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Greig's destructive "Creditors" is a vicious treat

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Chris Nugent

Creditors by August Strindberg in a new version by David Greig, produced by C Company

Rating: ★★★★★

Behind every great woman stands a broken man. Or a string of broken men. Men crippled and discarded by vampiric women who take all they have to give. In David Greig's darkly comic version of [August Strindberg's](#) 1888 play 'Creditors,' the checks and balances of gender politics are writ large and neither sex emerges particularly well. Less Pygmalion's with their stony Galatea's, men are more likely to be patriarchal Victor Frankenstein's, driven to despair by the monster they created out of love. A vain, flirtatious, unfaithful monster who doesn't respect them, despite all they've sacrificed to give them life. Unflinching in its portrayal of the destructive forces at the heart of the gender blame game, Greig's thought provoking 'Creditors' offers an insightful interrogation of gender, love and of Strindberg himself.

In a contemporary, cultured world of artists and academics two men sit in a hotel room. Here the impressionable Adolph, a former painter with marital difficulties, has found a new lease of life as a sculptor thanks to his new found friend, Gustav. Conversation switches from art to love and from there to the emasculating of Adolph by his wife Tekla. Part muse, part whore, part sister, part vampire, Tekla embodies all the dangers and desires men fear in the feminine. As both men set about testing Tekla's loyalty, secrets emerge and choices are made as both sexes reason out the unreasonable.

Neatly divided into three acts, with a reveal that comes as no surprise, Greig's potent script derives much of its power from its ruthless exploration of men, women and their co-dependent, mutually destructive relationships. With each act functioning as a duologue, director Aoife Spillane-Hinks ensures performances are focused on bringing Greig's razor sharp writing to the fore, with ideas taking precedent over character. Despite this, Kevin C Olohan gives a solid performance as the man boy Adolph, in what is undoubtedly a difficult role to balance. Ronan Leahy as Gustav is utterly compelling as a wolf in sheep's clothing intent on destruction. As is Susan Bracken as Tekla, the source of their desire and distress, being particularly impressive during the final act.

In 'Creditors' what men fear most is not so much what women think of them as what other men think of them, their self-image influenced more by the opinion of other men than by the women they claim to love. Yet if, as a result, Strindberg's misogyny is tempered by this criticism of male vanity and insecurity, women are still not to be trusted. "Underneath the nice clothes I'm completely naked," Tekla says at one point. The same holds true for C Company's production of 'Creditors.' For underneath Greig's fine writing something nakedly destructive lurks, seen in this brave production that has the power to engage, to provoke and to disturb.

'Creditor's by August Strindberg in a new version by David Greig, produced by C Company, runs at The New Theatre until February 6th

For information on times and tickets visit [The New Theatre](#)



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