

Stunt Lounge Media

Sydney Morning Herald:

“*Stunt Lounge* succeeds brilliantly. Featuring a strong ensemble of five young acrobats, the show offers jaw-dropping feats framed by the emotional timbre of adolescence... it's stylish, characterful and inventive circus.

Suitable for young teens and up, *Stunt Lounge* sees the next generation of circus performers making their mark, uniting extreme physical prowess with theatrical range and intelligence. The wow factor is high, but it makes you think and feel too.”

Arts Hub:

“The piece clearly and joyfully explores the experiences of these five young people as young adults and as circus performers... the mere spectacle of watching these young bodies performing such rigorously practiced and perfected tasks is a captivating juxtaposition.

A brilliantly entertaining and affecting show. I look forward to seeing where these graduates of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus go next.”

Australian Stage:

“The chemistry between the performers is palpable and the teamwork is of the highest order... Australia is certainly blessed to have the Flying Fruit Fly Circus training up our next generation of circus performers, and this troupe look well on their way to exciting careers... it's an extremely entertaining, enjoyable show.”

Herald Sun:

"There are lots of great ideas here and the young guns clearly have the talent. A meditative, whimsical, sweet and occasionally dark ride... refreshingly understated."

AU Review:

“Some spectacular stunts, all prepared in a schmick, stunning production... great staging, a spectacular score, simple but well considered lighting and excellent performances by the five young talents... it's without question entertaining, engaging and occasionally thrilling from start to finish.”

[Sydney Morning Herald/The Age]

Melbourne International Comedy Festival: Jaws will drop at Stunt Lounge

STUNT LOUNGE

Flying Fruit Fly Circus

Arts Centre Melbourne

Until April 9

Australia leads the world in a style of contemporary circus that has reinvigorated the art, delivering astonishing tricks with imaginative direction and theatrical flair. It's exemplified by the Brisbane-based Circa, which casts such a long creative shadow that drawing inspiration from its success without imitating its aesthetic has become a serious problem for emerging companies.



Zach Johnson, AJ Saltalamacchia (going through hoop) Jack Manson, Teagan Leslie and Jess Mews (throwing hoop) performing in Stunt Lounge. *Photo: Simon O'Dwyer*

Stunt Lounge succeeds brilliantly. Featuring a strong ensemble of five young acrobats, the show offers jaw-dropping feats framed by the emotional timbre of adolescence, with its rebelliousness and risk-taking, angst and puppy love.

It's stylish, characterful and inventive circus, and director Darcy Grant has it flowing with dramatic inevitability, from glorious group tumbling to novel individual routines that lightly suggest familiar human situations.

Suitable for young teens and up, *Stunt Lounge* sees the next generation of circus performers making their mark, uniting extreme physical prowess with theatrical range and intelligence. The wow factor is high, but it makes you think and feel too.

[Arts Hub]

Skilled young performers test their bodies to the limit in this thrilling circus showcase



Photo by Darcy Grant

Circus is the ultimate live performance. Live in the sense that you know that what you're watching is really happening, and could go drastically wrong at any minute. It's this compelling liveness that has kept audiences coming back throughout the centuries. Flying Fruit Fly Circus' *Stunt Lounge* revels in this liveness and danger. The five performers on stage are skilled – this much is impossible to deny. But they are also young people working in an art form that can only be mastered by slavish practice over long periods of time. There were plenty of stumbles and missteps in this work, but these only made the performance more compelling. For an hour, we watched five young people relentlessly test the limits of their bodies.

The piece clearly and joyfully explores the experiences of these five young people as young adults and as circus performers. Sometimes the metaphors are explicit – one performer is made to “jump through hoops” by his peers. At other times – particularly in many of the work's solo pieces – the mere spectacle of watching these young bodies performing such rigorously practiced and perfected tasks is a captivating juxtaposition.

I'm always surprised by the capacity of circus arts for immense emotional and physical affect on the audience's bodies, but there were two of the vignettes that left me breathless. Teagan Leslie's solo straps routine was chilling. Her body rotates in the middle of the air, hanging first from the hips and then from the neck. This solo delves much deeper than the simple sexual allure of so many aerial routines; Leslie's strength and fragility collide to conjure much darker connotations around this hanging body. The show also included a heartwarming

duet from AJ Saltalamacchia and Jess Mews. The pair have found beautifully unexpected ways of combining his acrobatics and her hooping skills to paint a breathtaking portrait of young love.

This piece is all about young bodies being tested – by one another and by their world. It doesn't have a through-line or narrative to follow, and the timing or placement of each vignette within the piece doesn't always feel deeply considered. The piece also leans quite heavily on overly sentimental music, which prevents us from truly hearing the performers and their bodies on stage. But these are small quibbles about what was ultimately a brilliantly entertaining and affecting show. I look forward to seeing where these graduates of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus go next.

4 out of 5 stars

Stunt Lounge

The Flying Fruit Fly Circus

Director: Darcy Grant

Cast: AJ Saltalamacchia, Jess Mews, Teagan Leslie, Jackson Manson, Zachariah Johnson

Arts Centre Melbourne

30 March – 9 April

[AU Review]

Flying Fruit Fly Circus' *Stunt Lounge* – The Studio, Sydney Opera House



Stunt Lounge is the first in a new collaborative arrangement between the Flying Fruit Fly Circus and the Sydney Opera House, where recent graduates – and those at the end of their time with the Youth circus – get the opportunity to perform in the prestigious venue. Its aim is to bridge the gap between the youth program and the professional circus arena, which both attracts a variety in their audience and serves as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the circus' finest exports.

But while they may be young performers, if you were expecting anything less than a phenomenal (not to mention professional) production, you would be gladly mistaken. *Stunt Lounge* sets the bar high for the program, and for the genre at large, playing with the bare

essentials of the genre and giving it enough flair to make it sit comfortably alongside other acclaimed works of its kind.

The hour long show doesn't play too heavily with anything you've seen before – without giving too much away, there are balancing acts, plenty of backflips, some fantastic hula hoop work that sits as much as a contemporary dance piece as it does a circus act, there are aerial acts, more backflips and a bed of nails. All the beats of its tradition are on display too – there's a good amount of slapstick, comedy and even romance. And there's an inspired rope act to close out the night, with some of the best use of light you'll see at any show this year.

Not everything “amazes” but it doesn't need to. Director **Darcy Grant** – an acrobat of his own acclaim who makes his directorial debut here – has wrapped his show up so neatly with great staging, a spectacular score, simple but well considered lighting and excellent performances by the five young talents, that it's without question entertaining, engaging and occasionally thrilling from start to finish.

Overall, *Stunt Lounge* delivers exactly what it says on paper – with some spectacular stunts, all prepared in a schmick, stunning production that helps make it something that is much more than the sum of its parts. Come and enjoy these incredibly talented young performers before the show flies out the door on 17th April.