



Rude: A Ska Musical

Written by Tony Wright



Gareth Ludkin

[Buzz Magazine](#)



A glimpse, a taste and a nostalgic hit of the 1980s ska scene; *Rude: A Ska Musical*, recalls an evocative mix of music, race and culture in Cardiff. The love, laughs and relationships formed through the emergence of ska and two tone, are presented through the story of Roddy, a mixed-race 47-year-old, looking back at his teenage rudeboy-self and the characters, culture and music that informed his youth.

Theatre group, Give It A Name, bring to life memories of growing up amidst the Cardiff Ska and reggae scene, and in the perfect setting of The Rocking Chair, the performance almost seemed at home. Based on the memories and story of Tony Wright, a veteran rudeboy from the Cardiff reggae scene, there was an added local resonance in the performance.

Engaging, nostalgic and fun, an unrefined polish added to my enjoyment, and a rich vein of humour kept me grinning throughout. With a touch of improvisation, the actors took the performance to the audience, building the set around them as the plot recalled memories of music, unemployment, love and violence.

The cast skanked, acted and hung out their washing amid the audience, helping to overcome the awkward nature of the performance space, and the live band provided an excellent soundtrack. Narrating the story through music, classic ska tunes bookended



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memories, and throughout the band had the audience tapping their feet and the cast skanking along with them.

Although important themes of race, identity and class are not tackled in any great depth, *Rude* addresses with broad brush strokes, the multicultural aspects of the 1980s and the boundaries that were, in-part, broken down by the emergence of ska and two tone. *Rude* reminds us of the familiarity of the 1980s, providing a glimpse, rather than an in-depth deconstruction, of life as an unemployed rudeboy out for a bit of fun. There was a real sense of fun and nostalgia in the performance, and I left the Rocking Chair with a big grin on my face.

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[Sarah Hoss](#)

[Roath Cardiff](#)

For those who remember Roath in the '80s – especially if you were a teenager back then – and if you want to relive those glory days for a couple of hours, check out 'Rude' – a musical featuring all the old haunts and the sound of that period – written by local man



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I went to the opening night (it is running until November 3rd). It's a high-speed run down memory lane – Cardiff-style – that took me right back to the early '80s – the fun, the danger, heartache, the sounds, the moves and the mania.

Tony Wright's show takes us back to a particular night – December 8th 1980. The story is based upon Tony's own experience of growing up as a mixed-race boy around Adamsdown.

A self-styled Cardiff 'Rude Boy', Roddy is caught up with the Caribbean-influenced culture of Ska music – the sharp suits and Trilby hats often sourced from local charity shops. The action follows Roddy and the people close to him, and takes in the excitement of the time when all youngsters wanted was to escape the relentless pressure to find a job and when socializing when you had no money was about nursing one cup of tea in a smart café dreaming of success, adventure and romance.

Groups like The Specials, Madness, The Selecter, Bad Manners and UB40 played hugely popular gigs in Cardiff that many teenagers in the area attended. The events also attracted gangs and skinheads, with often viciously-violent finales that spilled out onto the streets.

Rude evokes all of that – and more – in a whistle-stop tour of Cardiff in the 80s – from the dreaded dole office at Heron House on Newport Road to the thrill of the makeshift blues clubs in the city.

Rude – a Ska Musical – by Tony Wright – 'Give it a Name' Productions is directed by James Williams.

The show refers to many areas familiar to kids growing up in Roath. It's on at the Rockin' Chair, Lower Cathedral Rd, Riverside, Cardiff, Oct 24 – Nov 3 2012. Contact Chapter Arts for tickets.

(Part of Black History Month Wales 2012).



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THE PICK

Henry McMorrow
The Pick (Cardiff)

Give it a Name Theatre Company's production of *Rude – a Ska Musical* at The Rockin' Chair Bar in Riverside provided an evening of dressed down, raw theatre which evoked a time when the currency of young people was more Ska and Harrington jackets than Dubstep and Primark hoodies.

The production was originally performed two years ago but its success then has seen it returning to the stage as part of Black History Month Wales.

The performance was a devised piece where the director, James Williams, collaborated with Tony Wright whose own experiences as a mixed-race boy during the 1980s informed the context of the play.

In ways that touring productions can't, Give it a Name managed to increase the pertinence of the piece by effortlessly anchoring it in the context of '80s Cardiff. This allowed me to share in the audience's palpable sense of nostalgia despite being 20 to 30 years younger than most of them. The realism of the performances and relationships on



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stage furthered my capacity to fit the scenes to a certain locality, which meant I could vicariously relate through the audience members around me, applying my local knowledge to deepen my understanding and experience.

The beauty was in the simplicity of the work. While it followed Brechtian principles of 'breaking the fourth wall'; directly engaging with the audience and forcing them to face the subject matter head on, it avoided any of the pointless stylistic baggage synonymous with his theatre.

We spoke to a number of cast members and the director after the musical had finished. I was shocked to hear much of the play had relied on the actors improvising to ensure audience participation was seamless. As an actor nothing horrifies me more than the prospect of an unscripted play so for this reason I am in awe of these performers who capably handled scene after scene, while fluidly keeping pace and maintaining the action. This was one production whose message would have been completely lost if it weren't for the synergy between audience and cast and the cast's ability to slap the audience round the face with its message.

Although I'm enticing you to see a performance whose run has sadly come to an end (this time round) I hope you're as keen as I am to follow the progress of the company as a whole.