

'Turning to the Camera' by Simon Jackson ☆☆☆

In Simon Jackson's enjoyably fast-paced "noir thriller" directed by Andy Corelli, tabloid photographer Ian Thompson finds himself the focus of undesired attention after witnessing an Egyptian diplomat being thrown from a fifth-floor window. As he recounts the series of events to a pair of police interrogators, we learn that whilst the camera never lies, the photographer may be being more creative with the truth.

A paparazzo is sniffing out the latest sex scandal but instead photographs the moment when a man is pushed out of a window. This murder, of an Egyptian secret service agent, based on real facts, begins our paparazzo's mad adventure through the streets of London as he tries to outwit the murderers.

An impressive studio has been created in a vacant retail unit in Ocean Terminal (a shopping centre in Leith). This surprisingly intimate surrounding allows Ian Sexon as Ian Thompson, our paparazzo, to ingratiate us with his world. Sexon plays Thompson as a human weasel, slippery with his words, but full of charm. Sexon makes us like his Thompson and we are ready to join him on his journey as he wriggles through a hectic world of terrorists, madmen and duplicitous associates.

And it is a world that is portrayed. The play uses video to show Thompson's (Sexon) adventures, the audience becomes a CCTV camera to his life, whether exploring a murder scene or escaping in a taxi. This footage is woven in well, even to the point of Thompson (Sexon) physically pushing the footage along. However, the strength of the acting in this production makes the film a pleasant extra to the storytelling.

All the actors in this piece really show the magic of theatre – creating different characters using their voice and physicality in the space of a few moments; even props are thrown and delivered to each other with flair. The technology simply cannot compete with an ensemble that is at the top of their game.

Perhaps the reason for the use of film is that the story is packed and crammed into an hour. Sometimes so packed that it is difficult to take the information in – in fact at one point the lead character admits 'I'd drifted off at that point'. We are not supposed to take in all the

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information but to enjoy the comedy. However, the play is billed as a thriller, and at times this mix of comedy and thriller jarred – any tension that was created was dispelled quickly by a pratfall or an aside.

However, the script does have real moments of wit and invention. Lewis Hart, who like the other two supporting actors plays multiple roles, stands out because he makes all his roles believable. His terrorist feels dangerous because Hart exposes the vulnerability of this character.

Adam Tomkins and Adrienne Zitt provide strong support. Tomkins is brilliant at accents and has real menace when needed. Zitt, although underused, supports the story well as an effective put upon wife.

This play has some interesting current themes – surveillance, terrorism, press ethics – more exploration of these themes could have made this comedy into the electrifying thriller it yearns to be.

Gareth Ireland; “The Public Reviews”