

## ENTERTAINMENT

# The Made review: Superb cast and quips bring all elements together

By [Dionne Christian](#) 26 Sep, 2022 11:41 AM 3 mins to read



The Made's sex-bot and scientist played by Hannah Tasker-Poland and Alison Bruce respectively. Photo / Ross Brown

Emily Perkins is best known as an award-winning novelist but her latest endeavour shows she's a brilliant playwright, too.

She's teamed up with Auckland Theatre Company for *The Made*, which started with the premise that if Dr Frankenstein were a woman today, what would she create?

Perkins has created a provocative script packed with wry observations, an unexpected twist or two and all-too-familiar characters and situations – even if it is set in the near future with service robots doing more mundane daily chores. Fundamentally, *The Made* is about ways of living and being, creativity and connection.

All this makes it sound rather serious; indeed, a director could turn it into a drama – or horror – because it's flexible enough to be both. But Colin McColl has gone all in on its comedy so it's laugh-out-loud funny with a superb cast clearly relishing the chance to deliver whip-smart material.

The protagonist is Alice (the phenomenal Alison Bruce), a menopausal woman caught in a maelstrom of change where her body – and perplexed husband (Peter Daube) – betrays her. Her life's work is with artificial intelligence and trying to program service droids to experience human emotions but Alice never expresses her true feelings – no doubt fearing those around her won't take her seriously

if she comes close to showing emotion – and longs for authentic connection, a recurring theme throughout the play.

Her greatest success is Arie, a modified sex-bot who is capable, thus far, only of happiness. As Arie, Hannah Tasker-Poland is a revelation. An established dance artist, Tasker-Poland's movement skills are splendid but she also proves herself to be an outstanding comic actor giving Arie a naïve tenderness that the audience instantly warms to. Arie's guileless utterances complement perfectly all that Alice is coming to see about the world and how her place in it is viewed.

Murdoch Keane brings great humour and heart as Sam, Alice's self-absorbed and heart-broken teenage child, while Adam Gardiner's equally comedic turn as a disingenuous tech boss/director who lacks even a hint of self-awareness will be recognisable to anyone with experience of the corporate world. It would be nice to see Alice's lab assistant John (Joe Dekkers-Reihana) and the director's adviser (Kalyani Nagarajan) given a little more depth. Then again, that could come from a wish to see more of Dekkers-Reihana and Nagarajan because they're both charismatic performers.



The Made's sex-bot and scientist played by Hannah Tasker-Poland and Alison Bruce respectively.  
Photo / Ross Brown

To say more about the second half might be to reveal too much but watch for a star turn from Bronwyn Bradley, who throws herself body and soul into the role of Nanny Ann as The Made delves more deeply into toxic patriarchal culture - while retaining all of its humour.

There are times, for example as Nanny Ann springs back to life, that The Made needs to be slightly quieter so the audience can take in what's unfolding; the ending could be a little shorter and occasionally, a character tips into caricature when playing it serious might have more impact but these are minor quibbles. It's been a long time since I heard a theatre audience laugh so

wholeheartedly during a show where all the elements – script, cast and design – come together so cohesively.

- **The Made is at the ASB Waterfront Theatre until October 8.**