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# Dispatches from The Fringe - Steve Jobs, the message and the messenger

August 23, 2012

9:03 AM MST



The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs by Mike Daisey  
Mike Daisey

## The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs by Mike Daisey

Rating: ★★★★★

The title of Mike Daisey's controversial one man play, *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*, is a little disingenuous. Yes, Steve Jobs is in there, but it's not really about him. It's really about corporate responsibility.

In a place called Chengdu in China a corporation called Foxconn are responsible for making fifty percent of all electrical equipment in the world, including much of the equipment for Apple. Most of their manufacturing takes place by hand because they can legally use 12 year old children, potentially 12 hours a day, working for appalling wages and under horrendous conditions. Corporate profitability at the expense of people is the real concern at the heart of *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*, which paints a pretty damning portrait of employment practices that literally drive some people to their deaths. And all to ensure that the rest of us can enjoy the latest fashionable gadget we didn't know we had to have.

In *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*, Grant O'Rourke plays Daisey, a technology loving, uber-geek with a passion for Apple equipment. Following the chance discovery on an iPhone of four

photos from inside the secretive Apple factory, Daisey sets out on a Michael Moore like mission to uncover the story behind Apple's manufacturing processes. His investigative journey to Chengdu with his Chinese translator forms the central narrative of the play, with a secondary story running alongside. That secondary narrative recounts Steve Jobs' life and the founding of Apple and serves to ask the question: who knew?

*The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs* has a strong performance by Grant O'Rourke but, theatrically or imaginatively, there's little else going on. Set is minimal, music is minimal, lighting is minimal. Daisey's script is tight and well written, for the most part, however the sloppy transitions between its two interwoven stories could have been handled better. In the end it's the potency of its message which gives *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs* its power to be a compelling piece of [theatre](#).

Daisey is no stranger to being disingenuous. His original version of *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs* had to be edited following the discovery that some of what Daisey purported to be true was actually fabricated. It's crucial to know this going in as expectations need to be managed. For Daisey is aiming to plant a mind virus in you by hitting your moral and emotional core.

*If you control the metaphor though which we see the world, you control the world itself*, Daisey declares. *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs* aims to provide a new metaphor through which we view the world. Yet how you view the messenger can influence the strength of his metaphor and the ability of his mind virus to take hold. Daisey is undoubtedly a flawed messenger, but his message is sound and the facts he has sincerely represented do demand our attention and response.

*The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs* plays daily at The Gilded Balloon Teviot until August 27th. Doors open at 2.15 p.m. Tickets are £10.00



**Chris O'Rourke**  
Tulsa Theater Examiner

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