

JUST ABOUT READY TO JUMP



**"FRINGE FIRST"
Winner**

**BRITISH COUNCIL
TOUR OF INDIA 1994**

or **THE
AUDITION**

By A.L.Kennedy

With Mike Hayward

"High Road's" - Alun Morgan

"..an excellent theatrical experience."

ABERDEEN'S EVENING NEWS

"..breathtaking display...brilliant portrayal."

THE SCOTSMAN

"..he held his audience in the palm of his hand."

STRATHEARN HERALD

**"A TRAGICALLY COMIC AND LOVINGLY LYRICAL
WILD ROLLER COASTER JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE"**



High Road Mike stars in a play which is a disturbing mirror of his own turbulent career

UNTIL just over six years ago actor Mike Hayward was an alcoholic. He is still an alcoholic but he hasn't had a drink since then. The difference it has made to his life is immeasurable.

"But that doesn't mean I've become a bloody saint. I'm just as capable of screwing up my life, or anyone else's, as I ever was."

He's a National Theatre regular and has done a lot of TV but he is probably best known in Scotland for being Alan Morgan, husband of Isobel Blair in *The High Road*.

He is in Glasgow with his one-man show *The Audition*, which is at The Arches until Saturday. It was written for Mike by Al Kennedy and won a Fringe First Award last year in Edinburgh. Adopted Glaswegian Alison

Kennedy is still under 30 and already the possessor of several writing awards. This is her first play and it came about in an odd way.

She met Mike socially and asked him for help in developing and projecting her voice for some talks she wanted to give.

Talking

They fell to talking, Mike told her of this idea he had for a play, they talked a couple of times more and, as he says with some amazement "about two weeks later this script arrived in the post. And it was bloody amazing."

The play is about a Welsh actor who is an alcoholic. His name is Jack Rees and what he wants from life is certainty. As there is none, he climbs into a bottle

and hides, from whence he rails at his enemies, real and imagined.

How autobiographical is it? "I reckon it's about 30 per cent but a mate of mine saw it and told me later that he thought it was 'about a 105 per cent. But it's not about lust for drink. It's about Everyman's journey. Because he's addicted to life as well as booze, women and everything else, everything in his life is exaggerated."

A bit like your own was? "That's right," he replied. "In fact it still is. I still live life on a knife edge, but I'll go for things more now. I still cause as much chaos as much trouble in peoples lives, but I

don't intend to. I don't mean it, whereas when I was drinking I was possibly seeking revenge on people, blaming them for my failure, or what I saw as my failure, though I was a pretty successful guy. But I would go home and lacerate my wife with my tongue. I had that change of personality that goes with the booze."

Is Jack Rees like that? "He's so sensitive," Mike went on "that every slight, however small, eats into him and eventually corrodes into paranoia about life itself."

How is his life these days? "I'm present for it, that's the difference. I turn up for it. But of

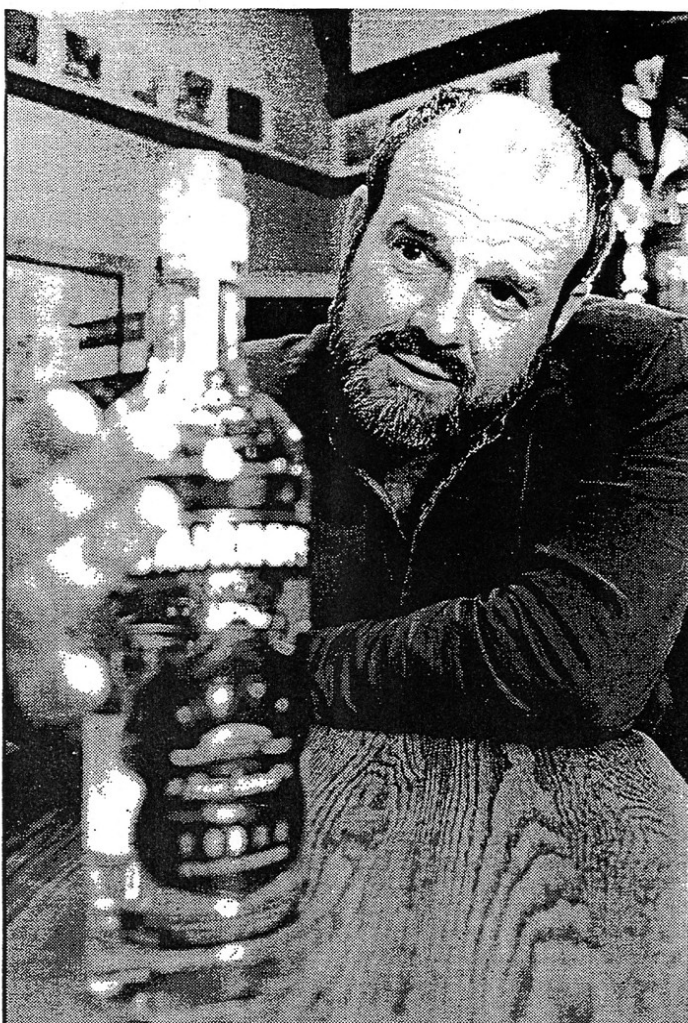
course things can hurt me a lot more because I don't anaesthetise them. At the same time I get double the pleasure from a lot of things, a lot."

The reviews for *The Audition*, which he has toured extensively in India as well as in the UK, are nothing short of ecstatic. Both about the quality of writing and about the acting, but none of them mention his singing. There is a song in the show called *Doing without You*, and at the suggestion of a musical friend he has recorded it. It is not yet commercially available but as he says "If enough people like it, who knows?"

Something he doesn't mention but I know that he does, if

asked, is to answer questions after the show - about acting, drinking or whatever. He stressed to me that the play is "not some message", and he hates preachiness, saying "that's why a lot of us started boozing in the first place", and suggests that the world would be a much nicer place if there had been *The Ten Suggestions* rather than *The Ten Commandments*.

In the play Jack Rees's father says: "I tried it once, never again." This may apply to Mike's drinking these days but it certainly doesn't apply to his audiences who can't seem to get enough of the burly ex-tight-head prop Welshman.



BOTTLED OUT . . . Mike Hayward has quit the habit Picture BILL FLEMING

By IAN BLACK

Reviews The Scotsman & Nine to Five



Mike Hayward – FRINGE FIRST WINNER

JACK Rees is an actor. The stage, protected from the outside world by an invisible wall, allows him to breathe. He is given an identity and told where to go and what to do. But once the curtain is down is there a real person behind the character? Glasgow's A L Kennedy was recently named as one of Granta's top 20 young British novelists. The 27-year old has drawn on her experience as an aspiring actress to write her first play. *The Audition* traces the sad life of a failing actor, from his non-conformist upbringing in Wales to later descent into self-loathing and drunkenness. There are moments of bleakness but a strand of strong, affecting humour runs through his acute and lyrical monologue. Mike Hayward (best known as Alun Morgan in *Take The High Road*, gives a breathtaking display of his theatrical range. He holds the audience in the palm of his hand in brilliant portrayal of an actor 'just a couple of scenes short of a full performance'. Kennedy has found the perfect actor for a demanding role. It is a fine performance and also a remarkable début from a talented novelist who looks set to become a playwright of distinction.

TOBY HAMDEN

He's gotta lotta bottle

The Audition
Old Red Lion, N1
Box Office: 0171-837 7816



INTIMATE RAPPORT: Mike Hayward is superb as the wayward Welsh actor Jack Rees in *The Audition*

NINE TO FIVE
DECEMBER '94

Even the best-informed, most diligent of theatre-goers would be hard pressed to catch all the plays performed every night in and around London. Occasionally a gem must slip through the net, unseen due to pressure of time or simply not knowing it was on.

This must not be allowed to happen with a one-man play. *The Audition*, by Alison Kennedy. Performed by Mike Hayward (Alun Morgan in *Take The High Road*), *The Audition* is a funny, perceptive, passionate portrayal of Welshman Jack Rees. Over two hours Rees instructs his audience in the actor's art, rambling off into intriguing glimpses of his own past: strict-chapel-family, only child, lay preacher, actor-turned-alcoholic.

Rees entralls the audience with irreverent, wicked anecdotes of his adventures from school nativity play to the West End, tempered with poignant glimpses of a man unable to separate life from the stage, or the bottle from his lips.

Shut out by his parents who are incapable of showing him

warmth and love, Rees seeks out fame as an actor. But the legacy of his childhood overwhelms him and unable to commit to anyone or anything, his only constant comfort is the vodka bottle.

Hayward as Rees is superb, moving from uncontrollable laughter to rage and desperation with the smoothness of a well-edited film. He creates an intimate rapport with the audience, carrying us along with his snapshots of the past, making asides and collapsing with laughter at his own jokes so that we are completely taken in and, like Rees, we can't distinguish the real actor from the character part.

The Audition is Kennedy's first play and won a Fringe First at Edinburgh last year.

It is a stunning piece of work. You don't need to be a Welshman to love it (the British Council deemed it right for a two month tour of India in spring this year), and you don't need to be a theatre buff to appreciate it.

At a mere £6 a ticket (£4 concessions) you will have enough money to buy a stamp and send Kennedy a fan letter - she deserves one.

Nicky Pope

Review Aberdeen's Evening News

ABERDEEN'S EVENING NEWS OCTOBER '93

What a way to celebrate

MARK SMITH saw The Audition at the Arts Centre, Aberdeen.

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FROM tragedy to stand-up comedy, The Audition was a superb way to celebrate 30 years of Aberdeen's Arts Centre.

The one man play follows the life of Jack Rees, an actor who treats life like an audition and auditions like life.

For Jack, it's a life where alcohol seems to offer a way out from his relationship with his parents, his wife, his agent, his employer — everyone.

The character was played brilliantly by Welsh actor Mike Hayward. Looking — and sometimes sounding — like a member of a Welsh male voice choir, he stomped around the stage with the audience completely engrossed.

The sharp, funny performance of a sharp, funny, award-winning play was an excellent theatrical experience.

At the end of the play even Jack's attempted suicide is a dream of the big headlines which he might get when he's dead.

And there one's unanswered question for Jack: 'How can I be Jack Rees?'

GOA

Theatrical experience

By Cyril D'Cunha

PANJIM, April 5: Man of a thousand faces. A dancer and a preacher. Yeah! A drunk and a clown. Wait a minute! What have I missed?

That's what Mike Hayward kept everyone wondering in his solo take-off in the play "The Audition", which was held at the D M auditorium of the Kala Academy on Monday.

It was a complete package of consummate artistry, with the performance held to my knowledge for the first time back stage, with ring-side viewing. Intimate and utterly engrossing.

An actor's actor, who as one critic described "treats life like an audition and auditions like life", sums up aptly Hayward's performance.

Hayward is Welsh and built like a tank. Yet, whatever novelist A L Kennedy intended Jack Rees to be in her play "The Audition", must have been amply and satisfyingly mirrored, not only in the visage but even in the subtle intonations of perfect English of the lovable Hayward. To use a like description for champion pugilist Mohammed Ali

"he floated like a butterfly and stung like a bee."

Hayward, a veteran of the National Theatre in the UK, did just that minus the violence, and much more. Jabbing the air, contorting a look, mimicking with fluidity and throwing barbs like accurate punches, which drew unaffected laughter. He has this funny way of saying things, making even a four-letter word ride lightly. For instance, like when Jack Rees, when a 11-year old, asks Mrs Sopworth his teacher to come to his flat and sit on his face for free.

Hayward interprets and feels for Rees — pain, booze, contemplated suicide and even God's mercy. He quotes Chekhov and Audrey from "The three sisters" to summarise Rees' life, almost having the audience lapping the cunningly phrased monologues, which only he in a "One man show", could have done so beautifully and effectively.

The show was jointly presented by the British High Commission, British Council Division, Bombay and the Kala Academy, Goa.