

## Better Man



By Alex Lycos. Bulldog Theatre Company. Director Alex Lycos. Lighting Design: Bill Illiades. Cast: Jey Osman, Panda Likoudis, Helena Stamoulis, George Harrison, Natalia Ladyko, Alex Lycos, Alicia Gonzalez, Michael Arvithis, Charles Billeh, Nick Mavridis. Sidetrack Theatre, Marrickville (NSW). 24 May to 10 June, 2012.

### **What shall it profit a man, to be better?**

Alex Lycos has been incredibly successful in recent years with his *Alex & Eve* trilogy, packing The Factory main stage venue for performance after performance. Alex's new play, *Better Man*, opens at the Sidetrack, where the *Alex & Eve* phenomenon all began in 2008.

Alex promises something different this time, but the first half of *Better Man* is still in the mode of a ribald daytime sit-com, remarkably similar in tone and content to *Alex & Eve*. Jimmy, the still at home twenty-something son of immigrant Greek parents, seeks to make good, but cannot ever satisfy a father who demands Jimmy own an investment property and a mother who wants the veto on any bride-to-be. There is also the powerful rivalry between life-long best friends, plus quite a number of night-club and domestic scenes.

In fact, there are a lot of scenes in this play, making it somewhat cinematic in form.

The second half does move along with some sizzle for the stakes. Secrets are revealed, love gushes and tensions rise. The stakes are set, then escalate. The director brings an objective point of view to a writer's work, as well as clearly developing the text into stage action.

There are stand out performances come from Natalia Ladyko as Gemma and Panda Likoudis as Frank.

*Better Man* is amusing and enervating at times. Do take a look at this interesting work in progress from one of Sydney's most prolific, passionate and successful writer/producer/director/actors.

*Stephen Carnell*

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