

» REVIEW – ABIGAIL'S PARTY

It might be the most excruciating social gathering of all time.

Abigail's Party, by Mike Leigh, sees a group of neighbours gather for cheesy nibbles in a suburban 1970s home.

And in Hesse Theatre Company's new production at Hull Truck, this masterpiece of discomfort crackles with tension.

The play opens with the domineering Beverley pushing around her husband, Laurence,

as they await the arrival of their guests.

Soon to knock on the door are couple Angela and Tony, the deeply mismatched new arrivals to the street.

The final guest, the divorced Susan, is anxious about the party being held by her teenage daughter, Abigail, at her home.

What follows is an extremely funny, if tense, evening in the company of these uncomfortable characters.

The cast draw us effortlessly

into the social clambering and the power-play between the guests.

As the supreme, strutting Beverley, Jamie Blake is pure Alpha female – flirting shamelessly with Tony (a splendidly grumpy turn from Shane Edwards) – and batting off any challenges with contemptuous clouds of cigarette smoke.

In the role of Susan, Lucy Palmer has the right mix of naivety and reserve, while Pauline Simpson captures Angela's terminal foot-in-mouth

syndrome. Perhaps special mention should be made of Martin Beaumont who, as the strung-up Laurence, creates a symphony of twitches.

Staged in the intimate space of the Studio, director Neil Collingbourne's production is powerful enough to make you feel like an eavesdropper.

By Will Ramsey

Where & when: Hull Truck Theatre, Ferensway, Hull, until tomorrow, 8pm. Matinee tomorrow, 2pm. Tickets £6.50-£8. Call (01482) 323638



» **CONVINCING:** The cast of Abigail's Party.