster ‘Give Clothing for Liberated Jewry’ is especially effective with its stark image of a famished Jewish inmate with dark, haunted eyes, something echoed in photographs elsewhere in the museum.

Games’ daughter Naomi helped curators and her contribution helps reveal the man behind the posters. Through family photos, paintings and funny hand drawn birthday cards, you get a real sense of life in Golders Green where he lived and worked. The exhibition ends with a touching letter written shortly before his death to his Grandson, Theo, now a talented cartoonist. Through his remarkable posters, as well as through his family, this exhibition illustrates that Games’ legacy lives on.

Until January 4.

Rebecca Pearson

WOW

THAT'S WHAT I CALL

STRAWBERRY MOONS

Every Saturday from 26th July



RESIDENT DJ
PAT SHARP

Playing the best dance floor fillers from the last 30 years

Happy Hour
UP TO
50% OFF DRINKS
SUN - FRI 5-9PM
SAT 5-8PM

FREE ADMISSION

For you and your guests when booking on the Guest List

BOOK NOW AND RESERVE
A RETRO ARCADE GAMES TABLE
FOR YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS

T: 0207 437 7300 E: INFO@STRAWBERRYMOONSBAR.CO.UK
15 HEDDON STREET, LONDON W18 4BF

WWW.STRAWBERRYMOONSBAR.CO.UK

What's the occasion?

www.familynotices24.co.uk

PUTTING ON AN EVENT?

1

VISIT

hamhigh.co.uk/listings

2

LOCATE

the Add Event button

3

SUBMIT

your event

USE THESE THREE SIMPLE STEPS TO
BROADCAST YOUR EVENT FAST AND
REACH A BIGGER AUDIENCE - FREE



ONCE SUBMITTED,

WE WILL POST YOUR EVENT ON THE
HAM & HIGH WHAT'S ON
SECTION **FREE OF CHARGE**

LINEUP

For more information and to speak to an Ham & High representative contact us on 0207 433 0000 or email sales.enquiries@archant.co.uk

Ham & High
▶ hamhigh.co.uk/listings