

## Fringe review: The Devil Made Me Do

An actress confronts her demons in this debut play by a new amateur theatre company adding a fresh twist to SA's theatrical scene. ★★½



An ageing performer is trying to get out of a contract with the devil, and her soul sits in a small box on a simple table on the minimalist stage. A digital clock mounted behind a black curtain at the back of the stage ticks down. She has forty minutes to unlock her suppressed memories and free herself.

But the story switches to another performer – an intermission dancer with maybe a bit of talent but who few paying customers will ever even see. Until one day she receives a visit from producer/director Robert Melva. She can have a movie contract as long as she changes her name to Nora Hudson, loses weight and gains energy by taking dangerous pills, and by being very friendly with Melva at regular 4pm bookings.

Such is her contract with a slightly different kind of devil. The connection between the two performers after eight years of filmmaking becomes clear as this short play progresses, but the constant is that there is no love in this world for either actor. The women who play the two performer/actors began to ease into their parts as the 50 minutes of action develops, but are a bit stiff at times.

It is the overbearing style of Melva which is given a central place in the action. His character is not allowed to develop beyond his role as the bully guided only by self-interest. He shouts a great deal – too much. He verges on screaming as he repeats to his star “Just do it right”.

The actor has some presence but is often at the back of the stage and looking downwards and away from the audience. Some development of this character would be a key to fleshing out the whole performance.

This is the debut production of Write Me Originals, a team of young actors headed by Carli Stasinopoulos, promising to bring fresh contemporary scripts to our stages. Described as a reflection on the lack of women's rights in the 1950s, this one confronts the problems of women in the world of Hollywood and no doubt in other places, too. There is optimism at the end as we see it is possible to kill our demons.

There is some work ahead for this young amateur company, but they are to be commended for adding a new twist to our theatrical scene.

*Robert Horne - Indaily*