

Review – Girl from The North Country

Several lost souls gather in the boarding house of Nick Laine (Colin Connor) a character who appears to take the hard knocks of life in his stride.

He and his wife Elizabeth (Frances McNamee), who suffers from dementia, take in boarders, each of them arriving with their own set of problems. At points it seems there are too many characters, many feel immediately familiar with their everyman struggles often present in dustbowl literature.

Set in Bob Dylan's hometown of Duluth, Minnesota less than a decade before the singer was born, we are introduced to the world that would come to shape many of his songs. Girl From The North Country successfully breathes new life into Dylan's songbook, Joe Scott (Joshua C. Jackson) is a struggling boxer and escaped prisoner for a crime he didn't commit. The performance of Hurricane by Jackson is a potent moment rich with the echoes of the original song's subject, the imprisonment of boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter.



GIRL FROM THE NORTH COUNTRY by McPherson, Writer/Director – Conner McPherson, Music – Bob Dylan, Olympia Theatre, Dublin, 2022, Credit: Johan Persson/

There are moments such as this that amplify the atmosphere backed by The Howlin' Winds band who deliver fine arrangements of tracks such as Slow Train and Like A Rolling Stone. While Nick and Elizabeth are parents of an adopted black daughter Marianne, (Justina Kehinde) there's not enough attention to that aspect of the story, racism of the time is covered more through the character of Joe Scott.

Frances McNamee has a beautiful voice but the closer of Forever Young felt too understated. An unexpected final of Pressing On nearly blew the roof of the Playhouse, leaving us with a transcendent, life-affirming moment that will linger long in the memory and the heart.

At Edinburgh Playhouse until 22 October. Tickets [here](#).

