

From NOLA Defender

It's My Penis, I'll Cry if I Want To

Despite a couple jitters, sole actor and director Jamie Black gives a star-studded performance all by himself in *It's My Penis, I'll Cry If I Want To*. Diving head first into a range of characters, Black successfully takes on the idea of gender as a spectrum and portrays the egregious elements of binary expectations. Ultimately, the play confronts human frailty and forces audience members to ask themselves when they've fallen victim to societal expectations.

Anyone who's ever taken a college course would have the same fears upon entering the play, which promotes itself as a discussion of "men and women who don't necessarily behave the way society says they should." The description conjures up images of tired tropes, and no one wants to see a play about men guzzling beer in front of a television as their women tend house and exchange beauty secrets. The controversial aspects of gender and sexuality are no longer so black and white.

Black's play begins with these trite representations, but only to acknowledge that they no longer exist as ideals. The transgendered director and performer uses the rest of his time on stage to delve into the more insidious forms of gender policing that persist into the 21st century.

First, viewers get some insights into the more nuanced elements of sexism and trans bias. Keeping the performance light and staying true to his characters, Black demonstrates that in one sense, gender nonconformists are more tied to stereotypes than people whose anatomies correspond to their assigned genders.

It's not all about being trans. The crux of the play deals with human insecurities. Black lets the viewer into the life of a straight married couple. The husband has a conversation with a friend about his wife's decision to divorce him.

The viewer sympathizes with both sides of the miscommunication—at first, the husband's tales of being repeatedly called a "Bitch Ass," for his inability to pay all the rent paint his wife as a monster. The issue becomes murkier once Black transitions into the wife's character, unveiling a vulnerability that translates as venom. There is something universal in the couple's frustration, the disconnect that breaks friendships, poisons marriages, and breeds resentment.

In terms of set, Black does a lot with a little. A couple of chairs and a table is all he needs for his subject matter, which depends entirely on his acting ability. The actor depends on the audience's

imagination for a lot of the performance, but he does his part to keep viewers' attention with convincing miming and realistic conversations. *See It's My Penis at the Shadowbox Theatre (2400 St. Claude Ave.) Nov. 16 at 11pm, Nov. 17 at 7pm, and Nov. 18 at 9pm. -M.D. Dupuy*

http://www.stltoday.com/jamie-black/image_49559e8d-c835-57fe-9056-984a8e11d644.html

http://www.stltoday.com/entertainment/arts-and-theatre/culture-club/st-lou-fringe-wraps-up-its-fifth-year/article_e5fef39c-14ca-56cd-9b89-715af8450242.html

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