

# Fiendishly good

## **THEATRE** **Hamlet**

**Citizens Theatre, Glasgow**  
Until October 11

**Kill Johnny Glendenning**  
**Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh**  
Until October 11;

**Citizens Theatre, Glasgow**  
October 22-November 8

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Reviewed by Mark Brown

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its brooding, premonitory aesthetic and unnerving sense of capriciousness (both aided by tremendous live music and sound) it is, by any measure, a world-class production.

If Hill scores a very palpable hit with his Hamlet, Mark Thomson, artistic director of Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum, also has one on his hands with DC Jackson's outstanding new comedy **Kill Johnny Glendenning**. Although, like his acclaimed Stewarton Trilogy, it opens in his native Ayrshire, the play is a breathtaking departure from the rest of Jackson's oeuvre.

Set in a fetid, remote farmhouse and the well-

appointed flat of tabloid hack Bruce Wilson, the play does, in some ways, for Ulster loyalism what Martin McDonagh's **The Lieutenant Of Inishmore** did for Irish republicanism. However, whereas McDonagh's **Mad Padraic** (a man who takes refuge in the INLA because he's too violent for the Provisional IRA) is entirely fictional, the biographical details of Jackson's Johnny "The Bastard" Glendenning seem remarkably similar to those of Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair (the loyalist terrorist who settled in Troon after he was exiled from Belfast by the UDA).

Jackson weaves together the mutually familiar

worlds of organised crime, paramilitarism and tabloid journalism with the skill of a darkly comic master craftsman. There are, typically of the Ayrshireman, tremendous set-piece gags (particularly about reggae band Aswad and painter Jack Vettriano). The play is beautifully structured, with great characterisations and gorgeous acting throughout. David Ireland, in particular, gives the performance of his career as the psychopathic Glendenning, as bleakly hilarious a creation as anything to come from the overactive imagination of McDonagh.