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## THE FAUST AND THE FURIOUS: BEST OF THE ADELAIDE FRINGE #1

American nouveau vaudeville company Sound and Fury's signature dish – the parody – is built upon a bed of puns, accompanied by sweetly chilled aural aperitifs, baked physical theatre and visual gags tossed with innuendo and served at a breakneck pace with little or no regard for the wall separating audience from performer.

In this case Christopher Marlowe's original Faust, a highly successful scholar dissatisfied with his life, makes a deal with the devil (Mephistopheles, or Mel) and exchanges his soul for 24 years of unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures.

In Doc Faustus, the scholar becomes a quaint, slightly goofy, patient-killing doctor in a one horse town just outside of Abilene whose highest personal ambition is to become the personal physician to the State's Governor. We are treated to a staccato travelogue of Faustus' desires, whims and journeys through the ages and continents told in the most engaging manner. Both versions deal with the 24 years of untrammelled success, freedom and desires, both show the peccadilloes of human nature and regrets that come with living. Sound and Fury just happen to do it with better songs, cheaper jokes and nary a wasted line to be seen or heard.

Sound and Fury - aka Ryan, Patrick and Richard - have an obvious affection for theatre and classic tales mixed with a healthy irreverence and genuine and clear love of what they do. The story provides room for them to parade their skills of improvisation and imagination while allowing them to incorporate easily recognisable pop culture references into it. Their skills and familiarity enable them to jump off into comedic cul-de-sacs often based on mistakes or glitches or build upon something that they may have found particularly amusing. This allows the feel of the show to be tailored to the audience accordingly meaning that Doc Faustus can be seen repeatedly.

The pace of the show is frenetic, costume changes are continuous yet never detract from the main action while the three oscillate wildly between some of the most hilariously two dimensional characters one could expect to see in a parody of a Western genre steeped in this tradition. The singing narrator provides a link between scenes and ties it up neatly in a series of wonderfully crafted songlets. Vaudeville is out and proud in Doc Faustus but is aligned with a genuinely entertaining and funny script making it a feast for the eyes, ears and funnybone.

The script is full of clever wordplay, superb one liners and some surprisingly acidic social commentary and rewarded both the overtly intellectual and fart joke loving sides of my brain. It was droll and edgy without being offputtingly so, dumb without being stupid and consistently mirth making.

Doc Faustus stands as a testament to the ability to successfully mix genres and settings to produce something new, something blue and something that audiences genuinely enjoy. It is an esoteric revue accessible to all and one that all enjoyed, certainly one that had me hogtied with delight. Sound and Fury have produced a show that could only be described as a hootenanny and one that everybody should get along to.