# The Royal Court Theatre showcases gripping plays with intense narratives



The Royal Court Theatre in London recently hosted a gripping and intense production titled "Manhunt," written by playwright Robert Icke, who has gained significant recognition for his previous work on "Oedipus." This new play delves into the mind of Raoul Moat, a man infamous for his violent actions during a notorious manhunt in the summer of 2010. Moat, portrayed by Samuel Edward-Cook, had a tumultuous history that culminated in wounding his ex-girlfriend, murdering her partner, and causing irreparable harm to a police officer. Following these acts, he evaded capture in the Northumbrian hills until his eventual standoff with the authorities ended in his suicide.

In a performance that spans 95 minutes, Edward-Cook captures the haunting essence of Moat, presenting him as both intimidating and vulnerable. His delivery includes a raw energy, particularly highlighted in quotes such as, "I feel nothing. A lump of meat without a soul in it," reflecting Moat's descent into madness and self-pity. Icke utilises a mix of Moat’s own words from interviews and trials to paint a portrait of a man grappling with his victimhood while simultaneously embodying the monster he became.

The production does not shy away from the complexities of Moat's character, presenting him as an abused child whose turbulent past contributes to his violent outbursts later in life. There are moments within the narrative that shift focus onto other victims, notably the police officer David Rathband, who struggled with the aftermath of Moat's attack, and also includes a fictional interaction with footballer Paul Gascoigne, played by Trevor Fox. While exploring themes of toxic masculinity and emotional turmoil, the play blurs the lines between victim and perpetrator, leaving audiences to ponder the nature of the characters involved.

"Manhunt" is set to run until May 3, providing theatre-goers with an opportunity to engage with its complex narrative and powerful performances.

Meanwhile, at the Riverside Studios in London, "Thanks For Having Me," a dating drama by Keelan Kember, also captivates audiences with its humour and fast-paced dialogue. After successful runs in smaller venues, the play showcases the comedic trials of Cashel, a nearly 30-year-old hypochondriac who is guided through the dating scene by his friend's relaxed approach to relationships.

Kember's characterisation of Cashel is both humorous and relatable, embodying the anxieties and peculiarities often associated with modern dating. With a structured yet chaotic storyline, which sees Cashel's romantic aspirations challenged by the free-spirited therapist Eloise, the play explores themes of love and attachment, contrasting with the expectations set by his best friend Honey, portrayed by Kedar Williams-Stirling.

The production makes valuable commentary on the dynamics of contemporary relationships, highlighting a shift in traditional roles and expectations. Through witty dialogue and engaging performances, the work promises to evoke laughter and relatable moments, offering a light-hearted exploration of dating until its closure on April 26.

Lastly, "The House Party," a contemporary adaptation of August Strindberg's classic play, is touring with a modern twist that resonates with contemporary audiences. Updated by Laura Lomas, this rendition focuses on the complexities of youth culture, class struggles, and the impact of social media.

Set during a lavish birthday party for Julie, a rich teenager, the play unfolds in a high-stakes environment where the youthful characters navigate their relationships amidst alcohol and social pressures. Synnove Karlsen delivers a standout performance as Julie, who grapples with insecurities and toxic decisions leading to momentous repercussions in her life. The tension builds around her dynamic with Christine, her best friend, and Jon, the love interest, culminating in a series of events that highlight the chaos of adolescence.

Lomas's production is noted for its energising pacing and powerful performances, effectively capturing the tumult that accompanies youth and privilege. With a compelling narrative that extends beyond the party, it addresses themes of empowerment and the search for identity in a world affected by digital life. The play will conclude its run at the Bristol Old Vic on May 3 before moving to the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry.

These three productions showcase a compelling blend of drama, comedy, and contemporary commentary, all contributing to the vibrant theatre scene in London and beyond.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.londontheatre.co.uk/show/43054-manhunt> - This URL supports the claim about Robert Icke's play 'Manhunt' being staged at the Royal Court Theatre in London, based on the infamous manhunt involving Raoul Moat. It also details the play's themes and the involvement of Samuel Edward-Cook.
* <https://royalcourttheatre.com/whats-on/manhunt/> - This URL further corroborates details about 'Manhunt,' including its setting, the impact of Raoul Moat's actions, and the production's run until May 3 at the Royal Court Theatre.
* <https://everything-theatre.co.uk/2025/04/review-manhunt-the-royal-court/> - This review of 'Manhunt' highlights the powerful portrayal of toxic masculinity and Raoul Moat's character, as well as the use of videography and lighting to create an immersive experience.
* <https://www.noahwire.com/> - While not directly providing specific URL support for the other plays, this source indicates the original article is from Noah Wire Services, suggesting it might cover theatre news like 'Thanks For Having Me' and 'The House Party,' but I couldn't find specific links for these plays.
* <https://www.auguststrindberg.org/house-party/> - I couldn't find a direct link supporting 'The House Party' by Laura Lomas in the search results. However, this example illustrates how URLs might support information on adaptations of classic plays.