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“Forever Bound” at Atwater Village Theatre



Rob Nagle and Emily Goss in **Steve Apostolina's** *Forever Bound*, directed by Ann Hearn Tobolowsky, now playing through June 16 at Atwater Village Theatre, 3269 Casitas Ave in Los Angeles. Photo by Kathy Flynn.

At lights up, a firmly erect young woman walks a seemingly set number of paces in half light from stage right to center, turns and walks back off as her light fades. Mystery tickles the audience at the outset of **Steve Apostolina's** eighty-five minute wonder, *Forever Bound*. The playwright takes his time in revealing the salient plot elements of this hilarious, grippingly ink-black comedy bit by hard won bit. The scene shifts to the roach-infested Los Angeles apartment of Edmund (the always excellent **French Stewart**), a down-at-the-heels rare book dealer hovering at the edge of insolvency and looming eviction. Edmund is a sad case, a furrowed-brow intellectual, a writer with an unfinished book somewhere. He is pulled back from the brink when his friend and fellow book dealer, Shep (the play-

wright Steve Apostolina), buys a sought-after book from Edmund, thus providing a short respite. Shep, a lively ball of energy, is an ex-military man who comes up with a dicey plan to solve Edmund's insolvency.



Playwright Steve Apostolina and French Stewart in Apostolina's *Forever Bound*, directed by Ann Hearn Tobolowsky, now playing through June 16 at Atwater Village Theatre, 3269 Casitas Ave in Los Angeles. Photo by Kathy Flynn.

As the play progresses, the young woman (**Emily Goss**), reappears in a confined area stage right in the company of a man (tall, imposing **Rob Nagle**) who is instructing her in classical literature with tutorial strictness. He calls her Miranda. The playwright's pace of revelation is too engrossing, too delicious to reveal anymore of the plot.



French Stewart in Steve Apostolina's *Forever Bound*, directed by Ann Hearn Tobolowsky, now playing through June 16 at Atwater Village Theatre, 3269 Casitas Ave in Los Angeles. Photo by Kathy Flynn.

The actors, under the incisive, fast paced direction of **Ann Hearn Tobolowsky**, deliver crisp, nuanced performances that are at once both searing and emotionally gripping while dancing on the knife edge of riotous comedy. The opening night crowd left the auditorium with smiles and laughter looking at one another in the joy of a shared experience. That kind of camaraderie is rare.



Emily Goss in **Steve Apostolina's** *Forever Bound*, directed by Ann Hearn Tobolowsky, now playing through June 16 at Atwater Village Theatre, 3269 Casitas Ave in Los Angeles. Photo by Kathy Flynn.

One of the joys of *Forever Bound* is the abundance of tickling references to the culture of graphic novels, comic books and films, which is reinforced by the scenic design of **Pete Hickok** with posters on the wall and volume upon volume of books to be seen in Edmund's apartment on shelves, in boxes and on an improvised coffee table made of a board sitting upon crates. Another is the profusion of literary references, some familiar and some not, that flesh out the relationship between Miranda and her tutor. The production benefits from the talents of lighting designer **Bosco Flanagan**, sound designer **Michael Lawshé**, and costume designer **Joanie Coyote**. The stage is deftly managed by **Amanda Sauter**.

Sankalpa Productions' presentation of *Forever Bound* is a bona fide must-see, which runs through June 16 at Atwater Village Theatre, 3269 Casitas Ave in Los Angeles.