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## M (Manchester)

Date Reviewed: 3 July 2009  
WOS Rating: ★★★★★

Venue: Taurus  
Where: Manchester

Take one 1950s thriller, then twist it and set it in modern day Manhattan. That's exactly what [Vertigo Theatre Productions](#) have done with *M*; their take on the [Frederick Knott](#) play and the [Alfred Hitchcock](#) thriller, *Dial M For Murder*.



The cast of *M*

Setting the plot in the present, along with all the accoutrements of modern life, this show cleverly updates a classic thriller without losing the suspense built into the original story. It's still good to spend time waiting for characters to get their just deserts.

[Craig Hepworth](#) and [Adele Stanhope](#) play siblings, Tony and Margot 'M' Wendice and are both excellent. Stanhope is convincing as the beautiful but morally corrupt Margot while Hepworth portrays the highs and lows of his character with great skill.

The rest of the company give fine performances with [Rick Carter's](#) Mark Halliday and [Emma Willcox's](#) Lisa Hudson standing out from the crowd. All the performers are believable, and helped by strong characterisation within the writing.

Within the small, intimate and at times claustrophobic performance space at Taurus, you are never more than ten feet from the actors making it a very intense experience, perfectly suiting the thriller genre. The action takes place almost within touching distance; and this closeness, along with the fact that all the scenes are set indoors, brings an intensity to the play that would be lost in a larger setting.

Vertigo's set, simply consists of a sofa and a bar, but it is enough to convey the different locations just by the use of curtains and throws. This simplistic approach enhances rather than detracts from the experience.

Hepworth and Stanhope are also the writers and producers of the play. They have done an excellent job in turning the original storyline into something modern and fresh. They have been influenced by the likes of *Cruel Intentions* and *Gossip* but the piece ends up being a homage to these teen films, as opposed to borrowing directly from them.

Vertigo have a target audience for this show of the 18 – 35 age group, but this does a disservice to them. *M* is marvelous and well worth seeing, whatever your age.

-Helen Jones

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