

## *The Stage: 'Times Square Angel'*

By WALTER GOODMAN

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Red wig aflame, sequins aglitter, Mr. Busch struts, slinks, swivels and sashays his way through the part of a doll from the streets of New York, circa 1940's, who becomes a high-paid, high-stepping stripper only to learn, at the last moment, that money and fame aren't everything. Although he is abetted by an energetic cast, this is pretty much one man's one-woman show. Mr. Busch's is a special sort of act, and he is funny in that special way, whether it's thrusting forth a bony hip for sexual allure, blinking eyelashes that are so long they send a breeze through the theater, doing a snappy routine to "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" with a lightly clad Santa (Robert Carey), tossing candy to the audience ("And this one's for you"), slipping into a quick imitation of Carmen Miranda or delivering in his smoky voice lines like: "Rich people gotta stay rich. Poor people gotta get rich."

Like the funky costumes of Debra Tennenbaum, the situations and the lines seem to have been picked up in the storeroom of a studio back lot. "I'm pretty," says the definitely un-pretty Irish, smearing on the lipstick. "I'm a pretty girl." The dialogue is pseudo-hardboiled in a show where everything is pseudo-something: "The shelf life for a dame's looks is as short as a can of olives." "Can the hearts and flowers." The jokes are groaners. Irish's sometime beau, Dexter Paine 3d, says, "I can't wait for you to meet my mother and the rest of the Paines." Irish says of an imaginary grandfather, "It was he who cremated our family fortune."

There are passages that make you wish Mr. Busch had brought in a co-writer, but that's beside the point, not that there is a point. Under the direction of Kenneth Elliott, things zip right along. Even the flat scenes, of which there are quite a few, go by fast. Arnie Kolodner, in white tails and halo, is the sort of angel who could sell you the Brooklyn Bridge and would certainly try, and Theresa Marlowe and Meghan Robinson are engaging as readily recognizable New York types who find their way in and out of Irish's affections.

Mr. Busch does not make much contact with the other characters. He is too busy at stage front and center, making up to the audience. He flounces along a narrow line between too much and much too much, but manages not to burlesque the burlesque. By the end, Irish, that tough broad, touches a spot soft, or maybe it's just the memory of all those B-movies that has softened us up. "Irish, you got beauty," says the good guy she left behind, "but you're missing one thin - heart." This show has a heart of gold. It concludes with a scene being repeated like a movie reel that has run out of control. That's not a bad description of the whole send-up.