

Look back in Anger with That Theatre Company.

5 stars.

Reviewer: Ulla Strømberg.

Jimmy is bored and angry with himself, but takes his frustrations out on anything and everything else around him on a grey Sunday morning with the Sunday papers scattered on the floor while his wife stands ironing his clothes: As he says: *“Even the book reviews seem to be the same as last weeks. Different books – same reviews!”*

John Osborne’s play from 1956 has earned the right to be labelled “iconic”. It has become a part of theatre legend partly because of a book written by theatre critic John Russell Taylor called *“Anger and After”* that in 1962 set the stage for a whole new approach for British theatre: Namely the birth of the *angry young man*.

His comments on Look Back in Anger started a revolution that stopped the practice of books being turned into plays and helped to create a wave of new, young writers, for example; John Arden, Ann Jellicoe, Arnold Wesker and master wordsmith Harold Pinter.

A second wave followed years later with writers such as Edward Bond and a third wave crashed on the shores of British theatre with angrier tales such as *Shopping and Fucking* in the 90’s.

It’s a part of theatre history that That Theatre Company are serving to us and this small English speaking theatre do so excellently with a fine sense of historical detail. The play takes place in the 1950’s. The First and Second World Wars and The Spanish Civil War are recent wounds that haven’t yet healed or been forgotten; neither has the snares of the British class system. That’s maybe one reason why this piece cannot be translated properly into Danish and is hardly ever produced here. We don’t have the same class or sexual divisions in our society. However, Jimmy Porter, the central character treating his wife and everyone around him without respect shouting into the abyss for change is universally recognisable.

Søren Højen, as this angry young man embraces this with every ounce of his being. He is madly irritating to listen to, but we sympathise with him as he tries to control his outbursts and sometimes sees the hopelessness of his own nature. Alex Jespersen as the upper middle class wife is slightly subdued to begin with as she continually suffers the sharp edge of Jimmy’s tongue, but she finally finds her own controlled angry voice when she returns to the “crime-scene” of the cramped little flat of her marriage and manages to preserve her dignity.

Peter Vinding, Helle Kristiansen and Ian Burns also deliver nuanced performances of their own, but this play stands or falls with Jimmy – and here Søren Højen’s presentation excels. A large part of the credit should also go to the British director, Helen Parry.

It’s also interesting to note how many references there are in this piece to other literary giants; namely Strindberg, Ibsen and Shakespeare. Among others.

www.that-theatre.com

[john osborne](#), [look back in anger](#), [søren højen](#), [that theatre Company](#)

