



Show Report

Showstoppers Theatre Group

Trigger Code

15 May 2026

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Trigger Code
SOCIETY	Showstoppers Theatre Group
VENUE	Hyde Festival Theatre
GENRE	Murder Mystery
CAST SIZE	21
DIRECTORS	Rachel Bunting & Victoria Husband
WRITTEN BY	Victoria Husband & Rachel Bunting
COSTUMES	Victoria Husband, Megan Husband & Katie Wilkins
MARKETING	Megan Husband
STAGE MANAGER	Rachel Bunting
LEAD CHAPERONE	Victoria Husband
SET DESIGN & PROPS	Rachel Bunting & Victoria Husband
LIGHTING & SOUND	Sparks Theatre Management
TICKET PROVIDER	Sparks Theatre Management
PROGRAMME DESIGN	Rachel Bunting & Victoria Husband
VIDEOGRAPHER	JHC Video Services - Phil Steels
PHOTOGRAPHER	Arthur Patchett
FRONT OF HOUSE	Hyde Festival Theatre Volunteers

CAST LIST

SUSPECTS

Sandra Rourke	Vicky Worthington
Jade Rourke	Katie Wilkins
Leanne 'Lee' Harris	Megan Husband
Rita Brown	Becci Alberti-King
Nikki	Emily Hill
Mav Shaw	Katie Dearnaley
Yvonne 'Von' Miller	Niamh Smith
Cat O'Neill	Chloé Joyce Walker
Shell Donnelly	Emily Ray

NON-SUSPECTS

Eileen Rourke	Sheila Gooding
Ethel Harris	Ann Croke
Sophie Briggs	Lucy Jade
Keely Briggs	Libby Hall
Emily Shaw	Bella Bunting
Coroner	Henry Campbell
PC 'Macca' McCaffrey	Aidan Jagatsingh
PC Liam Patterson	Lee Hurst

TEENAGERS

	Chloe Croke
	Leo Husband
	Michael Brickell
	Evie Etches

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Friday 15th May 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Sunday 17th May 2026
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA1002
NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Yes
PROGRAMME CLASS	Best Original Design

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT

2071

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

Powerful Performances

- Emily Ray's portrayal of Shell Donnelly grabbed my attention from the moment I walked through the door, her use of voice, body language and facial expressions was consistent throughout and really helped to fully develop the 'bad girl' image that Shell seemed to be.
- Katie Wilkin's rendition of 'Saving All My Love For You' was powerfully and beautifully done and really displayed her range as a vocalist.

Bold, Intelligent Direction and Structure

- The use of all areas of the Madge Bayes Hall meant that they could use a minimal set that wouldn't need moving around. This meant that there weren't set changes that needed to be covered and so they could keep the story moving at all times. It also kept grabbing the audience's attention as the action would move around the room.

You never quite know what to expect from an interactive murder mystery, but as soon as I entered the theatre to watch Trigger Code by Showstoppers Synergy, I was instantly immersed in the production. Before I had even entered the performance space, I was greeted by two of the actors, **Chloe Joyce Walker** playing Cat O'Neill and **Emily Ray** playing Shell Donnelly. They were already fully in character and welcomed me to the Trigger Code club that they owned and worked in within the production.

I then made my way to the top of the stairs, as the production was being held in the Madge Bayes Hall, and was shown to my seat by **Victoria Husband**. Vicky explained that although Showstoppers Synergy had performed interactive murder mystery productions previously, this was the first one written by herself and **Rachel Bunting**. Not only had they written the production, but they had also directed, stage managed, created the set design, compiled the props, put together the costumes and created the programme. They truly seemed like an impressive duo, though Vicky also mentioned that they received a great deal of help from **Megan Husband** and **Katie Wilkins** in bringing the production together, and that they owed them a huge amount of thanks for everything they did.

The tables had been arranged in a cabaret-style setting, and Vicky explained that there were packs of clues on the tables, clues hidden within the programme, and voting slips that the audience would be invited to use to vote for who they believed the murderer was at different points throughout the performance. Whilst I was looking through the pack and discussing the

various clues with the audience members on my table, I also noticed other members of the cast fully in character around different parts of the room. This immediately helped the audience feel immersed in the piece and encouraged them to participate in the detective roles they had been thrown into.

The set design cleverly utilised different areas of the Hall, meaning that apart from one corner of the room where the lighting and sound were controlled, the rest of the space was used as performance areas where the action unfolded. This was highlighted straight away in the opening scene, when one of the characters stood on a podium singing, while the 'audience' made up of other cast members watched her from the opposite side of the paying audience attending the club. Throughout the three acts, the action moved around different areas of the room. The set itself was minimal, but this worked to the production's advantage, as there was no need for large set changes and different parts of the room could easily become different settings through the dialogue and action taking place there. The production also made effective use of the screens in the room to display a prerecorded 'Crimewatch' segment during Act 2, which included CCTV footage.

The story of Trigger Code centred around the club of the production's namesake and the lives of the people who frequented it. The narrative focused on the suspicious deaths throughout the production, and within the programme the characters were divided into suspects and non-suspects, a smarter way to inform the audience who to watch and interrogate.

The owner of Trigger Point club, Cat O'Neill, was portrayed by **Chloe Joyce Walker**. She brought a confident and commanding presence to the role, using excellent vocal variation and strong facial expressions, particularly in reaction to the action unfolding around her throughout the show. She was often seen alongside Shell Donnelly, played by **Emily Ray**, who worked at the Trigger Code Club and had previously been in prison. Emily portrayed this convincingly through a cocky confidence, expressive hand gestures, and consistent characterisation. During Act 3, Shell also performed a solo singing piece which was delivered powerfully and showcased Emily's vocal tone well. I was informed that Emily was a new member of Showstoppers Synergy and had only previously performed as a child, which made the performance all the more impressive.

The barmaid at the pub, Leanne 'Lee' Harris, was portrayed by **Megan Husband**. Megan made excellent use of the performance space, even using the bar within the room as the bar in the show and remaining in character by cleaning it throughout scenes. Lee was revealed to be in a domestically abusive relationship, with makeup changes used effectively to display bruising, and she also performed a solo song that reflected the emotions her character was experiencing. Another employee of the club was Jade Rourke, played by **Katie Wilkins**. Jade appeared as the club singer and opened Act 1 with a song. Initially, both the performance and the character seemed tentative, with Jade appearing nervous throughout much of the production, though we saw her confidence gradually grow as the story progressed. Katie clearly knew her monologue well, though slowing down slightly at times would have strengthened the delivery further. A particular highlight of her performance was her solo rendition of Saving All My Love for You which was sung beautifully with good voice and breath control. Jade's mother,

Sandra Rourke, was brought to life by **Vicky Worthington**, who portrayed the role of a worried mother effectively, with the character's strength developing throughout the piece, though more emotional variation in the scenes would have helped deepen the character further by showing more aggression, projection in her dialogue and body mannerisms – something that I am certain Vicky can own, work on and bring to her next performance.

We saw several other characters frequenting the club throughout the production, including Nikki, played by **Emily Hill**. Nikki began the show quite subdued, and we learned that she worked as a youth worker, though during Act 2 her cocky attitude emerged as it was revealed that she was in fact a drug dealer using her youth connections to sell drugs through children, though another side of Nikki emerged during Act 3 as she spiralled under the pressure of potentially being exposed and linked to the murders. Emily's interaction with her fellow cast mates and the audience during the interactive and improv stages of the production was strong and convincing to her character, making her a convincing suspect to vote for. Although, I would have liked this aspect of the character to have been explored even further with more expressions in her portrayal. Rita Brown, played by **Becci Alberti-King**, worked alongside Nikki at the Youth Centre, and was revealed to be the owner and manager of the Youth Centre. Rita appeared burdened by guilt, blaming herself for some of the terrible events that unfolded. At times, some of Becci's dialogue was difficult to hear due to the lively audience atmosphere and greater projection would have ensured none of the character's lines were missed, however she commanded the stage, showed great characterisation and spoke clearly with good diction and her betrayal felt authentic and real.

Another mother experiencing a wide range of emotions throughout the production was Mav Shaw, played by **Katie Dearnley**. We learned that Mav's daughter Emily had died under suspicious circumstances, and we watched Mav navigate the grief of losing her. There were moments where her anger and emotional intensity truly captured the audience's attention and you could hear a pin drop in the auditorium. Though occasionally she stumbled over lines during heightened emotional scenes, she portrayed the character well with a huge amount of confidence. Emily Shaw, Mav's daughter, was played by **Bella Bunting** in flashback scenes involving Rita. Bella portrayed Emily as withdrawn and emotionally low, and it would have been interesting to have seen the character explored further through additional flashbacks to reveal more dimensions to her portrayal. We also discovered that Emily was not Mav's only daughter, as she had previously given another child up for adoption – Yvonne 'Von' Miller. Von was played by **Niamh Smith**, and there was a genuinely sweet moment between Von and Mav when the adoption was revealed, though I would have liked both characters to have explored the emotional impact of the revelation more deeply, as it felt like a missed opportunity to fully embrace such a raw and shocking moment. Niamh portrayed Von as a kind-hearted nurse weighed down by the realities of her job, often appearing distracted and emotionally burdened. At the very end of the production, Von was responsible for breaking down the truth surrounding each suspect, and although the scene was heavily dialogue-driven and packed with important information, Niamh remained calm, composed, and fully in character throughout. I later learned that this had been Niamh's first performance, and I was intrigued to see how she might develop

in future productions as she was an absolute delight to watch – she was commanding, authentic and she was fastidious in her delivery with every mannerism, look and posture catered for the character.

Alongside the darker drama, there were also lighter moments provided by characters such as the unlikely comedy duo Eileen Rourke and Ethel Harris, played by **Sheila Gooding** and **Ann Croke**. These two acted as the elders of the piece, seemingly seeing everything while rarely becoming directly involved. Their interactions felt natural, and there were moments where it seemed as though they may have been improvising after minor line mix-ups, but they carried on smoothly and brought much-needed humour into an otherwise dark production. The news reporter Sophie Briggs, played by **Lucy Jade**, also appeared to be everywhere throughout the show, constantly observing events. Lucy portrayed the stereotypical determined reporter convincingly, getting into everyone's faces and never seeming to switch off. Sophie came across like a dog with a bone, relentlessly chasing the story with a notebook always in hand, ready to "get the steal."

There had also been some late cast changes only two weeks before the performance, with **Henry Campbell** now taking on the role of the coroner. He portrayed the role in a very matter-of-fact way, which suited the character, though I would have liked him to direct his performance more towards the audience and command the room with the authority the role demanded. That said, he appeared more relaxed in the ensemble scenes and interacted well with the other characters. Another performer who had stepped into a role only two weeks before the show was **Libby Hall**, who played Keely Briggs. Her confidence with her lines was impressive, and her characterisation felt quick-witted and assured despite the short rehearsal period.

The detectives in the production, PC 'Macca' McCaffrey and PC Liam Patterson, were delivered by **Aidan Jagatsingh** and **Lee Hurst**. Their characters initially came across as quite matter-of-fact, with Aidan's portrayal particularly one-note at the beginning, but both performers really began to shine during the moments where they summarised the events of the story before the audience cast their votes for the murderer. The pair worked well together, with Lee displaying strong comic timing and believable frustration towards Aidan's character, particularly when the increasingly ridiculous crisp gag was introduced during their investigations, earning consistent laughs from the audience after each act.

Although Showstoppers Synergy is usually an adult performance group, Vicky and Rachel felt that including some teenagers would help the audience better understand the story. Alongside **Libby Hall** and **Bella Bunting**, the younger cast members included **Chloe Croke**, **Leo Husband**, **Evie Etches**, and **Michael Brickell**. Not only did they help convey the story through their presence in the production in the youth centre, but they also assisted with collecting voting slips and helping the evening run smoothly and punctually and should be really impressed in embracing the adult nature of this production so maturely.

As the characters remained amongst the audience during each interval, the cast had very little time away from view and should have been proud of how consistently they maintained their characterisation throughout the evening.

If anyone was wondering what an interactive murder mystery was really like, it was something you truly had to experience for yourself, especially as different amateur dramatics groups all approached the format in their own way. The key was to fully immerse yourself, get involved, and keep your eyes peeled. And if anyone was wondering who the murderer was – well, that would have been telling...

Thank you to Vicky and Rachel for their warm hospitality, and to the volunteers at Hyde Festival Theatre who worked professionally with the group to keep the production running smoothly and on time. I look forward to seeing what ShowStoppers Synergy has in store next.

PHOTOGRAPHS











PROGRAMME

HYDE Festival THEATRE

TRIGGER CODE

OPEN

Souvenir Programme

A 1980s
INTERACTIVE
MURDER
MYSTERY

HYDE
FESTIVAL
THEATRE

14TH-16TH MAY
7.15 P.M.

Performances held in Madge Bayes hall (First Floor)
Written by Rachel Bunting & Victoria Husband

Tickets £15 pp - Available from: www.sparksem.co.uk

Show Stoppers Synergy

act

Northern Stage Awards

Sparks