

WESTERN PARK GAZETTE

Those Magnificent Men Review

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Those Magnificent Men. 21st Feb Upstairs at the Western, Leicester.

If you ever want to see the Charge of the Light Brigade performed in your living room, Brian Mitchell and David Mountfield could probably do it with sticks, a cushion and a flared nostril apiece.

Last night with Those Magnificent Men, the Abbot and Costello of historical biographies brought the story of the first non stop trans-Atlantic flight vividly to life by making an entire bi-plane out of two tables, a couple of blankets and sheer force of personality.

Written by sketch writing veterans Brian Mitchell and Joseph Nixon, Mitchell took on the role of flying ace Sir John Alcock along with David Mountfield as redoubtable navigator Sir Arthur Whitten Brown.



It's a very funny, hands on hips, chin jutting out into the sunset look at old fashioned British heroism and epic boys' own daring do in the face of insurmountable odds and near certain death.

Those Magnificent Men is the Foundry Group's latest production following on from their award winning Big Daddy Vs Giant Haystacks which graced Upstairs at the Western last year. Their current show is a deft mixture of Python and Horrible Histories on a budget and is engagingly rough, ready and in places happily demented.

Yes everybody's heard of Charles Lindburgh's first solo flight across the Atlantic non-stop from New York to Paris, but he wasn't the first to traverse the pond in one hop. That honour will always lie with Alcock and Brown whose sixteen hour flight from Newfoundland to a bog in Ireland started off the age of long haul flights. And thanks to Those Magnificent Men, we know that as well.

Richard Perry

Those Magnificent Men

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Brian Mitchell and Dave Mounfield star as Alcock and Brown, the first people to fly non-stop across the Atlantic in June, 1919, in this hilarious and heartwarming play. Joseph Nixon and Mitchell's script manages to amuse, entertain and inform without ever being disingenuous to the two aviators who risked their lives for king, country and £10,000 – "But it was never about the money". This is a comedy, first and foremost, but a respectful one. The sparse, yet inventive set design captures perfectly the rickety nature of the pair's biplane and Mitchell and Mounfield successfully take us on their perilous journey with them, while simultaneously breaking the fourth wall at regular intervals to question Alcock and Brown's seemingly lost legacy. This was the first outing of this new production of the 2010 play, but with two consummate performers I'd look out

for it touring soon as tickets are going to fly.