

Metro - UK
Edinburgh Festival 2004
Aurora Nova

DANCE AND PHYSICAL THEATRE REVIEW

Caravan

**** (4 stars)

After the dark carnival of Black Hole Theatre Company rolls into town, you'll never look at a Barbie doll in quite the same light again. The pulp fiction of the puppetry world, internationally acclaimed Australian company Black Hole excel in creating cutting edge visual theatre for adults. With a seedy puppet-noir tale of broken hearts, drug deals and murder this is riveting stuff. Provocative and heartfelt, the story centres around a 1950's carnival amidst a landscape of strip joints, docklands, and alleyways. Though the storyline is the thrust of the piece, its main purpose is as an excuse to play. A fascinating trick with a cigarette folds out of an hilarious alleyway scene buzzing with animal life. The grotesque puppets strip, dance, fight and play with the human animators, who like theatre ghosts slink knowingly around the set. The humans are not immune to the cyclical darkness and before long become embroiled in status play with the marionettes, and eventually succumb to the world they have created, transforming into reflections of this miniature life. Profanities become audible through the babble language, and the script is as cheeky as it is tragic. A street sweeper witnesses all and sweeps the remains into the gutter, where the shocking deadness of the wooden figures is truly indescribable. Aided by an atmospheric soundtrack of scritch scratchy loops and samples, the delicate transitions between the scenes are an impressionistic splash of film and shadow puppetry. Where Barbie dolls are angels and Music Hall sparkle gives way to the dark glamour of the strip joint, this is puppetry for adults only.

Laura Cameron Lewis