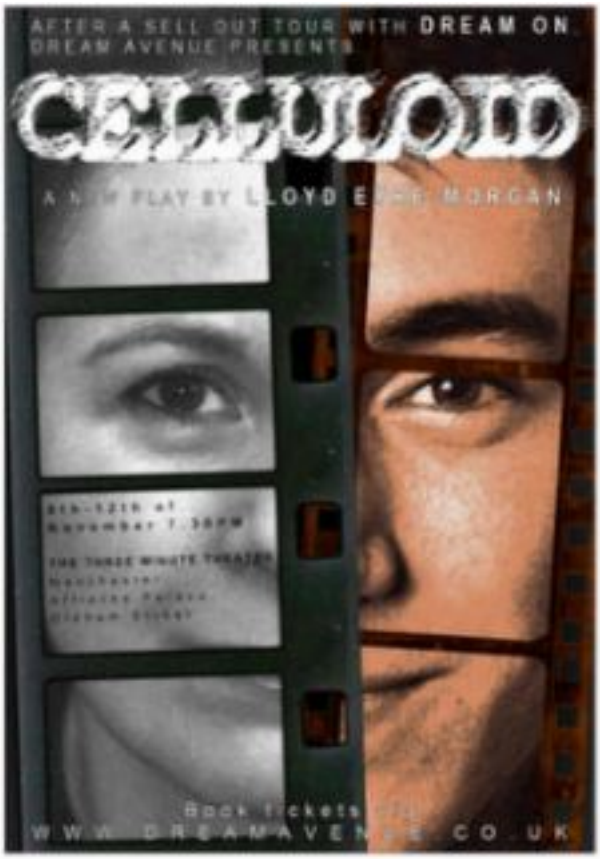

Celluloid by Lloyd Eyre-Morgan

Performed at Three Minute Theatre , by Dream Avenue Productions
Reviewed by Emma Short November 2011

Having been officially open for two months Manchester's Three Minute Theatre has emerged and stamped its mark on the ground floor of Afflecks on Oldham Street. With its intimate performance space and in house bar this comfortable venue recently hosted Dream Avenue Productions' **Celluloid** by Lloyd Eyre-Morgan.

Lloyd takes us straight into the heart of dysfunctional family life. Mum Dawn's (Janet Banford) struggle with her past is played out not only upon the counsellors couch during regression therapy but also within the family home. With the help of Josh's (played by Daniel Booth) method of escapism; a penchant for viewing life through a lens, we learn from his footage the extent and impact this situation has had over the years.

Vulnerable and unable to articulate their worries, teenagers Josh & Nicola (Sian Hill) struggle with their Mum's more recent bout of outbursts and her increasing instability. They forge relationships outside of the family unit; to escape in Nicola's case and for support whilst they try to maintain some sense of a 'normal' existence. As relationships at home become frayed suspicions about her counsellor's integrity & motivations arise (played by Ben Rigby). At the close of the first half Dawn is sectioned and social services are informed. Are Dawn's recollections true or have they been encouraged? Is the family strong enough to get through it?

With such deeply evocative content from incest to new found love, as well as anguish, vulnerability, and trust Lloyd Eyre-Morgan balances the weight of the narrative with some genuinely rib tickling moments helped by characters Christine (Zoe Iqbal) & Mikey (Joe Gosling). Each being a friend to Nicola & Josh respectively. Their naive & teenage responses to coming of age issues; sexuality, friendship & responsibility and the situations in which they find themselves bring well timed & executed scatterings of light relief.

The performances are highly commendable. Within constantly shifting relationships where loyalties and expectations are stretched the actors bring dynamic and convincing portrayals of fluctuating emotion with astounding ease. Christopher Faith's portrayal of Barnsey the villain from the estate, a small but pivotal role is an example of frightening realism.

With what sometimes seem like predictable plot devices at first the twists and lures keep the audience guessing. Cleverly encouraging doubt, enough room is afforded to allow shift and alignment within the different perspectives offered by each character. The outcome was unexpected and thoroughly satisfying. There is a touch of 'Capturing the Friedmans' or 'Death on a Staircase' in it for me, in which an account of events observed or judged from evidence is not always enough to determine the answers before the truth is eventually revealed. A psychologically captivating production.