

Metro LA

THE MEGAZINE
Adjunct of NoHoLA

Ecstasy & the Ice Queen *by Jacob Clark*

Justine Moore's one-woman show, *Ecstasy and the Ice Queen*, now playing at **Elephant Studio Theatre** sets a new standard for the one-person entertainments that make up so much of L.A.'s theatre scene.

This tale of a hardened adolescent who finds redemption and gratitude through the heroic act of her best friend is the most compelling story I've seen in the genre. Moore qualifies as a top-notch playwright with this piece. There's not a superfluous character or an ill-placed scene in it. Dialogue flows naturally and monologues serve the central story. Sparse relaxed narration intertwines, always reminding one there is storytelling happening here. And happen it does, on a grand scale. The play manages to be hilarious or horrifying, as needed. Sweet memories transit into stark and terrible realities. The rite of passage so many endure in the USA is the dangerous one of drug abuse, explored here without judgment or sentimentality.

The production, developed and directed by **Frederick Johntz**, shows his signature plainly in the style of the playing.



Moore projects each different character with a strong and unique physical posture which remains essentially unchanged throughout the play. This technique, which can be jarring and unreal, makes projects seem like they are about character delineation rather than character unless handled with great care. In this play, Johntz' technique works very well. As the evening progresses, one forgets Moore is playing all the characters; she embodies each so fully. The effect is like watching a great movie, where the acting is so good you get carried away by the characters and story.

Johntz' choice of white walls for the background creates another reality under **Max Pierson's** inventive lighting. Shadows of the performer stand as silent witnesses to the event and almost have a life of their own, making a party scene in particular, feel crowded. Terrific pre-show music sets the perfect mood for the story and the underscoring which is always appropriate never gets in the way. **RECOMMENDED.** See *listing in Theatre Guide.*