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SF PERUSALS

RUBBER RING

A Solo Play

by James McDermott

SAMUEL FRENCH

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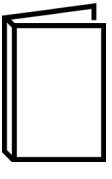
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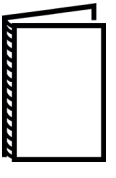
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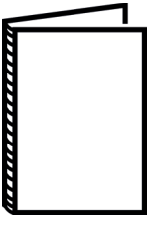
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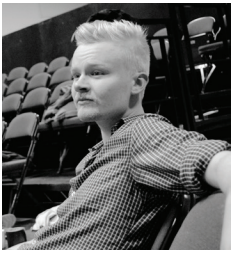
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



James McDermott trained at the University of East Anglia where he graduated with an MA (Distinction) in Scriptwriting. He has participated in the Royal Court Writers' Group, Soho Theatre's Writers' Lab, HighTide Academy, and he is currently one of four young writers on Hampstead Theatre's Inspire: The Next Playwright Programme. James's plays include *Fast Food*, starring Jude Law (Lyric Hammersmith; Lyric Gala 2017), *Ordinary Boys* (Royal Court; Playlist), *Street Life* (Norwich Theatre Royal), *Uniform* (Oldham Coliseum) and *Man Hug* (Theatre Royal BSE; Winner of Anglian Voices Playwriting Competition 2017). James recently developed his new plays *Time and Tide* on Park Theatre's Script Accelerator programme and *Fifty Years* on the Criterion Theatre's New Writing Programme. James is currently under commission to write new plays for HighTide, Eastern Angles and Norwich Arts Centre and he is developing TV projects with Hat Trick, Big Talk and Hare & Tortoise. James has been longlisted for the Bruntwood, Papatango and Verity Bargate playwriting prizes. When James isn't writing, he works as a diversity consultant at Norwich Arts Centre and teaches scriptwriting at Norwich Theatre Royal, New Wolsey Ipswich and Marina Theatre Lowestoft. James is represented by Independent Talent.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Growing up queer in rural England, I felt like a ghost no one believed in, as I never saw contemporary rural queer life represented onstage, on screen or in print. So I decided to write *Rubber Ring* to help me better understand myself, to help the play's rural queer audiences feel less invisible and to help all audiences of the play better understand and reassess how they perceive rural queer life. *Rubber Ring* has toured the UK on and off for the last two years and I am currently adapting it for TV with Hat Trick Productions. I am amazed and moved by the life the play has had on the stage and I am delighted that the script is being published by Samuel French so that the play can have a permanent life on the page. I hope you enjoy reading this playtext or staging your own production of the play. Thanks for picking it up.

James McDermott, 2019

CHARACTER

This was originally written and performed as a play for one actor.

SCRIPT NOTES

Speech in bold indicates when the performer addresses the audience.

Rubber Ring was first performed with no set and no props.

Rubber Ring was first produced at The Pleasance Islington on the 31 October 2016.

Written and performed by James McDermott

Directed by Siobhan James-Elliott
Produced by Nikolai Ribnikov, Nick Smith and Thomas Jones.

Front cover image by Gareth J. Smith
garethjsmith@outlook.com

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To Mum, Dad, Shiv, Morrissey and anyone who has grown up queer in a rural community

1.

I'm gonna tell you a story.

MUM Knock knock, lover.

And it starts at eight thirty when Mum knocks on my bedroom door.

Can I have a word?

JIMMY Have two: piss off.

But in she trots, nearly trips over my pile of choose-your-own-adventure books, then perches on the end of my bed.

MUM Don't swear at me lover, please, thank you. It spoils you. And open a window. It mings in here.

JIMMY It didn't until you came in.

MUM I don't ming. Smell me. That's ylang-ylang. Radox. It mings cos you're never out this room, are ya? Locked in here day and night with your records and your reading. Before you hit sixteen and started listening to that Morrissey, you were never in. Always off gallivanting. Right little Ray Mears, you were. But now... Ya dad's cummerbund has more outings than you. You're reclusive, lover.

JIMMY Of course I'm reclusive. We live in Sheringham. The coastal town they forgot to bomb. This place is a recluse. This place is a prison. And all the other inmates are thatched and pebble-dashed and they stink. Of potatoes. And molluscs. Why couldn't you bring me up in the city where the people are young and smell of money and perfume? Herbs?

MUM Herbs? What d'ya wanna smell of herbs for?

JIMMY Look. Leave it. I'm fine, alright? Happy as Larry.

MUM I knew a Larry once. Killed himself. He might not've done if he'd told his mum what was really wrong with him. Look, lover. Me and you, we used to be thick as thieves. So talk to me. What's up?

What's up?

I'm sixteen, I don't know whether I like boys or girls and I live in Sheringham.

I'm fucked.

Well I'm not actually; that's the problem...

Where can I "explore" by the coast?

Rock pools.

I can't get onto Grindr and Tinder; there's no 4G in Norfolk.

The whole world is a singles' bar now but I can't get in.

I am sick of feeling like a story that will never get told.

That's what's up.

Of course I don't say any of that to Mum...

Instead I say:

JIMMY I'm just sad I can't go and see Morrissey at the O2 tomorrow. I only need fifty quid for a ticket. And another twenty nine quid for travel but... Seven quid Sheringham to Norwich, twenty-quid Norwich to Stratford Underground, two quid Stratford Underground to North Greenwich then a two-minute walk. I know what I'm doing. I've Googled it.

MUM You are not going to London on your own. Who d'ya think you are: Dick Whittington?

JIMMY No but I think you are. A dick, I mean… Mum. You've just said I'm reclusive. When I say I want to go out, you try and stop me. I can't win.

MUM Look. Here's a tenner. Go and buy one of them books ya love, choose your own adventures. That'll get you out the house. Just get out this bloody bedroom. Promise me?

And I clock the Morrissey poster on my bedroom wall…

And I swear the Mozziah winks at me…

JIMMY I promise…

*

I cycle to school and try to beat the steam train out of town.

But as always, it wins and whistles a laugh as I'm stopped in my tracks by streets upon streets upon streets of chip shops and gift shops and pound shops.

Everywhere I look, I'm passed by lovers entwined.

Giggling groups make their way to Broadmoor.

Or school, as I'm told I should call it.

And no one notices me…

But I don't care.

I don't…

Cos…people in London will notice me.

Yeah.

I'm gonna get that eighty quid.

I'm gonna get that Morrissey ticket.

And I'm gonna get out of this town.

How though?

How am I gonna find another seventy quid in a day?

I stop on the promenade.

The sea and the sky are the same shade of grey, a wall between me and the universe.

And as I look out at the universe, I wonder if that's all I'll ever get to do.

Just look at it...

When is my story gonna start then?

*

As I cycle past the Pearly Gates Retirement Home, I see that someone else's story is coming to an end...

I walk over to see if it's my old neighbour when a hand grabs mine.

It's Brian, bad-breathed Brian, in his Crocs and corduroy slacks.

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