

Fringe review: Grief Lightning

Mary Angley is supreme in this work of surreal fan fiction, conspiracy theories, biting satire and powerpoint. ★★★★★ ½

Written by [Kylie Maslen](#) Indaily



Mary Angley's solo performance is captivating in *Grief Lightning*

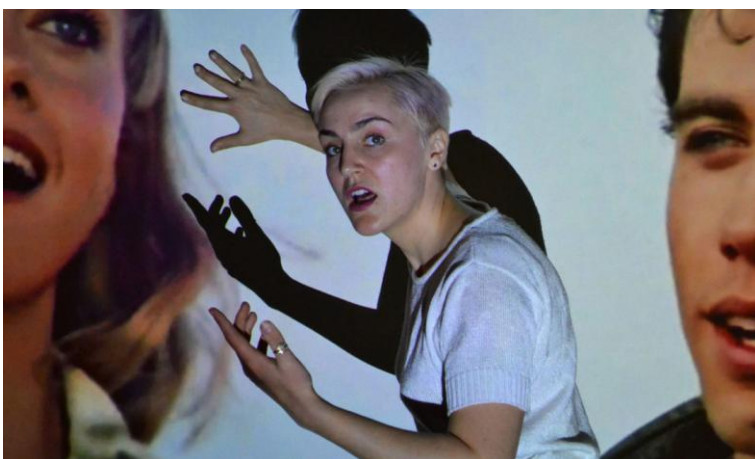
What if *Grease* wasn't all that it appeared to viewers for all these years? What if Sandy *really* – not nearly – drowned in the opening scene, and what plays out for the rest of the film is a summer loving coma fantasy?

In theatre-maker Mary Angley's remarkably sharp-witted comic script, anything is possible. She plays the role of an academic presenting a paper, with the audience her learned peers, there to pass judgement. (Don't fear: there is no audience participation or final vote. Our esteemed lecturer wouldn't think that lowly of us to doubt her.)

Through 13 scenes and 78 slides, the audience is walked through plot holes – how would Danny know Sandy would end up at Rydell High instead of flying home to Sydney tomorrow as planned? – quotes from fan theories on Reddit and research presented authoritatively in graphs.

Angley's solo performance is captivating. On opening night she barely skips a beat; despite the venue carrying some slight sight issues, no one breaks their gaze for the full 60 minutes. With a few simple props used to full effect, it is a performance equally assured and restrained.

Sharing the stage as both set and a character of itself is a powerpoint presentation that Angley controls with pinpoint precision. Enough vision is used from *Grease* to take previous viewers of the film on a nostalgic trip, while also ensuring anyone not familiar with the source material will feel included.



Grief Lightning incorporates vision from *Grease*.

A hero of the work is the soundtrack by Adelaide composer Dan Thorpe. His samples from the film blend with original composition into a searing,

glitching force, bringing both light and darkness to the stage. As Angley performs with the projection purposefully washing over her face, Thorpe's musical contribution backs her every move, holding her safely as the theories descend.

With an academic theatrical background as well as performances at previous Adelaide Fringes with Symposium Productions and Raw Shakespeare, Angley's *Grief Lightning* ascends beyond a typical Fringe comedy. Her theatrical skill combines with satire savage to provide commentary on fandom, online culture and gender within a tight hour. Reminiscent of Zöe Coombs Marr and Hannah Gadsby, *Grief Lightning* announces Angley as an artist to watch.

[*Grief Lightning*](#) plays at Fokus Creatives until February 28, then the Studio at Bakehouse Theatre from March 8-13.