

Review: Superstition Mountain

By Sara Lamerton

***Superstition Mountain* at Theatre Royal Plymouth**

Cross three dysfunctional brothers, a dead dad, an ailing scrapyard, a shed load of debt and repressed emotional baggage, a string of four letter words, an adventure of a lifetime calling from across the Atlantic, and what do you get? Carl Grose's *Superstition Mountain*.

This unique, local play about three Cornish boys who, after several terrible life decisions and tragic twists of fate, head for the Arizona desert in the search of their fortune. First performed a decade ago, this wild, unexpected, off-the-wall comedy is back on the road. If you're unopposed to plenty of expletives, crazy storylines, and high energy performances, this theatrical escapism might be the golden nugget you're longing to discover on a bleak November evening.

The Gunwallow boys, Slim, Dwayne, and Mark have some real issues: with themselves, with each other, with their dead father. Slim's (Ben Kernow) rage festers and grows as he battles his demons, responsibilities, and delusional daddy issues. Dwayne's (Darren Seed) stupidity and selfishness knows no bounds, lurching from one weed hazed disaster to another. And Mark's (Jack Brownridge-Kelly) naivety and relative intelligence puts him at odds with the more callous, calculating members of his family. However, in amongst their fights and disdain, they have moments of hilarious unity, spurring them into action.

The first half centres on the trio's electric dynamic, as well as understanding the multitude of issues simmering just below the surface. The second half follows their journey to faraway lands, expertly cutting back and forth between time frames to show how their journey is, or rather isn't, progressing as planned. And, although the first half contains plenty of treasure, the second is a rollercoaster of ups and down, rattlesnakes and tequilas shots, a poisoned, naked ass that will leave you unsure of where to look, but unable to look away in the twisted hope of catching a glimpse, a (potential) brotherly betrayal, and an unanswered life or death cliffhanger.

Despite the surface level comedy of *Superstition Mountain*, there are deeper themes at play. Secrets, lies, and resentment cloud the boys' lives as they each unconsciously act out their respective place in the family hierarchy. In a last ditch attempt to make something of their existence outside of the confines of St Day and the stifling wreck of a tax-dodging scrapyard, they push themselves to the limits and discover exactly what they're made of, with varying results.

And, it's no surprise that there isn't a traditional happy ending for the brothers. Nothing about their lives would suggest it could be that simple. Yet, in the dirt and ruin, a bond is formed, and with an apt theme tune ringing through their heads, "No matter how I struggle and strive, I'll never get out of this world alive," we ponder the fate of the trio beyond the crumbling, snake-infested gold mine.

Superstition Mountain runs until Saturday 5 November, so there's still time to see the world through the distorted lens of the Gunwallow brothers.