

Blue Angel mesmerizing

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Northern Light's season-opener, *Treacheries of the Blue Angel*, was conceived on a dare.

Director and writer Gyllien Raby had a bet with colleague David Rimmer that she couldn't write a Film Noir story from a woman's point of view.

"This, at David's instigation, was in reaction to the devouring, negative role played by women in most Film Noir stories. At first, I thought it was impossible," she explains in the program.

Raby has succeeded in exploding the myth of the femme fatale with a re-telling of the 1929 classic *Blue Angel*, the film which launched Marlene Dietrich's career.

The video/musical sets the mood of a smoke-filled cabaret from its opening number, with actresses in silhouettes, striking larger-than-life Dietrich poses.

An obsessed filmmaker Max Sancerre (played by veteran actor Carl Harel) tempts a nightclub singer to play the part of the Blue Angel in his remake of the original, often referred to as the first Film Noir.

has been inundated with requests for a tape of the production. Randall has just returned from Los Angeles, where he spent the summer as musical director at Second City's new theatre.

Max tries to turn his own life into an expression of "every man's fantasy and every woman's revenge."

With Andy Warhol, the ultimate pop idol and icon-maker as his mentor, Max firmly believes: "I record myself, therefore I am."

Video sequences are professionally done by Gary Bruckner, who shoots dreamlike scenes like the tongue-in-cheek one with Andy Warhol rising from his coffin to engage in an intellectual discussion with Max.

In other scenes, there are lush shots of Rosa in her role as the Dietrich character, or writhing around on pastel-colored sheets.

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The dialogue between the video Max and the live actress, is seamless and believable. In fact, the entire script is thoughtful and intelligent, if a bit wonky.

Action on stage, which includes singing, dancing and some very

physical acting, meshes well with the video to make the play much more than a sum of its parts.

Using the video as a device, the line between fiction and reality is cleverly blurred as the play unfolds.

There is great parody of Andy Warhol cult-worship, with Richard Tandrup in a Warhol mask, dancing to a song titled "15 Minutes." In another sequence, art imitates life when the video Warhol interviews Max about his obsession.

The entire cast is good, unselfconscious and committed to its roles.

There is particularly well-cast as the greying-at-the-temple, ex-Andy Warhol cameraman who later becomes the beloved Blue Angel.

Daniel Libman is good as Rosa's frustrated, French boyfriend and Frances Kushner is effective as Maria, Max's murdered wife and a former Blue Angel.

J. James Andrew's cleverly designed multifunctional set becomes alternately Max's video studio, Rene's editing suite and a tavern.

Raby has long talked about Northern Light's commitment to "total theatre", theatre designed to appeal to the eye, the ear and the mind. And unlike the offerings at other Edmonton theatres, *Treacheries* is truly a "total theatre" experience.

Treacheries of the Blue Angel runs until Nov. 26 at the Kaasa Theatre at the Jubilee Auditorium.



Treacheries
Of The

BLUE ANGEL

The story unfolds through entries in Max's video journal, flashbacks and the music, spanning musical eras and styles ranging from Kurt Weill to Talking Heads and Eartha Kitt.

The singing is, undoubtedly, the best thing about the play.

As the sultry Rosa, Chantelle Jenkins turns the Kaasa into her cabaret audience. She commands the stage as the prancing nymphette, delivering torch songs in a growling voice.

Her version of *Falling in Love Again* sends chills down your spine as she croons "men flock to me like moths to a flame."

And Jan Randall's songs are so catchy and lively that the theatre