

The Dead Devils Of Cockle Creek

Scenestr. review by Tim Byrnes, 15 February 2018



Image © Dylan Evans

Opening on a pitch black stage, La Boite's Roundhouse Theatre fills with voices shouting and echoing over one another.

The voices are recognisable, belonging to the likes of Pauline Hanson and President Donald Trump. They grow and echo more over dissonant music, almost becoming white noise, before cutting to silence. It's a perfect encapsulation of the currently heated political climate, where instead of making a point many strive to be the loudest voice in the room. Writer Kathryn Marquet's new play 'The Dead Devils Of Cockle Creek' brings all of those voices together in the one room, devolving into thrilling chaos.



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The action all takes place within the shack, with its roof covering the stage. It's dark, dank and spare, fitting with the play's mood. Dr George Templeton (Emily Weir) is a zoologist working in the isolated wilds of south-western Tasmania, trying to save Tasmanian Devils. She shares a shack with the New Zealand ranger and chicken nugget obsessive Harris Robb (Julian Curtis). It's the last place on earth anyone would expect to have visitors, but when they intrude on the shack everyone's worst traits come to the fore.

The play twists and turns in surprising ways, sometimes baffling while others shocking. Genuine gasps elicit from the audience when each layer of mystery is pulled back to reveal another truth. One in particular was enough to make the audience splutter in disbelief, yet like many fake news items it's almost so strange it has to be true. That Kathryn's writing can cause such strong reactions shows a lot of talent.



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At first the characters appear to be caricatures of polarising types you'll encounter on social media: centrists, trolls, leftists, and far-right. Their sanctimony can be unbearable, but comes to life when showing they're capable of doing terrible things.

Under Ian Lawson's direction, the cast completely embody their respective characters, giving them more dimensions than the initial flat stereotypes. They all shock in their own ways, while also drawing laughs with blackly comic lines, including the grossest Destiny's Child pun ever heard. After thrashing their bodies through confronting violence, it's a shock to see them all smiling for their curtain call.

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