He is such a rich creation that you feel that the author himself has been seduced by him. Defending the fact that 15-year-old kids attend his druggy rave-ups, Johnny declares "half of them are safer here than they are at home". Since the only representatives of supposed normality we see are an abusive stepfather, a morris-dancing publican and a pair of council officials, the dice are heavily loaded in Johnny's favour.  
**Michael Billington, review of *Jerusalem*, *Guardian*, 16 July 2009**

*Jerusalem* then, is real. The plasterer, the DJ, the weekend drug dealer, the ex-squaddie looking to work abroad, the bored slaughterman - are mainstream figures in the real English workforce and down the real English pub: two million ecstasy tablets are taken in Britain every week; one in eight young people are not in work, education or training; 15% of all households claim in-work benefits. Also real is the effing and blinding which seems to have uniformly discomforted the mainstream theatre critics: the swear-word count in *Jerusalem* is actually low compared to reality, and the swearing is generally genial, compared to reality where it is often aggressive, racist and violent. This, then, is the real English spoken by something close to the majority of real people: it's an indictment of the state of theatre […] that the language of *Jerusalem* is seems so challenging to theatregoers and critics alike. For this alone Jerusalem will go down as one of the great plays of the decade.  
**Paul Mason, ‘Butterworth’s *Jerusalem*: The Full English’, 18 December 2009, www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/paulmason**

*Jerusalem* deals with ideas that are definitely inflaming me at the moment. The profit motive of corporations, the way the landscape is being made ever blander – these things are a horror to me. We’re facing difficult questions: how can the individual survive within these 'communities’ that are being worked into our society? Can you be an individual when you’re on a motorway or in a Tesco store? The play is about how young people get caged into new estates with the prospects of soulless, nature-less working lives ahead of them. Johnny Byron is a useful way out for those young people but he’s also got a wild, reckless side to him – some audiences might well be horrified by him.  
**Mark Rylance, quoted in Dominic Cavendish, ‘Mark Rylance interview for Jez Butterworth's *Jerusalem* at the Royal Court’, *Daily Telegraph*, 14 July 2009.**

Johnny has been seen as anti-hero rather than hero. A notorious trouble-maker, foul-mouthed and dirty, who pays no rates, has turned a beautiful copse into a tip, been banned from every pub in the area, fathered a son he rarely sees and, worst of all, attracts the youth of the neighbourhood with drugs, drink and loud all-night parties; he seems to represent the worst, not the best of English life. However, he personifies the necessary challenge to a society that has lost its vision and become a bland, anaemic, soulless place with nothing to offer but material goods in exchange for monotonous, uninspiring jobs. Johnny 'Rooster' Byron is a force of nature, a myth-weaver, a Romany hobgoblin, and he stands for whatever in us rebels against the pressures to conform to a system established by leaders who see us as little more than units of productivity.

**Diane Crimp, ‘Carnival and Comedy: Subversion in *Jerusalem*’, *emagazine*, No. 63, February 2013.**