



HIGH PLAINS (A WESTERN MYTH)

Drifting through the secrets of the past ●●●●●

He's had a few drinks, young drifter Jake explains to us at the start of Brian Watkins's quietly gripping solo play – but he needs them to recount what he's about to tell. What begins as bar room recollections about growing up in the prairies of Colorado – why he lives in a town that's an acronym, how he found his first love – soon moves into darker territory as Jake picks apart his fractured relationship with his unstable brother. A seemingly insignificant prank has profound consequences – and an unsettling retribution.

Watkins's writing manages to be lucid and disorientating, an ideal combination in a play that hints at the paranormal yet remains enigmatic. His evocation of the brutal yet devoted brotherly relationship is compelling, and his steady control of growing tension is remarkably effective.

Ben Newman as Jake is the show's real draw: he's a thoroughly convincing study in uncertainty and guilt, giving a high-definition performance that brings his every stumbling thought to the fore. It's a slight tale in some ways, but the sheer passion of Newman's delivery makes its mysterious theme unforgettable. (David Kettle)

■ *Underbelly, Cowgate, 0844 545 8252, until 25 Aug (not 12), £9–£11 (£8–£10).*