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Dystopian love in a problematic 'Pink Milk'

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Pink Milk by Lauren-Shannon Jones directed by Nora Kelly Lester
At Craig

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Rating: ★★★★★

"Pink Milk" is a tale of twos. Two women, two men, two worlds and two artists. Produced by [the New Theatre](#) as part of their artists in residence programme, an award jointly shared by "Pink Milk's" writer, Lauren-Shannon Jones and its director, Nora Kelly Lester, this tale of dystopian love is an interweaving of two separate tales. Not that it's easy to tell at times. One concerns an agoraphobic woman, Anna Matthews, a somewhat dreary and world weary woman living in a top floor, high rise apartment. Her life revolves around receiving items of clothes delivered by a gaming postman with a goat's head, while she tries broadcast her business on the net. "Pink Milk's" other tale concerns itself with an alternate world where media goddess, Aisa Morta, monopolises every channel, rendering society ineffectual by addicting them to entertainment. In both stories the arrival of the male could potentially spell their doom. Striving to be an innovative

piece of theatre exploring love and humanity in a dystopian digital landscape, "Pink Milk" sees women steeped in fear of the beast like male in a world where animal and automaton collide. On occasion a synergy is achieved and a crackle of energy surges through "Pink Milk" promising great things. But unfortunately not enough, and not often enough, to make it truly ignite.

The heart of the problem lies with Lauren-Shannon Jones problematic script. Structurally "Pink Milk" has several issues. What begins as a tale about one woman's isolation flips midway from a solo to a duet, with a second, male driven story being inserted uneasily into proceedings late in the day. Littered with enough tropes and references to fill a mid-sized novel, "Pink Milk" loses much of its own originality by getting lost in the identities of other works, seeming to serve its Greek and cinematic sci-fi masters rather than the other way around. Even the name Aisa Morta appears to owe much to Socionic's song of the same name as to its Greek and Roman roots. Matrix, Wall-E, most of the sci-fi classics are in there, with Blade Runner being written particularly large, right down to Deckard in his raincoat with his futuristic gun pointed at the beautiful, female automaton. Thematically, many of "Pink Milk's" themes are underdeveloped, feeling like afterthoughts. There's a reference to sex work but in terms of representation it's neither sexy, gritty, disturbing nor sexual. It's barely there and barely explored. The collective effect is to make "Pink Milk" appear clichéd, clean and clever, steeped in abstraction and cold detachment, rather than something that beats with a pulse. By the time its confused ending arrives, after many false endings, it's difficult to know where you are exactly or to want to care very much. Which is a pity, for in key moments, such as the undressing scene, Lauren-Shannon Jones shows what could have been if only she had allowed herself to go there.

If Lauren-Shannon Jones' script is not all it might have been, director Nora Kelly Lester shows she has matured in leaps and bounds since their last collaboration, "Olympia." With the assistance of an excellently realised, clinically cold set design by Janna Kemperman, along with a pitch perfect lighting design by Cathy O'Carroll and a hypnotic, if not particularly innovative soundscape by Dylan Tonge Jones, Kelly Lester crafts texture and depth in a visually impressive production. Using tightly observed lighting and sound cues, along with projections and images, Kelly Lester's multimedia and multi-disciplinary approach yields dividends. Performatively, Kelly Lester extracts some strong moments from both Megan O'Flynn and Shane Robinson, particularly during their more human interactions. Staging showed some strong, and generally successful choices, though at times the long monologues did resemble a TED Talks sci-fi special.

"Pink Milk" is remarkably life like at times, but is not really attached to anything in the real world. Yet it doesn't go far enough in crafting an alternate world of sufficient interest or credibility either. Yet there's an undercurrent running through it, something intensely interesting, passionate and personal bubbling beneath the surface. But it feels reigned in, as if distracting itself in the word play and tropes rather than facing itself squarely head on. Yet "Pink Milk" is also a testament to the New Theatre as a place where artists can explore, play, fail again and fail better. Not that "Pink Milk" is a failure by any means. At its best "Pink Milk" is visually impressive, deftly directed and hints of greater things to come for both Lauren-Shannon Jones and Nora Kelly Lester.

"Pink Milk" by Lauren-Shannon Jones, directed by Nora Kelly Lester runs at The New Theatre until

July 9th

Show begins at 7.30 p.m.

Tickets are €16.00 or €12.50 concession

For further information, visit [The New Theatre](#)



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