

Heavy weather out in space

IT is not just two cosmonauts who are lost in space. Much the same could be said of this pretentious play by Scottish playwright, David Greig. The Cosmonaut's Last Message To The Woman He Once Loved In The Former Soviet Union, to give the full title, is about lost, lonely people searching for their missing link. Greig extends the long arm of coincidence to a giant forklift that trundles around picking up men and women and forcing them into encounters, linkages and connections.

The play's voyage takes two and a half hours, travelling to outer space, a mountain garden in Provence, an Edinburgh police station and a Soho basement bar. In this instance, travel broadens no minds. Greig dreams up points of contact between those two cosmonauts lost in space for years — Nastasja (an erotic dancer), a Scottish civil servant, a UFO researcher, a speech therapist and more. A steady flicker of theatrical tension is maintained as you wait to see how he stitches his patchwork together. The final shape is very conventional.

Vicky Featherstone's touring production and Georgia Sion's dull, min-

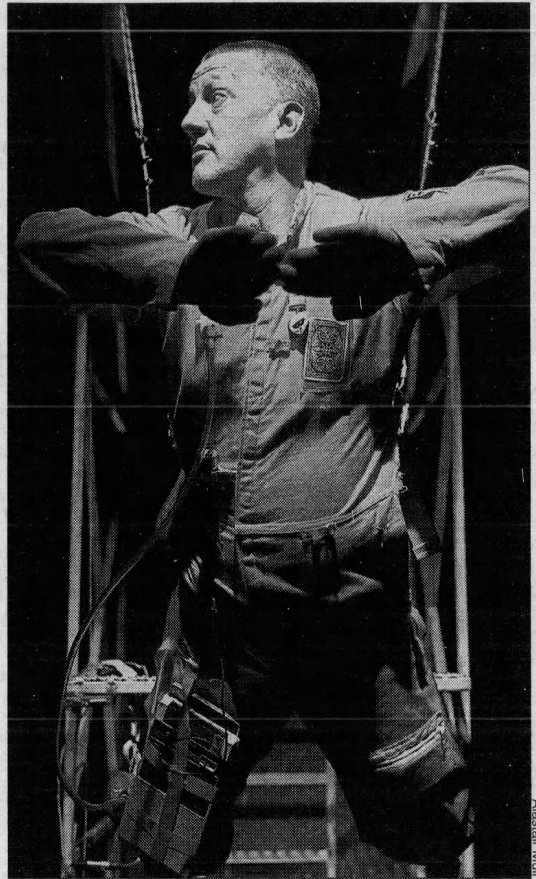
**The Cosmonaut's Last
Message To The Woman
He Once Loved In The Former
Soviet Union** ○

Lyric Studio, W6

NICHOLAS DE JONGH

imal design are hopelessly defeated by Greig's scope. The cosmonauts swing separately in harnesses attached to separate scaffolding frames. The stage set is Brechtianly decorated with a curtain, irritatingly pulled backwards and forwards during blackouts. There is scant sense of location. The swollen text, some of it bizarrely set as if lines of poetry (Methuen £4.99), explains why the production is hard to follow. Russians, French and Norwegians all tend to have Scottish accents. The efficiency of the clunking parodies of high-ranking officialdom and sub-Pinterish pastiche succumbs to loquaciousness. Morag Hood and Daniele Lydon as bereft women affectingly rise above the text's heavy weather.

●Until 29 May. Box office: 0181 741 2311



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Heading into orbit: Andy Smart in *The Cosmonaut's Last Message*

Cosmonaut Standard de Jongh

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