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presents

Hitting The Stage



Mar 21 'Time Trippin'
with MVT's 'Rock of
Ages'

L to R: John Wells, Ike Webster, Matthew Kelty,
and Dylan Lee in Kennedy Theatre's
Smile, You're Under Surveillance!

Photo: Jessica Jacob

Mar 21

Are You Under Surveillance?

Staff Reviews



L to R: Matthew Kelty, Dylan Lee, John Wells, and Ike Webster in Kennedy Theatre's *Smile, You're Under Surveillance!*

Photo: Jessica Jacob

By Guest Staff Reviewer Mikum Leah Webster

Smile, You're Under Surveillance! made its world debut at UHM's Kennedy Theatre on March 15th. This devised theatre piece was created by the ensemble **Bruh** (**Matthew Kelty, Dylan Lee, Ike Webster, John Wells, and Markus**

Guest Staff
Reviewer

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Wessendorf) working within the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Department of Theatre and Dance. When the ensemble began rehearsals in January of this year, they started with a blank slate. Rather than starting with or creating a script, they developed the plot through collaborative creation centered around the topic of surveillance. While surveillance might not be a daily consideration for most people, it is increasingly important in this modern age. People need to better define the moral, ethical, and legal grey areas that exist around current surveillance technologies and practices.

Bruh took on the challenge to make people think and even care about surveillance. Their approach? An episodic satire, split between a two-sided set (designed by **Rachel Filbeck**); one you see in real time and the other you experience via live video feed. The combination of live video, pre-recorded video, and live action theatre makes the show almost feel immersive. On one side, the audience experiences the NSA office where Syd (Matthew Kelty) works; on the other, a hacker's basement where his brother Hector (John Wells) lives. The audience isn't confined to one side, however, as you get to switch sides at intermission to see things from a different perspective.

The main narrative centers around Syd, a hopelessly in love NSA agent that has a shy awkwardness around his co-worker Iris (**Tali Ariav**), and his hacker brother Hector. Through countless shenanigans, the two brothers use their combined talents, and unlimited access to information, to artificially generate a scenario in which Iris and Syd might make a love connection. Their creepy stalking and extreme invasion of privacy leads to several embarrassing mishaps along the way.

Interjected within this main narrative are other shorter skits / segments. These shorter segments contain some of the more polarizing material in the play and may not be suitable for young audiences. However, these shorts really steal the show with their funny wit and clever perspective that will leave you laughing, talking, and thinking about surveillance for days to come.

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Smile, You're Under Surveillance! took the seemingly dry topic of surveillance and created a thought provoking and funny satire that addresses such questions as: How much surveillance do we want and accept in our daily lives? When has it gone too far? And where is the line that divides the two? The combination of technology and live action creates a unique audio-visual theatrical experience that is both engaging and entertaining. As further inspiration to their audiences, the production is offering free special events and pre-show talks that include panel members such as **Ben Wizner**, the director of the ACLU's Speech, Privacy, and Technology Project and acting attorney to Edward Snowden.

Smile, You're Under Surveillance! will be showing at Kennedy Theatre through March 26th. Tickets can be bought online or at the Kennedy Theatre Box Office.

Mikum Leah Webster is a former dancer and musical theatre professional, currently doing media production for TV and online. She has a Masters in Dance Science, and continues to share her love for movement as a teacher, researcher, choreographer, and Pilates practitioner.

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, UH: Kennedy Theatre, Department of Theatre + Dance, *Smile You're Under Surveillance!*

