

British Theatre Guide

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The Hotel

Jackinabox Productions
47/49 Tanner Street, London
14–19 October 2014

Open for business for a mere seven days, *The Hotel* is a site-specific, immersive performance from ambitious young company Jackinabox.

Housed in a Victorian tannery in Central London, the audience member is welcomed as a guest, revealing his or her name in exchange for a numbered room key.

Adopting his role from the outset, hotel manager Rafe Lansbury—"Not like Ralph Fiennes, bloody thespian"—proceeds to propel the 'checked-in' guest towards the hotel bar as the remainder of the audience arrive.

A Colombian housekeeper (played with smirking irony by Anais Alvarado) leads four nervous spectators into room 68, promising enlightenment as she directs each individual towards a yoga mat. A couple of downward dogs later, one startled audience member discovers a questionable packet of white powder beneath his mat and is urged to conceal it within his jacket.

Yet this is merely a warm-up, a clever (and amusingly literal) way for the spectators to limber up prior to the flesh of the production.

The overall premise is refreshingly simple for an immersive production: the audience enters two different rooms, each of which contains a different narrative.

Room 69 reveals Marlowe's Faustus, a strange mix of leather jacket and archaic tongue. The audience lingers on the periphery as the flawed protagonist relinquishes his soul to Lucifer (who doubles as a nun in an intelligent juxtaposition).

There are some interesting attempts to contemporise a traditional text—the seven deadly sins tempting viewers from the adult channel of a battered television set—yet the commitment to Marlowe's language somewhat stilted what appears to be a clear desire to reinvent the text.

Room 67 contains a rather different scene: a 20th century domestic drama played out between a husband, wife and an old lover—competent enough, but paler than its Renaissance neighbour.

The sounds of both performances (playing in tandem for alternate audience members) mingle to create the authentic bustle of a working hotel, though many may view this as a distraction rather than a canny artistic decision.

The lack of connection between the narratives also seems to jar, and perhaps a third performance may have brought the experience to a cleaner, clearer conclusion.

Fluidity is sometimes triumphed by a sense of chaos, as unsure audience members talk instead of listen and engage when they are invited only to spectate.

That said, there are some charming touches to *The Hotel*, and Stanley Eldridge delivers a truly excellent performance as the exasperated manager, quick with his improvised gags and interactions.

Well worth a watch, though, at an 11PM close, it may finish a little late for the long-distance commuter.

Reviewer: [Alecia Marshall](#)