

ThreeWeeks

EDINBURGH



The Awesome Fringe: Meet the musical Axis



JESSICA SHERR



FIGS IN WIGS

CtheFestival



Rosemary George
**Stupid Cupid:
The Girl Group Era**
10-16 Aug 7.15pm C nova



No Prophet Theatre Company
Chatroom
30 Jul-25 Aug 8.20pm C nova



Five Point One with C theatre
Notoriously Yours
31-25 Aug 8.00pm C south



HookHitch Theatre
**The Despondent
Divorcée**
31 Jul-25 Aug 7.00pm C cubed



English Cabaret with C theatre
**Dreams of Peace
and Freedom**
31 Jul-25 Aug 7.45pm C south



Straylight Australia and Bee Loud
**The Road to
Skibbereen**
10-25 Aug 2.15pm C



Ben Conway presents
What a Gay Play
30 Jul-24 Aug 11.15pm C



Bricks and Mortar Theatre
Barge Baby
30 Jul-25 Aug 9.25pm C nova



Sally E Dean
**Something's in the
Living Room**
6-25 Aug 3.00pm C cubed



La Compañía Perpetua
The Make Up
10-16 Aug 12.25pm C



English Cabaret with C theatre
The Happy Prince
31 Jul-25 Aug 12.00pm C south



DEM Productions
Lysistrata
30 Jul-25 Aug 8.30pm C

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Renkow takes first comedy gong of the Fringe

We may only be a few days into the Festival, but we have a Fringe winner for you already. The finals of Amused Moose's annual new talent competition took place at theSpace @ Symposium Hall on Sunday, with Tim Renkow declared the overall winner.



Holly Walsh hosted the show, which went ahead despite two of the finalists being temporarily trapped in a lift just before it was due to start. Those two aspiring comics, Archie Maddocks and Don Tran, nevertheless performed well before a packed audience and industry panel, coming second and third in the final.

All three will now appear at an Amused Moose Comedy Awards Showcase later this year at London's Soho Theatre, alongside the winner of the other Amused Moose comedy competition that reaches its climax during the Festival, for slightly more established new talent.

The winner of that one will be announced on 17 Aug, meanwhile Renkow, who follows the likes of Sarah Millican and Jack Whitehall in winning the Amused Moose newbies prize, takes away a nice £1500 and his shiny moose trophy.

The other finalists this year were Kiri Pritchard McLean, Penella Mellor, Rob Auton and Brennan Reece.

Amused Moose Comedy Awards Gangshow is on at theSpace @ Symposium Hall on 19 Aug.

Amused Moose Comedy's Laughter Awards Final is on at theSpace @ Symposium Hall on 17 Aug.

More at www.amusedmoose.com

“Let’s talk” about the Edinburgh Book Festival



Ladies and gentlemen, let's talk. Though only when it's time for questions from the floor, we don't want any unruly disruptions during the always civil Edinburgh International Book Festival which kicks off this weekend, even if 'let's talk' is the headline of this year's programme

Announcing his line-up earlier this summer, Book Festival Director Nick Barley confirmed that the future of Scotland will be back on the agenda

this year as the big independence vote looms, though so will the two world wars, the Commonwealth, economic migration, society, identity, culture and media. “All aspects of communication” in fact.

Says Barley: “The Book Festival provides a crucial forum for dialogue, where we can listen to and learn from one another, particularly in this year of momentous events in Scotland. Our thought-provoking conversations with both authors and audiences will permeate through Charlotte Square Gardens as we welcome world-renowned writers and thinkers from many countries and cultures”.

Amongst those authors being welcomed will be Martin Amis, making his EIBF debut to launch his new novel ‘The Zone Of Interest’, and Haruki Murakami, who makes his first trip to Edinburgh to launch an English



edition of his latest work ‘Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki’. Also on hand will be George R R Martin, the American novelist best known for the ‘A Song Of Ice And Fire’ series, aka the books behind TV phenomenon ‘A Game Of Thrones’.

Plenty of familiar faces will also be returning to Charlotte Square Gardens for another Book Festival appearance this August, including Will Self, Richard Dawkins, Simon Armitage, Carol Ann Duffy and Julia Donaldson, the latter as part of the always top form children's programme that takes place during Edinburgh's literary fest.

Meanwhile, those bored of being “unbored” at the Fringe, and who feel the urge to pop along to the book zone during Edinburgh's festival month, will also find some familiar faces, most notably in the Babble On strand, put together by Fringe



favourite and occasional ThreeWeeks poem-writer Luke Wright, which will celebrate the British spoken word scene with appearances from the likes of Elvis McGonagall, Hollie McNish and Hannah Silva, and Phill Jupitus in Porky The Poet mode.

The Book Festival has also partnered with Fringe theatre veterans Grid Iron to stage a promenade production of four newly commissioned pieces of short fiction, for which Kei Miller, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Kamila Shamsie and Christos Tsiolkas have all been invited to reflect on the themes of identity and home in the form of letters. Those works have been adapted into ‘Letters Home’, which will be performed in Charlotte Square Gardens throughout August.

So, plenty to be getting on with then. This year's Book Festival runs from 9-25 Aug.

TW

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CARO WRITES>

So, it's now in full swing. Nothing can stop it now.
The Festival is well and truly under way.

It's hard to believe, isn't it? Well, I suspect it's especially hard to believe for those who are very much involved in it. They mostly decided around this time last year that they were going to bring a show to the Fringe this summer, but for many it will seem like only a few months have passed since then, a mere few weeks since Christmas, maybe ten days since they wrote their blurb for the Fringe Programme, a week since they began thinking about what their show would actually consist of, and about half a day since they started rehearsing. Actually, it might only be half a day since they started rehearsing, but the point is that it all comes around very quickly. For those who come back year in, year out, July is a very ephemeral thing that passes by in the blink of an eye.

It certainly was for me. The fact that it very recently turned into August caught me utterly by surprise, so caught up was I in looking through press releases, trawling the programmes for information on interesting shows, and preparing prose for publication. I thought I had ages to go, and then suddenly, it was the first day of shows, and my reviewers were out there creating work for me to edit, and the print deadline for our Week One issue was looming.

It was a good thing I did look through all those press packs and trawl all the programmes though, because it's meant I've been able to commission some very interesting articles from a broad variety of Festival-makers, and this magazine bears the fruit of that. This week we have loads of interviews for you to peruse: we've spoken to, in no particular order (actually, it is in order, the order in which they come in this edition): Tamsin Clarke, Figs In Wigs, cover stars Axis Of Awesome, Celia Pacquola, Jessica Sherr, The Neutrinots, Rob Winlow, David Bolger and David Lee Morgan. We've also chatted to the people behind Freestival and Forest Fringe, whilst on the interviews page, the Fringe's favourite 'French Man' Marcel Lucont interviews 'fellow' French Man Yacine Belhousse.

We also have a few columns for your delectation. The Nualas, returning to the Festival after a significant absence, reminisce about Fringes of old, Paul Nathan offers you his guide to street theatre, and Maddy Carrick gives tips on how to fill a small person's day at the Festival. And as if all that weren't enough, we've got a poem from Robin And Partridge and some bite size bits featuring BEASTS and Fascinating Aida.

Aside from all the features, of course, we have a batch of reviews for you, penned by this year's roving team of skilled and experienced writers. Though what you read here is just the start of it reviews wise, do sign up for our ThreeWeeks Daily email for a helping of new reviews every morning in your inbox.

You can, of course, trust our team to steer you towards what's good, but I would urge you (as I did previously, in the ThreeWeeks Preview Edition) not just to listen to our reviewers, or the next publication's reviewers. Listen to your gut, and go and see at least one show this week that doesn't have a photocopied review stapled to its flyer, a show that doesn't yet have a star count. There is a huge number of shows at this Festival, and it would be ludicrous, frankly, to only take advice on your viewing choices from people like us. Take a risk on a show with no publicity budget, and it might just pay off.

I hope you are all enjoying Week One. See you next week for more.

Caro @ ThreeWeeks

Letter To Edinburgh: from Doug Segal

I know what you're all thinking, where the hell is that Doug Segal, freaking people out with his mentalist skills? Well, he's not at the Festival with a brand new show this year people. He's not even in Scotland. Yet. But he did send Edinburgh this letter...

Hi. How are you?

I know I said I wouldn't contact you but... well... I miss you and I hear you're even thinking about leaving the UK. And I know the break was my decision but I just can't get you out of my head. Like I said when I decided we needed to have a break this year, it's not you it's me.

Our romance was so sudden, so overwhelming. I met you almost by accident rather than by design and it was electric. It felt like we'd been made for each other; we fell in love instantly. And what an incredible three years we had.

You showered me with praise, sell out shows and awards, but you also exhausted me. Physically. And mentally.

I explored every inch of your undulating body as I wound my way up you, down you and even inside you, as I accepted every additional chance offered me to perform for you.

In addition to my show I'd do anything up to three extra performances a day in you. You always left me exhilarated but spent. You

took me from a room above a pub to The Gilded Balloon and even to a sold out EICC.

But how could I hope to keep up with you indefinitely? And you could be cruel. I know we made up and it was business as usual, with you showering me with stars and praise by the end, but you made my life hell for the first ten days of August last year. I hated you. I loved you too.

You've never taken me to the cleaners the way you do so many people, I know that and I'm grateful, but one of the other things you gifted me was a tour which only finished a few weeks ago, and there was no time to write something new. How could I dare turn up on your door without a new offering?

I've filled my days since writing that new show and I tell myself it's for another tour but we both know it's really for you, don't we?

But... All my friends are with you now and it hurts, it hurts to see how excited and happy you are making them. Is this your revenge on me for the time I spent with the Brighton Fringe, and the Leicester and Glasgow Comedy Festivals?

They meant nothing to me, it was just shows. You know my heart belongs to you. Didn't I fly all the way from down South to spend my birthday with you this year?

So I guess what I'm building to is this - take me back?

I know I said I wouldn't even visit, but the fact is people have offered me money to come, though the truth is the money is just

an excuse. I'll be back with you from August 18 until the end.

Let's never part again.
I love you.
Doug x

Doug Segal is making a really bad job of taking a year off the Edinburgh Fringe by flying in to perform at the The Five Thirty Cabaret at The Famous Spiegeltent (18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24 Aug), Musical CID at Gilded Balloon (19 Aug), The Lock-In Cabaret at Voodoo Rooms (19 Aug) and Fest On Forth (Floor) at Harvey Nichols (24 Aug). More at www.dougsegal.co.uk.



A poem from Justice Radiator

We are Jeremy Steam-Irons and Clarence Pennywether. Together we are Justice Radiator. Poetry on patrol. Taking down injustice with word bullets. Open your minds - we are coming in.

If our poems can change the world, it would be wrong not to share them. That is why at considerable emotional cost to ourselves (as well as a sizeable financial cost to Clarence's father), we have brought ourselves to the Fringe. Some say it's self promotion. We say it's selfless promotion.



Justice Radiator and other characters appear in 'Robin And Partridge: Robin Dies At The End Of The Show' at the Pleasance Courtyard until 24 Aug.

ThreeWeeks have been kind enough to let us share some of our work. Although our ideas are usually communicated through spoken word - Jeremy wishes to be connected to the oral tradition, and Clarence is scared of pens - we've decided to embrace this opportunity with the written word. Watch out people's eyes! Hope you are wearing goggles, because these words are about to get dangerous.

FRINGE ENVIRONMENTALIST (Every time they shop, they buy a bag for life)
I care about the world and would give all my cash,
If it would save the Arctic and clear the sea of trash,
With a bigger wallet, I'd recycle all the litter,
Alas, I have no money, not a dime to fritter,
Only my ideas are big,
The stage can barely hold them,
They fill up all the seats,
That's why I haven't sold them,
Even when, to waste away the climate change deniers,
I spent £600 to pave the streets with flyers.

Act To Act: Marcel Lucont chats to Yacine Belhousse



Paris-based stand-up Yacine Belhousse, who supported Eddie Izzard on a recent French tour, is in Edinburgh this month to perform an all-English show for the very first time.

Though, of course, he’s not the only French comedian to make Edinburgh his summer home, oh no. A certain Marcel Lucont has been long flying the flag for La France in these parts for quite some time. So we asked Lucont to interview his fellow countryman as he headed towards the Festival City.

ML: Bienvenue Yacine. It must be as disappointing for you as it is for me that this interview must be conducted in a lesser language. What are your least favourite English words? For me, ‘hierarchical’ is up there. An old French word made even more difficult to pronounce in order for them to feel superior, appropriately enough.

YB: My least favourite English word is ‘papier mâché’, because when I say it properly with the French accent no-one understands. In French we say “PAAH- Pye-mash-ey”, but you already know that because you’re a compatriot. I love saying ‘thistle’ because it is hard for me to say it properly with my accent and I love challenges. My favourite is “flabbergasted”. I learned that from ‘Downtown Abbey’. What is your favourite French word?

ML: I do enjoy ‘pamplemousse’. I imagine to the deaf it may seem like a come-on. Certainly it is better than the English effort of ‘grapefruit’. We know it is a fruit, we know it is not a grape. Why name a thing by something it is, and something it is not? Anyway, will you be playing shows elsewhere in Britain after the Edinburgh Fringe? I can gladly give you a list of towns to avoid.

YB: Thank you very much! Which city is the English equivalent of Maubeuge?

ML: Ah, Maubeuge... Well, for another city whose architectural reshaping seems considerably worse than the Nazis’

own efforts, may I recommend Coventry?

YB: I am already very happy to perform at the Fringe and would be really proud to tour Britain too. But a question for you. I think that you have succeeded in the UK because you are very humble. But the French public campaign for your return each year; petitions go around. How about you answer their prayers and return to honour us with a show?

ML: Sure, I shall return in time. I go where I feel I am required, often where the culture is woefully lacking. Perhaps I will have time after my trip to Australia next year. But now another question for you. What is your opinion of deep-fried food?

YB: I strongly defend all the local food producers. Many small brands struggle in the market and I would like to see the European government make strong decisions to help the small companies of this variety of food. Or not.

ML: Perhaps I will ask you this again in three weeks time. Have you prepared methods - verbal or physical - for dealing with the often uncouth heckles of the British crowds?

YB: Heckling is based on a short sentence shouted loudly at the comedian in order to confuse or destabilise him. Right? My secret weapon is that I don’t understand English. So I am not destabilised. Though most of the English speaking audiences I have performed in front of have been so patient and so kind with me I feel very lucky and grateful.

ML: May I recommend ‘Late N Live’ to improve your English and Scottish colloquialisms? Perhaps bring a recording device, you may not fully take them in at the time. When dumbing down your show for the British audience, what was the part of it you regretted jettisoning the most?

YB: I have a sketch about people from French Quebec and I can’t talk about that because it is a language thing. You know, Quebec-French and France-French expressions.

ML: You must be truly disappointed that our show times clash, you 9.30pm and me 10pm. Will you be cutting one of yours short by 30 minutes to see mine, or will you simply catch it on the UK tour, September to December 2014?

YB: I have a better idea. I will follow you in every town where you go and I will perform a show, 30 mins before your show time in memory of Edinburgh. We’ll be MAV - Meilleur Amis à Vie.

ML: Your style is that of surrealism, of the myriad bizarre things British ‘culture’ has to offer. What is the strangest you have seen so far?

YB: The dragon statues in London. This is a little bit frightening, because most of the sculptures that I have seen in Paris are statues of naked people carrying fruits.

ML: Edinburgh is a notoriously tough festival, and you have no doubt heard tales of newcomers having to deal with the dilemma of just one audience member showing up to a show one night. In this instance, do you:

a) Continue the show with aplomb?

b) Continue the show begrudgingly, muttering occasionally that this friendless cretin should technically be paying far more money for what is essentially a private show?

c) Suggest an alternative French show at 10pm which, although undoubtedly sold out, may have one spare seat left due to illness and/or death

YB: I think I will invite this person to dinner and do my show around a good meal.

ML: In a world increasingly troubled by civil war,

mass inequality, overpopulation, religious intolerance, chronic global solipsism and rapid erosion of civil liberties, is laughter truly the best medicine?

YB: Yep. Sure. But no. I didn’t understand the question.

ML: No? OK, what is your favourite soup?

YB: I thought you’d never ask... My favourite kind of soup is slightly lukewarm. What is your favourite kind of rain? I’m starting to get used to drizzle.

ML: Of course, drizzle. A weather condition so commonplace in Britain they even put it in cakes. I am surprised it is not a kind of soup. But now you are accustomed, Edinburgh is the city for you. They have more words for it here than Eskimos for snow. While sheltering from it a man once attempted to tell me all of its names. After about 7 minutes of this I chose the drizzle instead. Anyway, that is that. May I be the first to say to you “merde”.

YB: Thank you! That is the French equivalent of ‘break a leg’ to wish you luck and success. Saying “shit” is an Old French tradition! In the Moliere period, when they were performing a theatrical play, the more successful the show the more horses in front of the venue, and so the more shit also. So “merde” my friend! And to do it the right way you have to answer “je prends” - “ I take it”.

‘Yacine Belhousse: Made In France’ is on at Pleasance Courtyard until 25 Aug.

‘Marcel Lucont Is’ is on at Pleasance Dome until 25 Aug.



You may not be familiar with the story of Manuela Saenz but you possibly should be. A revolutionary in the Latin American wars of independence, the history books often mainly refer to her as the mistress of ‘The Liberator’ Simon Bolivar, but that wildly underplays her life and her role in the revolution.

Setting to put that right is Popelei Theatre’s Tamsin Clarke, who has written and directed ‘Manuelita’, exploring Saenz’s life through stories, comedy, physical theatre and live music from award winning Colombian guitarist Camilo Menjura. We spoke to Clark about the subject of her play and how she’s transformed the revolutionary’s story into a piece of theatre.

TW: For the uninitiated, tell us a bit about Simon Bolivar and Manuela Saenz. Why are they so important in Latin American history?

TC: Bolivar and Saenz were revolutionaries during the Latin American wars of independence in the 19th century. Bolivar is known

“You’re so vain you probably think this show is about you” say Figs In Wigs, the self-declared “lowbrow answer to avant-garde”. The popular Fringe troupe are back exploring the “new form of narcissism” that’s fuelled by social media, and the short attention spans caused by an internet overflowing with people and content, with a fast-paced variety show starring, well, the Figs. Who’d want the share the limelight?

Over the hour the group turn their hands to a number of new genres, many for the first time, including comedy, dance, music, circus and even visual art. We donned our best wigs and cornered the Figs to find out more.

TW: So, I have a feeling your show this year might be all about me. Tell us more about the concept behind ‘Show Off’.

Figs: Actually you’re wrong, it’s all about us. ‘Show Off’ is looking at the modern day fixation with social media and the self-obsession it breeds. We felt, what better way to explore this new form of narcissism than to make a show entirely about ourselves? As well as this, Figs In Wigs have always

Tamsin Clarke

as 'The Liberator' and was head of the liberating forces. Although now revered, when he died in 1830 he was rejected by his peers and sent into exile. Saenz's story is less easy to trace, because she was written out of the history books of the time, not least for being an ardent supporter of Bolivar and his revolution. She was a strong, progressive woman and a true believer in the fight for freedom.

TW: Until very recently Saenz was very often remembered primarily as Bolivar's mistress. But that greatly underplays her role doesn't it?

TC: Yes it does. Initially Manuela worked as a spy for the independence cause, even before she met Bolivar. later she joined the Colombian army, making it to the rank of colonel, a huge achievement for a woman at the time.

TW: Why do you think the history books have tended to play down Saenz's role in the revolutionary world in which she lived? Is it another example of mainstream history focusing on the men in the story?

TC: Basically, yes. You see it all over the world, throughout history. But in Latin America, as a catholic continent,

a married woman who embarks on an illicit affair with the Liberator is going to be very unpopular!

TW: What drew you to Saenz's story?

TC: I read an article which called her the 'harlot of the Americas'. I thought that was a pretty huge title to give someone, but when I read on I realised it all seemed a little out of context. And that made me want to explore it more, to find the truth.

TW: What research did you do before turning that story into theatre?

TC: I travelled to Colombia, Ecuador and Peru in search of the real Manuela Saenz. It took me over six weeks. I visited her house in Bogota, I travelled on horseback across the Andes mountains as she once did, and had jugo in the little shack where she ended her days in Peru.

TW: Tell us a little more about your company Popelei - why did you set it up, and what approach do you take?

TC: I set up Popelei Theatre with Scarlett Plouviez Comnas in 2012 for our debut performance of 'Knowledge Of Angels' at Shoreditch Church in

London. Having graduated from Lecoq in 2008, I wanted to start a company that explored physically expressive work that was also accessible to audiences new to physical theatre.

TW: Although you have written and perform the piece, you seem to really value the collaborations with your team. How did you select your creative team?

TC: Most of the team I had worked with before and already had strong creative bonds with. Camilo was a gift from the gods. I had never expected to work with the UK Latin American Musician Of The Year! It has been a wonderful experience.

TW: Do you hope that the piece will inspire your audience to go home and read more about Saenz's life? If so, any tips on where to start?

TC: Yes. I realised very early on that it would be impossible to fit an entire person's life into one show. So I do hope that people are inspired enough to go away and read more. It is hard for English speakers as the best books I found were in Spanish. But there are short snippets about her online - you will have to decide whether they all sound true or not!

TW: And maybe audience members will wonder why they aren't already more familiar with Saenz's story; and perhaps how many other inspirational women have been edited out of the history books?

TC: There were plenty of female participants in the Wars Of Independence. There is a great book called 'Notable Latin American Women' by Jerome Adams. If I could I would write a show about each and everyone of them!

TW: Finally, does the Edinburgh Fringe provide an important platform for showcasing this kind of theatre?

TC: Absolutely. The Fringe is all about discovering new stories and new perspectives. Everything is possible and should be welcomed.

'Manuelita' is on at Underbelly until 24 Aug.



TW

Figs In Wigs

enjoyed having their fingers in as many pies as possible. This makes us a little bit difficult to categorise. Are we dance, theatre, live art? We decided to play with this ambiguity and use it to our (dis)advantage; hence a variety show starring only us.

TW: Why did you decide to explore this "new form of narcissism", and why with a variety show?

Figs: Our generation - so that's Gen Y - have been labelled the "most narcissistic to date". The Figs are quite suspicious of labels and we were interested in whether we were more narcissistic than our parents, whether this could be do with our digital existence, and also whether it's even possible to categorise an entire generation. We felt the variety show format actually spoke a lot to the digital generation's restlessness. Nowadays we're always searching - usually in a tool bar - for the next best thing. Much like the variety show audience, we need continual entertainment and stimulation, and our dwindling attention spans can't cope with anything longer than five minutes.

TW: Do you think we are really bigger 'show offs' today than in the past, or is it just that social media platforms are providing a new forum for the inner show off that has always been in all of us?



Photo: David P Scott

Figs: This is the exact question that led us to make 'Show Off'. Like all complex questions, it's most likely a mix of both. There have always been show offs and the concept of the 'fifteen minutes of fame' is not a new one. But perhaps what is most fascinating is that social media not only affects this narcissism but also alters the way people see themselves and how

they interact with others. Speed of communication means that we never slow down; we build relationships and lose touch at an accelerating rate. And the concept of memory is completely altered, because pictures and messages remember our past better than we ever can. Our secret teenage diaries are public blogs, and 'community' means something

different than it did ten years ago. We make friends and follow each other everywhere from the comfort of our own homepage. It's not necessarily good or bad - it's just reality.

TW: You're going to reinvent yourselves as comedians, dancers, musicians, circus performers and even visual artists during the show. How have you prepared for each of these?

Figs: We've had intensive workshops with experts in each discipline. Most of them think we're insane. Apart from the incredible Tom Parkinson who transformed us into a band. I think he's more into our music than we are.

TW: And how does the visual art bit work?

Figs: We don't want to give too much away, but it does feature some of our original artworks. It's fair to say it will probably make you question your own existence.

TW: Which has been the most challenging of the reinventions?

Figs: Circus, without a doubt. Turns out everyone can juggle except us, and hula hooping is a lot harder than it looks. This section of the show is more of an exercise in our anxieties than an exercise in skill.

TW: Which of the genres that you are playing with in 'Show Off' have

you enjoyed the most?

Figs: Wow. That's like us asking you who is your favourite Fig! We love them all equally of course... (so, dance).

TW: Will you be back next year with separate shows in the comedy, dance, music, circus and art programmes? Maybe take a genre each?

Figs: That would be great, but we don't think our finances and mental health would survive five shows at the Fringe. A genre each is a good idea, but I think we'd miss each other too much.

TW: We've enjoyed your past Fringe shows, how does this one compare?

Figs: It's the same length but different things happen within in it. We also have blue liquid which harks back to the WKD in 'We, Object' last year. And the cake trolley is back again.

TW: If you take the show beyond Edinburgh, you'll probably want to extend the running time a little. What other genres might you like to show off in?

Figs: Horror and rom-com. What we call in the industry hor-rom-com.

'Show Off - Figs In Wigs' is on at Pleasance Courtyard until 25 Aug.

TW

The axis most awesome returns



Photo: David P Scott

TW INTERVIEWS

Axis Of Awesome are Fringe legends, though only one third of the Fringe's own rock band was at the Edinburgh Festival last year, with Jordan and Lee sitting it out. But they're back with a brand new show called 'Viva La Vida Loca Las Vegas'. Though if you ask them nicely they may also perform some of the comedy hits that have garnered them over 60 million YouTube views, including the crowd-pleasing 'Four Chords'. We locked all three of the Axis in Gilded Balloon's Loft Bar and fired some questions at them.

TW: So, welcome back to the Fringe. Presumably Lee and Jordan have letters from their mums to explain their absences last year?

Benny: Jordan was busy dealing with an infant child last year. Lee has no excuses... his mother has shunned him.

TW: Given that we've somehow never interviewed you guys before, let's start at the start. How did the Axis first come together?

Jordan: We all auditioned separately for 'The X-Factor' but Simon Cowell said we weren't good enough individually. So he suggested we form a band, and now three number-one albums, seven world tours and millions of pounds later, here we are!

TW: Hmm, I think that might be someone else's bio. As I remember it, your 2008 'Comeback

Spectacular' here in Edinburgh sort of kicked things off for you guys. Is that right?

Jordan: Yeah, maybe that's it. We were in the Sportmans Room in the bottom of the Gilded Balloon. We've got so many great memories from that year. We were kind enough to give up-and-coming young comedian Stephen K Amos a leg-up by being the houseband for his 'Late Night Talk Show'. And John Bishop rescued us from a crazy drunk punter before our first ever 'Late N Live'. We had a lot more hair back then too.

TW: I think it was around about then that 'Four Chords' went crazy viral on the net. Presumably people still always ask you to do that one? Do you mind?

Lee: It was somewhere between our first and second Fringes that 'Four Chords' caught on via the electric internet, so late 2008 I think. We still perform it live, but it's very different to the first recording of it. We're at peace with the fact that people want to hear it live. It's still a lot of fun to perform and it solves the tricky problem of how to end our show.

TW: Has Planet Pop provided any new songs to be added to the 'Four Chords' hall of fame?

Benny: Absolutely, they've been very accommodating. Without giving too much away, a certain Oscar-winning chilly Disney musical number fits the progression, as does some Imagine Dragons, Adele and the charming Miley Cyrus.

TW: What can we expect from 'Viva La Vida Loca Las Vegas'?

Lee: We have a big banner that features fire and lightning. We have a keyboard, two guitars, a jug, a couple of cool hats, some radical dancing, a Benny, a fake beard, lots of awesome lights and a bunch of new songs. But

don't worry, we also feature some classics from the internets that people wanna hear in the flesh. Oh, and we have lots of flesh.

TW: When you put together a new show, how much is new material, and how much brings together songs you've been playing out and about for a while?

Benny: We had a very busy schedule leading up to the writing of this show; a regional tour of Australia, we filmed a documentary for Earth Hour at the Great Barrier Reef, we've filmed two comedy series for the internet.com. Check our YouTube channel for those by the way, the second one is starting soon and it's over 30 different videos. **Jordan:** So we wrote the show just before the Melbourne International Comedy Festival in April, and have been polishing it up there and in Sydney before bringing it over here. The new songs in this show are all super-new, but many of them are ideas we've had kicking around for a while. And we have a whole section of the show about Lee's Nintendo-Wii Fit related injury that he'd rather we didn't mention.

TW: I was talking about you guys on Twitter, and one of our readers said they really enjoyed your show. So I suggested they ask you a question, and here it is: 'If you could be a colourful animal, what combo would you be?'

Benny: A green giraffe. Taller and camouflaged.

Jordan: A bat mixed with a wolf, mixed with a scorpion. The colour of nightmares.

Lee: A wet couch.

TW: I think that question was designed to force me to plug their Assembly Roxy show 'Red Tap/Blue Tiger' in your interview. I feel bad about that. Is there any other interview we might be doing this Festival that you'd like me to gatecrash with a plug for your show?

Lee: Yes, please gatecrash an interview with Steen Raskopoulos for his show 'I'm Wearing Two Suits Because I Mean Business' at the Underbelly. Preferably with a plug for Steen Raskopoulos for his show 'I'm Wearing Two Suits Because I Mean Business' at the Underbelly.

TW: And finally, my personal guitar skills never really progressed past two chords - G and E minor. Have you got any songs I can play with just those?

Lee: Absolutely, with those two chords you'll be able to master Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody', Van Halen's 'Hot for Teacher' and the entire Rachmaninov catalogue.

*The Axis of Awesome: Viva La Vida Loca Las Vegas' is on at Gilded Balloon until 24 Aug.

TW REVIEWS

Cambridge Footlights International Tour Show 2014: Real Feelings (Cambridge Footlight)

They're a famous university comedy group with an impressive list of alumni, and Cambridge Footlights' 2014 offering shows real promise, but the troupe still have a lot to learn. Like the floorboards of the theatre they came from, their act consists of well-trodden material, and sadly, this group of five young men wear their generation's cultural references too clearly upon their sleeves. Will Ferrell's ludicrous grandiosity and Noel Fielding's Hitcher character often speak louder than those on stage, overshadowing their real talent. These guys are obviously skilful and funny, they just need to find their own voices to express that. Until then, they'll struggle to appeal to anyone who's never said, "oh my god, that's soooo random".

Pleasance Dome, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 [George Robb]

Laurence Owen: Lullabies Of Pervland

Laurence Owen is very good at trying to be funny. He's confident, he writes songs about sex and Disney (sometimes together!), and is very competent at both playing the guitar and programming music. He knows about timing, and is a virtuoso of syllables, lyrics and melodies. He's even formulated a complicated Star Wars conspiracy theory and can recite it like a master rhetorician. He can handle the technical apparatus of musical comedy like he should be very good. But sadly there's no Grade 8 in Comedic Theory. Humour is organic, and Owen's show is just too full of formulas and intricate mechanical workings. Go along to be impressed but, aside from a few moments of wit, don't expect to laugh too much.

Fingers Piano Bar, until 24 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 [George Robb]

Richard Herring: Lord Of The Dance Settee

Richard Herring wants the critics to know that he doesn't have a theme this year. He's earned the right to make his own rules after twenty-three years at the Fringe, and here he offers up a delightful collection of miscellany: from the shame of picking fights with small children, to a feel-good finale that neatly works the eponymous settee into a self-referential bit of slapstick. Herring's observations occasionally descend into ranting and the audience are left wondering where it's all going; the answer is generally nowhere, but that's ok, because he's so zealously entertaining that I leave with one of those warm, fuzzy feelings, chuckling at the baffling but hilarious concept of a viscous Alsatian.

Assembly George Square Theatre, until 24 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 [Laura Gavin]

some

News

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Tom Rhodes: Colossus (Brett Vincent for Get Comedy)

Tom Rhodes boldly, brashly and bolshily bombards us during his hotly anticipated debut, and boy, does it feel good. Of course this is to be expected from the hoarse, coarse Floridian; with a plethora of awards under his belt and a range of flattering nicknames ("The David Letterman of Holland", "The Bad-Boy of Comedy"), it may be Rhodes' Edinburgh debut, but by no means is he a debutant. Cancer, marijuana, homosexuality and, most importantly, penises, are the topics of the day, and his are the jokes every frat-boy wishes they could make successfully but instead are left looking like homophobic morons. Yet beneath his cynicism and crudeness lies elevating enthusiasm; Rhodes is the kind of guy who would overshadow and insult you at a party, making it your best night ever.

Gilded Balloon, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 [George Robb]

Maff Brown: Born Again Comedian (Bound and Gagged Comedy)

Maff Brown's opening quip, about where he gets his corkscrew curls, is unfortunately one of the only convincing jokes in this show. At times, it has the uncomfortable air of an 80s working men's club routine, complete with a couple of un-PC references that sound dated. Brown's comedy is of the cheeky Cockney chappy ilk, but his delivery can feel rushed, meaning some of the set-up-and-punchline jokes (that probably work when he's writing for *Mock The Week*) go wide of the mark. Some of his PowerPoint-style visuals work well, playing on our collective nostalgia for the Bud-Weis-Er frogs, but overall, his rather knowing on-stage persona suggests that Brown thinks he's funnier than he actually is.

Gilded Balloon, until 24 Aug.
tw rating 2/5 [Laura Gavin]

Zombie Science: Brain of the Dead (Zombie Institute for Theoretical Studies)

Taking the form of a mock-lecture, this turned to be a little less hardcore than I was expecting; in truth, it doesn't matter if you don't know your *Walking Dead*s from your *Dawns* or *Diaries of the Dead*. Much of the humour arises from our gawky lecturer's failed attempts to relate to student life, and the entire script is peppered with funny little jokes, puns and references. At times it was eerily reminiscent of genuine university lectures, where no-one was willing to contribute or volunteer. Ultimately, the gimmick wore a little thin, and didn't quite do justice to the quality of the writing. Maybe next year an actual zombie, for demonstration purposes, would liven things up. Or undeadden them, at least.

C, until 25 Aug. tw rating 3/5 [Andrew Leask]

Alfie Moore: The Naked Stun (Mick Perrin Worldwide)

Ex-policeman and R4 funnyman Alfie Moore regales a sold-out studio with sleazy tales of Scunthorpe and Skegness. His punchlines are hit-and-miss, yet his kind face and beaming smile complement his plodding delivery, somehow turning his sordid anecdotes into something warm and cosy. Appreciative of the absurdity around him, his fact based wit and rational humour works in parts, and also makes him come across as the ideal policeman, reserved and restrained; this may work well when dealing with ruffians and drunkards, but it is less effective on hecklers and punters. The police use callous humour to deal with the hardships of the job, he says; sadly, this doesn't translate well into to the civilian world of stand-up, preventing him from arresting anything more than a lukewarm reception.

Assembly George Square Studios, until 25 Aug. tw rating 2/5 [George Robb]

Massive Dad (The Pleasance)

The young masterminds behind this buzzing selection of side-splitting sketches are the whole package. They can act, dance, write and sing, bouncing off each other and radiating fun as they do so. But what are they offering? Yugoslavian meta-drama? And by that I mean self-referential vignettes performed by Durham graduates acting as Eastern Europeans, who in turn act as the Coen brothers' nans, a sex denier, and kidnapped Scottish folk musicians. And by that... I don't really know what I mean. This is the bewildered state *Massive Dad* leave you in. Bewildered, but also in awe, for this performance is outstanding. Their deconstructionist sketches are a creative tour-de-force, as thread-bare and yet as elegantly and elaborately crafted as the Bayeux Tapestry.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 25 Aug. tw rating 5/5 [George Robb]



TW

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Thanks for the (Fringe) memories: The Nualas



Undeniably Fringe favourites back in the day, The Nualas are back at the Festival for the first time in over a decade. Yes, it's been that long. "The Fringe was better back then" old people will tell you, forgetting the older people who told them ten years ago how the Festival was so much better ten years before that. But accurately remembering anything from Festivals so long ago is a bit of challenge. That said, The Nualas are always up for a challenge. And so, to mark their marvellous return, we asked each Nuala to dig deep into their memory banks to recall some favourite Edinburgh Festival moments from years gone by. Things that may or may not have happened like this...

went ape-shit and impaled me. He said later, quote unquote, "I'm so so sorry, I was aiming for Malcom St John-Smythe and missed".

THREE: The year I had a romantic assignation with an Scottish aristocratic punter who treated me to a top of the range sporran, a weekend of shooting rare geese and a stay in a freezing cold authentically damp, historic castle. In Glasgow. I still treasure his recipe for rare goose kedgerree.

FOUR: The same year, when I somehow got swept into the Tattoo, the top of the range sporran given to me by the aristocrat being mistaken as a license to lead some huge contingent of military instrumentalist types who were marching around loudly in a sort of, as they call it, 'finale'. One word, 'disaster'. Suffice it to say nine thousand people asked for their money back that night.

Blonde Nuala

ONE: The first Festival flat we stayed in, there was a ferris wheel in the living room, four dwarfs making toffee apples in the kitchen, and an electricity meter that worked by you throwing whatever loose change you had at it, whilst shouting, "bravo, bravo, hurray, amazing, more please".

TWO: The time we were taken to the famous The Witchery restaurant by the BBC and experienced food we'll never forget, such as Smoked Pigeon Head Shot By An English Aristocrat, Haggis Parfait With Shavings Of Battered Mars Bar, and chips. Sublime. Unfortunately the BBC sat at a different table and didn't pay the bill.

THREE: When I discovered Steve Coogan shared my love of flyer-collecting and he ended up in our Festival flat at 4am gasping in absolute awe at my vast piles of printed matter promoting performances, most particularly my rare signed A5 of the 1950s Cambridge Footlights show 'Come Away With Me Bobo To Eastbourne' featuring Malcom St John-Smythe who went on to become completely unknown.

Red-Head Nuala

ONE: When I got hypnotised and started acting like a dog during a Festival show and ended up on stage hunkering down on all fours, barking the theme tune of 'Hawaii Five O' before weeing on a man's leg. And the most humiliating thing was it happened during a production of 'Macbeth'. I still blush to this day when I see pictures of Ian McKellan.

TWO: The day I took part in the big celebrity Joust-Off on the Royal Mile and for some reason Mervyn Stutter

Brunette Nuala

ONE: My first year at the Festival, when my perception of the boundaries of performance, and the profundity of the performer in the naked space that is the stage, and my sense of the meaning of live performance in an era of exponentially escalating pervasive digital infotainment, was completely exploded by witnessing the Lithuanian Monkey Wranglers in The Wee Room.

TWO: The night during the Festival when I decided to just sit in our Festival flat and watch telly rather than head out, and John Logie Baird materialised to me, in front of the screen, and said "Och aye the noo whatye doin, sittin in when there be a thousand theatres offering real offerings yonder nearby?". Which inspired me to turn off the Festival flat telly and go to bed instead.

THREE: The year we organised a 'photo call' to advertise our show of us abseiling nude down Arthur's Seat. The only photographer who showed up was an amateur stringer for the Troon Advertiser who got hit by the rockfall caused by Nuala's bottom bashing off the cliff face, leaving him concussed. Plus Nuala got a chill in her kidneys, as well as a hurt bottom. Turns out there was a better photo call on The Royal Mile, Neil Delamere setting fire to his own head.

FOUR: The special time I spent in Edinburgh prior to Scotland finally being set free by referendum... Oh sorry, my spirit guide was just cutting in there, ignore ignore, that's not a memory yet.

'The Nualas in Hello Again, We're The Nualas' is on at Assembly George Square until 25 Aug.

GARY COLMAN

ChUNT*

(*the verb to grumble)

"Laugh out loud funny"

The Scotsman

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Three Weeks

★★★★★

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Photo: Mark Dawson



TW INTERVIEW

Originally from Melbourne, Celia Pacquola has become a favourite at both her home city's annual comedy festival and the Edinburgh Fringe. And the new show she is performing at the Gilded Balloon this month was nominated for the prestigious Barry Award at the Melbourne Comedy Festival earlier this year. 'Let Me Know How It All Works Out' sees Pacquola obsessing with the future, and the ways people try to work out what to expect from it. Trying to work out what we can expect from Pacquola's latest Fringe show, we threw some questions in her general direction.

TW: You debuted 'Let Me Know How It All Works Out' at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival earlier this year. How did it all work out?

CP: Fantastic actually. It was nominated for the Barry Award which - whilst being the most Australian sounding award there is - is also the Australian version of the Fosters Edinburgh Comedy Award. Actually, that sounds pretty Australian too... Anyway, it went really well.

TW: What's the theme of the new show?

CP: It's about psychics and fate and my secret shame that, for the last ten years, I've been dabbling in that world. I find this area both hilarious and interesting; everything from dream catchers - which I imagine you have to clean out like a tumble dryer filter each day - to tarot readers and crystals, and why exactly a rational minded person might get involved in it all.

TW: How does it compare to your previous Fringe outings?

CP: I think this is my favourite show of the four I've brought to the Edinburgh Fringe. It's very silly and high energy, and is about a topic that really interests me, and with a story - basically I got into a fight with a palm reader - that I really love telling.

TW: The show blurb says you've "always been obsessed with the future, but planned for none of it". What about the future are you particularly obsessed about?

CP: Everything. I've always wanted to know what's going to happen. To me. To us. To the world. Because you never know. And I love it when things that you would never expect to happen do. For example, who knew that fax machines, at a time when transporting the simplest of data through space was huge, would only last a few years, but those little metallic clicky balls that business people keep on their desks would still be a booming business to this day. I am so impatient to find out what happens next.

TW: But despite that obsession, no plans at all?

CP: Not really, no. I've never imagined myself in the future. I pretty much wake up surprised every day. Even comedy was something that happened by accident and I've just kept saying 'yes'. Who knows, in five years I could be a window washer, or a French teacher. Well, probably not that one. I was always crap at French.

TW: You're based over here in the UK now. What motivated the move, and how have you found living in Britain?

CP: I love how many places here sell sandwiches. Post offices, banks, sandwich shops. It's brilliant. Oh, and there are more gigs than in Australia. Well, that's what I usually tell people, but honestly it's about the sandwiches.

TW: Is it easier playing to British audiences now you live here?

CP: I think so. But I like being an

outsider enough that you can still appreciate the differences. Just last week I realised why I've always thought that the UK was a bit rougher and tougher; it's how everyone greets each other here. They don't say "hello",

Celia Pacquola: Seeing how it all works out

they say "are you alright?". That's what you say to someone who's been in a fight.

TW: You've done some acting as well, in two Aussie TV shows in particular I think, how does acting and comedy compare?

CP: Acting is always really fun for a change from stand-up. It's fun having someone else write what you say. Plus if you make a mistake you get to have another go at it.

TW: Quite a few comedians have used their Edinburgh Fringe time to do a bit of stage acting on the side. Are you ever tempted to do some theatre here at the Festival?

CP: I would love to.

TW: You've performed a few times now at both the Edinburgh Fringe and the Melbourne Comedy Festival, how do the two compare?

CP: Melbourne is my home town and I

love the festival there very much. The main difference I think is the scale. At MICF everyone has every Monday off and shows don't really start until 6pm. Edinburgh feels like a 24/7 festival bubble that you disappear into completely for a month.

TW: Yes, doing the full three week run at the Fringe can be tiring. I think everyone hits that middle-of-August wall at some point. Any tips for new stand-ups on getting through the run in one piece?

CP: Try and pace yourself.

TW: And what about punters, any tips for getting the most out of the Fringe as an audience member?

CP Take a chance on some shows you've never heard of.

Celia Pacquola: Let Me Know How It All Works Out is on at Gilded Balloon until 24 Aug.

A Question For Three: BEASTS

What one thing is guaranteed to split up a sketch group?



CIARAN: I bring the biscuits. That's my job. Within the group we each have our roles - someone is in charge of tech, someone is the venue's point of contact, someone deals with press, with the industry, with our agent. It's someone's job to type the script, one person makes the props, one sews the costumes. It's someone's job to book the transport and accommodation and someone books our gigs. All of these people are James. But I'm the biscuit man, and if one more person complains that it's fig rolls for the third day in a row then we're done!

JAMES: You know what they say: love destroys all. The same is true of sketch groups. No matter of the heart can be allowed to come before the sacred bond of sketch. We don't want some Yoko Ono coming in and killing John Lennon again. In order to preserve our comedic priorities, we have all taken sacrosanct vows of abstinence. Rather than trifling over fleeting infatuations, we have agreed to only fight about important things, like whether or not it's funnier to say "penguin" or "puffin".

OWEN: In any artistic partnership there's always the danger that one member of the group becomes more famous than the others. Like Michael Williams in Take That, and even Snarf from 'Thundercats' had that spin-off where he moves to LA and opens a coffee shop. Sketch groups are no different. Unfortunately, it is only a matter of time before Scorsese comes looking for me. When that fateful day arrives, it will be the end of our time together. But until then I will continue to let the others shelter under the bulging umbrella of my massive genius.

BEASTS is on at Pleasance Courtyard until 25 Aug.
Photo: Ben Carpenter

Jessica Sherr: Playing with Bette Davis



Photo: Mark Dawson

was taking a class in New York on character development, and I was going to do Lucille Ball, as she is a funny red head, but instead I thought Bette Davis would be more of a challenge. After all, she was a redhead when she played Jezebel, so that was fitting. And here I am five years later with a one-person show all about her!

TW: Where did the idea for that stand alone show come from?

JS: I didn't originally set out to write a one-person show. I was just going to develop the character of Bette Davis for a class. But we were given exercises to complete as the character and I ended up creating a 28-minute piece of Miss Davis, which was the beginnings of this show. Bette is one lady who just sticks with you.

TW: How much research did you do when writing the piece?

JS: A ton. I didn't know a lot about her when I set out on the project. I researched for two years reading books and watching films before I began writing. As the project has unfolded I have gone deeper into my research. Just last year I flew out to California to the USC archives and spent a week with her personal file from Warner Brothers. That was surreal. I touched her handwriting and read her memos to Jack Warner. That was as close as I have gotten to her and it was powerful.

TW: You sense the young and older Davis were quite different people. Would you agree? Why do you think this is?

JS: Yes. The young Bette was bright-eyed and bushy tailed and ready to take on Hollywood in her best Yankee manner. Being a theatre actress, she thought the Hollywood system would be interested in her talent. Sadly it didn't take Bette long to realise that the Hollywood movie mogul wasn't anything like the people back at her hometown theatre. The movie mogul cared less about talent, he only cared about money. Money wasn't a driving force for Miss Davis. She was interested in good parts and doing good work.

TW: Did researching the piece change the way your view Davis? Do you see her movies in a new light?

JS: Indeed. After researching I can see how her personal life paralleled and influenced her work. There are certain directors, William Wyler being one, that really shaped her acting career. You can tell in her earlier films that she had so much spunk. As she got older that spunk shifted into a darker Bette Davis.

TW: As you say, the Hollywood machine wasn't especially kind to its earlier stars like Davis. Is it any better today do you think?

JS: Hollywood is a mess. They have one idea in mind: sell tickets, no

TW INTERVIEW

Jessica Sherr was once told she had Bette Davis eyes. A simple remark that led to her researching the entire life story of the Hollywood great, and subsequently the creation of her one-woman play 'Bette Davis Ain't For Sissies'. Returning to the Fringe at The Assembly Rooms this year, the story tracks Davis's defining moments as she fought her way through the Hollywood system. We spoke to Sherr about her play, and the woman that inspired it.

TW: Tell us about the premise of 'Bette Davis Ain't For Sissies'.

JS: It's the night of the 1939 Oscars and the LA Times leaked the winners early. Knowing she is going to lose out to 'Gone With The Wind', Bette Davis leaves the ceremony. We then journey with young Bette through her memories, and her fight for good parts and respect in Hollywood.

TW: How did you first come to play Bette Davis?

JS: Someone said I had Bette Davis eyes. So I looked her up and it was true, there is indeed a similarity. I

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matter what they have to do to their stars. It's always been that way. Davis was definitely a victim of that. Many people don't know that she went to London and Warner Brothers sued her for breach of contract, which ultimately was the first time a star spoke out against the virtual slavery of Hollywood.

TW: Do you try to impersonate Davis for the piece, in voice, the way you look, mannerisms and so on?

JS: I don't impersonate, I play Bette Davis. I have worked a lot on her voice though, and the way she looks, and of course her mannerisms, but ultimately I am playing a character from the inside out.

TW: Is it ever strange being an actress pretending to be another real-life actress?

JS: It is strange? My personality and Davis's are very different, and that's good. That way I know when I am playing a character and when I am being myself! The hardest part is playing someone who is well known, as everyone has their own 'idea' as to what Bette Davis should be like. And at times I think people identify Bette by her characters, but she was very different in her real life.

TW: Have any people who knew Davis seen the piece? What did they think of it?

JS: Yes. They are impressed by the similarities and how much we are alike. I have had people say that there are moments that are 'so her'.

TW: You've been performing 'Bette Davis Ain't For Sissies' for a few years now, has the piece developed over time?

JS: Definitely. In two ways. First, artistically the show has evolved. I am working with a new director, Antony Raymond, and each time we get in the room we discover something new. Second, I have had some incredible meetings. Last year I met Kathryn Sermak, Bette's last assistant, and she was very complimentary. She gave me a pair of Miss Davis's gloves, which I now wear in the show, and which still have her make-up on the edge.

TW: Are you looking forward to performing for the Edinburgh Fringe audience again?

JS: I do love a great crowd and Edinburgh Fringe audiences are so appreciative. I can feel everyone really listening and really coming along for the ride. I love talking to people after the show as well, so I can get a sense of what people enjoyed. I learn a lot from my audience. I just don't understand why everyone is so quiet and polite! Laugh out loud — we need it as actors!

TW: And finally, are there any other iconic women you fancy playing in a one-woman show?

JS: Hmm, I'd say Madonna.

'Bette Davis Ain't For Sissies' is on at The Assembly Rooms until 24 Aug.

TW REVIEWS

According To His Need (Reds Theatre Company)

One guy, one girl and a whiteboard: those are all that Reds Theatre Company need to show you the complex relationship between politics and sex. The quirky romance is played out by Michael-David McKernan and Hannah Tucker Mamalis, both performing with real energy and charisma, though it would have been interesting to see them interact even more with their audience. Oliver Eagleton's intelligent script makes this piece an intellectual challenge as well as a very charming story, but there are some moments when the dialogue is so quick-fire that it can be hard to understand. If you can keep up with the characters' agendas, you will find this an unusual, smart and touching story.

C nova, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Vicki Baron]

The Capone Trilogy: Loki (Jethro Compton Productions)

It's fitting that a play inspired by the Norse trickster god would be so playfully subversive; it flits from fourth-wall-breaking comedy to sudden threats of violence - and back - in a heartbeat. In the intimate setting of a shabby 1920s hotel room (complete with peeling wallpaper) we are fully immersed in the action, sharing the room with a motley parade of gangsters, busboys and policemen. Their lives revolve around the protagonist, Lola Keen: a glamorous nightclub singer with a dark secret. The script elevates what could have been simply stock characters, through a goodly dose of vaudevillian humour and farce, yet it never loses the constant sense of impending, inevitable tragedy, as Lola's story unravels before our eyes.

C nova, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 [Andrew Leask]

The Duchess Of Malfi (UCLU Runaground)

Webster's classic play about love, death and betrayal takes a lot of energy to perform, and UCLU Runaground's talented and enthusiastic cast rose to the challenge. The production accurately represented the intense themes of the Jacobean tragedy and, though long for a Fringe show, skilfully got to the heart of the complex story in a mere hour and twenty minutes. The tale is a dramatic one with several twists and turns, but unfortunately the pitch of volume, energy and emotion seemed to plateau somewhat about halfway through the performance, and so ultimately, it lacked climax, which prevented the audience from remaining entirely immersed. It's a committed and engaging production, for the most part, but would benefit from further development.

C Nova, until 16 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 | [Vicki Baron]

Eden Gate (Produced Moon)

This is a great concept, flawed in

execution. Less a play than a post-apocalyptic role-playing game, it has its audience slowly file into quarantine: immediately the problems become apparent. You'd expect a real life queue for a medical checkpoint to take time but, as an audience member, ten minutes of tedious queuing was a bad start. Once inside, as the interactive plot unfolds, there are moments of panic and hysteria, presumably just what the creators were aiming for. Unfortunately it was all a bit toothless, and the conclusion was anticlimactic. Presented with a choice, we picked one door, walked down a corridor... only to be told it was game over, and that they hoped we'd made the right decision. A real let down.

C nova, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 2/5 [Andrew Leask]

Forget Fire (Pepperdine University (Malibu))

As the cast individually welcomed every audience member, I realised this wasn't going to be some Luddite rant. When the blurb referred to technological barriers, it seemed an anti-technology, anti-progress agenda was certain, but this engaging, engaged troupe have devised something special here. It's an honest reflection of the tolls - emotional, psychological, interpersonal - exerted on the smartphone generation, never forgetting that "you can't go back": the internet is here to stay. There is a loose central narrative following a young woman's reaction to a social

media hoax, but the whole thing is shot through with rich seams of allegory, symbolism and some wonderfully simple but effective staging. Moving and honest: a lovely piece of contemporary theatre.

C, until 9 Aug. tw rating 4/5 [Andrew Leask]

Hamlet (Secret Theatre)

Adapting Shakespeare's most acclaimed tragedy must be a daunting prospect: too faithful, you risk stagnation; too radical, you'll offend the purists. Secret Theatre's powerful production gets it almost entirely right. The 1960s setting isn't too intrusive, and the decision to re-imagine Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as women - swinging sixties sex-bombs at that - is inspired, complicating their relationship with Hamlet. The tweaks to Ophelia's arc are also welcome, as is the company's ability to seize on the brief moments of levity in the otherwise angst-ridden play. My only minor complaint is regarding the omission of Fortinbras, which makes Hamlet's transformation feel rather sudden. All of the cast do an excellent job, with the actor playing Hamlet delivering a mesmerising performance.

C too, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 [Andrew Leask]

Lear's Daughters (The Footfall Theatre Company)

There's much to be said for a retelling of Shakespeare's 'King Lear' from the perspectives of his daughters, and the presentation here is certainly engaging and entertaining. Despite this, it doesn't

quite live up to its excellent potential. All four actors give compelling performances, and there are moments - including one shockingly visceral act of violence - that really stand out. The problem lies in the adherence to Shakespeare's words. Though the plot has been tweaked slightly, the dialogue hails from the bard and while Goneril, Regan and Cordelia are intriguing characters, they remain just that: intriguing. This adaptation would have benefited from giving the sisters a little more depth, a little more character.

C nova, until 16 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 [Andrew Leask]

Lavender Junction (Peppermint Muse)

Though set in colonial India, 'Lavender Junction' isn't really about colonial India. Indeed, that's its biggest fault: it's not really about anything. Rather, this one-woman show, written and performed by Lisa White, is inspired by White's grandmother's life. What emerges, then, is a lovely portrait of her experiences in India in the latter days of the Raj and the Second World War. There's no doubt that White's emotional connection to the material lends her performance a poignancy and tenderness that is affecting. We hear of her distant parents, harsh nuns at boarding school, a multitude of servants... but all devoid of any commentary, any subtext. It's a nice show, but unfortunately, I'm left wanting more: more drama, more meaning.

C nova, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 [Andrew Leask]

TW

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TW REVIEWS

Unsung (Red Mane Productions)

This is very much a play of two halves. The first half is a sharply observed comedy about two British-Asian brothers, living in England with their wives. The patriarchal values of older brother Rana are, initially, played for laughs, and it is the women - carefree Joy and more traditional Megh - who are strong. All four actors are excellent, their performances subtle and nuanced. When things suddenly take a dark turn half-way through, once the initial panache of the dramatic twist wore off, I began to question the actions of the characters, especially Joy and her husband Ash. The play's climax seeks to offer resolution, but doesn't, making the whole thing gripping, engaging but ultimately a little hollow.

C nova, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 [Andrew Leask]

Altamont (Peppermint Muse)

The Rolling Stones' 1969 Altamont gig is notorious for the killing of a fan by a security guard. This grim end to a decade of free love serves as a background to John Stenhouse's surprisingly sedate solo performance. The script follows generic hippie Joe, a bewildered narrator lost in the crowd. Though his limited viewpoint fails to provide a sense of perspective to the unfolding events, it allows Stenhouse to concentrate on building the mood, with plenty of evocative details. After



Woyzeck (Splendid Productions)

Buchner's fragmented tragedy of jealousy and madness is rightly regarded as an existentialist masterpiece. It's just not usually this funny. Splendid Productions confidently break down the bleak text, twisting it into a dark, anarchic music hall act that's equal parts Brecht and Monty Python. Seamlessly splicing physicality, wicked asides and warm audience interaction, these three superb performers inject the show with wit, pathos and tremendous energy. It's hilarious and horrific, erotic and brutal, and the hairpin emotional shifts could easily feel forced in less confident hands. Here though it's never less than enthralling, held together with perfect timing, self assured ad-libs and a spot-on chimpanzee impression. This is a powerful, unsettling experience and a frankly brilliant performance.

Gilded Balloon, until 25 Aug. tw rating 5/5 [Dave Fargnoli]

a slow start, the fleeting glimpses of stoners, freaks and Hell's Angels become increasingly tense. Though at times it feels like the volume has been set a little low, this develops into an interesting look at a dark moment in music history.

C nova, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 [Dave Fargnoli]

Dead Letters (PropUp Theatre)

Following a pleasantly neurotic postman on a quest to get every lost letter to its destination, Dead Letters is a simple story told in an appealingly rough around the edges style. The five-strong ensemble make good use of a few props, silly sight gags and strong, clear images throughout. Flurries of envelopes and a downpour of torn paper leave the audience smiling and the space gloriously messy. The script may be a little sketchy, with characters tending to ramble, but there are touching moments as long lost messages begin to change people's lives. There's a sense that the words matter less here than the sentiment, as this charming, undeniably talented company delivers a gentle, good-natured show.

C cubed, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 [Dave Fargnoli]

Grimm (Hypnotist Theatre Company)

Identity, innocence and memory are all expertly played with in a Kickstarter-funded show from this Oxford student ensemble. Aoife is desperately trying to remember who

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she is, her memories resurfacing under the guise of familiar fairytales. Black humour, a conversational script and some brilliantly visceral props bring a modern chill to these old morality stories - and any group who casts the witch from Hansel and Gretel as a forceful, manic-eyed maitre d' wins a vote from me. The truth gradually unfolds in a series of fragmented, darkly absurd vignettes that effectively mimic a damaged mind trying to put itself back together. And once all the pieces are in place, it becomes clear why some things are truly so grim, you might choose to forget them completely.

C too, until 16 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Laura Gavin]

Antiquithon (Cie des Femmes à Barbe)

You should definitely seek out this quirky slice of fun Fringe freakery; it's a little off the beaten track, but well worth the walk, even though it's only 30 minutes long. You are ushered into the macabre "cabinet of curiosities", inspired by carnival sideshows, by your hosts Ourelia and Vodek Cazaniescu. Exiled from Romania with only their creepy uncle's assorted ephemera - a mummified crocodile, a tiny mermaid, the dread spiderabbit - they make a living by charging people to hear the grim mythological back-story of some of these antiquities. Things take a dark turn, however, as the occult curios reveal their secrets. A glorious mix of the comic and the creepy, with a shocking climax.

Institut Français d'Ecosse, until 23 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 [Andrew Leask]

Awkward Conversations with Animals I've F*cked (Ten Dead Men)

First, the good: actor Jack Holden is outstanding, delivering a compelling performance, rich in pathos and humour. The problem with the play itself, though, is that it wants to have its cake and eat it. Or have its dog and, well... The central concept - awkward, morning-after conversations between a man and the animals he's slept with - is amusing. It would work as a recurring sketch, but just doesn't work as a play. So there's some heavy handed allusions to the sex-trade and gender politics, as well as a last minute bid to give the animal f*cker Bobby some depth, a tragic back-story. Yet these attempts at gravitas undermine the humour, while the humour makes the drama feel unearned.

Underbelly, until 24 Aug.
tw rating 2/5 [Andrew Leask]

Birdwatchers' Wives (Caroline Smith / Escalator East To Edinburgh)

Something of an odd duck - an odd Great Crested Grebe to be accurate - this is a pleasantly quirky blend of theatre, comedy and performance art. The main focus of the show, devised and performed by Caroline Smith, is Rita Grebe, an avian diva who is preparing for a birdsong competition.

If that sounds odd, it is, and that's just a toe-dip into the giant lake of weird that Smith serves up. Much of it is funny, though often the audience was more bemused than amused and there were times when the character's facade cracked. This won't be to everyone's taste, but it's exactly the kind of off-kilter production for which the Fringe is famed, and rightly praised.

Summerhall, until 24 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 [Andrew Leask]

Chatroom (No Prophet Theatre Company)

Much like the internet itself, 'Chatroom' gently draws you in with some innocuous, amusing banter about Roald Dahl and Britney Spears, before revealing the dark, nasty stuff. This powerful play depicts a series of conversations between teenagers in an anonymous online chatroom, focusing on 'Jim', who is teetering on the brink of suicide, and the malicious 'William' and 'Eva', who do their damndest to push him over. All of the performers were great, especially James Lewis as Jim: his breakdown on stage was harrowing and intense. The only real problem with the play is that despite being ably performed, the antagonists lacked depth or motivation, a surprising oversight given the otherwise authentic exploration of the adolescent psyche.

C nova, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 [Andrew Leask]

Domestic Labour: A Study in Love (30 Bird / Escalator East To Edinburgh)

Asthmatics beware: 'Domestic Labour' stirs up quite a bit of dust. Literally. At one point a cloud of dust fills the air - while undoubtedly visually arresting, this initiated a chorus of coughs and had me reaching for my inhaler. Nevertheless, there's much to like in this entertaining blend of drama and physical theatre; the movement in particular was excellent, as was the creative use of household appliances as props. It's not simply a string of vignettes, though, and it's the overarching narrative that lets the play down: there is a story here, but it's fragmented and incoherent. As such, it doesn't lend the whole thing the structural cohesion it needs, leaving this an engaging but ironically messy production.

Summerhall, until 23 Aug.
tw rating 3/5 [Andrew Leask]

Dylan Thomas: Clown In The Moon (Miles Productions)

This is a show about the life and mischief of Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, who died at the age of thirty-nine after a short but incredibly full life. Played by the superb Rhodri Miles, Thomas takes us through some of the most outlandish and outstanding moments of his life, interspersed with readings of his poetry in a BBC studio. The audience is treated to some sad stories, a few unbelievable anecdotes and many moments of pure joy. Miles' depiction of the troubled but talented

man is truly captivating, and director Gareth Armstrong maximises the show's potential for humour as well as poignancy. 'Clown In The Moon' manages to be at once touching, educational and genuinely uplifting.

Assembly Hall, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Vicki Baron]

So It Goes (On the Run)

I simply adored 'So It Goes'. It's a wonderfully inventive and moving show about grief, and how hard it is to talk about a loved one who has died. It's not maudlin or depressing though: it's uplifting. Created and performed by Hannah Moss and David Ralfe, the show was inspired by the loss of Moss's father, and the difficulty she had speaking about it. The brilliant device used to realise this difficulty is that neither performer speaks during the performance; rather, they use signs and write on whiteboards. No mere gimmick, this is an integral part of the performance; the anticipatory silences were often pregnant with tension, or expectation, or sorrow. A profoundly affecting experience: just lovely.

Underbelly, until 24 Aug.
tw rating 5/5 [Andrew Leask]

The Sonneteer (Sebastian Michael and Tom Medcalf with Optimistic Creations)

If you have bad memories of high school English lessons, it's probably because your introduction to Shakespeare's poetry was as dry as this intelligent but flawed play. Writer Sebastian Michael clearly loves the material, convincingly weaving Shakespeare's sonnets into a backdrop for two imagined love affairs, one between a professor and his student, the other between the Bard and his patron. It's a worthy attempt to approach these timeless texts from a new angle, but it suffers from unclear direction and indistinct characterisation. Abstract movements muddy things further, making it difficult to know which storyline you're watching at any given time. You'll be reminded why Shakespeare's writing was so good, but this production ends up wandering in his shadow.

Greenside @ Nicolson Square, until 23 Aug.
tw rating 2/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

Tea for Tabitha (Blanket Theatre / Free Festival)

Fresh from the Brighton Fringe, New Zealand company Blanket Theatre bring this intimate drama to Edinburgh, exposing the trauma of family break-ups from the inside out. Playing both parents and children, James Stephen and Jodie Ellis (also the writer) embody their characters physically and mentally, alternately capturing the petulant mannerisms of childhood and the repressed emotions of adulthood. The switches are startlingly smooth, happening mid-scene, as comic-tragic tantrums between brother and sister about dead pet spiders transform into the bitter rows of two people watching their once-joyful relationship crumble.

Forced to make their own sense of matters way beyond their years, the children's exchanges are particularly intense and upsetting. A show more than worthy of your time.

Laughing Horse @ The Phoenix, until 12 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Laura Gavin]

Hyde & Seek (Elsewhere and Otherwise in association with Peppermint Muse)

This is a thoroughly engrossing show that's a little hard to categorise. Actor and writer Michael Daviot presents a fascinating mix of drama and storytelling, all connected to Robert Louis Stevenson's most famous creation, 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'. Daviot recounts stories from Stevenson's life - his inspirations, quirks and characteristics, as well as his own anecdotes. These were often astoundingly frank, as he delved into the darker aspects of his own psyche that have parallels with Hyde's: drugs, violence and mental health. A number of excerpts from the novel complete the play, and the interplay between these three strands - biography, autobiography and fiction - is endlessly rewarding. A fine reflection on a fine bogey tale!

C nova, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 [Andrew Leask]

Thank You For Staring (Patrice Gerideau)

Patrice Gerideau has vitiligo, a skin disorder which she once feared would take her African-American identity, as well as her pigment. This

candid piece of solo theatre lays bare not only Gerideau's struggles with her condition, but also puts a stark spotlight on how all of us judge at skin level. As she tells her story through years of family distance, relationships-gone-rotten and some rather frank arguments with God, the material occasionally feels repetitive, but builds towards a powerful ending. The title is not a sarcastic retort to those who point in the street, nor is it a mere pun. Gerideau means it in the most genuine way possible, thanking each one of us for looking and listening, on her own terms this time.

Sweet Grassmarket, until 10 Aug.
tw rating 4/5 | [Laura Gavin]

What Do You Mean (Ego Actus)

Everyone knows it's hard to make great theatre. Ego Actus gets around the problem by staging this intentionally terrible show about making a terrible show. Following an egomaniac writer and a company of bickering actors, this is a play without a plot and without a point. It's energetically and earnestly performed, but interminable shrill scenes stuffed with cheap gags, slapstick and technical descriptions of theatrical tropes quickly start to grate. Continually telling the audience that what they're watching is meaningless isn't funny, it's insulting, and though this is clearly done with the best intentions, it's frustrating to watch. Ultimately, the question isn't so much "what do you mean?" as "why did you do this?"

Spotlites @ The Merchants' Hall, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 1/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]



Beowulf: The Blockbuster (Pat Moylan Presents a Show in a Bag Production)

A story about a single father in 1980s Ireland. A story about teaching your son to live well. And most of all, a story about stories: how we find meaning in them; how we use them to find meaning in our lives. The central narrative - a dying father telling the story of Beowulf to his son - is crammed with references to Star Wars, Bruce Lee and James Bond, but this isn't mere nostalgia. Rather, writer/performer Bryan Burroughs perfectly captures the way we use the stories we learn to filter experience, as lenses through which we view the world. There's humour, sorrow, wit, warmth...through it all Burroughs is in complete control of our emotions. A masterful performance.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 24 Aug. tw rating 5/5 [Andrew Leask]

Paul Nathan: Taking to the Fringe streets

When you think of the cabaret Fringe you normally picture the late night gatherings that occur in vaults and lofts and dark corners all over the city. But don't forget the streets of Edinburgh are one big cabaret during daylight hours too. The Royal Mile is the hub of this street theatre cabaret, with some awe-inspiring acts on show alongside the flyering frenzy and show-clip preview stages.

One guy who knows this most exciting element of the Festival better than most is ThreeWeeks Editors' Award winning Paul Nathan. He stars in 'The I Hate Children Children's Show' in the mornings and the 'Best Of Burlesque' at night, but in the middle he busks on the Mile. We asked Nathan for his tips for how Fringe-goers can get the most out of the street theatre Fringe.

TW COLUMN

Busking is intimate and immediate. There is a lot going on. It is also pure. No lights, no trapdoors, just the artist and the audience and sometimes those lines blur. Here are five tips and tricks to enjoy the show more.

1. It really is dangerous. The fire is real, the knives are sharp, and yes that is a real whip. So when the performer says "don't try this at home" keep in mind that there is a reason every act on the Royal Mile is required to have insurance.



2. Don't watch the fun, be part of it. The father of modern psychology, William James, said "we don't laugh because we're happy, we're happy because we laugh". Nowhere is this more true than in street theatre. There's no fourth wall. The audience is a character in the play and anything can happen. You travelled all the way to Edinburgh to be part of something special (or all the way into town if you're local!)... don't hold back now.

3. You never know who you'll see. Many of the artists in this year's street programme have very successful indoor shows. You may even catch some future stars. Pierce Brosnan started his career as a fire-eater. And Eddie Izzard did street shows here until Robin Williams - who himself started as a street mime in New York - produced Eddie's Emmy Award winning TV Special. Couldn't get tickets to see The Boy With Tape On His Face last year? This year you can see The Boy's alter ego, Sam Wills, on the Mile. The take away here is to cherish whichever act you are watching.

4. We are on the clock. Just like you, we have to be at work on time. At 10am each morning all the artists meet on the Mile and draw names out of a hat to see who will perform where and when. It's different each day. Buskers have 30 minutes to gather a crowd and do their show. Bigger circle acts have 45 minutes. If we go over time we are thrown in the Edinburgh Dungeon and made to watch ghost tours until 10am the next morning. Schedules are posted online daily on the Fringe website.

5. Get in early and get in close. When you see an artist starting up a street show, that is the best time to join the audience. Don't get stuck in the back of the crowd. If you see a few street shows you will likely see something you have never seen before and will

never see again, you want to see it from as close as possible.

Bonus tip... Street festival organizer Andy Meldrum recommends that folks bring a towel or a hoodie to sit on for comfort. If you have a tip of your own, tweet it to @ThreeWeeks and we will add it to our list of tips for watching shows.

The I Hate Children Children's Show is on at the Pleasance Courtyard until 25 Aug.

Best Of Burlesque is on at Assembly George Square until 24 Aug.

Plus you'll find Paul performing on the Mile. Do say hello to him!



Top picture, Todd Various performs on the Mile. Photo: Andrew Brown.

Above: Paul and his cards

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KlangHaus: Site responsive sounds

TW INTERVIEW

There are plenty of great gigs at the Fringe, but few will feel quite so perfectly placed within this genre-bending festival as 'KlangHaus'. It has many of the elements of a gig - a great band for starters - but which ramps things up several notches, creating a unique audio-visual experience.

The band is the experimental art-rock outfit The Neutrinos, collaborating here with artist and designer Sal Pittman and, to an extent, with the very walls of Summerhall itself, to create a "360° visceral, enveloping experience challenging conventions of the live gig". We caught up with three of the band - Karen Reilly (vocals), Jon Baker (bass, keys, effects) and Mark Travis (guitars, effects) - to find out more.

TW: So part gig, part art installation - what can an audience member expect from the 'KlangHaus' experience? How does it work?

Jon: You might feel like you're walking through a Spike Jonze film. Or it's like experiencing a gig from the inside. We're all onstage together with the audience. We move about together, we sing up close, you can see our breath.

TW: Where did the original idea come from for this production?

Mark: We made our album 'The Butcher Of Common Sense' in the unexplored parts of a defunct GDR radio station in Berlin. We became so fascinated with the state and sound of the spaces, the corridors, lobbies and rooms full of listening equipment, that we started to record the building: sight and sound. We harvested the songs from the rooms. We find ourselves drawn to bleak spaces, we are often the only colour for each other.

TW: How did the collaboration with Sal Pittman begin?

Karen: We've been working together since 2005 when Sal put together a crazy collage website. Then we worked on videos and she's been our 'Stanley Donwood' ever since. Only she's got a bit more hair and she's slightly prettier. We share a similar off-kilter macabre sense of humour.

TW: How does it work creating a show like this?

Jon: We like to call this work 'site-responsive' if that doesn't sound too pretentious. We try to imagine the soundworld from our first site visit: listening to the acoustics of the various rooms - in this case we've got twelve and they're all markedly different - trying to feel the architecture and the geometry of the building. Collaborating with the building is essentially a playful process and one of cooperative exploration, discovery and honing around a shared aesthetic or vision. The core musicians and team involved in this project are long time associates and very experienced, responsive and passionate about the work

TW: That building is Summerhall's Small Animal Hospital. How important is that space for realising your ambitions?

Mark: Originally we were planning to come to Edinburgh and make a show in a house where the audience would come to visit, stay as long as they wanted, and get to hang out with us; we may even get to play some music. We've done that version of KlangHaus before, doing four shows a day. But as soon as we saw the Small Animal Hospital we knew that we wanted to adapt the show, because the rooms reflect so much of where we're at sonically and visually. And this seemed like a natural progression after our residency at London's Horse Hospital. Animals feature strongly in the work we've been making, as do the recurring themes of mortality, consciousness, anesthetic... The silent screams of small souls.

TW: How does performing a show like this compare to performing a standard gig?

Karen: It's wider, unpredictable, bloody weird, sonically exciting, you don't know where the sound is gonna come from next. We get to travel with the audience through the space, we're right up close to them, surrounding them or right in the middle of them, and that feels really special. In fact our approach here, in many ways, was born out of a frustration with the conventional gig format - drive, set up, play, pack up, drive home - and the desire to challenge and grow up as artists. The most significant and obvious difference, of course, is the use of the space and where we perform within it to create intimacy, power and mood. The next is use of the acoustic. You know that terrible scenario of battling with a huge windy acoustically difficult room, like a function band in a massive barn or church hall. Well, if we have



Photo: David P Scott

a room that is tall ceilinged and with reflective surfaces, we play quietly, no amplification, to create magic. Or blast the room with sonic terrorism so create a mass noise... we use the architecture and respect the sound waves because they are fact.

TW: Is the technical set up complicated?

Jon: It's not always complicated for KlangHaus. We can (and have) made entirely acoustic shows and we've got a few moments in this one. Having said that, we were up until 4am making the sound and vision work

for this show, so yes the sound and vision plot is pretty exciting. Most of the performers are controlling remote sounds in other rooms using various means and we have had some superb technical assistance from both our own crew and the people at Summerhall.

TW: Do you have to experience this music in the live environment, or will you release it as an album too? Or maybe as a video project?

Karen: We are always aiming to create a genuine, visceral and meaningful musical experience - to bring music,

sound and song to life in a particular space is a vital part of that experience and of the process of creating new material. Live is where the songs really start to breathe and grow. Putting those ideas into fresh environments forces them to; adapt, mutate and develop resonance. For this Fringe 'KlangHaus', for example, we have developed an unreleased song that goes way back but, somehow, is just right for this show.

'KlangHaus - The Neutrinos and Sal Pittman' is on at Summerhall until 24 Aug.

TW

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Rob Winlow: Austen's life on the musical stage

TW MUSICALS

Having previously penned the Fringe musical show 'Armada', actor, director and writer Rob Winlow returns to the Festival with new show 'Austen', as in Jane, whose life the show is based on.

Ahead of its arrival at theSpace we caught up with Rob about the motivation for the show, his work researching the life of the popular author, and the challenges of bringing new musical theatre to the stage.

TW: Where did the idea come from to create a new musical around the real life of Jane Austen?

RW: Having been a long time Jane Austen fan, I knew there was an awful lot of interest in her and her work. Whilst there are musicals with her novels as the basis there are none, to my knowledge, about her life. That is not surprising, as documented information about her is sparse. Whilst she is famous for her romantic novels - even if some would argue they are not purely romantic, but also comment on the foibles and follies of the day - little is known of her own love life.



TW: Given information is sparse, how did you research the piece?

RW: I read as many biographies as possible, though, as I say, whilst there is a wealth of background information on the people around Jane, it is difficult to find much on the author herself. She was a prolific letter writer but only one hundred or so letters survived. Her sister, Cassandra, destroyed the

great majority of them after Jane's premature death. There are two well known romantic connections, but there was a third mystery man who formed the most serious relationship with Jane before his sudden death. And we cover this liaison in the show.

TW: You worked with writer and dramaturge Bernie C Byrnes on the show, how did that tie-up come about and how did it work?

RW: I had a rehearsed read through and realised the format wasn't working. I teamed up with Bernie, and she knocked it into shape, giving it a much better framework. Bernie not only gave the piece structure but edited it to the one hour/one act time restriction we needed for the Fringe.

TW: What's your process, what comes first, the story or the music and songs?

RW: The story came first and the songs then emerged at points of high drama, or where we needed to drive the narrative along. The underscore came last to add atmosphere and link the scenes.

TW: What kind of musical is 'Austen' in terms of the music itself? Do you draw any inspiration from other musical theatre makers?

RW: Because there is a modern time zone as well as the regency period in the show we are not limited to any particular style. The score is fairly simple, however, as we have gone for piano accompaniment this time rather than the big production backing tracks we used in the 'Armada'.

TW: Ah yes, your previous Fringe production. For people who saw that, how does 'Austen' compare?

RW: Austen is a four-hander compared to Armada's cast of seven. There are

no massive choral numbers this time, but more intimate solos and duets. We won't be able to boss The Mile with big songs this year, so hopefully the costumes will help us with our flying! 'Austen' is a much tighter show with some high moments of levity as well as some desperately sad moments too.

TW: Did writing and producing 'Armada' provide lessons for when you set out on 'Austen'?

RW: Most definitely yes. One friendly critique pointed out the show was song driven rather than narrative driven. That has been turned on its head for Austen.

TW: You also acted in 'Armada', but not in this show. What's it like writing a show, and then completely handing it over to a director?

RW: Quite frankly it is wonderful to hand over the reins and let people develop it further. Matthew Gould has done a terrific job of drawing out the humour and the emotion. I was puzzled as to how Matthew would handle the ending, because it would have been so easy to create unintended laughter. Instead he has performed a stroke of genius that I know is going to move me every time I see it.

TW: As an actor and director, what drew you to the idea of writing your own musicals?

RW: Having always dabbled with songwriting, that side of it feels more natural than book writing and certainly easier than directing. I love theatre and performing so it seemed the most natural thing to combine these passions. I envy writers for whom this process comes so easily...it takes me forever to write a single page of dialogue.

TW: Tell us a bit more about Old Hall Theatre. Why did you set it up?

RW: Old Hall Theatre was set up as a vehicle to perform my own shows. We needed to form a company for being a part of the York New Musical Festival when I helped to found it in 2012. YNMF is now an annual event and plans are already in place for 2015. Both 'Armada' and 'Austen' have appeared here and I would recommend it to all writers to showcase or develop not only completed shows but also Works In Progress which we warmly welcome at the event.

TW: And what are your future plans for 'Austen'?

RW: We are at Etcetera Theatre on 24 August, and have been chosen to perform at the prestigious Jane Austen Festival in Bath. We're then hoping to tour 'Austen' in the UK a little. And we would love to hear from promoters in the US where Jane Austen is extremely popular.

'Austen' is on at theSpace On The Mile from 10 Aug until 16 Aug.

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David Bolger: Issues through dance

TW INTERVIEW

CoisCéim Dance Theatre's 'Missing' is a very impactful piece, exploring the high number of people who go missing each year, in the company's home country of Ireland in particular, but in general worldwide as well.

The focus of choreographer David Bolger's work is the impact a missing person has on the people they leave behind, who are left searching and hoping. We spoke to Bolger about what inspired him to turn this issue into 'Missing', and about the process he went through to bring the work to the stage.

TW: Tell us about the premise of 'Missing'.

DB: 'Missing' is a duet danced by Emma O'Kane and Tom Pritchard. In the work they are both searching for answers about missing people in Ireland, because the piece is really about the people who are left behind searching for a lost loved one.

TW: Where did the idea come from to build a piece around this theme?

DB: The idea first began when I noticed a missing person's poster image on a lamppost. The poster was fading; time and the weather were starting to make the image disappear. It got me thinking about the importance of remembering missing people. That here was this poster with a plea for help in locating someone, yet her image was fading. But memories of her for her family, friends and loved ones can never fade. They have no closure; always wondering what might have happened.

TW: We see lists in the show, reasons people go missing, the responses of

those left behind. Where do those come from? Did you have to do much research?

DB: I began researching 'Missing' three years ago. We worked with a lot of organisations which deal with missing person cases, and which support families of the missing. It was difficult to find exact numbers of how many people are reported missing in Ireland each year, as there is no central bank of information. The figures we use in the show were taken from an official report presented in the Irish parliament in 2011. This was to lobby the Irish government to support a national day for the missing, which was successful and now takes place each December.

TW: How did those real life elements impact on the choreography?

DB: With the choreography, I was looking at the theme of searching. Searching with the entire body. Searching for knowledge and understanding. I was also looking for hope in the work. Because there is always hope that someone will turn up again. Interestingly, just a few weeks into rehearsals for the original production, the news story broke of those three women who had been kidnapped in Cleveland, Ohio emerging from their capture, Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus and Michelle Knight. Although theirs was an horrific story, Berry's voice at the end of the telephone allowed thousands of other families have hope that their loved ones too could be found years after disappearing.

TW: The design and lighting seems particularly important in this piece. Tell us about the other elements to the production.

DB: In designing for the piece, I knew that I wanted to use empty chairs on stage, as a constant reminder and symbol of the missing. I worked very carefully with our lighting designer Eamon Fox, who also brought a lot of ideas to the table. The colour of the lighting became important, as I believe that we view colour emotionally, and it has a huge impact

on our feelings. Even the colour of the costumes I chose for Emma and Tom are very much connected to emotional colour impact. Likewise with the music that I chose to use in the performance. I wanted to find music that would not tell the audience how to feel, but imply just how big the subject matter is and the huge numbers of missing people, not just in Ireland, but the entire world.

TW: The show was very well received at the Dublin Dance Festival last year I hear.

DB: Yes, the work premiered there. It completely sold out its entire run before we even opened. This was very

encouraging for us because we had been tucked away in the dance studio working and wondering whether anyone would want to come and see a show with missing people as its central theme.

TW: Are you pleased to be able to bring the show to the Fringe?

DB: Yes, definitely. Edinburgh audiences are so well informed in theatre, dance and the arts in general. This makes audiences here very in tune with difficult subject matters. There is huge responsibility with taking on this subject matter. Being careful not to be sensational, which is all too common in media reporting



of missing people. And respecting the memories of the missing, and the families left behind.

Missing is on at Dance Base until 24 Aug



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David Lee Morgan: Honest words

TW INTERVIEW

In amongst a particularly strong spoken word selection in the Free Fringe this year, David Lee Morgan's show stands out, as he follows on last year's excellent 'Science, Love And Revolution' with 'Pornography And Heartbreak'.

We caught up with the Slam Poetry champion and acclaimed spoken word performer to find out more about his new show, its subject matter, and how he goes about creating his Fringe productions.

TW: Tell us about 'Pornography And Heartbreak', what's the premise for the show?
DLM: It's a gut-wrenchingly honest show about sexuality, sexual fantasy

and violence, and about my complicity with what I am writing about.

TW: Is there a specific message in it?
DLM: A powerful work of art usually has conflicting messages - if any - and often not those the artist intended. But I think one theme in my play is this: pornography is sexual fantasy, packaged and sold by the pornography industry. And its violence and misogyny are a symptom of just how much our society hates women. But pornography is not identical with sexual fantasy. Whatever happens to the pornography industry, you cannot stop sexual fantasy itself, nor its expression in words and pictures.

TW: What motivated exploring this theme at the Fringe this year?
DLM: The biggest motivator was the response to last year's show, 'Science, Love And Revolution'. The show was from my heart, but it was from the best most idealistic part of my heart. People responded to the idealism so strongly that I felt I had to show the darker parts of me, or else I would be a hypocrite forever.

TW: When you put together a full-hour show like this for the Festival, do you bring together work you've already written that fits a theme, or do you write an hour of new material?
DLM: I mostly write new material, but I've been writing a long time, so often there are a few older things that might fit in, or that serve as a launch pad for the new writing.

TW: Your passionate performance style is often noted by reviewers. When you write a poem, are you imagining how you will perform it, or do you write it for the page and then transform it for the stage?
DLM: I might think about theatrical elements that could be fused with the writing. For example, in this show, I knew from the start that I would be switching between 'lights on' and 'blackout' as I did the more confessional pieces. But I don't think at all about my personal performance when I'm writing. If the piece is well-written, the performance writes itself. I think my biggest weakness as a performer is a tendency to

over-project, to over-perform. When I think consciously about performance, it's usually about reining that in.

TW: You've performed in a number of poetry slam competitions. For the uninitiated, what does that involve?
DLM: Slam poetry is a very specialised form of poetry. In fact, it might be more accurate to call it a form of speech-making. You have three minutes - usually - to win your audience over to your point of view and make them cheer for it. Doesn't matter how good your poetry is, if the judges don't agree with what you're saying, you won't win.

TW: How does your performance style differ in the competition environment, compared to when you are doing a full show like at the Fringe?
DLM: I'm more relaxed in a show. You can screw up and say, "oops, I screwed up", and often that just helps you connect better with the audience. In a competition, you need to be intense and perfect.

TW: You sense the spoken word genre has really grown at the Edinburgh Festival in recent years, would you agree? Why do you think that is?
DLM: The spoken word scene has grown tremendously all over the UK. In addition, at the Fringe, there were the two big game changers: adding 'Spoken Word' as a Fringe category and the PBH Free Fringe. It means you don't have to pretend your show is theatre or comedy when it isn't either - and you don't have to rob and pillage to get enough money to put on a show.

TW: That said, I suppose different people might define 'spoken word' in different ways. What does the genre term mean to you? Any tips for navigating spoken word at the Festival?
DLM: It means poetry that thinks firstly about the music of words and only secondly about how they will look on the page. My tip: Go to everything (and check out other one-person performances in comedy and theatre that might have something useful to steal).

TW: You've written novels and for musical theatre as well as poetry and your spoken word shows, how do the different disciplines compare? Do you have a favourite?
DLM: I love writing for musical theatre. Just as in Elizabethan plays, it has everything: you can have true-to-life dialogue and soaring poetry in the soliloquy/song lyrics. The problem for me was this: a play isn't truly written until it's been put up on stage. I got tired of writing for my desk drawer.

TW: What plans have you got for 'Pornography And Heartbreak' beyond this year's Festival?
DLM: I will perform it anywhere I can find two or more people to sit down and listen to it. At the same time, I will be working on a show for next year, and the year after, and the year after...

TW: Can you do us a show plug in the form of a short poem?
How about this...
No
See the show

No? Well, how about this...
He said, is it good?
And she said
G-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-d
I was pinned there, helpless
But afterwards it turned me on to remember
Outside the window
I could hear him fucking her
Driving a nail into my stomach

David also wrote a longer alternative poem for you, which you can check out online via www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/spokenword

'Pornography And Heartbreak' is on at Banshee Labyrinth until 24 Aug.

TW REVIEWS



The Big Bite-Size Plays Factory Goes Down The Toilet (White Room Theatre)

If you're looking for a show that teaches as it titillates, this one is for you. Teaching children about sewers and what exactly can/cannot go down the toilet doesn't sound very entertaining, but this company knows how to have fun with a challenging topic. Audience members of all ages are welcomed warmly by the cast, and the performers are excellent at interacting directly with the children throughout the performance. Bringing a genuinely important issue to our notice, this piece is a great way to introduce kids to theatre. Energy, education and references to poo - exactly what children really want out of theatre.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 25 Aug.
tw rating 5/5 | [Vicki Baron]

Brush (Haddangse (Korea))
A Korean folk tale (performed mostly in Korean) about a boy's quest with his grandmother to make his mother give him a baby brother doesn't necessarily sound like a great basis for a kid's show, but somehow it works. Fusing calligraphic drawing, dance, physical comedy and a dash of Korean innuendo (I think), 'Brush' had the audience giggling, gasping and cowering in just the right amounts. The cast are emotive and acrobatic actors but, while they are undoubtedly also skilled at painting, some of the drawing sections are a little too long. Overall though, 'Brush' was engaging, amusing and visually interesting. Despite the language barrier, it was clear enough that my four year old son understood what was going on.

C, until 24 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Andrew Bell]

Celeste's Circus (Faux Theatre)
'Celeste's Circus' is a straightforward, charming show, ideal for introducing younger children to the theatre. Taking us on a trip to a paper doll circus, Celeste captures the audience's attention with ease and gentle humour. The dolls, puppets and sets are very simple, but remarkably effective when combined with the whizzes and pops from Celeste's collection of noise-makers. The surprise cascade of bubbles lends an air of magic to the performance, though the final high wire act is a bit underwhelming and the whole show feels a little short for the price. Despite this, 'Celeste's Circus' is a delightful little show for the little Fringe fan, and not too bad for the grown-ups, either.

Scottish Storytelling Centre, until 17 Aug.



How to survive a day at the Fringe with the kids

TW COLUMN

If you are planning to spend a day at the Fringe with your little ones, you might be feeling a little bit daunted - after all, it's a massive festival, and there's so much to choose from. Comedian and children's entertainer Maddy Carrick offers a few suggestions; and while you may not quite be able to manage all of this in one day, you can definitely try. They'll certainly sleep well after all this.

You've managed to finally bundle your brood onto the bus / train / tram / car / plane, or perhaps for you it's just a gentle stroll across the Meadows; regardless, you have finally arrived at the Fringe with pint-sized theatregoers in tow. But where to start? The kids are most likely collecting every flyer given to them for their own bulging personal collections, but how do you wade through the show posters, postcards, stickers, badges, balloons and work out what you want to see? And why is everything on at the same time?

This is my second Fringe performing a solo comedy show for kids and I think I have a pretty good gauge of what's on offer for little ones - mostly from sneakily exit flyering other shows and judging the audience reaction.

I always think a good place to begin is with a good brekkie. Peter's Yard is a lovely spot, and great for kids, with long tables and plenty of room for buggies. They have tables outside with plenty of running around space. Next, if your child is a Keira Knightley or Orlando Bloom in the making, why not make your way up to Hanover Street and drop them at one of the drama workshops at the Merchants' Hall? They start at 9.30am, and they are run by Fringe

performers. Elsewhere, one of my personal favourites is 'CeilidhKids' at Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, which offers two daily workshops at 10.00am and 11.00am. Scottish dancing! A must for locals and visitors alike!

After dancing or drama classes, you'll be in need of a sit-down and your first show. My tip would be 'The Snow Dog' at the Pleasance, which features puppetry, music and a real-life Siberian husky! While you are in the area, you might want to take advantage of the venue's Kidzone, where children can get busy with a range of arts and crafts. Then it's on to the highlight of your day - big giggles and crazy dancing at my show, 'The World's Worst Birthday Party', on at 12.45pm in the Yurt Locker in the Three Sisters Courtyard. Suitable for 4-10 year olds, it's a silly adventure featuring pranks, fortune tellers and Harry Styles.

After all that fun, it's time for lunch, and where better to re-fill than Mum's on Forrest Road? Hungry tummies will appreciate the big helpings of sausages and mash.

Once your little ones are completely stuffed, head over to Underbelly at Bristo Square to gaze at the giant cow, and be sure to stop in at the Assembly Gardens, a lovely

spot for a sit down, with plenty of space for the kids to have a run around.

In the afternoon, you could send the older kids and teenagers to watch plays at Spaces or C Venues, while for younger kids, the children's comedy compilation shows are quite good fun. Try 'Huggers' at the Three Sisters, or 'Comedy All Sorts' at Assembly George Square Gardens. If you can get a babysitter or have someone to watch the kids - a friendly circus act perhaps? - do make time for my solo comedy show, Maddy Carrick in Maddy's Carrickters, Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, until 24 Aug

Next, something that sounds very exciting - an actual magic mystery tour! A trip on a bus around Edinburgh with dancers propelling themselves down the aisle and from the roof! 'Back of the Bus' is on at 4.30pm. Finally, finish your day with a slow wander along the Royal Mile - hopefully at this point your little ones will be so weighed down with flyers they will be less inclined to take everything they are offered... a final flavour of the Fringe.

Maddy recommends:
Drama Workshops for 5-12s, Spotlites @ The Merchants' Hall, until 24 Aug
CeilidhKids At The Fringe, Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, until 24 Aug
The Snow Dog, Pleasance Courtyard, until 23 Aug
Huggers - Family Friendly Comedy and Cabaret, Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters and Laughing Horse @ Gorgie City Farm until 23 Aug
Comedy All Sorts: Variety For Kids, Assembly George Square Gardens, until 24 Aug
Back Of The Bus, Assembly George Square Gardens, until 21 Aug

You can catch Maddie in her own shows:

The World's Worst Birthday Party, Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, until 24 Aug

Maddy Carrick in Maddy's Carrickters, Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, until 24 Aug



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Already featured on the podcast this Festival:
Baba Brinkman, Mock Tudor, Jay Foreman,
Blues, Party For Two, Jonny & The Baptists

A Fringe full of ventures

Chris Cooke considers the cultural entrepreneurs behind the Fringe, and speaks to the people behind one of the Festival's newest strands, and one of its institutions

Whilst widely regarded as the biggest cultural festival of them all, the Edinburgh Fringe is also a significant forum for cultural entrepreneurialism.

Behind the scenes, alongside the hundreds of producers and production teams making the shows you all see happen, are a community of culturally-minded business people pursuing their own Fringe ventures, whether those be venues, mini-festivals, show strands, awards, media, apps and so on. In much the same way the Fringe encourages anyone with a show to perform, it likewise welcomes anyone with a Fringe business initiative to pursue. Some fail. Some succeed. Some become Fringe institutions.

This is another reason why the Fringe is so exciting, and why so many innovative and inspiring things

happen here. Though it's also why the festival can be so confusing. And why the Fringe sometimes feels like a festival of festivals (within the wider Edinburgh Festival, which is already a festival of festivals). Plus sometimes these new ventures officially ally with the Fringe Society, other times they sit on the edge, on the fringe of the Fringe if you like.

Also, because there is no such thing as a completely original idea, most new Fringe business ventures are similar to and compete with existing Fringe business ventures. Sometimes to the annoyance of the existing players, though the Fringe is all about competition, and most new initiatives have some distinguishing features from what went before, serving the needs of a different kind of performer or a different kind of punter, or just taking things down a slightly different route.

Freestival

It's because of this process that the Fringe now boasts not one, not two, but three free show strands. It's no secret that there have been some tensions between the Free Fringe and the Free Festival over the years, since the latter spun off from the former, after free show pioneer Peter Buckley Hill parted company with the Laughing Horse team, who collaborated on the Free Fringe for a while.

The latest free show strand, the Freestival, has also spun out of the Free Fringe, creating some new tensions earlier this year. Though ultimately - whatever frustrations may occur, whatever allegations may emerge - ambitious and entrepreneurial creative people launching their own business ventures, and providing new competition, is as much part of the Fringe as flyering on the Mile, discovering the next big stand-up, premiering a new play and moaning about the weather.

The Freestival's Alex Marion (pictured right) is very open about the circumstances that led to the launch of the Fringe's newest free show strand.

"After years of collective experience at the free end of the Fringe, a group of us started thinking about how we could do things a little differently" he says, "to enhance the experience for

acts and audience alike. One thing lead to another and we approached Peter Buckley Hill with some ideas for changes to the Free Fringe model. This seemed logical as most of us had worked with PBH Free Fringe for years, some of us very closely and very hard. Peter saw it differently and told us we should start our own free organisation. So we did".

Though, Marion is keen to add, "there has never been, and never will be, any animosity towards PBH on our part. We wish the Free Fringe well, and all its performers are welcome to perform on our stages". And Marion reckons that, whatever may have been said in the past, one crucial thing links all three of the free show strands together. "We all believe passionately that access to the arts for public and performers should not be limited to those who can afford to spend a small fortune" he says.

On where the three free groupings differ, though, he tells us: "The differences are small but crucial. The Free Fringe is run according to Peter's ethos and depends on the collaborative efforts of all concerned in terms of running the venues, fund-raising and donations. Laughing Horse's Free Festival is more business-like in the sense that it takes all the organisational load off the acts' shoulders and focuses on key hub

venues to showcase its acts and draw traffic, and they do it very well".

He adds: "Both of these have grown very large and this is where Freestival comes in. Our belief is that unfettered growth inevitably dilutes the quality of shows on offer. We think that by remaining small and carefully curating our programme we can come as close as possible on the Fringe to guaranteeing quality shows for the audience".

Though, he does note, the Freestival is not totally alone in presenting a tighter programme of free shows, pointing out that Bob Slayer's Heroes strand - which has emerged out of the Free Festival in recent years - is doing something very similar. "And Bob has found a middle way by offering free shows where seats can be guaranteed in advance with a payment" he adds.

Despite being brand new, and smaller than its competitors, the all new Freestival has arrived with quite a fanfare thanks to sponsorship from pizza sellers La Favorita, helping to fund venue costs and a big marketing campaign. "We met La Favorita and they liked our model", Marion explains. "They felt it mirrored their own commitment to quality and to supporting the arts and Edinburgh through the Fringe".

On the inaugural Freestival programme itself Marion says of the

Forest Fringe



Of course, we say there are three free show strands at the Fringe, meaning the Free Fringe, Free Festival and the Freestival, though that maths ignores another important programme within the wider festival with a pay-what-you-want philosophy. And that is the Forest Fringe. Though it operates in a very different way, and while the other free show collectives are best known for their comedy (though their programmes do go beyond that), the Forest Fringe is usually associated with other art forms.

"Forest Fringe is an artist-led organisation" the group's Ira Brand (pictured left) tells ThreeWeeks, "meaning we all have our own artistic practice as well as the curatorial and facilitating roles we take on when it comes to running a venue in Edinburgh. That's really important to me, that we come at everything as artists as well as programmers or managers".

The Forest Fringe, of course, began life at the Forest Café on Bristo Place. Though since that building has been reborn as Assembly Checkpoint, the Forest Fringe team have found a new home at the Out Of The Blue Drill Hall, a big space with lots of potential.

"We're learning all the time about how to best make use of the Drill Hall" Brand tells us. "It's such a beautiful and unique space, full of possibilities, but also of course limitations, so we have to think creatively about what we

can make happen. We have a 'studio', where all our daytime shows take place, and then we use the main Drill Hall space for our evening programme once the sun goes down; because of the stunning glass ceiling we can't make it dark in there artificially".

"This year the evening programme is slightly different" she adds. "Rather than the same show every night we have programmed different pieces and events for one or two nights each, so there's always something new on. We also have installations, residencies and one-off events happening around the building or out in Leith".

In both its original and new home, the Forest Fringe programme has always been very eclectic, in terms of the genres it covers, and the performers it involves. "Gruelling" is how Brand describes the process of picking who to present. "When we are programming I always think a lot about balance - we want a programme that is 'balanced' in terms of artists we've worked with before and new relationships, of more established or younger artists, and, really importantly, an exciting mix of types of experience on offer for an audience".

Once the programme has been selected, of course, all shows are then presented on a pay-what-you-want basis. "It's vital for us that our shows are by donation. There are enough barriers to audiences engaging with theatre and performance, especially at



shows that feature, “we watched every video, read every CV, and made collective decisions and built a programme filled with acts that we believe in 100%”. And as for the future he concludes, “we aim to learn from

every mistake, enjoy working with amazing performers in the beautiful city of Edinburgh, and keep doing what we set out to do, keeping small, getting better at all the time”.
More at www.freetival.co.uk

the Fringe where there is such a vast amount of work on, so it’s really important as a way of encouraging people to take a chance on seeing something they are not familiar with”.
Though that ambition creates challenges, Brand admits. “I think the commercial side of the Fringe as a whole is tricky, it’s a huge financial commitment for artists to present their work here. Almost nobody expects to make money. And as an audience member it can be prohibitively expensive to see a lot of work. Of course it’s commercially tricky for us. We rely on a brilliant team of volunteers who give their time for free, on the artists who present their work for donations, and for us it’s always a massive labour of love”.
Since its conception in Edinburgh, the Forest Fringe

has taken its approach way beyond Scotland, with the team working in Lisbon, Austin, Bangkok, San Francisco, Yokohama and Hong Kong. Meanwhile, back in Edinburgh, the whole endeavour has grown and matured, but hopefully without losing its adventurous spirit.
Brand first performed at the Forest Fringe in 2008, becoming a volunteer manager in 2011 and now a co-director. She says of the venture’s development over the years: “I think we’ve just got better, if that’s not too flippant or arrogant a thing to say! I mean better at doing what we do, with slightly more maturity and rigour, whilst maintaining the playful and spontaneous nature of Forest Fringe that made me want to be part of it in the first place”.
More at www.forestfringe.co.uk

All about ThreeWeeks

LONGEST ESTABLISHED: ThreeWeeks is the longest established magazine at the Edinburgh Festival, the world’s biggest cultural event, and has been discovering and championing new and exciting comedy, cabaret, dance, musical, theatre and spoken word talent every summer since 1996.

HALF A MILLION READERS: Each August half a million festival-goers rely on the ThreeWeeks free weekly magazine, daily email, website and podcast for a comprehensive guide to all of the festivals that take place in Edinburgh during August, including the International, Book, Art and Politics festivals and the awe inspiring Edinburgh Fringe.

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THISWEEK LONDON: ThisWeek London is a new sister media to ThreeWeeks, providing year round coverage of cultural events in London, including daily recommendations from the ThisWeek team, and the Caro Meets interviews with some of our favourite performers, producers and directors. ThisWeek London also benefits from ThreeWeeks’ eighteen years covering the Edinburgh Festival, tipping Fringe favourites old and new (and brand new) as they appear in London. Check us out at ThisWeekLondon.com, or sign up for the weekly bulletin at ThisWeekLondon.com/signup.

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WHAT DOES THE TITLE MATTER ANYWAY?

Colin



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Greg



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Josie



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Mike



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Phill

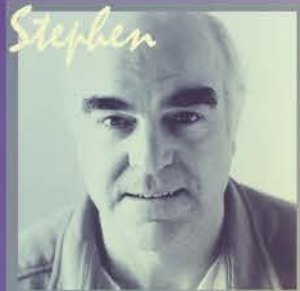


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HOSTED BY
CLIVE ANDERSON

STARRING
COLIN MOCHRIE 6-10 AUG
GREG PROOPS 6-19 AUG
JOSIE LAWRENCE 6-9 AUG
MIKE MCSHANE 13-15 AUG
STEPHEN FROST 6-19 AUG
RICHARD VRANCH 11, 12, 16 AUG
PHILL JUPITUS 16-19 AUG
MARCUS BRIGSTOCKE 10 AUG
AND **PHILIP POPE** 6-19 AUG
ON THE PIANO

Stephen



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Richard



AS SEEN ON WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

Marcus



Phillip



Acts on rotation.

See www.underbelly.co.uk
for full line-ups, and other
special festival guests still
to be announced

COMPOSER OF THE THEME TUNE TO WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

0844 545 8252

underbellyedinburgh.co.uk

21:00 (22:00)

6 - 19 AUG 2014

