

## Reviews

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www.thisislondon.co.uk/musicLacking in  
IntiMacy

THE return of Macy Gray was always likely to be a hot affair. Londoners take a lot of credit for launching her career as a late-developing superstar. Her debut album, *On How Life Is*, broke here long before Johnny Yank was up to speed.

By way of a thank you, Spacey Macy launched her second disc, *The Id*, in front of an audience of Radio One competition winners, web site purchasers and the odd celebrity like Eminem. Allegedly.

Billing the show as *IntiMacy*, with the promise she'd play her deep Freud-inspired material in its entirety, wasn't necessarily the carrot required.

Macy's current songs, produced by Rick Rubin — more of a rock and hip hop merchant than a soul seer — take time to grown on one.

So how long have you got?

But normal sense isn't the required ticket for a Gray show. She came out looking like she'd raided the OV's wardrobe dept, found her customary mad hatter brown and cream

MACY GRAY ★

Old Vic

Max Bell

choice — 14th century dominatrix tonight — and then got her magnificent 15-piece band togged out like extras in *Oliver meets Shaft*.

She bucks style trends so well that she has become an icon anyway.

Even so the sterile, theatrical atmosphere didn't assist one's enjoyment.

On stage Gray was pouring out a funkified R&B potion that started to kick in once *Don't Come Around* and the daft *Oblivion* arrived, but the audience felt hemmed in by expectations until *I Try*. Civilised behaviour is all very well...

So, it wasn't a total success. Weird, because Macy Gray is one of the finest live performers on the planet, with musos to match.

Those who attended won't forget this show in a hurry. They won't remember it as the girl's finest hour either.



Not her finest hour: Macy Gray returns to London

Reaping the whirlwind  
of teenage hysteria

RAW★★

Pleasance Theatre, Edinburgh

Rachel Halliburton

THE pretty teenage blonde would easily fall into the heartbreaker category if she weren't more keen on smashing heads, kicking stomachs, and ruining lives. In this second part of a trilogy which focuses on young offenders, Chris O'Connell has turned from the high adrenaline-rush of adolescent boys stealing cars and shines his light onto young girls looking for something stronger than sex to release their adolescent frustrations.

The intimate gloom of the *Pleasance Cavern* provides a conducive setting to a play where teenage rage is first evoked with the angry hiss of a graffiti can and then developed into a battle-cry against the world. Lex is the kind of girl who would be more likely to shove lipstick up somebody's nose than use it to make her appearance pleasing — but at the same time as she radiates hostility, she also commands doglike adoration from the two younger girls and the teenage boy who share a dank flat with her.

O'Connell has worked with teenage offenders, and in a play that is pleasantly free from preaching, he investigates the contradictions whirling around the mind of a teenager who cannot love without abusing. The catalyst to the play's action is Lex's attack on a

Ratings: ○ adequate, ★ good, ★★ very good, ★★★ outstanding, X poor

Battle-cry against the world: another victim for Lex (Jo Joyner, right) in *Raw*

man sharing a train carriage with her and two of her friends: for a while it is unclear whether she has killed him or not, and the resulting panic in her gang results in her hospitalising one of her companions, *Trainers*, by smashing her head against a cabinet.

Director Mark Babych has captured the whirlwind of teenage hysteria in a production which is rhythmically tight and visually inventive. At one point one of Lex's victims appears like an angel behind a misted panel of glass, lending a surreal pathos to this otherwise darkly gritty play.

An impressive young cast provides the backbone to this emotionally difficult work: as Lex, Jo Joyner is paradoxically sympathetic, while Samantha Power and Clare Corbett evoke the wirily disturbed behaviour of her two disciples, *Trainers* and *Lorna*.

O'Connell continues to mark himself out as the playwright most suited to articulating the cries of young people who become enmeshed in our criminal justice system.

● Until 27 August. Box office: 0131 556 6550.

Peak moment  
on 'Everest'

PROM 43 ★★

Royal Albert Hall

Rick Jones

LANG LANG was a big, big sensation at the Proms last night. The Chinese pianist more than justified his breathless recommendations from across the Atlantic when he performed Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No3 — Everest to concert pianists.

He set a gentle pace in the foothills of the first movement, presenting the simple tune as if he had freshly invented it, looking around him in wonder as he played, surprising even himself at the sounds emanating from under the lid. The slow movement climbed to a passionate peak with perfectly executed finger gymnastics along the way. He watched his hands like a trainer of circus dogs. A two-octave glissando zipped up the piano and fitted its gap precisely. The finale was a tally-ho gallop that brought a smile to Lang Lang's lips and thunder to an ecstatic audience even before the last tum-titty-tum had died away.

We held him captive until he played an encore. "A Chinese folksong!" he announced to the gallery. It sounded like Debussy.

Conductor Yuri Temirkanov unobtrusively balanced soloist and the St Petersburg Philharmonic, waving through the themes like a traffic policeman. Each section of the orchestra seemed inordinately proud of its line. The players took on the second half with a mostly colourful performance of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No1 Winter Daydreams. Something of the struggle with which it had been composed came across, however, and it did not flow entirely easily. The opening movement was soft, balletic and rather unmasculine as symphonies of the time went. Peter was such a sensitive boy. The slow movement freed a catchy circular tune while the scherzo's waltz danced out onto the balcony and lost its way a bit. No matter; they played their encores anyway. Elgar's *Salut d'amour* and Tchaikovsky's *Danse Russe* from the *Nutcracker* sent the crowd home crowing. They'd copped one of the highlights.

● Tonight at 7pm Antonio Pappano conducts the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus in Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*, Verdi's *Four Sacred Pieces* and Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* with soloist Yefim Bronfman; at 10pm Leonard Slatkin conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Big Band in Michael Camilo's *Piano Concerto*, with the composer as soloist and works by Gershwin, Ellington and Bernstein. Royal Albert Hall. Box office: 020 7589 8212.



## Pop goes the easel

STEVEN DOWSON ★

Sadie Coles HQ, W1

Nick Hackworth

MINT is the first piece one sees on entering the gallery. A circular chopping board is mounted on a paintbrush handle like a large lollipop, which is itself fixed to the wall by an extendible metal arm. On the side of the chopping board that we see first, painted like a slick pub sign, is a self-portrait in profile, aping the regal pose that adorns our coins, of Dowson made-up in red and white clown make-up. He has a turd sticking out of his mouth and, for some reason, a rather pained expression on his face. On the other side of the board is a portrait of a decidedly hairy anus that, one assumes, belongs to the artist. Inspection of a tattoo located just above the anus reveals an image of three ostrich feathers with the inscription *Ich Dien* below them, a design more normally found on the reverse side of a 2p coin.

Quite an opening but one that is typical of Dowson's work. Aside from taking a swipe at the monarchy, *Mint* plays on a number of binary relationships; two sides to a coin, the sadist and the masochist, production and consumption but manages to avoid being an over-laboured metaphor.

Other is a similar work, also a wall-mounted, two-sided piece, this time painted on a wardrobe door. On one side is a naked full-length self-portrait, on the reverse the back of the artist's skeleton, rendered in oil pastel and made to look like a blackboard diagram from an anatomy lesson. The relationships between life and death, portrait and diagram and the part to the whole are all alluded to, but again the directness avoids pretension.

Among the other eight works on show, the crass commercial culture surrounding Princess Diana and Jurassic Park come under attack and God is personified as a sinister corn-dolly-cum-vooodoo doll made out of vegetables. Though the subject matter changes, there is a consistency to the style and tone — the tone tongue-in-cheek and the style poppy-YBA in flavour — that is impressive for what is a first solo show.

● Until 8 September. 35 Heddon Street. 020 7434 2227.