

The Cockpit in collaboration with Burning Coal Theatre, presents:

Howie the Rookie



COCKPIT THEATRE

24th April - 2nd May (10 performances)

Press night: 24th April

Ticket link: https://www.thecockpit.org.uk/show/howie_the_rookie

Praise for the original 1999 production of *Howie the Rookie* at the Bush Theatre

'Grabs you by the collar and head-butts you into submission' **Sunday Times**

'Outstanding' **Telegraph**

'A magnificent mix of violence and poignancy' **The Stage**

*'Startling... there are shades of Homer's *Odyssey* in the sweep of this telling, or of Joyce's *Ulysses* in the elevation of ordinary detail to heroic form'* **Irish Times**

'Mesmerising... funny, tragic, shocking and disturbing in turn' **Scotsman**

'[Has] the lip-smacking relish and the whooping vulgarity of Behan, Joyce or Flann O'Brien'

Whatsonstage

The Cockpit, in collaboration with Burning Coal Theatre are pleased to announce a limited 10-performance run of Mark O'Rowe's ferocious and timeless two-hander '*Howie the Rookie*'. Originally written and first performed in 1999, the play remains a hugely celebrated and enduring work of contemporary Irish theatre, now relevant as ever in a world where 'the mansphere' has entered public consciousness and politics has started to reflect economic and societal fragmentation with a slide toward nationalism and the cult of the 'strong man'. Burning Coal is a North Carolina-based theatre company established in 1997 who visit London every two years, bringing timely revivals of overlooked and modern classics.

Praise For Burning Coal's Production Of David Edgar's *The Shape Of The Table* At The Cockpit

"an excellent revival" ★★★★★ **The Guardian**

Structured as two interlocking monologues delivered sequentially, the play follows 'Howie Lee' and 'The Rookie Lee' across a single volatile 24-hour period in working-class Dublin. Fast-paced and foul-mouthed, '*Howie the Rookie*' examines how young men perform toughness, dominance and emotional detachment as social currency and how quickly wounded pride can tip into violence.

Bored, restless and drifting through Dublin nightlife, Howie becomes fixated on a seemingly trivial but deeply humiliating incident. After he and his friends contract scabies from a discarded mattress, embarrassment spirals into obsession. Convinced someone else must be to blame, he embarks on a night-long mission to reclaim his honour, as bravado, drink, and peer pressure push events toward catastrophe. Meanwhile, The Rookie Lee is already in trouble, indebted to a local gangster after killing his prized Siamese fighting fish. As his precarious path collides with Howie's escalating vendetta, comic misfortune tightens into inevitability, with fear, pride and misunderstanding driving both men towards devastating consequences.

With these two stories taken together, *Howie the Rookie* is a fast, visceral and brutal study of how petty incidents, boredom and humiliation snowball into devastating consequences. It exposes how status, belonging and masculine performance can eclipse instinctive compassion, and how violence becomes both currency and identity.

Programmed now, the play feels newly urgent - not because its world has returned, but because it never left. Mark O'Rowe's text captures how young people, when left isolated and without stake or status, can turn to performative violence-as-power in areas decimated by post-industrial decline.

Howie the Rookie prompts us to wonder how much worse things might get in a new global order where "might equals right" and instincts toward community are quashed, with violence presenting itself as the quickest route to identity.

The play's relevance lies in the fact that these conditions persist in the 'left behind' towns and shires of Ireland, the UK and further afield. *Howie the Rookie* exposes social dynamics that have never been meaningfully resolved, offering a lens on how young people, particularly young men, are shaped by a culture lacking routes to positive masculine role modelling and the increasing emphasis on division as an answer to political or social unease.

Jerome Davis, Director of Burning Coal Theatre Company said: *Howie the Rookie explores how hopelessness can so easily curdle into tribal loyalty. But it's also a reminder that we are not fixed by the worlds we inherit. Even within cultures that elevate violence and aggression as markers of strength, the individual still has the capacity for grace - for a selflessness that is ultimately more powerful than those false gods."*

Dave Wybrow, Director of Cockpit Theatre, said: "Our continuing collaboration with Burning Coal Theatre Company reflects our commitment to international dialogue and artist-led storytelling. Each year, we invite work that feels urgent, muscular and formally daring - theatre that trusts language and performance as well as action. *Howie the Rookie* is exactly that. It's a play that interrogates violence, masculinity and belonging with ferocious clarity, and it speaks across borders. Perhaps what we should take note of - and learn from - is the extent to which we find him understandable."

ENDS

CAST/CREATIVES

Jerome Davis (Director) has directed extensively for Burning Coal Theatre, including productions that have transferred to London and Washington DC. He has worked with and studied under theatre luminaries including Uta Hagen, Adrian Hall, Hope Davis, Denis O'Hare and Ellen Burstyn at institutions including Trinity Rep, Columbia University and SoHo Rep. This is his 29th year running Burning Coal, which he co-founded with his wife Simmie Kastner in 1995. He received the 2019 Raleigh Medal of Arts.

Andrew Price Carlile (The Rookie) is a Raleigh-based actor and playwright. Recent credits include Gregor Samsa in Berkoff's *Metamorphosis* and Oliver/William in *As You Like It*. Previous Burning Coal credits include Gunnar in *Being Chaka*, Jim in *The Rainmaker* and Liam in *Haughey/Gregory*.

Lucius Robinson (Howie Lee) is a Princess Grace award-winning performer, director, writer and teacher with an MFA from Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theater. He has spent the past decade devising and performing new theatre across the US, with credits including work for Burning Coal, Iron Crow Theater and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. He appeared in the original production of *Howie The Rookie* at Burning Coal in 2008.

ABOUT COCKPIT THEATRE

The Cockpit is a flexible, purpose-built 20th-century theatre in Marylebone, London. Seating up to 240 in the round, the theatre presents and produces shows, music and events of every kind, taking pride in programming work that is risky, controversial - often a piece of work you won't find anywhere else. Owned by United Colleges Group, The Cockpit supports the work of emerging companies, putting early career development at the forefront of programming and working with emerging theatre makers through classes, courses, workshops, scratch nights, reading sessions, practical support and mentoring. With over 120 titles a year involving many hundreds of participants and attracting audience footfall of over 35000, The Cockpit is committed to theatre of ideas and disruptive panache and its ever-growing, ever-diverse community of seekers and creators.

ABOUT BURNING COAL THEATRE:

US-based Burning Coal Theatre company stages works that are experienced viscerally, unlike more traditional, linear plays where audiences are most often asked to observe without participating. Using the best local, national and international artists available, they produce explosive re-examinations of overlooked classics, modern classics and new plays that address ideas important to our community. They strive to achieve high-energy performances with minimalist production values. Burning Coal was founded by Artistic Director Jerome Davis and Managing Director Simmie Kastner. It began as an itinerant company, performing in spaces across the Raleigh, North Carolina area. In 2008,

LISTINGS INFORMATION

COCKPIT THEATRE

24th April - 2nd May (10 performances)

Press night: Friday, 24th April - 7.30pm

Ticket link: https://www.thecockpit.org.uk/show/howie_the_rookie

Friday,	24th	April	-		7.30pm
Saturday,	25th	April	-		7.30pm
Sunday,	26th	April	-	3.00pm	& 6.00pm
Wednesday	29th	April	-		7.30pm
Thursday	30th	April	-	6.00pm	& 9.00pm
Friday,	1st	May	-		7.30pm
Saturday, 2 nd May - 2pm & 7.30pm					

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