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Paul T Davies Column: Review: Bug, Headgate Theatre, Colchester

By Paul T Davies

Bug, Headgate Theatre, Colchester. Until tomorrow, November 9. 01206 366000.

Director Will Parrick promoted this Headgate Theatre Production as unlike anything usually seen at the venue.

Having seen Bug, I totally concur with his view.

Tracy Letts's play lifts the underbelly of American society and looks at the 'bugs' that live there - drug users, the drifters, the disaffected, the ex prisoners. But as the play progresses, it's paranoia, conspiracy theories and the fear of being watched that emerge as the play's true themes.

Agnes lives in a motel room, and forms a relationship with Peter, ex Army, who is convinced that he has been experimented on and that live bugs have been planted under his skin.

Her ex, Jerry, is fresh out of prison and abusive, and their child disappeared several years earlier in a crowded shopping centre. The scars remain, and the first half cleverly plants theatrical bombs that Letts detonates in the second half.

The central performances are tremendous. Joe Eason is outstanding as Peter, at first vulnerable and shy, but becoming terrifying as his paranoia increases and he begins to harm himself and Agnes. His eye contact and focus is superb throughout, passionate and gripping. He is matched by another excellent performance by Eleanor Kent-Dyson as Agnes, who makes her vulnerable and sympathetic so we begin to will her to leave the motel. The last scenes are emotionally powerful.

They are supported by fine performance from Adam Duarte-Dias as Jerry, (good to see him acting against type here), Jessica Miller as Agnes's friend R.C, and Joseph Sales as the mysterious Dr. Sweet.

The set, designed by the director and company, was superb, capturing the seediness of the environment, and Will's confident direction let the tension build slowly and superbly.

Whist the play wouldn't be to everyone's taste, it's so good to see Headgate taking a risk on a production like this, which will stay in my mind for a very long time.