

Glam Adelaide Review: **Stop Start**



Presented by Dawson Nichols
Reviewed 21 February 2015

So much happens during the course of a lifetime but what about when we don't want to live (or relive it)?

So many of us yearn to 'stop what we are and start something new' without any effort. Can this be an explanation for the popularity of stimulants through the ages?

Seattle's Dawson Nichols returns to Adelaide with **Stop Start** – a new show for this year's Fringe. Audiences familiar with his work (he brought **I Might Be Edgar Allan Poe** and **Virtual Solitaire** here in 2014) are well aware of his gripping solo performances and skill for weaving multiple characters through complex storylines. The hallucinogenic beauty of **Stop Start** delivers again.

Is it possible Thanatos – the death drive – is pushing us, speeding us to the end of our existence faster? Could this be the reason we strive for transcendence through substances or experiences that propel us out of ourselves and obliterate the anxiety of the present?

Caffeine, cocaine, ancient Aztec cacao elixir – since the dawn of time humans have made use of stimulants to reach an alternate reality. **Stop Start** begins in an embalming room and swims through the boyhood memories of Orion, his father Harmond and uncle Chaz, one or all of whom may be dead.

As their recollections collide and contradict, they bleed into warped history lessons where shrewd 9th Century pilgrims drinking goat milk lattes and plot the history of caffeine's global dominance. A balloon artiste at a convention discovers the horrors of entertaining executive offspring while a homunculus rises from the theobromine-laden buffet, proving there is such a thing as too much chocolate.

Pedophile or polar bear...spectres rise and fall and we're never 100% certain where the dream-like narrative is headed next. Are these ancient myths or memories? A tripped-out swim in an underground lap pool later resurfaces via the story of Quetzalcoatl's quest for the drink of the gods. The message is clear. We must embrace the illusion to get to the other side.

Stop Start is a journey to the bowels of the earth and the outer realms of consciousness, and another delicious and disturbing experience from a master playwright and performer. If you're looking for an escape from the mainstream Fringe offerings, this is it.

Reviewed by Jo Vabolis