

Lady sings the blues with bitter-sweet wit

Courier Mail 21/4/89

Cabaret

Blues in the Night
Leah Cotterell
Metro Arts Theatre
By NEVILLE MEYERS

WHAT do Leah Cotterell, Cole Porter and Billie Holiday have in common?

The answer is, a feeling for a good song, especially for a song that explores the bitter-sweet quality of romantic love.

In Cotterell's case, there is an added element of ideology — women seem to have been much more disadvantaged than men by love's illusions.

Blues in the Night, which opened on Wednesday at the Metro Arts Theatre, explores these themes with humor.

Throughout, Cotterell shows an excellent sense of timing and the ability to bring credibility and humor to her material.

Her gritty blues quality and phrasing give a personal meaning to every lyric she touches.

Apart from the songs there is an artful, witty and illuminating monologue which Cotterell scripted.

The two-act song review is thankfully light on ideology and strong on entertainment.

The first act, *Love Junkies*, opens with the Harold Arlen tune, *Blues in the Night*, which depicts the mean, one-way street of romantic illusion.

It is a riveting beginning, but slightly over-sung, possibly out of sheer nervousness on the singer's part.

Cotterell eases into a soulful ballad, Dinah Washington's former hit, *I Want to be Loved*, then Cole Porter's *Love for Sale*, and four Billie Holiday classics, *Lover Man*, *Easy Living*, *Don't Explain* and *You've Changed*.

She ends the set with a defiant up-tempo blues song, *Baby, Get Lost*.



LEAH COTTERELL in cabaret
with *Blues in the Night* at Metro
Arts Theatre, City.

Glad to be Bad is the theme of the second act, which includes *Fine Brown Frame*, *No Moon at All* and *Love Being Here with You*, among other classics.

Pianist Brendan St Ledger and bassist Mike Taime provide excellent backing and the lighting and sound enhance the intimate, cabaret atmosphere.

Blues in the Night will play nightly until Saturday, and for two matinees on Sunday.