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**STRANGERS ON A TRAIN**  
**Independent Theatre Company**  
The Odeon, Norwood

Review by Theresa Dolman

Independent Theatre took on a huge challenge with the Australian premiere production of 'Strangers on a Train', but with Rob Croser at the helm it was a challenge well met.

The play is based on a novel by Patricia Highsmith (who also wrote 'The Talented Mr Ripley') and was adapted for the stage by Craig Warner. It is the story of two strangers who meet on a train. After drinking far too much alcohol, each agrees to commit a murder for the other. Charles Bruno (Luke Jacka) is consumed with hate for his father, who will not allow him access to money he believes he is entitled to. Charles thinks he has convinced Guy Haines (Dai Davison) to kill his father in return for ridding Guy of his adulteress wife, who, although pregnant to another man, will not allow Guy to divorce her and get on with his life. The malice starts when Charles carries out his half of the bargain, then torments Guy until he finally cracks and fulfills his part of the deal.

Luke Jacka is well cast as the psychopathic, alcoholic Charles, making Guy's life miserable until the end. Dai Davison is brilliant as the tormented Guy---you could feel the audience wanting to help him out of his dilemma as he is gradually destroyed by guilt. Tom Carney added to the intrigue with his wonderful portrayal of Arthur Gerard, the know-all family detective.

The casting was perfect, from Charles' dippy and substance-dependant mother Elsie (Lyn Wilson) and Guy's confused and distraught girlfriend Anne (Peta Long), to his work mates Frank (Josh Markey) and Bob (Blair Breeding), who also doubled as investigating police.

Set against a backdrop indicating a train, with a couple of well designed wooden chairs and other smaller sets wheeled on as needed, the design worked well and allowed smooth changes from each scene to the next. The lighting by Rob Croser and Laraine Wheeler helped immensely, defining areas and creating the atmosphere essential to the 1950's era.

The only criticism is that in the opening scene Jacka was so intent on convincing Davison of his idea that he seems to have forgotten that the audience needed to hear it too; a lot of his dialogue got lost in the wings.

Overall a wonderful piece of theatre, not to be missed.