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Elysium

Scott Cameron

The Halcyon Room

The Kings Arms, Salford

29–31 July 2025

The Halcyon Room made a strong impression at the 2024 GM Fringe daring to stage [Black Spring](#), a Lovecraftian horror. For 2025, the company switches to the thriller / science fiction genre with *Elysium*, written and directed by Scott Cameron.

Fifteen years after the COVID pandemic, society has gone from bad to worse. Farmlands are unproductive, and pets are used for food rather than companionship. Rose (Rebekah Williams) seeks to understand why her sister suddenly switched from idealism to extremism and tried to bomb Council buildings. She decides to join the radical activist group of which her sister was a member to see if she can uncover answers.

However, the leader of the pressure group was killed in the terrorist attack leaving the leadership vacant. Rose's investigations are complicated by her lifelong friend William (Anthony Lally) and her former lover Noah (author Scott Cameron) both competing to lead the group. William favours sticking to the practice of negotiating with the authorities, while Noah prefers more aggressive action to remove and replace those in power. Rose is baffled when her induction into the group is undertaken by an artificial intelligence algorithm, The Overlord, which concludes by asking if she is aware of *Elysium*.

Elysium comes from Greek mythology, a place where the souls of heroes and the most virtuous people reside. Hanging over the play is the fascinating concept that harsh living conditions and lack of hope have caused humankind to revert to such primitive beliefs so that prompts from artificial intelligence are regarded as Divine Writ from the Almighty.

Writer / director Cameron squeezes a lot into the play, so some areas are not well explored. I struggled to understand why Noah lied about his mother's health to Rose unless the narrative just needed to build in distrust between the characters. Rose is something of an enigma, apparently apolitical despite her sister, friend and lover all being political activists.

The play shies away from humour, but there is an element of satire. The increasingly widespread belief that political parties lack any guiding ideals or principles and are motivated purely by self-interest may be reflected in no-one in the activist group (including those seeking its leadership) being able to define its purpose or objectives.

Elysium is less a 'whodunnit' more a 'whydunnit', the motivations of the villain determining their actions. Writer Cameron plays fair with the audience with a visual clue in the opening scene. It seems a shame, however, that the idea of using beliefs to manipulate idealists could not be explored in greater depth.

Despite a lack of background information on the character, Rebekah Williams is able to make Rose a traditional resolute and determined heroine. Anthony Lally and Scott Cameron show different sides of the same coin, both motivated by self-interest and able to justify their dodgy behaviour to themselves. Avery McKenzie's Dinah is the least well-developed character, possibly intended as a physical menace in an environment where the threats are largely cerebral.

Elysium offers the audience a thought-provoking storyline, examining whether the ends justify the means and the morality of manipulating other people, within a credible thriller format. It might, however, benefit from trimming some of the internal politicking and squabbling within the activist group to allow time to explore the more interesting ideas.

Reviewer: [David Cunningham](#)