

## Talk About The Passion

### Middlesbrough Theatre

THERE can be no doubt that the horrific rape and murder of a child is a difficult and demanding subject to explore, especially as a piece of theatre.

*Talk About The Passion*, by Yarm-based playwright, Graham Farrow, is a compelling, thought-provoking drama which bravely confronts society's morbid fascination with such terrible crimes.

It inspires much uncomfortable shifting in seats as it attacks our duplicity in condemning the inhumanity of child killers, while at the same time thirsting for information about them and their crimes.

The plot throws up obvious echoes of the recent controversy over publication of Mary Bell's story. The father of a child who was brutally murdered goes after the woman who published the killer's autobiography.

The play works best as an intelligent exploration of the devastating psychological effect which constant publicity can have on a victim's loved ones.

On another level, it is a tense thriller with the obligatory twist in the tale.

Mark Wharton gives a believ-

able, passionate performance in a fine portrayal of a man driven to the edge of madness by the horror of his son's murder.

As the central character points out, the victims of crime are denied the platform to speak which is afforded criminals through books about them.

His pain is compounded by guilt, as he faces accusations that he should have taken greater care of the child.

He also has to face the realisation that his son's death has become a source of literary entertainment, recalling watching boys in a bookshop read out gruesome details of the murder to each other.

Emma Swinn, as the publisher, produces an effective depiction of a woman who descends from cool arrogance when the father first appears at her office, to fear and desperation as his threats become ever more savage and real.

The script includes strong language, including shocking details of the little boy's suffering, which adds to the power of the one-hour play.

It is a dark, uncomfortable drama which provides plenty of food for thought. P P