



## 'Cabaret' hits stage with talented cast

by [Mike Blasky](#), The State News

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James “Rusty” Broughton is the face of the MSU Department of Theatre’s production of “Cabaret.”

In fact, he’s the “two-face.”

Broughton, a theater junior, dazzled the audience on opening night Tuesday with his dual performance as the meek, quiet American writer Cliff Bradshaw, and also as the flamboyantly fabulous emcee of the “Kit Kat Klub,” a 1930s German nightclub.

The show is set in Berlin just before the Nazi party’s rise to power. The story begins with Bradshaw’s arrival to Germany and his search for inspiration for a novel he plans to write.

He takes up residence in an apartment complex managed by Fraulein Schneider (Jaclyn Hofmann, a master’s theater student) to find some privacy.

These plans are disrupted after he attends a show at the “Kit Kat Klub” and meets English performer Sally Bowles (theater junior Jennifer Shafer).

Although the cast is phenomenal, it’s Broughton who really shines. It starts with his costume, which was outrageous.

Half of his face was smeared with makeup, the other half was plain. Half of his hair was curled, the other half slicked back and greasy. Half of his suit was plain and respectable, the other half sleeveless and pantless.

This costume never changes. Even when Broughton is playing the shy Bradshaw, his outrageous half is always visible to audiences.

This is distracting at first, but it's a testament to Broughton's acting ability — he changes characters so quickly that, with a blink of an eye and a simple haunch of the shoulders, he becomes someone else.

The rest of the cast deserves credit, too. Most of them played multiple characters, with theater senior Tayler Ansel playing more than five.

It's not the type of play where the actors get much of a break, either. Although the main action takes place on center stage, there are four minisets above and to the sides of the main stage where the rest of the characters “hang out,” almost always in the eye of the audience — even during costume changes.

When you're performing virtually nonstop for more than two hours, by the last day of the show on Sunday every cast member will likely need a few mental weeks off.

And instead of flowers, by Sunday Shafer might need a few bags of lozenges instead. Vocally, she stole the show with a range of fantastic singing numbers.

Although her acting was great, especially in a couple heart-wrenching scenes with Broughton's Bradshaw late in the play, her biggest contribution to the show was her voice.

Overall, “Cabaret” was a very entertaining show. The acting was great, the dancing numbers were fun (if not overly spectacular) and the singers never seemed to miss a beat.

Director and assistant theater professor Rob Roznowski deserves credit. His artistic choices were bold, but they paid off big time.

