

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN TODAY

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The West Australian TODAY

TELEVISION: IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN. P5

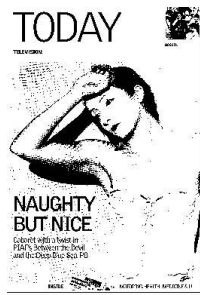


GOSSIP: The kids from Stumdog Millionaire visit Disneyland. P3

NAUGHTY BUT NICE

Cabaret with a twist in PIAF's Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea. P8

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Calendar girls in cabaret



STEPHEN BEVIS

The year 1927, at the height of the Roaring Twenties, was a very good one. An annus mirabilis, as a more cheerful Queen Elizabeth might say, it marked the high-water mark of a decade of great technological, cultural and political change between the end of World War I and the 1929 share market crash that launched the Great Depression.

Television had just been invented and the world appeared to shrink as Charles Lindbergh made the first solo non-stop transatlantic flight. The first full-length "talkie", *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson, marked the end of the silent movie era.

As well as being the title of a 1980s one-hit-wonder Australian pop band, 1927 also proves an apt name for a barnstorming British theatre company that pays irreverent homage to silent films in its show *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* — a fusion of live music, surreal animation, cabaret and schlock-horror contemporary fairytales.

Co-founded by writer, director and actor Suzanne Andrade with fellow English animator and designer Paul Barritt, 1927 is perhaps the only theatre company named after a calendar year. On the phone from London, Andrade likes to joke that theatre companies named after years have a 100 per cent success rate.

In the two years since Andrade and Barritt created *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, they have gathered critical acclaim and full houses from the Edinburgh

Festival to the Sydney Opera House.

The pair toy with the sensibilities of the silent film and music hall to concoct a theatrical cabaret of bizarre vignettes, 10 weird, self-devised diabolical modern fairytales suggestive of the twisted aesthetics of Tim Burton, *The Tiger Lillies*, Edward Gorey and Herk Harvey.

As Andrade puts it, the company tries to reinvent old idioms to tell stories for modern audiences. "We borrow from the 1920s or 30s and the whole show looks rather like an early animation or old silent film."

The tone is semi-satirical, she says. "The stories all poke a bit of fun in absurd ways."

The one-hour show is notable for the sly interaction of Andrade and fellow actor Esme Appleton with Barritt's animated scenes as if their characters are trapped in the film.

Accompanied in silent-film style by Lillian Henley on piano, Andrade and Appleton appear in various guises, most notably as two stitched-up sisters in white make-up, demure dresses and affected plummy accents. But their malevolent civility peels away to reveal nursery-rhyme horrors.

The devilry and mischief-making in the show takes some inspiration from the Austrian myth of *Gruss Vom Krampus*, an incarnation of the devil who visits naughty children passed over by the benevolent Santa.

"We set up this image of prim and proper but then you scratch beneath the surface to reveal something darker," Andrade says.

In various apocalyptic tales, a respectable suburb is horrified when all the housewives catch the clap,

rebellious gingerbread men slaughter a pastry chef, and murderous twin sisters find a playmate from the audience after their parents die.

"Audience interaction is always a bit scary for people but this one is genuinely quite terrifying because the sisters can be really frightening," Andrade says. "We have had some poor, frightened people on stage but it is all in good fun for the rest of the audience."

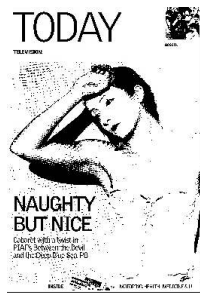
Andrade, 28, began her stage career as a performance poet and stand-up comedian. Her collaborations with Barritt began when he heard some of her offbeat segments on BBC radio and tracked her down to suggest her poetry and his animated projections could make beautiful music together.

Their first public effort as part of a literary cabaret at the 2006 Edinburgh Fringe Festival was less than auspicious. "One night actually no one came," Andrade says. "We ended up going to the pub. It gave us the determination to go away and come up with our own show and really storm it next year."

The pair assembled the 1927 team and slowly hammered *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* into shape over 18 months of workshops, studio work and performances.

The show premiered at the 2007 Edinburgh Festival, where it was a huge success with sell-out shows, rave reviews and a bunch of awards.

Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea is at the Playhouse Theatre from tomorrow night to March 7.



Sly interaction: Esme Appleton, left, with Suzanne Andrade in *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*.

WHAT'S ON TODAY

Revolt of the Mannequins: Perth city shopfronts all day.

Mobile Sewing Company: Roaming through the Murray Street Mall, 11am-2pm.

The Nargun and the Stars: EARTH's theatre and puppetry at the Regal, 7pm. Meet the creatures, 8pm.

Samuel Beckett: Fragments: The Octagon Theatre, 7.30pm.

The Year of Magical Thinking: Black Swan State Theatre Company at Dolphin Theatre, 7.30pm.

The New Electric Ballroom: Druid Theatre Company at the Playhouse, 7.30pm.

Antigone: ThinIce at the Subiaco Arts Centre, 8pm.

Seckou Keita SKQ: Music at Beck's Music Box, 8.30pm.

Ballet at the Quarry: WA Ballet at the Quarry Amphitheatre, 8.30pm.

Films: Lemon Tree (Somerville); **Shall We Kiss?** (Joondalup), 8.30pm.