

## ACT Theatre's *Double Indemnity* is Double the Noir Fun

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by [Audrey](#)



"I'm gonna bone you right here, baby, see?" Carrie Paff and John Bogar in ACT's production of *Double Indemnity*. Photo: Chris Bennion

It's the last week of David Pichette and R. Hamilton Wright's adaptation of [Double Indemnity at ACT Theatre](#), so this Wednesday through Sunday are your remaining chances to catch the play during its world premiere run. This is also ACT's 2011 season closer, and it's a noirish doozy that moves along at a fairly fast-paced clip. Here we go!

I'm not familiar with the husband-murdering trial of [Ruth Snyder](#) and Judd Gray in 1927 ("New York's Crime of the Century"), nor the eight-part magazine serial by pulp writer extraordinaire James M. Cain in 1936, nor his further novelization of the crime in 1943. But what I have seen—and what any adaptation of the work will be compared to—is Billy Wilder and Raymond Chandler's 1944 genre-

defining film noir. If anything, the film's outlook is darker and more nihilistic, but perhaps that's a product of its time: in 1944, the entire world was black and white, and now we got all kinds of colors.

As directed by ACT's Artistic Director Kurt Beattie, *Double Indemnity* the play is longer than the film (2 hours and 10 minutes, with intermission) and features only five actors taking on ten roles—a combined ensemble from both the Puget Sound and the Bay Area. The cast is led by Seattle's John Bogar as disgruntled insurance salesman Walter Huff and San Francisco's Carrie Paff as femme fatale Phyllis Nirlinger, who tempts Huff to come to the amoral side and knock off her old man.

Pichette and Wright's dialogue is sharp, especially the scenes in the insurance office with tart-tongued actor Richard Ziman, but nothing compares to the ratatat of Wilder and Chandler. Bogar reminds me both physically and aurally of Jason Sudekis, so there's not the heat necessary with Paff that Barbara Stanwyck had with Fred MacMurray.

In fact, the ACT production's, um, acting is very nearly overshadowed by the completely amazing rotating set care of Thomas Lynch, who must make the space work as a ship, office, parlor, train, and boudoir. Paff's slinky, to-die-for trophy wife frocks are care of costume designer Annie Smart. With *Double Indemnity*, you get all the sexy pantsuits and hip flasks you want. Everyone is horrible to everyone, because people are terrible creatures. There is nothing new under the sun.

And here is where I once again give my ACT Pro Tips: [Tickets are pay-what-you-will](#) everyday, day of show, in person at the box office only, starting at 1 p.m.; meanwhile, the [ACTPass](#) allows you see any show you want for only \$25 a month.