

NEWS

28/05/2009

Celeb culture and tabloid journalism under the flashlight for regional premiere

A New Vic Theatre production in association with Richard Jordan Productions Ltd

Dumb Show

By Joe Penhall

Fri 29 May - Sat 20 June 2009

Celebrity culture and media vultures are caught in the flashlight this month as the New Vic brings together award-winning theatre talents for a perfectly timed regional premiere.

Perrier award-nominated director, Phillip Breen, is making a hotly anticipated debut at the Staffordshire theatre-in-the-round with Joe Penhall's ferociously funny exposé of celebrity culture and tabloid journalism, *Dumb Show*.

Millions of fans may know him as television's 'Mr Saturday Night', but Barry's worried that his 15 minutes of fame could be coming to an end. So, when a couple of hot-shots say they can help him make some serious money, he's more than happy to go along.

Back in the luxury hotel suite, the champagne and the jokes are flowing. But it's not long before the laughter turns hollow. Seems that Barry's show is on the skids, his marriage is a mess and he's tried - and failed - to stay off the drink. Is it a good idea to empty the mini bar? Or to make a pass at Jane? And just how big will his hangover be?

Last year's Fringe First award winner, Breen is excited about reviving Penhall's play at a time when *Dumb Show* seems more relevant than ever:

"Joe Penhall and I discussed our worry that Jade Goody dying live on television and Michael Barrymore finding a body in his swimming pool might make the actions of our characters seem somewhat tame. The truth is far stranger by comparison."

*"The daring observation at the heart of Joe's play is that it's our delight in bitching about our neighbours, people like us, that whets the appetite for up-skirt shots of 'reality stars', that rejoices in calling Susan Boyle a 'hairy angel' and makes Jackie Smith's husband's onanism a front page story. In *Dumb Show* Barry says 'If Jesus Christ was alive today, they'd be going through his bins', they'd also be door stepping his mum in Nazareth..."*

Breen is joined by an inspired cast including Richard Elis (*The Suicide, Eastenders*), Liz May Brice (*Torchwood, Dead Set, Bad Girls*) and Steven Elliott (RSC, *Judge John Deed*). Creative support comes from the award-winning Max Jones, Designer, and Tina MacHugh, Lighting Designer, with Sound Design by James Earls Davis.

Tickets for *Dumb Show*, which cost £8.50 – £17.50, can be booked by calling the New Vic's Box Office on 01782 717962, or online at www.newvictheatre.org.uk

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For further press information, images or to arrange an interview please contact Clare Hargreaves on 01782 717954 ext 317 or e-mail chargreaves@newvictheatre.org.uk