

Review: The Ghost of White Hart Lane: A game of two halves, a play of five stars

THERE are people of a certain vintage that remember John White playing for Spurs. There was added poignancy with the audience at this Edinburgh Festival show at the Underbelly that there was also those who remember John White at Alloa and Falkirk.

Spurs and Scotland star John White was one of the best footballers of the 1960s, however, in July 1964 he was struck by lightning and killed at 27 years old. From humble beginnings growing up just outside Edinburgh, through to football fame and his tragic death, the play shares John's cheeky humour. It also follows the story of his son Rob White, who was just five months old when his dad died. Having premiered at Spurs Stadium, this follows on from the Sunday Times bestseller by Rob White and Julie Welch.

Cal Newman holds the audience like a gifted midfield maestro. He commands the room both as John and Rob as well as a number of the other characters that many knew so well.

It is a celebration of a life and a chronicling of a journey to find identity and meaning.

John's journey from Musselburgh to White Hart Lane and then the fateful day on the golf course is punctuated by an incredible energy, often motivated by him proving he was good enough, He clearly enjoyed that night beating Glasgow Rangers.

Cal also 'plays" other characters along the way. Jimmy Greaves, Bill Nicholson, Harry Evans to name just a few.

But it is the channeling of John White, in the Spurs kit. that left such an impression on this reviewer. Especially the kit

in all white on those glory glory nights.

He also deftly (and with empathy), plays writer and son Rob in his journey to understand his father, the Ghost of White Hart Lane. It is great credit that Spurs players never forgot the White family. From Dave Mackay hosting him at a Derby County game in the seventies to the premiere of the play at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium last month.

Since we interviewed Rob, people we know, of a certain vintage, still adore John White. Some compared him to Luca Modric.

The use of the screen is vital with moving footage and still photos.

The show holds the audience. Whether you have a connection or not, you cannot help be moved.

On the face of it, it is a one-man show and we hope Cal Newman gets the plaudits he deserves but it is, like football, a team game and so well done to all who brought it to the stage.

Recommend: Five Stars:

<https://underbellyedinburgh.co.uk/event/the-ghost-of-white-hart-lane>