

# EIF 2014: Helen Lawrence, King's Theatre, Review

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Film Noir meets modern technology and the consequences are both thought provoking and impressive.

'Stylish' is the sort of term one might casually use to describe a lady's hat, but in the hands of Stan Douglas, Chris Haddock, Kevin McAllister and their colleagues it becomes new minted and thoroughly re-invigorated.

'Helen Lawrence' takes a slice of post World War Two Canadian history and uses it as both background to a dark tale of revenge and corruption and commentary on times that are at times remarkably like our own.

Using a combination of live action, simultaneous filmed action and projection, 'Helen Lawrence' is a technical triumph supporting some fine acting.

Lisa Ryder's Helen Lawrence seemed a little hesitant at first; as well she might be, entering the underbelly of a corrupt and corruptible city.

The pace quickened, however, as she and we gradually discovered that the man who had killed her husband was running an illegal

betting operation in a veteran's hostel in an insalubrious part of town, dominated by Buddy Black (Allan Louis).

Buddy's various operations have attracted the interest of the local police, in the shape of Chief James Muldoon (Ryan Hollyman) and Sergeant Leonard Perkins (Greg Ellwand), whose greed-fuelled machinations spell trouble for all in Hogan's Alley.

More dark than noir, Douglas and Haddock's creation deals with race, gender and class as much as it dwells on the faults of all humanity. At times with the qualities of an ambitious graphic novel, 'Helen Lawrence' both re-creates the recent past and points toward our continuing concerns.

A real achievement on many levels, 'Helen Lawrence' creates its own brand of theatricality that owes as much to today's technology as it does to acting and directorial tradition.

As the train carrying both Helen and her intended victim away from tragedy toward a possible other one, we are left to applaud what Canadian Stage has given us here.



Allan Louis and Greg Ellwand in 'Helen Lawrence'.  
Photo by David Cooper