

Review: Ego Jacket at Bakehouse

By Lisa Lanzi Theatre Travels

An assortment of songs, a collection of jackets, a heartfelt story and a young Australian performer whose honesty and rawness touches many. It matters not if you are straight, queer, trans, large, small, non-binary, still discovering, recovering or still hurting - there are moments in this cabaret performance that anyone can relate to.

Appearing on BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs in 2015, Kylie Minogue revealed that "Michael Hutchence took her blinkers off and taught her how to put on an 'ego jacket' to face the world". This is where Phillip Lee Curtis has aptly purloined the title for his cabaret / concert for the Adelaide Fringe after a season at Melbourne's *Midsumma Festival* in 2018.

Ego Jacket is entirely Phillip's work – including script, artwork / audio-visuals and his set list of pop and rock songs which he sings accompanied by backing tracks. Some of the songs are by INXS, Tina Arena, Alanis Morissette and Nick Cave. *Where The Wild Roses Grow* by the latter is a particularly good rendition in this performance where Phillip channels both Cave and Minogue's parts. Another poignant moment is his version of Alanis Morissette's *That I Would Be Good*.

There are momentous revelations in the final part of the performance that are delivered with grace and courage and this song has wonderful resonance in the face of those truths. The delivery of these moments was accomplished in stillness and are all the more powerful for that.

The vocals are mostly great with just occasional wavering pitch but it is a herculean task Phillip has set himself with song choice and sheer number of songs and range. Additionally, accompaniment via backing tracks is tricky at the best of times and for a solo singer requires tremendous energy to deliver your best. Phillip's focus and connection to the audience was excellent and I can only imagine the hours of rehearsal he put in. I did feel the vocals were lost in the mix during some songs but overall the technical aspects were faultless.

The entire cabaret is back-lit by visuals on screen with some audio interaction at the start. Phillip studied graphic design and has prepared the artwork for projection to complement each song and monologue to good effect.

My directorial thoughts did run away somewhat... I imagined how the performance could be if the AV took over the entire back wall (instead of a small drop-down screen), if there was live band accompaniment instead of recorded backing and a more cabaret-like setting so that the audience was truly in amongst it. Of course, this all takes dollars and few independent artists can afford to stretch to such luxuries.

It is easy to forget that FRINGE takes place in many venues across Adelaide and The Bakehouse is an awesome venue with a plethora of Fringe acts this year. I recommend *Ego Jacket* - Phillip Lee Curtis is a performer to watch and deserves an audience to hear and understand his personal yet universal story.

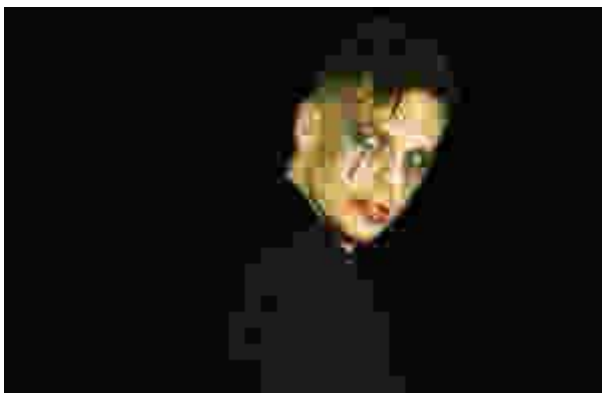


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