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Dispatches from The Fringe - Elevator is fast, flashy and fabulous

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Elevator by THISISPOPBABY
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Rating: ★★★★★

In a house in a forest, somewhere in the middle of nowhere important, a party is taking place. Like *Godot*, it's host has disappeared and his guests, seven bright, young yuppies, take part in a cocaine and sex fuelled waiting game. These darlings of decadence are bored, and are bored of being bored. They can have anything they want and they want more. What of? Just more.

In *Elevator*, the latest production from multi-award winning THISISPOPBABY, writer Phillip McMahon explores wealth and its consequences in a theatrical orgy of cultural codes and references. Here Fitzgerald meets Kafka meets Beckett meets Baudrillard meets absurdism meets expressionism meets [musical theatre](#) meets: the list goes on. *Elevator* is style with more than a smattering of substance, as beautiful people snort and sniff their way through a truck load of questions without any real interest or urgency in the answers. Here cities are brand names to be

experienced and consumed like lovers, then disposed of as soon as they become boring as you journey onto the next in a music video lifestyle. Why? Why not.

Wayne Jordan's minimalist set design highlighted the cold, almost clinical cynicism of the characters and the world they inhabit and create. An elongated, L-shaped white sofa with large white ottoman set on a shiny, black floor, reinforced the plastic artificiality of these characters and their lives. To either side of the playing area microphone stands and lighting rigs stood next to where cast members sometimes sat. From here performers often created a heightened focus on, or gave subtle commentary to, the primary action unfolding in the playing area. Jordan's minimalism also encouraged attention on some outstanding performances by a highly accomplished ensemble. Aoibhinn McGinnity as the sultry Eve, Cathy White as the enigmatic house keeper Mrs Schiller, Megan Riordan as the platinum blonded Julia and Nicola Lewis as the ice bitch Natalie where breathtakingly good. Ciarán O'Brien as the less than cool Jonathan, Conor Madden as the alpha male Edward and Muiris Crowley as the exhibitionist Tristan rounded out a near perfect cast.

Elevator pushes the boundaries of musical theatre and takes many risks, demanding much of its audience in the process. While many of these risks pay off, a few are less successful. Alma Kelliher's soundtrack, with lyrics by Phillip McMahon, featured a strong dose of 80's synthpop and post punk revivalism. Both lyrically and musically the material was not as strong as it might have been. McMahon's dialogue also felt a little strained at times, like a pencil pared to too fine a point, unable to sustain the pressure behind it.

Like the shiny, empty people it portrays, you really don't care for the characters, their lives, their stories or concerns. All that mattered was the artifice unfolding in front of you. To this end Wayne Jordan's direction was flawless in its execution, keeping the action moving briskly along and displaying meticulous attention to detail. From the slant of an arm to the position of a glance, nothing was ever left to chance. Movement was exquisitely choreographed and the resulting orgy of images, from cocaine clouds to human bodies gyrating in animal masks, gave testament to an artistic vision that, if not always easy to comprehend, was always visually stunning.

Elevator may not be the high octane explosion it aspired to be, but it is a stunning, theatrical feast attempting a much needed questioning of a First World society where the social no longer exists.

Elevator runs at The Project Arts Centre – Space Upstairs until Sat 22nd, excluding Wednesdays. Doors open at 8.00 p.m. Tickets are €16.00.



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