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Me and Me Dad (Hull Truck Theatre)

Date Reviewed: 29 January 2010
WOS Rating: ★★★★★

Me and Me Dad is the latest play from Hull Truck's Associate Director **Nick Lane** and sequel to his popular and critically-acclaimed *My Favourite Summer*.

When Dave's mum dies, he temporarily neglects the pursuit of his dream to be an actor in London and decides to move back home to be with his dad, Pete. Concerned about Pete's future independence and wellbeing, Dave sets about teaching him to cook. This is no easy task as Pete, in the shadow of his domestically capable, though now deceased, wife, has remained blissfully ignorant of the conventions of the kitchen. Dave and Pete bond as the cookery lessons progress and they resurrect a shared appreciation for Subbuteo that helps them through the darker days.

The abundant comedy is expertly set up and pulled off with impeccable timing, woven into the structure of the piece so that at just the right moment the audience are brought back from the brink of tears when the script digs emotionally deeper. Towards the play's resolution these twists and turns are frequent and exhilarating, and culminate in a touching concluding act as the characters themselves grow. Pete begins to master the domestic arts and Dave's career takes a turn for the better, though more important is the relationship that develops between them and the reconciliation of their grief.

Jean, Dave's mum is present in the play even after her death, visible only to the audience, observing and commenting on the boys' behaviour. Where this device could have faltered in cliché and predictability, in Nick Lane's accomplished script Jean's presence is subtle and heart warming, successfully creating an entertaining dynamic that brings a feminine element to what could otherwise be a male dominated play.

The Subbuteo matches that feature in the production are promising, but don't quite achieve their potential as the climactic and enjoyable events they could be. There are a couple of heavy handed blackouts used to represent the passing of time that disrupt the flow of the scenes.

Matthew Booth's skilful portrayal of Dave is highly engaging and well observed, **Eamonn Fleming's** performance as 'Pete' achieves the difficult emotional truths and vulnerability of the recently bereaved and **Una McNulty** glides effortlessly in and out of the roles of Jean, Auntie Joyce and Dave's girlfriend Suzy, neatly maintaining the distinction of each character.

- Joanne Hartley



Matthew Booth is highly engaging as kitchen novice Dave

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