



[Spend Spend Spend](#) at [The Lowry](#)

A Musical based on the life story of Pools winner [Viv Nicholson](#).

Directed by [Craig Revel Horwood](#) and Performed by The Watermill Theatre.

Reviewed by [Jane Turner](#) October 2010

At first glance, it seems hard to imagine what [Viv Nicholson](#) – a blonde-haired, white Northern working class woman could possibly have in common with

[Daniel Ben-Ami](#)

– a dark, Southern middle class man; and in all honesty it's probably not that much, except for one crucial trait. They both like the idea of being able to spend money!

But while Viv spent to make her *own* life more enjoyable, Daniel is an advocate of spending to improve *all* of our lives; but more about that later. For now, let's talk a little about Viv, the subject of the performance of Spend, Spend, Spend currently showing at the Lowry Theatre, Salford.

Taking heed from a pair of big spenders, instead of staying at home, turning out the lights and knitting my own socks by candlelight, in order to save a “few bob” at a time of caution and crisis, I hit the town to take in this new musical, hailed as a “triumph” in the press. And a triumph it is!

Background

“Spend Spend Spend” tells the story of Viv Nicholson, a miners daughter, scraping an existence in Castleford, until one day in 1961 she “hit the jackpot” on the football pools winning the equivalent of approximately £5million today. Some of you may not have heard of her, or be aware that the Football Pools was the popular weekly gambling fix that preceded the National Lottery, but Viv’s face and story was splashed all over the tabloids for years as she went on one enormous spending spree, revelling in every “kerching” – an anti-consumerists worst nightmare!

She was catapulted from a life of grinding hardship and obscurity as a working class factory worker with a large family to fame and fortune and a short life in the fast lane inebriated and immersed in the luxury of fun, fashion and fast cars. She became an instant media hit when she famously responded to a journalists question about “what she was going to do next” with her off-the-cuff response of “spend, spend, spend” and which came to be the maxim by which she lived the rest of her life.

Prior to her “big win”, she was a cog-in-a-wheel in a factory and her husband worked long dark hours down the pit. Between them they earned a pittance of around £14 a week, and despite their hard but regular employment, still struggled to feed four children. She says she often went without decent food and was “probably half-starved” and that household bills were regularly unpaid. On the night she won the pools, she had been fed up and “desperate for a treat” and had borrowed the money from her mum to pay for the coupon.





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