



FILM

JANE AUSTEN WRECKED MY LIFE

An Anglo-French romantic-comedy as refreshing as a summer breeze, *Jane Austen Wrecked My Life* is the story of Agathe (Camille Rutherford), an aspiring writer who works by day in famed Parisian bookshop, Shakespeare & Co. While she dreams of finding love just like in an Austen novel, things shift when she's invited to the Jane Austen Writers' Residency in the English countryside where she meets Austen's stand-offish distant relative Oliver (Charlie Anson).

For the film's writer-director Laura Piani, this is flush with autobiography. Like her character, she worked in Shakespeare & Co during her student days, often manning the tills during the evening shift: a perfect place for people-watching. 'You had the tourists and the Parisian people, and then you had sometimes lonely people, sometimes homeless people, especially in winter, when it was cold outside. We were actually letting everyone in.'

Naturally, she's also a huge fan of Jane Austen, a writer who has continued to dominate popular culture (remember, without Austen, there'd be no Bridget Jones). 'It is fascinating to think that 250 years later, she still influences generations of readers. She owned romantic comedies,' says Piani.

Intriguingly, the film also stars Frederick Wiseman, the 95-year-old documentarian (of such acclaimed observational films as *National Gallery* and *City Hall*). Piani first met him a decade ago on the streets of Paris and they became friends. When she was casting the role of a poet, Wiseman cheekily put himself forward. 'It's a big gift to end up with this man that I care so much for,' says Piani, promising that her film veers from the usual romcom path. 'It's important to not do another film where a woman is saved by love, even if I do feel that love *can* save many people.' (James Mottram)

■ In cinemas from Friday 13 June.

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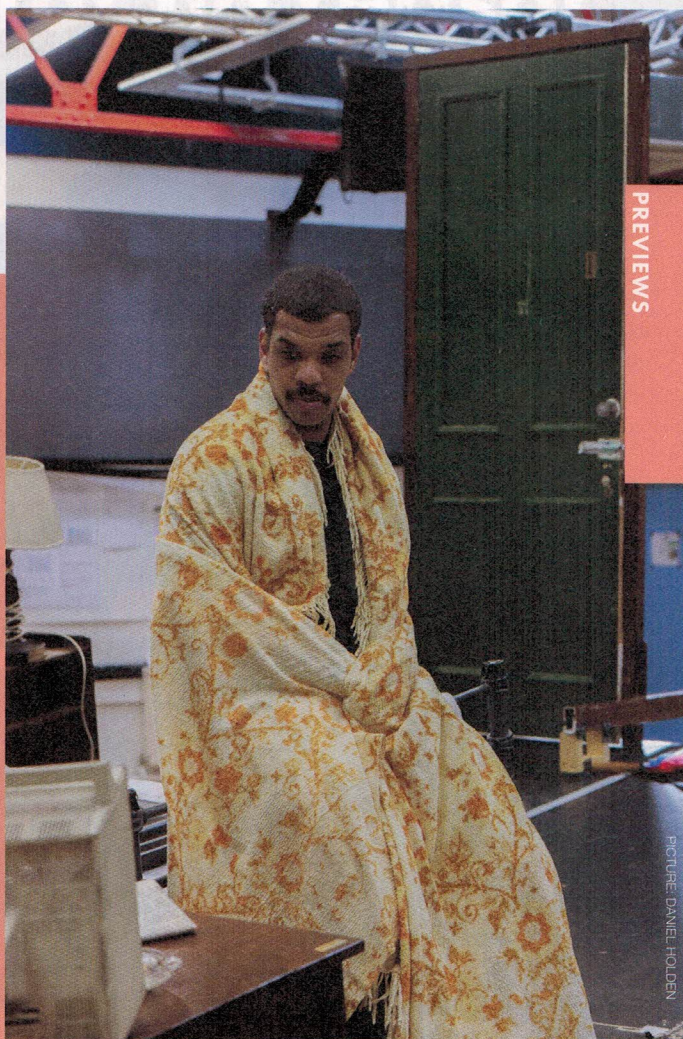
THE MOUNTAINTOP

The lines between legacy and historical fact are often blurred. From the echo chamber of the internet to the biases of human recollection, it is easier than ever to skew the impact of those who have made a mark on the world. Considering efforts (by a certain president sworn in on Martin Luther King Day) to roll back liberties gained during the civil rights movement, it may seem odd to reflect on King's life through a critical lens. Yet, this summer, Katori Hall's Olivier Award-winning play, *The Mountaintop*, will do just that.

Set in King's motel room in Memphis, just hours before his death, we meet the renowned leader at a moment when he is less of a legend and more of a man who just wants a cigarette. 'Katori Hall strips away the speeches, the spotlight, the grandeur, and gives us a man who is alone,' explains director Rikki Henry. 'He's hungry. Uncertain. Flawed. Hopeful. Human.'

As he is weighed down by impending doom, King's room service arrives with an unexpected development. Camae, a motel maid full of welcome distractions, unravels the polished exterior to meet the man behind the speech. This, in Henry's eyes, reveals a far more significant message. 'I wanted to explore the very human truth that you can feel small and still act. That history isn't something we observe; it's something we build.' With a cast led by Caleb Roberts and Shannon Hayes, *The Mountaintop* is well placed to show that every individual, both in and out of the spotlight, can change a culture. (Rachel Morrell)

■ Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, until Saturday 21 June.



PREVIEWS

PICTURE: DANIEL HOLDEN