

Pre-Show Information

A Face in the Crowd



Music and lyrics by **Elvis Costello** and Book by **Sarah Ruhl**

Directed by **Kwame Kwei-Armah**

Based on an original story by **Budd Schulberg** and the Warner Bros Film

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Introduction:

This document contains detailed information about the show to describe what you should expect when attending.

This includes information about the content warnings, plot, the space, lighting and sound, audience participation, and further access information.

the information in this document was correct at the time of publishing.

More information will be available closer to the time of performance.

Please note that by discussing the content of the show, **the below information will contain key plot points and descriptions of what happens in the performance.**

If you would like to receive elements of this information but avoid these spoilers, please do not read the section at the end of this document entitled 'Show Synopsis'.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Box Office team:

E-mail: boxoffice@youngvic.org

Phone number: 020 7922 2922

Show Information:

Running Time: 2 hours 35 minutes with a 20-minute interval

Content warnings:

- Physical violence
- Alcoholism and drug use
- Discussion of racist themes
- References to animal hunting
- References to war and death
- Depiction of threat of suicide
- Sexism and sexual harassment

Production warnings:

- Live music
- Guns and loud live gunshots onstage
- Haze
- Smoking on stage of herbal cigarettes
- Blood onstage
- Actors in the audience and moments where actors climb over the audience to get to the back of the auditorium.

Please note these warnings are subject to change until **Fri 20 Sep.**

The Auditorium



A Face in the Crowd

This show will take place in our main auditorium, which our largest performance spaces.

For this performance, the space will be in an “end on” arrangement, meaning there will be seats on one side of the auditorium facing the stage.

Access to the main auditorium is via the upstairs (rows K - Q) and downstairs (rows A – J) via the main doors. Rows S & T are in the gallery. Our ushers are on hand to help you, they wear red t-shirts and jumpers with our logo.

Please arrive at the Young Vic with your ticket ready on your phone, have it printed in advance or you can collect it from box office.

Facilities:

There are toilets located on the ground and first floor at the Young Vic, via The Cut Bar. We have gender-neutral and accessible/baby changing toilets. Sanitary bins are available in all.

Building Accessibility:

All indoor venues will also be accessible with lifts & ramps and toilet provided.

Assistance Dogs:

Assistance dogs are always welcome at the Young Vic, if you are planning a visit please let us know in advance which performance you will be attending by calling our box office on **020 7922 2922** or e-mailing boxoffice@youngvic.org and we will be happy to look after your dog during the show.

Access for all:

For full information about our access measures, please visit our Access for all page, on our website here: www.youngvic.org/visit-us/access-for-all

Show Synopsis:

Loud sounds

Upsetting themes

Flashing Lights

Auditorium warnings

Strong smells

The play opens with Marcia Jeffries (**Anoushka Lucas**) addressing the audience directly. She explains she is going to be taking the audience back in time to when television was just becoming popular, and radio was still the primary form of media. Marcia is a radio producer hosting an early morning radio show which aims to host “real” people. Sitting in a radio control booth at the station, Marcia waits for callers and sings a song about how radio can chase away the loneliness before the sun comes up (UNEASY HOUR).

In scene 2, Marcia is interviewing the Sheriff (**Howard Gossington**) and some inmates of a small county jailhouse in Arkansas. The selected inmates are reluctant to perform, and one recommends Marcia talk to an inmate who has been jailed for drunken behaviour. Marcia meets Lonesome Rhodes (**Ramin Karimloo**) and convinces him to talk on her radio show. In exchange, the Sheriff agrees to let Lonesome go, on the condition the Sheriff gets to go on a date with Marcia. Lonesome performs a song about his hometown in Arkansas (A TOWN CALLED RIDDLE).

The next scene takes us back to the morning show at the radio station. The Ajax sisters are practicing their ad for a cleaning product. (HE MAKES MY WATER BOIL). Lonesome shows up unexpectedly ready to go on the radio. Marcia’s boss opposes this, arguing that only qualified people should go on the radio. Marcia’s boss reluctantly agrees, telling her there will be consequences if Lonesome is unpopular. Lonesome’s segment on the radio proves popular, attracting many listeners. He particularly appeals to women listeners as he seems to sympathise with the plight of the housewife. Marcia asks him to do a regular segment, and Lonesome is reluctant to commit, but Marcia is confident he loves the power too much to give it up. The scene finishes with a reprise of the Ajax sisters’ ad song.

The boss is very impressed with how popular Lonesome is proving. He tells Marcia he will give her a better time slot and emphasises the importance of keeping Lonesome happy. Marcia uses this to negotiate raises for her and Lonesome. Lonesome continues to act as a loose cannon on the radio, but his listeners find it charming. On a break, Marcia begins to read Lonesome some of his fan mail, and the ensemble come to life as various listeners who feel inspired by Lonesome. In response, Lonesome sings a song of comfort and commiseration which Marcia puts on the air (A FACE IN THE CROWD).

In scene 5, Marcia and Lonesome meet in a bar where the Ajax sisters are singing (DON'T PUT ME ON). **Lonesome is smoking a herbal cigarette.** They talk about how they both enjoy radio because it makes them feel less alone. Lonesome tells Marcia about his life and flirts with her. The Sheriff interrupts and rudely reminds Marcia that she owes him a date. **Lonesome and the Sheriff fight, and the Sheriff arrests Lonesome.**

Marcia pays Lonesome's bail, and scene 6 begins with him back at the radio station. Lonesome uses his segment to get revenge on the Sheriff who is running for Mayor. He tells people that the Sheriff is corrupt and has paid for a private swimming pool with dirty money. He sings a song telling people to go swim in the Sheriff's pool (WHY DON'T YOU ALL JUMP IN?). **The Sheriff arrives angry, and fires two gunshots in an attempt to get the crowd to disperse.**

In the next scene, a TV station is reporting on the fact that Lonesome managed to sway the election with his radio appearance. Marcia is delighted, and Lonesome uses it as an opportunity to flirt with her, but Marcia shuts this down. While Lonesome is on air, a talent scout named Joey De Palma (**Stavros Demetraki**) calls up, hoping to get Lonesome on a TV show in Chicago. Lonesome insists on taking the call on the air. Joey makes an offer, and Lonesome insists he couldn't leave his town. Off the air, Marcia accepts on Lonesome's behalf for double the initial offer. Lonesome seems reluctant, saying he would go to Chicago if he could marry Marcia, but she persuades him to go.

Marcia and Lonesome board a train for Chicago. When the inspector checks their tickets, they learn there has been a mistake, and they have been assigned to one bunk. Lonesome promises to be a gentleman, but Marcia doesn't trust him, saying she will wait up all night. Lonesome encourages Marcia to play a drinking game, and the two get increasingly drunk and flirtatious (RAISE A GLASS). The scene is ended by their arrival in Chicago.

At the TV station in Chicago, Joey tries to dazzle Lonesome with the production value of the TV programme, while Marcia insists on closely studying Lonesome's contract. Joey introduces the team at the TV station, including the lead writer Mel Miller (**Olly Dobson**), who Marcia knows well. Mel asks Marcia out for a drink, and Lonesome is jealous. Lonesome is prepped to go on air; he rejects reading from cards, so the TV team compromise, telling him he at least must mention their sponsor Luffler mattresses.

Lonesome's first appearance on TV seems rocky; he explains he cannot promote the mattresses as he has not used one himself. His charming honest energy is reprimanded by TV crew, and he storms off upset. Marcia follows him, and we cut to a commercial. Upon Lonesome's next segment, he brings a husband and wife who were arguing in off the street and reunites them, which is very popular. He encourages couples not to fight (THE LAST WORD). He uses this as part of the mattress ad campaign, which impresses the TV station team.

In the next scene, Mel and Marcia are sitting in the TV studios writer's room, signing autographs for Lonesome. A crowd has assembled outside calling for Lonesome. Mel tries to organise a date with Marcia, but she explains she is busy working with Lonesome. Mel calls out Lonesome's hypocrisy in holding up marriage on TV when he has been sleeping with multiple women since his arrival and asks Marcia what her relationship with Lonesome is. When Marcia explains he is making both her and Mel money and they should be grateful, Mel sings a song about how men like him always loose out to fakers like Lonesome and warns Marcia to be careful of Lonesome (NICE GUYS COME LAST).

In the next scene, Joey De Palma is interviewing actors for a new ad campaign for Vitajex energy pills. Marcia argues with Joey, insisting that Lonesome's popularity comes from his authenticity and that she should have a producer credit on the show. Upon seeing the pills and hearing the pitch, Lonesome suggests changing the colour from white to bright yellow. He comes up with a flashy campaign song pitching Vitajex as a substance that makes you more sexually attractive (VITAJEX). The campaign is massively successful and makes Lonesome rich.

The next scene shows Marcia and Lonesome celebrating their success in a bar in New York. Joey arrives with some important politicians he wants Lonesome and Marcia to meet. Among them are Senator Worthington Fuller who is running for president and wants advice for his upcoming televised speech.

Lonesome agrees to make an appearance at Fuller's campaign stop in Arkansas. The politicians leave, and Lonesome and Marcia remain talking. **Lonesome lights a cigarette.** He invites Marcia to move in with him. She is shocked and refuses, but he is unphased, asking her to dance. He continues to flirt with her, explaining he feels she is the only person who really knows her. Marcia sings a song about how she wants to be reckless and the two kiss (BURN THE PAPER DOWN TO ASH). It is implied the two spend the night together.

We are back in a TV studio in Arkansas with Lonesome and Senator Fuller, where Lonesome is judging a baton twirling competition. Behind the scenes, Mel asks Marcia questions about her relationship with Lonesome which she evades. The baton finalist Betty Lou (**Emily Florence**) performs a song along with the ensemble, and Lonesome is captivated (MISS HOT MISCHIEF). Lonesome announces Betty Lou the winner and pulls her onstage with him, to Marcia's dismay.

Interval

Act 2 begins back in New York on the *Face in the Crowd* TV set. Lonesome has brought Betty Lou to perform on his show (STAND BACK). Lonesome proposes to Betty Lou on live TV; she enthusiastically accepts, and they are married. (FACE PROPOSAL TO BETTY LOU). Lonesome pulls Marcia aside to talk to her alone, and Marcia angrily explains she never wants to see him again. Betty Lou interrupts their conversation, and Lonesome calls Joey to take her off again. Lonesome tries to make up, but Marcia insists on getting her share of the business on paper. Lonesome leaves, and Marcia sings a song about how she does not need a man in her life (NO MAN'S WOMAN).

Lonesome and Betty Lou are at a press conference in front of a large crowd, but Lonesome is clearly tense. Marcia is nowhere to be seen, and Betty Lou is upset that Lonesome has been coming home late. She exits; **Lonesome downs alcohol and Vitajex pills and seems rejuvenated.** Senator Fuller comes out onstage and the two talk to the crowd, **Lonesome's speech becoming increasingly political and racist.** Mel is concerned that Lonesome is out of his depth with the political talk and asks Joey to get Marcia back to control him. Joey waves away his concerns, pointing out that the public love Lonesome, and Mel quits, disgusted.

The crowd disperses and the action moves inside as Senator Fuller is practicing his televised speech for Lonesome. Lonesome tells him things he needs to change about himself to entertain the public and win their affection and support (WE'LL MAKE A MAN OF YOU).

The next scene opens with Mel who has come to the Jersey Shore to find Marcia who is on vacation. Mel explains that Lonesome is getting more caught up in politics and is becoming dangerous. Marcia refuses to come back, and Mel sings a song which Marcia joins persuading her to return to New York regardless of Lonesome (KICK OUT THE FOOTLIGHTS).

The next scene opens at a rally in Texas for Senator Fuller where Lonesome is addressing the crowd. **Lonesome is smoking a cigarette in this scene.** Lonesome is meant to be introducing Fuller, but he keeps talking, **his commentary getting increasingly problematic and Fuller becoming increasingly uncomfortable.** Lonesome introduces Fuller's new campaign slogan through song (BLOOD AND HOT SAUCE). **During this song, Lonesome walks on the audience's seats up to row three of the auditorium.**

Lonesome returns to the Face in the Crowd studio and finds Joey emerging from Betty Lou's dressing room. Lonesome tries to fire Joey, but Joey reveals Lonesome has signed a document making Joey President of Lonesome Rhodes Enterprises, meaning Lonesome is his employee. **Lonesome punches Joey,** and Betty Lou runs out of her dressing room half dressed. Lonesome fires her as well, to which Betty Lou protests that they are married. She insists she now sees Lonesome for who he really is, and when Lonesome threatens her, Joey steps in the way, calling out Lonesome's hypocrisy considering he has slept with other women since his marriage. Betty Lou and Joey leave, and **Lonesome acts out in anger, throwing things at the wall and demanding Marcia.**

The next scene opens with Betty Lou being mobbed by press. She sings a song suggesting she is leaving Lonesome for being unfaithful to her (THEY CALL ME MRS. LONESOME). By the end of the song, she has transitioned to performing on a competing TV show to Lonesome's.

The next scene shows Marcia and Mel watching the end of Betty Lou's performance on TV in a bar. **Mel warns Marcia about drinking too much.** Marcia has been working hard attempting to sort out the paperwork to protect her interest in the Lonesome Rhodes show. Mel encourages Marcia to end Lonesome's career as he has become too powerful, but Marcia insists that she

can still handle the situation. The phone rings; it's Lonesome, needing Marcia to talk him down. Marcia takes the call, and Mel exits, seeing Marcia will always choose Lonesome over him.

Marcia returns to the TV station where Lonesome is drinking on a commercial break. He welcomes her back, explains it's over with Betty Lou, and **begs for Marcia back, threatening suicide if she doesn't agree**. He explains he is going to go back on air with the senator and declare war, sure that the American people will stand with him. He tells Marcia his plans to have a banquet that evening with the most powerful men in America. Lonesome thanks Marcia for giving him this power, and Marcia is horrified. She tells Lonesome to go back on air and stay entirely on script.

The Ajax sisters sing (VITAJEX JINGLE), and Lonesome goes live interviewing Senator Fuller. **Discussing a hunting trip they went on together, Lonesome takes out a gun and aims it at the camera**. He announces Fuller will be the next president and he, Lonesome Rhodes, will likely be VP. We cut to a commercial break. Fuller is upset that Lonesome made this announcement so rashly. Lonesome tells Fuller to be careful or he, Lonesome, might run for president against him and win. Angry, Fuller storms off.

Off air, Lonesome laughs with extras on set, drunk on power, insulting his audience and calling them idiots, **saying he could tell them to kill each other or themselves and they would obey**. Marcia makes the choice to put Lonesome on air unbeknownst to him, and his tirade is broadcast live. As he goes to leave, phones start ringing with complaints from viewers, and we hear Joey pitching a new figure to replace Lonesome.

The TV studio disappears and Lonesome is sat in an empty penthouse at a banquet table. **Lonesome is smoking a cigarette in this scene**. Lonesome is angrily questioning why everyone has made excuses to not come, and his servant tells him to turn on the TV. There, he sees multiple news reports about his insulting speech being aired and the resulting backlash. Lonesome sings a song about how quickly the tide has turned against him (BIG STARS HAVE TUMBLED).

Mel and Marcia arrive, and Lonesome begs Marcia to help him. Marcia reveals that she betrayed Lonesome by broadcasting his conversation, explaining she did it for his own good, to destroy the persona of Lonesome Rhodes they created together. **Lonesome holds his gun up to his head, saying he wants to**

make people sorry for what they did to him. Marcia reasons with him and Lonesome gives her the gun. Marcia apologises to Lonesome for making him who he is. She explains that she can't look after him anymore, that he must stop thinking about fame and consider who he is. Marcia and Mel leave while Lonesome begs her to stay.

In a final epilogue, Marcia addresses the audience directly, explaining she regrets her actions but still admires who Lonesome was before fame when he was genuine. Marcia and the chorus sing (AMERICAN MIRROR /A FACE IN THE CROWD – FINALE) and the play ends.

If you would like any further clarification or have any questions, please do get in touch with our Box Office team.

Email: boxoffice@youngvic.org

Phone number: **020 7922 2922**

See you soon!

Welcome Team