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## Entertainment :: Theatre

### The Big Knife

by Daniel Scheffler

EDGE Contributor

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The golden age of Hollywood presents only the best of the best in everything you can possibly imagine, from cars, to homes, to fancy whisky. But with everything in life, too much is always too much. And so in The Roundabout Theatre's **"The Big Knife"** the price of fame in mid last century is ever so high, but the glossy rewards, regardless of what you've done to your friends, are ever so alluring.

So what "The Big Knife" does so immaculately is remind enthused theatregoers, even the cynical ones, that fame, as in the lyrics of David Bowie's latest song "The Stars (Are Out Tonight)," is not in any way what it is seems and that the famed often want to return to a natural state before the fame.

Written by Clifford Odets the play reveals a delicious, almost "US Weekly," spiel of a New York theatre actor who's headed west to find his spotlight, hard on and possibly himself in Hollywood. But as these things go, Charlie (played by crowd favorite Bobby Cannavale -- who's a Tony Award nominee again and again) entraps himself with all this prosperous bounty.

Unsure of how to find freedom of the snare, the story kicks off with Charlie grossly, and hysterically, interrogated by the proverbial gossip columnist of a certain age. Neat and together, bitchy and underhand in the slyest fashion is this columnist, Patty Benedict (played with perfect derision by Brenda Wehle), seeking answers about Charlie's complicated marriage to his never-a-bimbo fabulous wife Marion (played by the outstanding Marin Ireland, a Tony Award nominee).

Her female persona in contrast to the masculine energy of the entire play comes across as a speck of white on a black background and heightens the idea that boys will be boys -- in every sense of that overly used cliché.



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Marin Ireland and Bobby Canavale (Source: Joan Marcus)

The role of Marion in Charlie's life becomes central to the theme of "know thyself" in the play and as Charlie's demise and self-doubt swell, the room quickly becomes a night in August in Manhattan -- sweaty, expired and gelatinous. This role as savior, as ringer of a self-assessment bell, and as constant reminder of rational thinking becomes more blatantly obvious throughout the play, Charlie further slips through his own fingers as Marion tries harder to have an effect on him. Again the play so smartly uses a female character to fly the red flag to our lost anti-hero Charlie, but the poor sod cannot see past his possibly flaccid member and tumbler glass.

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As

the studio execs eat his soul Charlie signs a deal to continue to work for Marcus Hoff (played by Richard Kind who the audience loved and so religiously hung on his every word) although his wife was to leave him if he couldn't break free from his contractual bilboes. She had already moved out to the holiday home at this point anyway, so Charlie desperately tries to fight for her, caving under the charms and snake oils of the studio and not trusting his own instincts.

But nothing could be that simple of course and Hoff, with his minion Smiley Coy (played by Reg Rogers), use their insider knowledge and dirt on Charlie to force him to sign this deal. Charlie had been involved in a hit-and-run accident, something that Charlie's best friend, Buddy Bliss (played



Director Derek Cianfrance's newest film, "The Place Beyond The Pines" is epic in scope - covering two generations of cops & criminals in Schenectady, NY. EDGE spoke to the director about how his film, which stars Ryan Gosling & Bradley Co...



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