

Hitchcock's blonde ambitions

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ACCORDING to two of his biographers, Donald Spoto and Patrick McGilligan, the great film director Alfred Hitchcock had a thing about beautiful blondes to the point of an unhealthy obsession.

Some sources have claimed that he improperly involved himself in up-and-coming actresses' lives, especially if they were blondes, using his considerable Hollywood clout to positively influence – or blight, as the case may have been – their careers.

For those who do not remember what he looked like, Hitchcock at the pinnacle of his career was a man in his 50s to his 70s, balding and obese.

However, like clues in a murder mystery, much based on opinions of people who have their own axes to grind, it is hard to sift fact from scuttlebutt.

And this is where Terry Johnson's play comes in. The British playwright has taken the various mysterious and troubling strands of Hitchcock's life and turned them into an amusingly intriguing piece of theatre, *Hitchcock Blonde*, now being staged by the peninsula's

own theatre company, Factory Space, at Star of the Sea Theatre, Manly.

The play takes known facts about Hitchcock, his movie plots, adds a large dose of speculation and innuendo and mixes in audacious try-ons and then presents the melange in time zones split between 1919 and 1959. The play is also set roughly in the present.

It includes quasi-archival clips of film specially shot for the production.

A typically Hitchcockian plot point – or, as he called it, a “MacGuffin” – is that in 1959 he was in pre-production for *Psycho*, probably his most famous and most referenced film. In *Hitchcock Blonde* he is auditioning the stand-in who will play Janet Leigh's corpse in the infamous shower scene.

What we have here is a witty pastiche of tongue-in-cheek speculation, beginning with a lost cache of allegedly unknown Hitchcock films and the journey to find them.

The play's director, Roz Riley, has suggested that the appeal for the audience is how the pieces of the jigsaw end up fitting together, mimicking a Hitchcock thriller.

“The play contains real clues as well as red herrings,” she said.



Actress Belinda Marques plays Hitchcock's 1959 blonde.

“The (stage) presence of Hitchcock himself (played by Steven McGrath) and the beautifully evocative cinematography which presents flickering, silent, black-and-white images of the 1919 blonde (Amelia Foxton) add to the experience.”

This play is likely to satisfy the theatregoer on a straightforward, mystery-solving level, but its real appeal lies for those who love films, and Hitchcock films in particular, and are knowledgeable about them,

spotting the MacGuffins along the way.

The cast consists of Amelia Foxton as the 1919 blonde; Belinda Marques as the 1959 blonde; Eleni Schumacher as Nicola; Geoff Cartwright as Alex; and Steven McGrath as Alfred Hitchcock.

□ Star of the Sea theatre, cnr Collingwood St and Iluka Ave, Manly. For bookings phone 9439 1906; until April 26, 7.30pm Thu-Sat, matinees 3pm Sundays and Saturday.