



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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SEX, LIES & BETRAYAL - MEMOIRS OF A HOLLYWOOD STAR

JTM Productions

Holden Street Theatres

Until 17 July 2021

By Helen Karakulak

JTM Productions "Sex, Lies & Betrayal – Memoirs of a Hollywood Star" originally planned to go ahead with Adelaide's Cabaret Fringe Festival in June but was rescheduled as COVID-19 restrictions upstaged their lovely lead. Fortunately, they were able to return to perform this scandalous, stellar tale for Adelaide audiences across two nights at Holden Street's The Arch.

The character of the venue offers a delightful backdrop for this production, as the warm lighting by Jason Bovaird casts enticing shadows of Miss Nightingale, played by Karla Hillam, on the walls of the auditorium as she crosses one leg over the other and divulges tales of her past. The set is simple but effective, with Hillam perched front and centre in a pink chair, occasionally getting up to pour herself a drink and pace as she reads her memoirs to a person on the other end of her glamorous gold 1940s style telephone.

It's no easy task to hold an audience in a cabaret show of this kind, featuring only one performer, but Hillam's stage presence is commanding. There was slight inconsistency with her projection, with certain words getting lost on their way towards those seated at the back of the theatre. However, what you do pick up will have you hanging on every word her transatlantic accent sprouts.

"Sex Lies & Betrayal – Memoirs of a Hollywood Star" is cleverly written and directed by Margaret Fisk. The intriguing Miss Nightingale has quite the story to tell, painting a picture that captures both the glamour old Hollywood promised and the grit that came with it.

The production features re-imagined pop songs intertwined with Miss Nightingale's monologuing to assist storytelling. Despite their modernity, musical arrangements by Ned Wright-Smith are well-executed, achieving a classical feel.

Some tracks, such as David Guetta's "Titanium" and Evanescence's "My Immortal" were a jarring surprise. While their lyrics fit the concepts the tracks followed, they weren't as effective as the other more fitting genres and became the outliers of an otherwise well-coordinated score.

The choice to pair more recent hits, such as Billie Eilish's "Bad Guy" and Christina Perri's "A Thousand Years", with a story rooted in the now 80-year-old legacy of Hollywood's golden age is commendable. In doing so, themes of love, lust and betrayal are subtly presented as remaining relevant today.

Hillam has a unique, sultry tone that suits a production of this kind. Unfortunately, she seems to struggle through some high notes here and there, possibly the mark of a wavering throat beyond her control. Despite this, she recovers well and delivers the sweeter, softer notes beautifully. Overall, her vocals and delivery of this dialogue-heavy performance is charming.

Although we never learn Miss Nightingale's true identity, hints of those she's entangled with will derive recognition from the average theatre goer and draw in old Hollywood experts. "Sex, Lies & Betrayal –



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Memoirs of a Hollywood Star" is an incredible effort by JTM Productions, with an intriguing story and strong performance.