

# KISS shows its quality

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## THEATRE

By BERWYN LEWIS

**KISS**  
Leeches, by Jim Ennis, and The White Whore and The Bit  
Player by Tom Egan.  
Cell Block Theatre, January 23 and 30.

LEECHES, together with The White Whore and The Bit Player, prove that this Netherlands-based group now touring Australia offers a unique intellectual, emotional and theatrical experience.

Their opening last week in KISS-Inferno and Purgatorio was not auspicious. It appeared, from these offerings, that the avant-garde group was neither avant-garde nor capable of presenting interesting theatre devoid of clichés. These two new pieces, however, fulfil the promise made by the Festival of Sydney of exciting theatre from KISS.

Leeches is a raw and electrifying play which deals with a ragged old couple trapped in their primitive and symbiotic relationship, hence the title.

The husband, dishevelled, dominating, is played by Lynne Ellis with a delicacy that repels and magnetises. He is the keeper of the keys and handcuffs, but he is weak and in the end he is his own victim. The mother (played by the author, Mr Ennis) stooped, simpering, is the caged animal. Both are obsessed by their son, played by Jepke Goudsmit — who plays the whore in the following piece.

Craving for the tiniest sign of their son's return and squabbling over a 14-year-old letter concealed in the mother's cloth shoe, they play out a waiting game. Their actions are furtive and reptilian, their currency is emotional castration.

The actions are reduced to a minimal statement, both linguistically and stylistically, with the barest and rawest essentials and sounds evoking horror and fear.

With The White Whore And The Bit Player, the group's versatility is shown in this two-character short play about one person which portrays the "nun mind" and the "whore flesh" personality.

The nun's and the white whore's story unfolds using movie set cuts and retakes. The whore is a confection of supple seduction. The nun, played by Lynne Ellis, is the alter ego, vicariously taking the whore's confessions as her own sexual experiences, demanding more intimate details and never achieving satisfaction.

Both the nun and the whore seek love. One is strung up by a crucifix; the other by her pearls and her bottom.

This is a remarkable and moving double bill, with both pieces dealing with incarceration of two different types. The sex object and the madonna steal each other's sense of purpose; the old couple retreat into a living death.