

## Review of «Burnt Toast»

By Per Christian Selmer-Anderssen (Aftenposten) 14. feb. 2020. English Translation: Eivind Sæthre

### Fun and Scary Horror Theatre Dressed up as a B-movie

**Susie Wang's latest horror show «Burnt Toast» is of a rare breed – existential B-movie splatter theatre for adults.**



PHOTO: Alette Schei Rørvik. A hotel reception is the setting for mad scenes in the splatter drama «Burnt Toast». From the left: Mona Solhaug, Julie Solberg and Kim Atle Hansen.

#### Graded 5 out of 6

**Black Box Teater. By Trine Falch/Theatre group Susie Wang. Director: Trine Falch. Scenography: Bo Krister Wallström. Light: Phillip Isaksen. Sound and music: Martin Langlie. With: Kim Atle Hansen, Julie Solberg, and Mona Solhaug. Played at Black Box Teater in Oslo until 21. February.**

Black Box Teater's main stage is dressed up as a pinkish-red hotel lobby with two large elevator doors, reception desk – and four beanbags. It looks like we are in a sleazy B-movie. This impression is strengthened when the receptionist enters with fake breasts, a deep cleavage, and tight pants.

In this reception, anything goes. Guests may drink mothers milk, suck blood or cut open a belly. It is also an arena where little is left to the audience's imagination. The splatter effects are so realistic that it feels real even from the second row.

What the heck kind of lobby is this – or rather, what kind of a spectacle?

The answer is for the audience to define. The spectacle is drenched in body fluids, blood, and twisted soap opera dialogues, but without a clear message or political

statement. This makes *Burnt Toast* a splatter drama for the open and curious spectator.



Things get absurd and bloody in the show «Burnt Toast» at Black Box Teater.
Photo: Alette Schei Rørvik

## The Big Man-baby

Theatre group Susie Wang was formed three years ago by Mona Solhaug, Martin Langlie, Trine Falch, and Bo Krister Wallström. The latter two have worked together in the well known group Baktruppen who used to play havoc with the classics, both at home and abroad for two decades.

*Burnt Toast* is the third spectacle in a horror trilogy which according to the web pages will «Take a happy place and take the happy out of it». The first play was set at a beach and the second takes place in an art gallery. The latter earned the group the Norwegian critics award for the best show in 2019.

This year everything is in American, but the plot is easy to follow. Danny meets Violet over a complementary egg drink in the reception. He is supposedly on his way to a reptile museum, but clings to a silver-coloured briefcase. She is breastfeeding a baby girl.

The briefcase contains mothers milk. The man is a «Manchild», a big man-baby. Burnt Toast explores the theme of the manchild from various angles: It's the man who do not want to leave his mom's uterus. The woman who ties up the man. Parents who want the newborn baby to pull them back to something innocent and clean.

Could it be that we are not in a lobby, but rather in an egg clinic? No matter where, it is not so important because Burnt Toast has its very own theatrical logic.

### **Children as Consumer Goods**

«Burnt Toast» is American slang for insomnia, and the show is in a kind of trailing dream state. It could be a nightmare or perhaps an alternative reality.

A burnt toast also points at a sad hotel breakfast. Cheap crap that has been grilled for too long only to be thrown away and replaced by something else in the same toaster. This is what childbirth seems to mean in this spectacle: consumption for your own pleasure.

At least this is the way I see it, but as previously stated, it may be interpreted in many ways. Burnt Toast needs no interpretations, it may be seen as the absurd art of the moment.

### **The Sound is Half the Show**

The actors play with the ever-changing stage settings, which constitute a sort of character in its own right. Every line is fun and threatening at the same time, delivered with perfect B-movie timing by the three actors.

The soundscapes are signed Martin Langlie and varies between large string orchestras and sound from the objects on stage. A pencil scratching against a map. The elevator sounds like a passing freight train.

I will not reveal more. If you have 250 NOK, an open mind, and a strong stomach, you should go see Burnt Toast for yourself.