



# Arbery Productions

thought-provoking theatre

## DON'T SHOOT THE ACTOR

PRESS RELEASE

John Vernon appears in *Californian Lives*

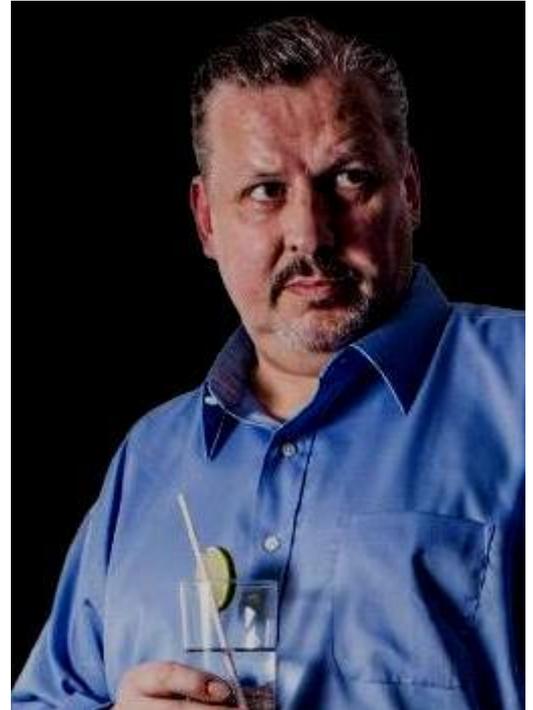
"John Vernon tells his tale with wit and a sense of joy"  
(*Broadway World*)

"John Vernon is superb"  
(*Beige*)

"John Vernon held the audience captivated throughout his  
performance"  
(*The Gay UK*)

"John Vernon is excellent"  
(*playstosee.com*)

"John Vernon is a brilliant actor"  
(*One Stop Arts*)



Not many actors have ever wondered if someone in the audience is going to draw a gun and shoot the cast on stage. One exception is John Vernon, who, as a young man in the 1980s, was appearing with John Bindon at the King's Head in Islington, in *QRs and AIs Clearly State*.

Bindon had a colourful life away from the stage, including drug use, gangland connections, intimacy with Princess Margaret and physical attributes that cannot be mentioned in a family-friendly newspaper. "We had heard some hard men were looking for him," John says, "One night he said to us all in the dressing room, 'If someone stands up in the audience and points a gun at the stage, don't worry; just hit the deck. It's me he's after'."

Gunfire never erupted, and earlier this year John returned to the King's Head. This time alone on stage, in *Ben and Joe's*, one of three monologues in *Californian Lives*. "It's an unusual piece, about a middle-aged man reminiscing about the bar he used to frequent in the San Fernando Valley. He wants to be accepted by those around him, but he's never sure if he is." It's not just one man that audiences see; in the course of the play, John brings many other characters to life.

Now *Californian Lives* is transferring to the OSO Arts Centre in Barnes and another audience has a chance to see this critically acclaimed production. "It feels good to be back on stage again," he says, after an absence of almost 20

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years. For a long time he appeared regularly on television; you might have seen him in *Call the Midwife*, *East Enders*, *Heartbeat*, *The Bill*, *Doctors*. More recently he has been worked mostly in voiceovers for documentaries and dubbing for foreign soap operas and Japanese anime. At one time, if you were a fan of stand-up comedy, you could have caught his act at the Tunnel Club or Hackney Cabaret.

So why return to theatre? "Not for the money," he says. "It's more for the opportunity to exercise some acting muscles that have been dormant for too long." To make things harder, he's playing against type. "My career changed back in 1997 when I was glassed in a pub - I had over eighty stitches in my face and now have a permanently wonky smile and an occasional twitch in my left eye. For a time I even had a livid scar running down my cheek which was helped me get cast as villains and viking types rather than the 'decent young man' roles I had had before."

He needn't worry. The critics were universal in praising his performance. More importantly, perhaps, Vernon feels that he has "got" the various characters he portrays, and relishes the opportunity to bring them back to life. London audiences will have another opportunity to see this thoughtful and sensitive performance for one week in the middle of September.

*Californian Lives* is written by award-winning playwright Martin Foreman and features Robin Holden in *Los Feliz*, John Vernon in *Ben and Joe's* and Carolyn Lyster in *Sunset*. Underlying each story are the common themes of intimacy and trust: how well do we know those who are closest to us? The six-week run opens on 21st April.

***Californian Lives* at the OSO Arts Centre, 49 Station Road, London SW13 0LF**

7.30pm, Tuesday 17 – Saturday 21 September 2013

Press Night: Wednesday 18 September

Tickets £12 (£10 concessions)

online: [www.osoarts.org.uk](http://www.osoarts.org.uk)

box office: 020 8876 9885

[californianlives.co.uk](http://californianlives.co.uk)

*pictures:* [californianlives.co.uk/press.htm](http://californianlives.co.uk/press.htm)

*trailer:* [youtu.be/hGUDJBPwd9E](http://youtu.be/hGUDJBPwd9E)

*Profiles of the other actors (Robin Holden and Carolyn Lyster), director (Emma King-Farlow) and writer (Martin Foreman) also available.*

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