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# A First Class Last Post

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The Last Post by Just The Lads

*Just The Lads*

## The Last Post by Just The Lads

Rating: ★★★★★

190a Rathmines Road Lower boasts something of a chequered past. Currently home to MART, rapidly becoming the one stop shop for all things artistic, it once served as a fire station for a time, and back in the 1960's was the Rathmines Return Letter Section for the then Department of Post and Telegraphs. It's during this last period that Just The Lads, *The Last Post*, concerns itself in a warm and wonderful, immersive experience that explores all things postal.

Making a welcome return since first being performed at the 2013 Fringe, *The Last Post* takes its new recruits on a whirlwind tour of the Return Letter Section, as well as the wider postal service. Whisked inside, having signed the Official Secrets Act, audiences are treated to the mayhem of sorting, the musicality of scanning and to moments spent with their favourite Granny Smith. Along the way there's high energy, much hilarity and some musical interludes, including the sublime song of the envelope and a rousing rendition of Silent Night. And there's always plenty of biscuits to go

around. By the time the energised recruits are ready to set off on their own postal route, they leave to face the dogs at large uplifted and full of joy.

While energy and joy abound, along with some incredibly inventive moments, not everything works as well as it should. Thematically, the decision to focus on the Return Letter Section, also known as the Dead Letter Section, isolated *The Last Post's* concerns to the site specific location. Not a problem in itself, but its attempts to negotiate the larger history, experience and politics of postal workers, such as mention of the baton charges during the strikes of the late 1970's and an incident highlighting gender politics, risked being tokenistic attempts to cover all bases. Indeed much concerning the postal service was never addressed at all, suggesting that the research hadn't gone deep enough. Theatrically, some sections, such as the recorded voices and the mysterious figure in the doorway, didn't work as well and sapped energy and pace at times, even if they did offer a forced sense of cohesion to the overall production.

But *The Last Post* is much more than its individual parts and if not everything worked, Just The Lads are to be applauded for taking risks. Applauded too, for some wonderful performances. John Doran, Joan Somers Donnelly, Aoife Leonard, Patrick Culhane as the wildly entertaining postal workers were hilariously engaging, accompanied by Philip Brennan as the mysterious figure in the doorway. Set Design by Shannon O'Brien was a visual spectacle and a master class in utilising the strengths and limitations of a multi-site, performance space to create something truly remarkable. Direction, by Laidain Kaminska and Darren Sinnott, crafted some excellent and truly memorable moments, harnessing the energy of the performers, and the audience, to create a joyous night of theatre.

*The Last Post* is a poignant, hilarious and highly theatrical love letter to the postal service, bursting with energy and inventiveness, by one of Ireland's most original, emerging theatre companies. Wrap up well. It's cold in the Return Letter Section. But it's well worth the visit.

*The Last Post*, by Just The Lads runs at The Mart Gallery, (The Old Fire Station) Rathmines Road Lower until November 29th  
Doors open at 7:30PM  
Ticket Prices: €9.00 - €15.00



**Chris O'Rourke**  
Tulsa Theater Examiner

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