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## Sofie Hagen: It's a (bubble)wrap

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## Richard Gadd takes Amused Moose award



**The grand final of the annual Amused Moose Awards took place at theSpace @ Symposium Hall last Sunday, with Richard Gadd taking the overall prize for his much acclaimed show 'Waiting For Gaddot', part of PBH's Free Fringe at the Banshee Labyrinth.**

Amused Moose runs two separate awards each year, one for brand new talent, and then this one for more established comedians already presenting full-hour shows at the Fringe, but who are yet to pick up another major comedy award, making it something of a breakthrough prize. Or, as Amused Moose boss Hills Jago

explains, "this one is for comedy performers with Fringe shows who are on the cusp of being noticed, and getting opportunities from the comedy industry beyond the stand-up circuit".

There is a long list of eligible comedians for this award each year, who are then shortlisted down to just ten finalists, who each performed a snippet of their show at the grand finale last weekend. "All entrant shows are initially watched online by a big panel of international and UK comedy industry people", Jago explains of the first stage of the judging process. "Then once the Fringe starts panellists who are in Edinburgh watch as many of the shows live as they can, partly focussing - though not at all exclusively - on the shows which scored highest online. From that process a longlist emerges, which then gets sifted to a shortlist".

It was a very strong shortlist this year, and from it Richard Gadd emerged victorious. "This award has such a great history behind it", Gadd told ThreeWeeks shortly after his win, "with lots of comedians I really enjoy having come through it. And I was picked

alongside the circuit stalwarts, and a lot of comedians I have respected and admired for a very long time, so to win feels really good".

Asked to tell us more about 'Waiting For Gaddot', Gadd cautions, "I cannot tell you much about my show without pretty much giving away the whole premise! But I will say that the clue is in the title. I can also say that it is the absolute antithesis of what you would see on 'Live At The Apollo'".

From what we know about Gadd's show, we assumed it was hard for him to pick just ten minutes to perform at last Sunday's final. And we were right. "My show makes absolutely no sense over the course of an hour. Now I am getting asked to condense it into ten minutes? Man oh man, I have to admit I did not think it would work".

"So", he went on, "I decided to just do the last ten minutes of my show - you know, just to confuse them even more. Start with the end, work your way back, throw enough of your own - well, I won't swear - at the wall and hope some of it sticks. It was cluster bomb comedy at its sloppy finest!"

Obviously it worked, given the industry judges awarded him the overall prize. "Funnily enough, about four years ago I entered the Amused Moose new act award and died on my hole" Gadd mused, reflecting on his victory this time. "Then I got reviewed by one4review who said I was 'ten minutes of their life they were never getting back'. So to come full circle from that tragedy is a nice feeling at least. It was also nice to thank all the people who have worked on the show with me. Winning is never a bad feeling, you just cannot let it go to your head. Though I am the best!"

In addition to the main prize, the audience at the final also gets to vote for its favourite act of the afternoon, and the People's Choice Award this year went to Jess Robinson, whose show 'The Rise Of Mighty Voice' is on at the Pleasance Dome.

But what makes a really good breakthrough show in comedy? Jago again: "A great show which has the go-to beginnings of potential cult status, or simply a very well-crafted show by a charismatic performer who in it demonstrates their comedy chops".

Pictured, Richard Gadd with Ben Target, who also appears in 'Waiting For Gaddot'

## NEWS

03-04

## COVER FEATURE

05

### Sofie Hagen: Bubblewrapped

## INTERVIEWS

06-12



06



08



09



10



12

Read all our interviews from Festival 2015 at [ThreeWeeks.co.uk/interviews](http://ThreeWeeks.co.uk/interviews)

## REVIEWS

13-19

## VIEWS

20-22

## AND THERE'S MORE...

This is our last weekly magazine of the Festival, but look out for more news, reviews, features and our Editors' Awards at [ThreeWeeks.co.uk](http://ThreeWeeks.co.uk)

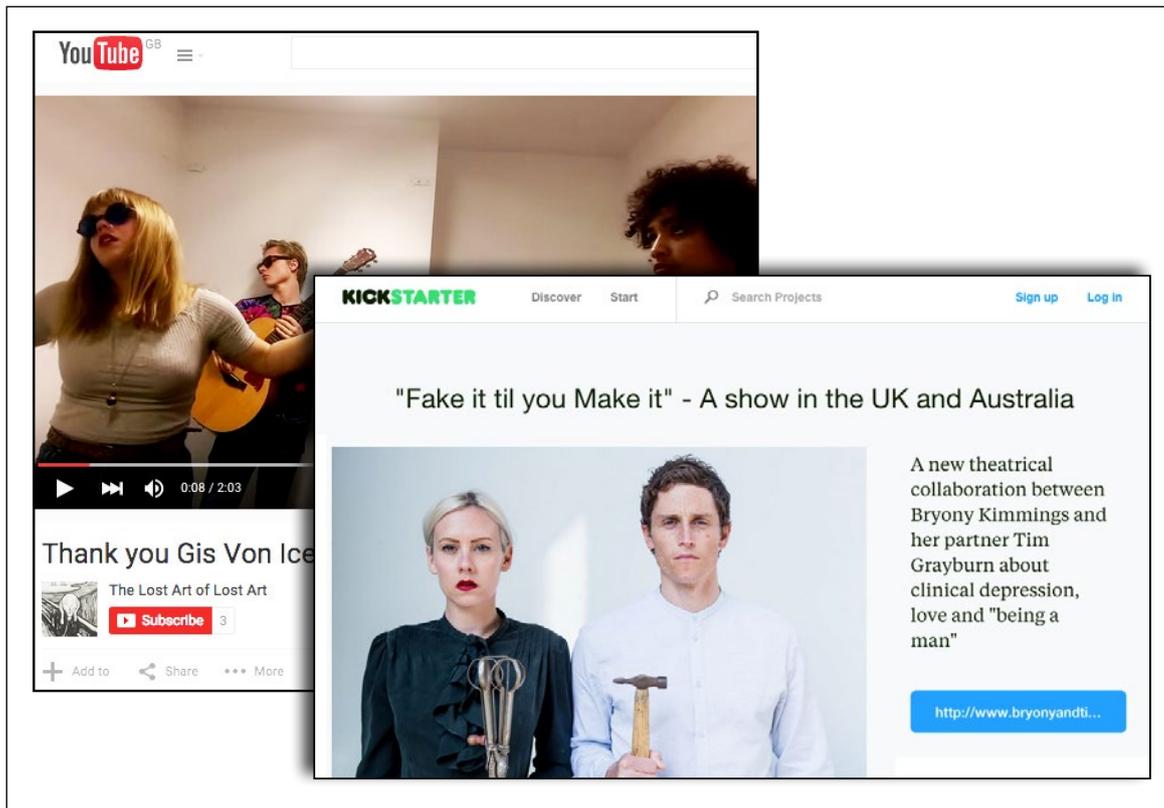
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# Kickstarting at the Fringe: the ins and outs of crowd-funding an Edinburgh show



**It's no secret that it's expensive bringing a show to the Edinburgh Fringe, with many performers making a considerable investment to take to the Festival stage, and many knowing that - even if all goes to plan - they are unlikely to cover all their costs with ticket income alone. The motivation for such loss-making endeavours varies, of course, though performers may wish to hone their art, or gain experience, or build profile, or make connections, or simply to have a summer holiday where you get to show off everyday.**

But given the costs and the risks, it's not surprising that in recent years we've seen an increasing number of Fringe performers taking to online funding platforms like Kickstarter in the spring, to try and raise some cash to help pay production costs, and lessen the potential losses, come August. Done right this is a great way to enable supporters and fans to contribute, to get people talking about your show early on, and to raise some all important funds. Though the fundraising campaign in itself needs work, and if it fails, it can have a negative impact on team morale just as the Festival is zooming into view.

Alfrun Gisladdottir of new production company Raspberry Tart had

already raised a significant chunk of the budget for her debut Fringe show, 'The Lost Art Of Lost Art', by successfully applying to a Daily Mail initiative that supports new acting talent. But some costs still needed to be covered, and having already set up a blog for the project she decided to go the crowd-funding route, mainly targeting friends and family of people involved in the production.

"I made a big list of anyone and everyone who might donate, and then put together a personalised letter to send to them" she says. "My friend who works as a fundraiser for a charity helped me create the right sort of letter. It was important to make it upbeat and genuine, breaking down

all the costs, telling the story of the project to date, and making sure it was clear how grateful we'd be for any support. We then personalised each email or Facebook message that we sent out with this letter".

But the trick with online crowd-funding is offering something in return for any donations. That something doesn't need to be costly to produce, but needs to grab attention. Gisladdottir decided to use her cast to make something personalised for each person who donated. "After researching other fundraising campaigns, we felt what worked best was something interactive and personal", Gisladdottir continues, "and which could also be shared on social media, because that might encourage others to donate".

Gisladdottir and her cast made short musical videos for each supporter. "The videos are minimal guerrilla filmmaking, all made on an iPhone and usually in one-take" she says. They are lo-fi but fun, and while Gisladdottir originally intended to only be making videos for friends and family, the initiative went a little further than that. "We've started to get requests from people we don't know! And it's been so much fun making these videos we regularly joke about sacking off drama school and starting a band!"

The Village Pub Theatre in Leith also raised funds online to fund their Fringe programme this year, and they also let their imaginations run riot when thinking of things to offer

those who donated. Says the group's James Ley: "The Village Pub Theatre is all new writing, so we were able to tell backers that we could name characters after them in our shows, and a few people went for that". Not every idea was taken up by potential funders, however: "I did offer to give a private dance to anyone who donated £1000! Oddly no one went for that, despite my Tina Turner impersonation in our fundraising video!"

The video Ley refers to there is the one you post at the start of your crowd-funding campaign, basically your pitch to possible funders. And that is arguably more important than what you actually offer backers in return for their support. Angus Wilkinson of another crowd-funded show, 'Miss Sarah' at Zoo, described his company's pitch video.

"We filmed a time-lapse at The Annex Studios in London where we built a giant chalk mural that encapsulated what the Fringe meant to us and to our company. This is our first show as a company, and going into the Fringe our aim was to build a level of professionalism and legitimacy around the art we create and the production company we run. The best way to tell that story is by displaying exactly those values, so our whole campaign centred around the video pitch. It needed to show a level of skill but at the same time still have the 'home-made' aesthetic so that it was clear we don't have huge production budget backing us. That's how we arrived at a chalk mural...cheap but skilful!"

Although it's often new talent and Fringe first-timers using crowd-funding, more established performers have also gone this route. Fringe veteran Bryony Kimmings also partly funded her hugely acclaimed new show 'Fake It 'til You Make It' this way. "My mate Amanda Palmer is the queen of crowd-funding and I had heard about it from her and various other bands" she explains.

Though, whereas with brand new talent, just getting to the Fringe might in itself be a credible pitch to possible funders, for more established performers and companies there probably needs to be something else about your project to make it attractive to possible online backers. And that might be the subject matter of the show.

Says Kimmings: "I had seen some very unsuccessful crowd-funding projects, and understood that it had to be the right project to ask fellow humans to give their hard earned cash to. It had to be a subject and a pursuit that

people felt personally connected to. So when we needed some extra support to make our new show and get it in front of audiences, I knew Kickstarter would be excellent. A chance to reclaim mental health and turn it into a positive thing... I think most people are affected by mental illness in one way or another and it was an unprecedented success".

Ley also thinks you need to be honest and realistic with what you ask for in any crowd-funding campaign. "Definitely be realistic with how much money you're asking for" he says. "We still have to sell quite a lot of tickets to break even, but that feels right. That's our job and it wouldn't be fair to expect our backers to pay for 100% of a show that doesn't attract an audience. Fortunately we've seen pretty good ticket sale so far".

Most Fringe performers raising money this way seem to use Kickstarter. As Wilkinson says: "There was much debate in our team about which platform to use, but in the end you really have to understand that you are asking people to take a punt on something and you need as many legitimate indicators as possible to help them feel comfortable donating. There were some platforms that took a significantly smaller commission but no one has really heard of them yet. People know Kickstarter".

Though Gisladdottir reckons that if you are primarily hitting friends and family for donations, there are other options. She says: "I think that crowd-funding platforms are great when you have built a following, but when you are completely new it's mostly your family and friends that donate anyway, so why pay 8% of that to a website that doesn't even give you the money if you don't make your target? I did a lot of research and in the end we agreed that it would be better to use the crowd-funding template but do it ourselves, through our blog and Paypal".

So, like a Fringe show itself, there are decisions to be made, risks to be taken, and a very good pitch is required. But if it takes some of the heat off come August, fund-raising in this way may be a good use of time each Spring for those heading to the Festival.

#### FEATURED SHOWS:

The Lost Art Of Lost Art, Underbelly Cowgate, until 30 Aug

Village Pub Theatre new writing, until 29 Aug  
Miss Sarah, Zoo, until 31 Aug.

Fake It 'Til You Make It, Traverse Theatre, until 30 Aug

# Sofie Hagen: Bubblewrapped

Lots of real life, and a little Westlife-themed fan fiction, fill Sofie Hagen's first full hour show at the Fringe, and what a gem of a show it really is. Which is just as well, given a venue mix-up put her in a space with 500 rather than the expected 70 seats. Harking from Denmark, living in London, and winning in Edinburgh, Sofie put down the 'Bubblewrap' and agreed to answer all our questions.



**CC:** So, this is your first full-hour show at the Fringe. How's it going so far?

SH: Well, it has taken me three weeks, but I have finally located the hidden chamber where the Scots keep all their vegetables, so I'm now feeling a lot better physically. And mentally, I'm much better than I thought I would be by this point. I feel like I have been extremely lucky this Fringe, my audiences have been the best people.

**CC:** Is there a theme in the show?

SH: There are a few themes, I think. I touch upon everything from mental health to body image, from fetishes to boybands. And I stubbornly make all that somehow relevant to each other.

**CC:** Does the show bring together material you've performed in the

past, or did you start with a blank page?

SH: My show doesn't really have any 'material'. Nor were there any pages involved. A few months ago I walked on stage and told a few stories about my life and suddenly 50 minutes had passed. And that became my show.

People who know me who have seen it have all said the same thing, that I am completely different on stage this time. And that's because I'm not doing stuff that has to work in a Saturday night comedy club in Liverpool, in front of a load of drunk builders. So I am just completely and honestly

sharing - maybe over sharing! - stories about my life.

**CC:** You mentioned the boybands. What is it with Westlife?

SH: They're only the best boyband ever, mate. I was a very obsessed teenage fan, to say the least. >

ThreeWeeks editors Chris Cooke and Caro Moses chat to some of their favourite performers taking to the Fringe stage this year

## COMING UP:

Sofie Hagen  
Henry Maynard  
The Place's Eddie Nixon and Christina Elliot  
Luke Wright  
Ally Houston  
Emma Hall

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/comedy

**> CC: But I hear that all five (original) members have so far failed to see the show. Will you start writing fan fiction about The Wanted instead?**

SH: Oh my God, I had to just Google them to find out who they even were. They are children! No, once a Westlifer, always a Westlifer. And I haven't given up yet. Kian, Mark, Brian and Nicky have all shown interest in seeing the show at one point or another, so I just need to make all the stars line up. It will happen.

**CC: Let's back up a bit, tell us how you first got into comedy.**

SH: I got myself some volunteer work at an open mic night in Copenhagen in 2010. From day one, I was hooked. I went home and wrote sixteen pages of "jokes". Eventually the comedians forced me to actually try them out. And it was the biggest rush of my life.

**CC: Why did you decide to move to the UK, and how did you go about getting noticed on the comedy scene over here?**

SH: I went to London on a vacation, alone, to get over a heartbreak. Comedy feels like home in any country, so I found some open mic nights. As soon as I had gotten a taste of the UK comedy scene, I knew I couldn't go back to Denmark. In Denmark there is one comedy club. In the UK, four new clubs have just opened while I've been answering this question. So I ignored my plane ticket home, found a flat and just kept on performing. That's how you get noticed, by the way. Keep gigging and be funny. Eventually they'll ask you to do more stuff.

**CC: What's it like doing comedy in a second language? Are you thinking in English or Danish?**

SH: English is the perfect language for comedy. You have four times as many words as we do in Danish, so the possibility of making 'the perfect sentence' for 'the perfect joke' is

bigger. So I enjoy doing comedy in English way more than in Danish. I think in both languages, depending on where I am, who I am talking to and what I am doing. Though I can't have a phonecall with a Danish friend before going on stage, because then I will be a split second too slow.

**CC: Aside from the language, do you have to alter the routine between UK and Danish audiences? Do cultural references need to change?**

SH: I gig all over the world. I have gigged in sixteen countries now, so I don't really use any cultural references. I talk about myself and the things I find funny, and that has so far proven to be universal. The main difference is how behind Denmark is in some regards. In the UK, you'll say the word 'feminism' on stage and automatically get a supporting round of applause - where in Denmark, they'll heckle me and tell me to get back in the kitchen.

**CC: But does Westlife fan fiction cross all boundaries?**

SH: Westlife fan fiction does not necessarily cross any boundaries. But reading it out loud on stage in front of a room full of people might.

**CC: We love your podcast. Tell us more about that.**

SH: I LOVE MY PODCAST TOO. It's the best thing I have ever created, maybe apart from my show. It is called Comedians Telling Stuff - because no one told me not to before it was too late - and it is based on anecdotes and stories told by comedians. And it has had some amazing comedians on it, including Josie Long, Kyle Kinane, Mark Watson, Colin Mochrie, Russell Kane, Shappi Khorsandi, Nick Helm, Andy Zaltzman, and many more. I love doing it and I love my listeners. Meeting them at the show has been the best thing about my Fringe.

**CC: I hear you've had some venue**

**issues this Festival. Has it all worked out?**

SH: I was meant to be in a 70-seater which didn't get built, for some reason. No one's fault, really. So PBH's Free Fringe helped me out and placed me in a last-minute room - a 500 seater music venue where acts like Seether, Deadmau5 and Rage Against The Machine have all played. And, in fact, on five of my dates there are actual rock bands playing in there in my time slot! So I'm having to perform at different venues at slightly different times on those days. It was all a bit of a mess, and has been quite stressful, but hopefully people will bear with me and find my show!

**CC: Away from your own venue stresses, you pop up at lots of the late night shows at the Festival. Do you have any favourites?**

SH: 'SetList' and 'Voices In Your Head'. They really push me out of my comfort zone and that is when the real magic happens. Plus they are not attended by drunk lads-lads-lads, like most late night shows.

**CC: And finally, what next, for you and the show?**

SH: Straight after Edinburgh, I am going to Denmark for a Danish festival where I am doing the show. Then I am going to Lund in Sweden for their festival. Then back to the UK, where I will hopefully be doing it in a few more places, if anyone wants me. I might eventually have to go to the individual members of Westlife's houses and to do it in their front gardens. Just to make sure they see it before I start working on next year's show.

**THE SHOW:**

Sofie Hagen: Bubblewrap  
George Next Door on 26 Aug, 8.30pm and 29 Aug, 9.40pm; The Liquid Room Annexe Extra on 27, 28, 30 Aug 7.10pm

**THE LINK:** [sofiehagen.com](http://sofiehagen.com)

Photos by David P Scott

## Henry Maynard: Flabbergasting the Fringe

**Flabbergast Theatre wowed us and the Fringe at recent festivals with their 'Boris & Sergey' shows, featuring the titular puppets and their crazy antics. This year they return with a totally new show, 'Tatterdemalion', where one silent man, with his suitcase of props, interacts with his audience to tell delightful stories. We caught up with that one man, Henry Maynard, to find out how you go about creating a show like this, how 'Tatterdemalion' has evolved, and what Flabbergast has planned as it pursues world domination.**

**CC: OK, let's start at the start, tell us about 'Tatterdemalion'. What can we expect?**

HM: It's a physical comedy piece featuring mime and puppetry. It's very silly and funny, but has some dark poignancy for counter balance. The central character finds himself in a predicament on stage and sets about trying to entertain his audience with no show to fall back on. You will be involved... because everybody is! It is, after all, live theatre. Come wanting to have fun and I guarantee you will not be disappointed.

**CC: As you say, you interact with the audience a lot. How much does their response influence the show?**

HM: As with all theatre, the audience dictate the mood. In the past theatres employed 'claqueurs' who were paid to laugh and clap, making everybody's experience of the show better. If the audience are happy to have fun with me we always have a great time together. On the other hand, it can be a tough show if people are very reserved. A couple of reviews suggested that the show only worked because I picked "performers" or friends to take part. But nothing could be further from the truth, I much prefer using strangers and non-performers, as their reactions are so much more natural. Performers can try too hard to go along with things.

**CC: Given the importance of audience interaction, how do you go about writing and rehearsing a show like this?**

HM: The show has to be rehearsed in front of a live audience. During initial development I do use my company to come up with a basic idea, but only by running it in the real world do you really find the humour and details. At Flabbergast we always use improvisation to create shows in front of audiences. It's what made 'Vaudevillian Adventure', our first show, so good. It was devised over two

years in front of real audiences and went through many variations before settling down. With this show, we came up with something that made us laugh, but it's only now, six months on, and after a tour in Australia and a week or so in Edinburgh, that I feel like it is really starting to take off.

**CC: You mentioned 'Boris & Sergey's Vaudevillian Adventure' - to give it its full name - we loved both your Boris & Sergey shows. How do you think 'Tatterdemalion' compares?**

HM: Both shows use audience participation, no fourth wall and improvisation. I think of Boris & Sergey as clown characters like Laurel & Hardy. Because they are puppets they can get away with almost anything. The character in 'Tatterdemalion' is a foolish child, so he does get away with a lot too. I think this show is a little more family friendly, but I may experiment with a later slot in the future.

**CC: Tell us more about Flabbergast Theatre. Why did you set it up? And what are the company's aims?**

HM: Flabbergast theatre was set up to make uncompromising and exciting physical theatre in the belief that all theatre should be engaging and sweaty. It came about through my desire to take more control over the work I appeared in. We believe that as theatre is a live experience, we should exploit that and engage with the audience directly, which is why we use so much direct address and participation. As for aims - well, we aim for World Domination.

**CC: Are some audiences a bit nervous about silent mime-based comedy? If so, how do you - well - talk them round?**

HM: It is becoming much more popular, people like Dr Brown and Trygve Wakenshaw have helped to show people the value of the art form. It is still avant-garde, but those people



/comedy



who love it really do love it. Some people are funny about puppetry too. It seems that I am cursed with a love for theatre styles that aren't necessarily the most mainstream, but I wouldn't have it any other way. In the show I rely on the charm of the character, and if someone really doesn't want to be involved I don't force it. You can't please all the people all the time.

**CC: Is the Edinburgh Fringe a particularly good festival for this kind of show?**

HM: I think the Edinburgh Festival is a good festival precisely because there is such a range of theatre styles. And it's great seeing all the other performers who are doing similar things to me too. Jamie Wood is great and on after me; he is also a solo 'clown' although he does less mime. There seems to be a real appetite for this type of work at the Fringe right now. Though the show works elsewhere too. I am constantly surprised by the range of people that seem to love our work. And I'm currently attracting an older audience base than perhaps we did with Boris & Sergey, which is great.

**CC: We're into the final week of the Fringe, what have been the highlights so far?**

HM: The two sell-out shows have been great, but even the smaller audiences have been fun too, receiving the good star ratings have been gratifying. I'm continuing to develop the show and

the character, and it has been fun to polish the timing and elements of the show that perhaps weren't working at the start.

**CC: Any low points?**

HM: I have a suspected protrusion in one of my lower lumbar discs which is causing a great deal of pain in my sciatic nerve, which is frustrating, although it isn't really affecting the show fortunately.

**CC: And what next? For yourself, Flabbergast and the show?**

HM: I'd really like to transfer the show to London in the autumn, and I'm talking to a few theatres about it. Boris & Sergey also have a completely improvised show called 'Preposterous Improvisation Experiment', which will be part of the Suspense Festival at the Little Angel Theatre. I have a few projects which we are applying for funding to get off the ground. And this Christmas I'll be performing with the Scottish National Theatre in a puppetry based 'A Christmas Carol' in Michigan, America. Then next year we plan to bring 'Tatterdemalion' and Boris & Sergey back to Edinburgh and we might even be running our own theatre space. Like I said - World Domination.

**THE SHOW:** Tatterdemalion, Assembly Roxy, until 31 Aug  
**THE LINK:** [flabbergasttheatre.co.uk](http://flabbergasttheatre.co.uk)  
 Photo by Idil Sukan

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## Eddie Nixon and Christina Elliot: Giving dance its place

**London-based dance performance hub The Place has shifted North this August to present three great shows as part of Summerhall's Fringe programme. While it's here, the venue has also teamed up with Total Theatre to launch a new award celebrating dance at the Festival. We caught up with Director Eddie Nixon and Producer Christina Elliot to find out more.**

**CC: For those not familiar with your year-round work, tell us a bit about The Place.**

CE: The Place is in London and it's somewhere you can watch, learn and make dance. As well as our theatre, and our classes, we support artists to make and tour dance shows.

**CC: And tell us about the Work Place scheme.**

CE: It's an associate artist programme. We give eleven choreographers bespoke producing support, and some money, space and advice. They work in different ways, and make different styles of performance, so we tailor the way we work with them according to their ambitions.

**CC: Why did you decide to bring three productions to the Edinburgh Fringe this year?**

EN: The shows came first. Three artists we support had brilliant new shows and we thought they really deserved a broader audience than you can find in London. The Fringe is perfect for this, because there's a curiosity and eagerness to try something unfamiliar here. We hope it will also lead to further opportunities for the shows to tour, and to be seen by even more people around the UK and beyond.

**CC: Let's talk about the shows, and let's start with Ben Duke's solo performance inspired by Milton's 'Paradise Lost'.**

EN: This is a show that reveals the fallibility of everything - theatre, God, the best laid plans. Like all good comedy it has a kind of masochistic wit. It's an epic miniature about the fragility of creating things.

**CC: And what about 'Idiot-Syncrasy'?**

EN: To say this piece is charming would be a monumental understatement! It's bottled optimism; beguilingly simple and infectiously joyful. We've watched it many times and every night it still leaves your heart singing and jumping along.

**CC: And finally 'T-Dance'.**

EN: We've all sat in some auditorium thinking "please don't pick on me". This show tenderly, lovingly ushers those feelings away. A dance that's like feeling the hand of an old friend touching your cheek

**CC: Why did you decide to collaborate with Summerhall on your Fringe season?**

CE: It seems like one of the homes for experimentation on the Fringe at the moment, and so one of the places where you can find the kind of audience we just described. It's full of artists and audiences who want to take a risk together. It's also a great place to hang out.

**CC: The Fringe's dance programme can sometimes be overshadowed by the comedy and theatre sections, but is this a good place to present and perform dance-based shows?**

CE: The categorisation is kind of the problem. It pigeonholes shows. There's plenty of theatre with dance in it, and plenty of dance that's very, very funny. In an alternative universe the Fringe brochure might just have one long section called 'Performance' and we'd all navigate our own way through it.

**CC: You're also partnering with Total Theatre on a new award this year, tell us more about that.**

EN: There are lots of great

dance shows at the Fringe and we thought they deserved to be talked about a lot more. The idea of the award is that it fuels the conversation, amongst the audience and the critics, about what makes a piece of dance performance unforgettable.

**CC: I sort of thought Total Theatre had a dance award already! I suppose because they have celebrated some key dance shows in the past under their other categories. Why do you think there needs to be a standalone prize for this section of the Fringe?**

CE: Like you said - dance slips under the radar. And as we said, we wish things were less sliced up. There aren't any other major dance prizes on the Fringe and although, occasionally, a dance show sneaks into another category, at the moment we want to celebrate some of the outstanding shows that are up here. Maybe in a few years we won't need it anymore.

**CC: With three shows and the award, I am guessing you've had a very busy Festival. What have been the highlights so far?**

EN: Seeing hundreds of people come out of the shows we're presenting at Summerhall laughing, weeping, gesturing animatedly and saying "I've never really seen a dance show like that before".

**CC: Will we be able to see any of your Edinburgh shows at your own venue, or elsewhere, later this year?**

EN: 'Paradise Lost (Lies Unopened Beside me)' is on at The Place in October. And Igor and Moreno - who are behind 'Idiot-Syncrasy' - and Vera Tussing - of 'T-Dance' - are both premiering new shows with us the same month. And, of course, by the end of the Festival they'll all have countless invitations to tour around the world.

**THE SHOWS:**

Paradise Lost (Lies Unopened Beside me), Summerhall, until 30 Aug (pictured)

Idiot-Syncrasy, Summerhall, until 29 Aug

T-Dance, Summerhall, until 30 Aug

**THE LINK:** [theplace.org.uk](http://theplace.org.uk)



## Luke Wright: The stay-at-Fringe dandy

**Luke Wright has been a stand-out name in the Fringe's spoken word strand for way longer than there has even been such a thing, and he returns this year with two new shows. The first, in particular, caught our eye, because it's a slight departure from the stand-up poetry sets we're more used to from Luke, with a longer story to tell and more theatrical way of telling it. So we caught up with the man himself to find out more about that show, 'What I Learned From Johnny Bevan', and to talk 'Stay-at-Home Dandy' and poetry at the Fringe.**

**CM: Without giving too much away, tell us a bit about what happens in 'What I Learned From Johnny Bevan'? What's the basic plot...?**

LW: University Of East Anglia, 1997. Nick is the wet-behind-the-ears posh kid in danger of just listlessly living his dad's life, then he meets Johnny, the angry, whip-smart mercurial kid from a London council estate. Johnny shows Nick a brave new world of Nestlé boycotts, Marx and new music. Things go wrong for the friends and now twenty years later Nick is jaded with the world and trying to make sense of it all.

**CM: What themes does it explore?**



LW: Friendship, class politics and what it means to cut loose - or not - from where you come from. It's also set against the backdrop of the 1997 election, so I guess it's a study in hope, and an autopsy of aspiration.

**CM: What inspired it? Are there any autobiographical elements...?**

LW: Aren't there always? Neither character is based on anyone, although I do have a similar background to Nick and I had a very good friend that I lost in a similar way. There are a few sly references to 'Brideshead' in there too. I started thinking, what if Sebastian hadn't had a trust fund?

**CM: It's a bit different to a lot of your previous output - what made you decide to write a more theatrical piece?**

LW: I had a story I wanted to tell and I needed to find the best way to tell it. I thought this might be a novel, but in the end the desire to write it in verse overwhelmed that idea. I knew if I was to write it in verse then I should have a go at making it performance length. It felt like a manageable step from the five to ten minute ballads I had been writing previously.

**CM: You performed 'What I Learned From Johnny Bevan' at The Last Word festival in London earlier this year. Has the show evolved since then?**

LW: It's changed a lot. Joe Murphy came on board as a director. We changed the text from third person to the first person, which was quite a big change! I was afraid to 'act', but Joe gave me confidence with that. I now

play the protagonist Nick. I've also rewritten three major scenes.

**CM: You're actually doing two shows at the Fringe this year. Tell us about the other one, 'Stay-at-Home Dandy', what can we expect from that?**

LW: It's eight of my best poems, and all new stuff since I was last in Edinburgh. There are a couple of more personal pieces, but mostly it's ballads - or story poems - about characters I have met doing the school run and flouncing around my strange, rural East Anglian town. Some of the poems are funny, others are more emotional and serious. And there's a full-throttle splenetic rant as well, just for good measure

**CM: I've lost count how many Edinburgh shows you've done now, I assume the Fringe remains an**

**important part of your year?**

LW: I do a full run every two years now. These two shows are number thirteen and fourteen. I love this city and I love this festival. There's nothing like it. You have another life here and I love to lose myself in it.

**CM: In the time you've been doing the Fringe the spoken word section of the programme has grown from being basically you, Penny Ashton and the Big Word team, to being a significant strand. Does that make it easier promoting the kind of show you do? Or is there just more competition?**

LW: I really don't know. I'm pleased to be in a more appropriate section of the programme, and am pleased for the spoken word world that it has recognition. I do get a little worried that we get forgotten about, but this is where I belong.

**CM: Let's say we remind everyone of this strand right now, what tips would you give for someone navigating this section of the programme for the first time?**

LW: There's not much to navigate yet! We're the baby genre, but there are loads of gems. Check out John Osborne's 'Most People Aren't That Happy Anyway' and Jemima Foxtrot's 'Melody'. John's is a lovely, no frills poetry set of great, great work: funny, clever and moving. Jemima is a star of the future, this poetic monologue play is captivating. And both are free!

**THE SHOWS:**

What I Learned From Johnny Bevan, Summerhall, until 30 Aug  
Luke Wright: Stay-at-Home Dandy, Underbelly Cowgate, until 30 Aug

**THE LINK:** [lukewright.co.uk](http://lukewright.co.uk)

Photo by Guiseppe Cerone

/spokenword

**12.10.15** Suitable for ages 16+

Centenary of the Execution of Edith Cavell, First World War Nurse

Written by Clive Holland  
Directed by Mary Swan  
Performed by Mary Rose

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PREVIEW 6TH AUGUST 2015 | 2.20PM (1HR15)  
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The Scandalous Life and Fast Times of Lord Byron

Devised by Mary Swan and Paul Huntley-Thomas  
Performed by Paul Huntley-Thomas

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7TH - 30TH AUGUST 2015 | 8.30PM (45M)  
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## Emma Hall: With 621 opinions, you have to choose



**Emma Hall promises 621 opinions in her impactful and thought-provoking one-woman show 'We May Have To Choose'. Inspired by her Facebook newsfeed, or more to the point, how frustrated the constant stream of over-simplified opinions made her feel, the show sets out to make the audience think, consider and debate. It certainly had a big impact on our reviewer, and after she gave the show top marks we decided we had to sit down with Emma to find out more about the show, why she wrote it, and how she is finding performing solo for the first time.**

**CC: So tell us the premise for 'We May Have To Choose'.**

EH: The show is a one-woman stream of consciousness-type ride through my own personal worldview. It's an attempt to define and situate myself within what feels like an overloaded, unhealthy, morally-confusing planet. I wrote it in response to the incessant opinion-sharing of social media, where everyone is an expert and knowledge is shared in bite-sized overly-simplified ways. I wanted to know what would happen if I put that newsfeed format in front of a live audience.

**CC: Your blurb promises 621 opinions. Are there really 621 opinions expressed? Could we count them?**

EH: You could! I counted them myself to get to 621. Though to be honest, I think there might be a few more than that. It begs the question of course - what is an opinion? I've taken a pretty broad definition, I see it as a particular idea about anything in the world, which includes statements of undeniable fact ("men are not rats") as well as things that might be more contentious ("poverty breeds ebola").

**CC: We really felt you were challenging your audience's ideas and views with the show. Is that your intention? To change opinions, or at least instigate debate?**

EH: It is my main aim, yes, to encourage people to critically examine their own views, and how they are constructed. One person who saw my show said to me afterwards that she doesn't watch the news, or read the papers, and that she follows the world only through social media. When I asked her why, she said "because I don't want my opinions to be changed". That made me a

little sad, to think that it is so easy now to feel connected, but only in an increasingly curated online space, so you may never come into contact with ideas or perspectives that you disagree with. I want people to be exposed to a series of provocations that encourage them to actively position themselves against me, or alongside me, on a range of issues that they might otherwise avoid.

**CC: Tell us a bit more about your work in theatre to date.**

EH: This is the first show I've written, my first solo show, and my first time in Edinburgh. So I am still learning a lot! But I've been a professional actor for three years now and work mainly in independent theatre in Melbourne. Before training, I made theatre with friends in Adelaide and Canberra. I love working in a live environment, I love learning about how to tailor work for the group of individuals who are in the room that night. My favourite moments are when you can feel that we are all holding our breath at the same time. Plus I'm a sucker for fear, and the never-ending threat of failure!

**CC: What motivated writing 'We**

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## May Have To Choose?

**EH:** Facebook. I was just so absolutely fed up by Facebook and my newsfeed of other people's opinions. Plus, in my day job, I'm a civil servant, so by law it can be tricky for me to express my personal political opinions.

That, and a fundraiser I organised in late 2013 for the Philippine Typhoon Yolanda, or Haiyan. For that event I wrote to my all time favourite theatre legends Forced Entertainment to request permission to perform one of their pieces. In response, Artistic Director Tim Etchells kindly donated his work 'Sight Is The Sense' for me to read at the event. That too is a free-associating list of declarations - which has been described as a "badly organised taxonomy" of the world - and it gave me the idea for the form of 'We May Have to Choose', and really opened up my thinking about what a work of theatre could be.

Another big influence for my piece was another Forced Entertainment work called 'Tomorrow's Parties', which I'm so excited to see will be at Edinburgh Fringe next week at Summerhall. It's an absolute dream for me to see that live, as it's not toured to Australia.

## CC: How does writing and then performing a monologue compare to working with other actors on a production?

**EH:** My next show is most definitely going to be a group show! There are some great things about performing

solo - it appeals to the megalomaniac in me - and I like getting to call the shots and play directly with the audience. Sometimes, when things are going well, performing a monologue can make you feel incredibly powerful and vulnerable at the same time. But it's also a much more unpredictable experience. And if the ball gets dropped, you only have yourself to blame! And that can be very stressful at times.

Though this production has been a pretty collaborative experience, because my director Prue Clark played a huge role in the whole process - dramaturging the writing and honing the shape of the piece in performance. Plus my stage manager and tour director Olivia Monticciolo, who is also an actor, is watching me like a hawk each show, to make sure the performance stays on track. And the designer Amy Lever-Davidson and sound designer SS. Sebastian also played key roles in creating the mood of the piece. I couldn't do this alone, and I don't know how others do it.

## CC: You have an academic background in political science. Do you think theatre or comedy can get an audience to think in a way political speeches or journalism cannot?

**EH:** I definitely think art is one of the most powerful mediums for politics. Too often people switch off from journalism or media soundbites, and even if they think they are listening,

they aren't really engaging in the debate. Art, if done well, can activate people imaginatively and emotionally.

In many ways, all art is political, because it presents a particular point of view or relationship to the world. But it also opens up conversations in intimate spaces that might otherwise never happen. A great example of this is Bryony Kimmings' beautiful work 'Fake It Till You Make It'. A friend of mine took her boyfriend to that show, and it gave them the impetus to talk about his depression in a constructive and genuine way, for the first time in their ten year relationship.

I am no Bryony Kimmings, but I hope to make work that can give audiences similar opportunities to talk to each other. I don't think I'll ever make work that doesn't have a political edge to it.

## CC: You performed the show at the Adelaide Fringe to much acclaim. Has the show evolved at all since then?

**EH:** It's changed a bit. I've reworked some of the opinions to make them more relatable to a British audience. In Australia I tell people what I think of our former prime ministers - and I reckon you guys probably couldn't care less about that! It's also needed to be redrafted in some areas, where I might have changed my perspective on a particular issue due to a life experience or something being presented to me that I hadn't previously thought of. Everything I

say has to be something I really do believe.

It's also continuing to evolve in performance. The Edinburgh Fringe is such a fantastic opportunity to perform the work to a wide range of people. Though Melbourne is a big city it is a pretty small arts scene, and I hardly ever have the luxury of performing to a room of people who don't know me personally. I've used the Fringe as an opportunity to really build confidence and experiment. I don't want to stop!

## CC: How have you found performing the show at the Edinburgh Fringe? How have audiences responded?

**EH:** Oh the audiences have all been really supportive and special, but so different day to day. I did a short run at the incredible Forest Fringe in a large space with a very theatre-literate audience, and they responded to the form of the work and could see who I was influenced by. The Free Festival crowd, in contrast, have been really mixed. I've had hecklers, people falling asleep, people checking their phone, late arrivals, early leavers, people who see loads of theatre and people who think they're walking into a stand-up comedy show.

Some people are weeping by the end, while others think the piece is hilarious. It is a really personal experience for people and really reflects where they might be at at any particular point in their life or even their day. Some people have seen it

more than once and hear different things each time. That was the idea of the piece - if you are preoccupied with something in particular in your life right now, chances are you'll be more likely to think the piece has that theme to it.

## CC: And finally, what's next, for both you and the show?

**EH:** When I get back to Melbourne I take this straight to the Melbourne Fringe, which will be the first time I've shown it to my home crowd.

Then I'm working with theatre company Man With A Plan, of which I'm a founding member, on a new devised work 'Gin Sister' about women and alcohol. 'Gin Sister' will premiere in late November at the inaugural Poppyseed Festival, which is an honour and very exciting. For now I'm doing as much research as possible to prepare - Guinness and whisky are two particular areas I'm exploring while in Edinburgh! I'm joking! A little.

I'm also hoping to be able to bring 'We May Have To Choose' back to the UK next year for a regional tour. It's a piece that will continue to evolve and be updated as the world evolves, but it's a continually fascinating show to perform.

## THE SHOW:

We May Have to Choose, Laughing Horse @ Espionage, until 29 Aug

THE LINK: [emmamaryhall.com](http://emmamaryhall.com)

/theatre

# TIMMY FAILURE

## MISTAKES WERE MADE

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## Ally Houston: Clowning with stand-up

**Glasgow-born stand-up Ally Houston reckons all comedians have an inner clown. His is called Shandy, and he's written entire show about it. Ally's first full hour show - which adds music and video to the stand-up for which he'd already won acclaim - debuted at the Glasgow International Comedy Festival earlier this year, and is now playing at the Fringe. We sat Ally down to talk Edinburgh, music making, and that clown called Shandy.**

**CC: So Shandy. The clown. Tell us about Shandy The Clown.**

AH: I'm a performer and I abuse myself. Every performer has a pet clown. Mine is called Shandy.

**CC: So why did you decide to build your first full hour show around Shandy?**

AH: This idea of having a pet clown seemed universal to comedy performers. It's the part of you that you have a difficult but funny relationship with. The musical side of the show was already developing, so I thought let's do this!

**CC: How do you describe the show? Part stand-up, part musical, part disturbing relationship with a clown?**

AH: That pretty much describes it, yes. It twists and turns through all of those aspects, and I'm there along the way to make sure no-one gets lost.



**CC: Actually, tell us more about the music. Who wrote that?**

AH: The music is a collaboration between me and my old buddy from university, Gary. We used to try and write proper songs, but more often than not they'd come out as daft parodies. So we decided to put that to good use.

**CC: So once you've totally dominated the creepy-clown-based-stand-up genre, is a career in pop or rock on the agenda?**

AH: Haha, that would be telling. But I think the experience of putting on a pet clown musical for my first year at the Fringe will breathe life into my desire to just do stand-up in the future.

**CC: What was it like writing your first full-hour show, how does it compare to writing stand-up for the circuit?**

AH: For a show like 'Shandy' that has lots of different aspects, I had to write more than just straight stand-up. So I had to move from just writing jokes for a man and a mic, which is what I usually do, to writing jokes that work with the music, and the video projections, and the overall visuals.

**CC: You performed the show at the Glasgow International Comedy Festival earlier this year, how did that go?**

AH: It went really well, and I sold it out. People had seen little snippets of Shandy already, and knew my stand-up, and they seemed to really liked the idea of this show.

**CC: Has it evolved much since then?**

AH: It has lightened up a lot. The premise is dark, so keeping it accessible has been the number one priority.

**CC: Do you worry that if this show goes too well, the clown will break off and go solo?**

AH: I don't want to spoil the ending of the show, but you are not far off!

**CC: We're past half way point now, how has the Fringe been going for you and Shandy so far?**

AH: I don't want to speak for Shandy, but the whole experience has blown my mind in a good way. How can you not be inspired by such a big experience?

**CC: And finally, what next for you, the show and the clown?**

AH: For me, back to stand up and gigging as much as possible. For the show, I love it, and it will remain in my comedy cellar. And as for Shandy... well, you can't keep a good clown down.

**THE SHOW:**

Ally Houston: Shandy, Just The Tonic at The Mash House, until 30 Aug

Photo by David P Scott

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## CABARET

### Ivy Paige: Filthy Rich (Bound & Gagged)

If you want to live the glamorous, showbiz lifestyle of burlesque queen Ivy Paige, her Filthy Rich programme is taking applications, and all you have to do is enjoy a boisterous hour of cabaret, comedy and music. Sound good? It is! Singing, dancing and firing out sharp one-liners with practised ease, Ivy Paige gives great burlesque, and last night's audience had a tremendous time in her company. If you've seen her before there's nothing particularly new, but Ivy Paige keeps the energy high and the jokes bawdy, and her singing voice is worth the price of admission by itself. Sit down the front row, if you dare, and you may be in for some extra special attention.

Underbelly Cowgate, until 30 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

debut hour, in which she lists her worries and the amusing events she has encountered. There is a flavour of innocence to her delivery, and she comes across as very likeable, especially when the show takes a shocking turn towards the final third. That said, the show itself doesn't feel consistent, and several segments end abruptly with the most tentative of links to move the show along. This can often be the case with debut hours, though, and her audience interaction was suitable when called upon. Kemsley is a fresh voice that shows promise, and it will be interesting to see how she develops this for her next hour.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 31 Aug. tw rating 3/5 | [Ben Shannon]

### Liam Williams: Bonfire Night (The Invisible Dot)

With a number of award nominations from recent years under his belt, Liam Williams returns bearing a set based around the loose theme of bonfire night. His drawn out explanation for this theme makes for a memorable routine in which he details his semi-fictional interaction with the fringe office with regard to the name of his show. The

creation of such scenes is a technique which Williams calls upon several times during the hour to great effect. He'll move between whimsy and hard-hitting satire with relative ease, keeping the room unsure of what to expect next. It's his first night in a bigger room than the one he's been performing in for the previous 15 dates; he has adapted quickly, and there are some genuine belly laughs from surprising subjects. A unique voice amongst many at the Fringe.

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, until 30 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Ben Shannon]

### Lucy Frederick - In The Wild (Vivienne Smith Management)

The staff of the Pleasance Dome (where the Gilded Balloon Study is confusingly located) assured people if they sat at the front they wouldn't get picked on. They were lying. Luckily, Lucy Frederick is a delightfully warm and friendly presence, and even those who drew her repeated attention enjoyed a convivial hour. Frederick's show this year is all about animals – from dogs to dolphins – and her breakneck delivery allows her to stuff it full of anecdotes. >



### Fairy Tale Theatre: 18 & Over (J Michael Feldman & Lindsey Bowden)

In this salacious story session for adults, the fairytales we were told as children are adapted into narratives such as 'The Tale Of The Bipolar Bear and the Co-Dependent Eskimo', all of which are outrageous and glorious in equal measure. The cast are a whirlwind of energy, speeding us through the stories using a combination of costume and puppetry, while characters we know and love, such as Cinderella and her Fairy Godmother, are given a delightfully silly madcap makeover. There are some important ideas included – about how we live as adults – but first and foremost 'Fairy Tale Theatre: 18 & Over' is a constantly hilarious and ludicrous experience.

Assembly George Square Studios, until 30 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Vicki Baron]

## COMEDY

### Harriet Kemsley: Puppy Fat (Live Nation)

There are some clever lines sprinkled throughout Kemsley's

5/5



### Sofie Hagen: Bubblewrap (Sofie Hagen/PBH)

'Bubblewrap' is a sparkling gem in the free fringe crown this year. Hagen entertains a very full venue with a very laid-back delivery; not an easy feat, even for a seasoned performer, so it's particularly impressive that this is her debut hour. It's a consistent and well put together show, with the feel-good message of overcoming the negative body image pushed upon young people. She's fiercely competitive, but at no point does this cross the line into arrogance during her material, which moves from theft to car chases and of course meeting her childhood idols. The extracts from her self-penned Westlife fan fiction are well timed, the callbacks aren't crow-barred in, and ultimately it's an enjoyable hour with a winner.

Liquid Room Annexe, until 30 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Ben Shannon]

> self-deprecation, and railing against the anthropomorphisation of pets. The set took a while to warm up, and I could have done with fewer jokes that used terms like 'retarded' and 'special needs', but Frederick's likeable stage presence carries it through the rockier moments.

Gilded Balloon, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 3/5 | [Jon Stapley]

### Markus Birdman - Grimm Realities (Markus Birdman / PBH's Free Fringe)

Buying his ten-year-old daughter her

first bra was a traumatic experience for Markus Birdman, but at least he got a good show out of it. A fearsomely talented illustrator, he uses a projector to weave two fairy tales, Cinderella and Red Riding Hood, into his own experiences of fatherhood. His versions of the tales revel in the darker elements airbrushed out by sanitised adaptations - I'd buy a book of them. His point that we should engage with children about adult themes like love and sex is a good one, reinforced by the Grimm tales once used for exactly that. We didn't

need some lazy gender-based jokes ("Women can't park, am I right?" etc.), but this show is exquisitely put together.

Canon's Gait, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

### Michael J Dolan: Miserable Guts

Michael J Dolan's first and most impressive move is to get the audience onside by telling them that the show is going badly; within the first few minutes of his performance we are told that the opening was terrible, that the show is dreadful,

and that he is not sure why we are there at all. Far from being put off, the audience are hooked. Dolan's melancholy observations about his marriage, the nature of the universe and rich children are all delivered with irrefutable logic and peculiar charm. His combination of intensity and cheekiness will remind you of Dylan Moran and Mark Watson simultaneously, which should not work as a combination, but definitely does.

The Stand Comedy Club 3 & 4, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Vicki Baron]

### Leggoland (Colin Leggo / Free Festival)

Having a leg amputated has been good for Colin Leggo; for one thing, he can wear shoes again. Leggo is wonderfully silly, engaging with his audience as if he were chatting with friends. Armed with PowerPoint and an arsenal of puns, he takes us on a humorous ten-year journey through his life before and after his below-the-knee amputation, a consequence of undiagnosed Type 1 diabetes. Dropping in tales from his childhood, Leggo isn't afraid of poking fun at himself, or of seeing the positive side to having a plastic foot. Bursting with optimism and character, this is a pleasantly uplifting and brilliantly entertaining show that proves you really can make the best from whatever life throws at you.

Laughing Horse @ The Blind Poet, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 3/5 | [Daisy Malt]

### Pajama Men: 2 Man 3 Musketeers (Assembly Festival in association with Soho Theatre)

If the comedy doesn't work out, Shenoah Allen and Mark Chavez could easily fall back on careers as Foley artists. Their peerless talent for vocal sound effects is put to grotesque use in their new show, a very loose adaptation of 'The Three Musketeers'. Sketches and silliness abound as the musketeers become embroiled in a nefarious plot by the corpulent Cardinal Richelieu, with the Pajama Men frenetically multi-rolling, improvising, and having the time of their lives. They're aware that their show is not for everyone: in the best running gag they pose as bewildered audience members who are contemplating walking out. I wouldn't blame anyone for describing this as gross and bewildering - it is. But still I cried with laughter.

Assembly Roxy, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

## MUSIC

### Late Night Phantasmagoria with Jack Lukeman

It's difficult for a musician to take me (and the rest of this small, tired crowd) from ready for bed to up and dancing along. But Jack Lukeman has the great voice, high energy, and above all, the stage presence to really warm up an

audience. 'Late Night Phantasmagoria' is a combination of high-energy blues and soft lullabies, appealing to both the possibilities of an 11pm audience: tipsy and fun, or tired and floppy. He has the versatility for both and makes great song choices, though if pressed I might say that while the more rock-based songs were his natural element, I generally preferred the quieter numbers. However your evening has gone, Jack Lukeman will provide the perfect nightcap.

The Famous Spiegeltent, until 31 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Lucy Diver]

### Soweto Afro Pop Opera

While 'Soweto Afro-Pop Opera' may sound like a mish-mash of genres, really it's anything but. This trio delight with their obvious joy for performance, combining soulful vocals with infectious personalities to demonstrate the huge variety and versatility of South African music. From the traditional 'pata-pata' to 'Ave Maria', they show the influences of the western world on the sounds of their own country. They're great characters, keeping the audience totally enthralled as they flit between slower and livelier pieces. The group have downsized this year, and while the three men easily command the stage, the absence of a live band (replaced by recorded backing track) stops the performance just short of being something really special.

C, until 31 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Stephanie Gray]

### Luca Wu And Reverse Context

Two pop/rock shows for the price of one? These very different singers performed for half the show each sharing the band. Luca Wu played piano competently but I couldn't hear a word over the band, which was a pity because both artists write their own material and I was intrigued to hear the lyrics. I would rather the likeable guitarists had contributed more, such as backing vocals, instead of relying on computers. Reverse Context was energetic, audible, sang in front of the instrumentalists and used a wider musical vocabulary. However, I heard nothing that could be described as "experimental" - he did wear a fish mask for a song about the human race as fish swimming in an ocean, though. That perked me up.

theSpace @ Symposium Hall, until 29 Aug.  
tw rating 3/5 | [Louise Rodgers]

## MUSICAL

### Ushers: The Front Of House Musical (Matthew Cundy Productions and Kouban Productions)

This is a highly enjoyable show about a group of ushers working in London's West End. New girl Lucy (played by Corrine Priest) is thrown in at the deep end on the opening night of a new musical, and her colleagues take her and the audience on a whirlwind journey of love, ambition and trying to sell ice-creams. The cast work very

## Bromance

(Underbelly Productions by arrangement with DREAM present Barely Methodical Troupe)

Fusing physical theatre and contemporary circus, Bromance is a beguiling portrayal of friendship and masculinity. Beginning with a handshake, the show builds into a simple yet exquisite narrative that actually gave me goose bumps. Very few words are used as Beren D'Amico, Charlie Wheeler and Louis Gift use their bodies and cheeky personalities to develop the story, alongside very effectively selected music. Exploring trust, support and camaraderie, the display is beautifully choreographed, mixing in elements of anticipation and plenty of humour. It could only really end with a standing ovation, which the boys fully deserved for their expert performance. I must confess that I enjoyed this imaginative, original show so much that I am planning to see it again.

Underbelly's Circus Hub on The Meadows, until 29 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Daisy Malt]



well together as a believable team of discontented dreamers, and their individual musical numbers are all performed with personal flare. This show has everything you want from a musical: heightened characters, toe-tapping numbers, and romance. This show has an essentially whimsical outlook, but you will feel genuinely moved as well as entertained.

Momentum Venues @ St Stephens, until 30 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Vicki Baron]

## 2 Become 1 (Swipe Right Theatre)

The best girls night out I've had in a while, courtesy of Swipe Right Theatre, who take us back to the 90's and invite us along to their party.

Jess has just been dumped, and so in an attempt to cheer her up, Jess's three friends take her speed dating. The result is a light-hearted comedy featuring all your favourite girl-power hits from the likes of Britney, Christina and Shania, all performed with brilliant comical skill by the talented cast. It also offers a poignant reflection on the world of modern dating, asking us to re-examine internet dating sites and the frequent failure of these platforms to offer meaningful connection. The four performers are instantly likeable, and ensure we have a great time watching this piece, a must see!

C Nova, until 31 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Stephanie Withers]

## THEATRE

### Am I Dead Yet? (Unlimited Theatre)

We are all going to die. That we can be certain of. Chris Thorpe and Jon Spooner take a late night look at mortality and the process of dying in Unlimited Theatre's new show 'Am I Dead Yet?', telling three stories over the course of the hour; of a suicide, of a little girl playing on the ice, and two men in the future waiting to die. A lesson in first aid is thrown in too, as the pair bring in the Front of House Manager from the Traverse Theatre for a quick lesson in CPR. The process of dying is an uncomfortable >

**Old Trunk**  
theatre company

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# PRAMKICKER

by Sadie Hasler

"Compelling" - Scotsman  
"Twisted genius" - GQ  
"Superb" - Edinburgh Evening News

Directed by Sarah Mayhew  
"Inspired" - Fringe Review

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14:45  
6-31 AUG (not 17)

assembly  
GEORGE SQUARE  
Studios - Four

5/5



## Japan Marvelous Drummers (NPO Kawasuji Japan Marvelous)

The description "traditional instruments of Japan" doesn't quite convey the explosion of raw power and noise that is 'Japan Marvelous Drummers'. So be prepared: this show is big, loud, and utterly wonderful. With astounding skill and stamina, eight musicians work their way through not only drums of all kinds but also Koto harps, flutes and clarinets, presenting everything with charming good humour. The feats of strength are staggering - watching a man struggle to hold up a drum the size of a tumble dryer while two musclebound drummers beat it mercilessly is an image that will stay with you. The drummers deserve to pack out the George Square Theatre before the end of their run, and I sincerely hope they do.

Assembly George Square Theatre, until 30 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Jon Stapley]

> subject for an audience, but one that is handled very well here. Funny, heart-warming and a little bit silly.

Traverse Theatre, until 30 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Bethan Highgate-Betts]

## 887 (Ex Machina / Robert Lepage)

At the beginning of '887', Robert Lepage mentions the memory palace, a mnemonic device that involves visualising a complex place and assigning information to each room. This autobiographical solo show makes the memory palace literal: Lepage, a Canadian known for his technical wizardry, shares the stage with a gorgeously intricate reconstruction of his family's apartment building in Quebec City in the '60s. At the time, French-speaking separatists were trying to establish a separate state, and Lepage intertwines historical anecdotes with stories from his youth and musings on the slipperiness of memory. It's an overstuffed two hours - Lepage hangs the show on his attempts to memorise Michèle Lalonde's 'Speak White,' a poem resisting Anglophone hegemony - but still a visual marvel, down to the scale-model crown molding and glittering Christmas tree.

Edinburgh International Conference Centre, until 23 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Rebecca Jacobson]

## The Christians (Gate Theatre)

Set in an American megachurch - the sort of place with a parking lot so massive you could get lost in it - Lucas Hnath's new play unfolds as a series of sermons and theological debates. As it opens, pastor Paul (the engaging William Gaminara) announces the church is newly debt-free. But he accompanies this exciting news with a bombshell: Hell doesn't exist, at least not as a fire-and-brimstone dungeon ruled over by a horned devil. This unleashes a crisis of both faith and community among his congregants - this production features a 24-member choir in purple robes - who start to decamp to a splinter church. It's a smart and solid play, if sterile at times.

Traverse Theatre, until 31 Aug. tw rating 3/5 | [Rebecca Jacobson]

## Confessional by Tennessee Williams (Tramp)

This is Tennessee Williams - but not as you know him. 'Confessional' is a rarely performed first draft, and the script is fascinating: moments of classic Williams despair and lyricism, but there are also rough points, sudden

shifts. For fans, this is a great chance to see the playwright's experimental work, and his rough version still outstrips many polished plays. It could be made clearer, perhaps with some staging tweaks, what is internal monologue and what is dialogue. The performances are all solid, but star of the show is Lizzie Stanton as the emotional but caring Leona. Her performance alone makes the piece worth seeing, but there's so much more: Williams' first openly gay character, on-stage handjobs, a fatherly bartender.

C cubed, until 31 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Lucy Diver]

## Fourth Monkey's Grimm Tales: Little Red Cap (Fourth Monkey)

Fourth Monkey have taken this well-known tale, about a sweet little girl on her way to Grandma's house, and interspersed it with a narrative about a young woman working in a care home. It's an intriguing concept, but when you also add in Little Red Cap's mother, popping pills and terrified of leaving the house, you're left with a show that's trying to fit too much in. Though the performances are assured, the menacing, white-faced chorus, ominously whispering the more portentous lines, feels a little dated, while the campy wolf is more panto than grown-up fairy tale. It is, however, suitably macabre, committing fully to the darker, more disturbing elements of the original. An ambitious project, no doubt, but maybe a little too ambitious.

theSpace on Niddry Street, until 29 Aug. tw rating 3/5 | [Gemma Scott]

## Foxfinder (Master Of None)

The fox is to blame for society's ills, avows foxfinder William Bloor in this marvellous staging of Dawn King's fantastical parable. Bloor arrives at the farm of Sam and Judith Covey to root out potential infestation, representing the long arm of a government that's gone badly wrong. The dystopia is all off stage, its separation from the peaceful sanctuary of the farm emphasised by the electronic light of the foxfinder's tablet against the rustic walls. Exceptional performances, particularly Alexander Stutt as Bloor, keep the tension high as paranoia takes hold. It's not terribly subtle (the propaganda video is so obviously evil you wonder how it got past the government's PR department) but as events reach their shocking climax, you'll be gripped.

Bedlam Theatre, until 30 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

### Stuart Bowden: *Wilting In Reverse* (Stuart Bowden)

It is the year 2084, and Stuart Bowden is dead. Fear not though, because a lycra-clad man who has not learnt his lines is here to tell us the story of the departed Bowden, and his separation from someone he loved on a distant terraformed planet (apparently we work out that faster-than-light travel thing eventually). A slice of wonderfully strange conceptual narrative comedy, Bowden's show is impressively unafraid to plumb some serious emotional depths even while telling stories about alien caravans. Providing his own musical accompaniment with a judiciously applied loop pedal, Bowden weaves the audience into his tale until about a third of it is involved in the ridiculous but touching climax. A courageous and lyrical hour of joy.

Underbelly Cowgate, until 30 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Jon Stapley]



5/5

### The Solid Life Of Sugar Water (Graeae Theatre Company and Theatre Royal Plymouth)

This is a deeply affecting production, about a grieving young couple and the cracks that can grow in the silences. We see their relationship develop, from first meeting (he finds her deafness "exotic", she finds him "harmless") to

trying to cope with a tragic loss. Genevieve Barr and Arthur Hughes are by turns tender and touching, distant and damaged. They mostly talk directly to the audience, allowing us to hear the things left unsaid between them. The play is also creatively surtitled, making it fully accessible to a D/deaf audience. Though I found the very graphic descriptions of sex a little too much for my

(unexpectedly prudish) tastes, this is nonetheless a profoundly moving play.

Pleasance Dome, until 30 Aug. tw rating 4/5 | [Gemma Scott]

### A Very British Childhood (Pelican's Briefs)

It's summer in suburban sixties Britain and the sun shines relentlessly through the bay window of 37 Willow Way. But when a child goes missing, dark

truths emerge and the Ladybird book facade crumbles. Pelican's Briefs production of Sarah May's period piece often feels a little like a school play, but a remarkably good one. William Castle and Megan Fudge both give spectacularly eerie performances, and Carlos Sandin is unsettling as the commuting father who can't explain why he was in the woods that day. Whilst some >

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2014

*Praise for Smoke & Oakum's 'Cow Play' and 'Tinderbox'*

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★★★★★

Broadway Baby  
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★★★★★

Three Weeks  
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**1972: The Future Of Sex (The Wardrobe Ensemble)**

I never thought I'd find myself marvelling at the genius of a scene involving a space-hopper, but The Wardrobe Ensemble laid a minefield for all kinds of unexpected things, including Lady Chatterley and some extremely charismatic chairs. The writing sparkled: not an inch of redundant script, plus some moments of real poetry, made all the more poignant by being out of place within the snappy repartee. The dialogue incorporated stage directions, satirising the characters - and the very idea of characters - and scene changes - and plays. The story lines ran parallel like synchronised swimmers, with a potent sense of one collective, glitter-soaked, sexually-awkward voice emerging from the anarchy. The theatrical equivalent of popping candy: blissful, colourful, multi-sensory magic.

The Zoo, until 31 Aug.  
tw rating 5/5 [Sarah Murphy]

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# SHOWBIZ

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> of the other performances feel a little vacuous, the cast succeed, collectively, in creating a dark, claustrophobic atmosphere, reminding us that there's menace in the familiar.

Pleasance Dome, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 3/5 [Patrick Galbraith]

**The Year Of The Hare (Ryhmäteatteri)**

Where to start? This is certainly one of the weirder plays at this year's Fringe. A man, tired of his depressing life, drives into the Finnish countryside to get away from it all. He meets Hare, a karaoke-singing, vodka-loving manic pixie dream girl in animal form, and so begins a bizarre journey. They meet a string of surreal characters, including a Hunter S. Thompson-inspired vet, a willing hostage and dodgy-dealing crow. It's filled with music, drugs, and lost days (weeks? months?) Though the first half of the play is absurdly, joyfully hilarious, the second half suffers slightly from a more serious tone and a heavy-handed message about climate change. 'The Year Of The Hare' is hard to describe, but even harder to forget.

Pleasance Dome, until 31 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 [Gemma Scott]

**Light Boxes (Grid Iron)**

Entering 'Light Boxes' is like falling into a children's book. Wood chips cover the floor, silver balloons float overhead and the air smells of mint. The sound design - folksy strings, haunting vocals, electronic effects - is gorgeous. Scottish company Grid Iron have been creating immersive theatre for 20 years, and it shows. But the story, based on Shane Jones' 2010 novel, is a narrative morass. It's about a father, mother and daughter trapped in a perpetual February: the cold never ends, all flight has been banned, and children keep disappearing. As resistance mounts, 'Light Boxes' recalls Caryl Churchill's 'Far Away', another dystopian tale about nature and war. But the stakes never reach real heights

here, and the closing sombreness feels unearned.

Summerhall, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 3/5 [Rebecca Jacobson]

**Pramkicker (Old Trunk)**

We first meet sisters Susie and Jude in an anger management session, court-ordered after Jude kicked the eponymous pram. As this spiky, lively, foul-mouthed play unfolds we learn what led to the pivotal pram-kick, exploring themes of womanhood, anger, and the question of having children. It pins much on its two actors - if Sadie Hasler and Sarah Mayhew didn't entirely convince as sisters then nothing else would work. Luckily, despite looking nothing alike, they have such easy, genuine chemistry that you accept them without question. Hasler in particular (who also wrote the play) is a very natural actor who takes her time with Susie, starting out as deadpan comic relief but gradually revealing more and more. This is a mid-afternoon gem.

Assembly George Square Studios, until 31 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 [Jon Stapley]

**Heartbeats & Algorithms (Jenny Lee)**

In our daily online habits, the amount of data about ourselves we blithely give to computer programs is staggering. One-woman show 'Heartbeats & Algorithms' questions what might happen if we gave ourselves completely to the programs' every detail. What might they learn? Writer Jenny Lee plays Banks, a talented programmer whose algorithm predicts her life down to minutiae, just as it starts to unravel. Those acquainted with Philip K. Dick or the series Black Mirror will be on familiar territory with this dark, subtle sci-fi. Standing with feet resolutely planted, Lee only has her voice to hold our attention, and her assured, melodious delivery handles the demanding script with dexterity. A fascinating show unafraid to explore

challenging ideas.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Jon Stapley]

### Here Is The News From Over There (Over There Is The News From Here) - A Borderless Twitter Ballad Fresh From The Middle East

Share an experience of quality, late night, casual-yet political, and semi-improvisational storytelling. An evening filled with tweets and readings from artists in the Middle East, with every night bringing a different focus. Straight away it was acknowledged by the host, Abdelrahim Alawji, that "Tonight, we're talking about the Middle East... because you guys don't know much about the Middle East". The writer Sara Sharaawi and guest performers from The Letter Room were outstanding. There is something magical about witnessing an improvised collaboration. Sara passionately read a piece detailing her life in Cairo, whilst the musicians devised the music, and characters from her story. Cairo's essence was felt throughout the room, and the audience left with a feeling of shared, cultural enrichment.

Northern Stage @ Summerhouse, until 30 Aug. tw rating 4/5 [Zita Campbell]

### The Rules - Sex, Lies And Serial Killers

What happens when you put three psychopaths in a room together? Nothing good - that's why Mel, Jay and Steven have devised 'The Rules'. Every once in a while they meet in secret to exchange stories and experiences, safe in the belief that these rules will protect them. You can be forgiven for expecting psychopaths to be difficult to relate to, but this play is crafted so expertly, the twists and turns revealed at such perfect moments, that you'll find yourself rooting for these completely believable, full characters along the way. It takes some skill to trivialise death in such a humorous fashion and still keep hold of emotion and meaning the way they do, and for that they should be commended.

theSpace on The Mile, until 29 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Stephanie Gray]

### Sex Rated G (Ines Wurth Presents)

In this comedy show, which looks at the ways we talk about sex, Lisa Verlo wants to get us all expressing ourselves more openly. It's an all-singing, all-dancing presentation, covering everything from repressed childhoods right up to 'the talk' with your own children. Educational at times and funny at others, this show uses quotes, Barbie dolls and anecdotes to explore sex, though it's a shame that the facts and figures are all based on American surveys. Verlo also shares her own sexual exploits, in a bid to lead the way for free speech. Slow in places, the musical outbursts don't always feel like they are naturally integrated with the sketches and presentation, giving the show a fragmented feel.

Gilded Balloon, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 3/5 | [Bethan Highgate-Betts]

### Wilde Without The Boy (Cahoots Theatre Company)

Part denunciation, partly a love letter which can't help itself, this adaptation of 'De Profundis' is a thing of smoulder and pathos. I've always seen the role of Wilde as inextricable from Stephen Fry's 1997 portrayal, but not any more. Playing a heartbroken version of the literary dandy, Gerard Logan delivers epigrams, poeticisings and exquisitely-worded rants with a diction of velvet and thunder (a give-away sign he's also a Shakespearean player par excellence). The performance glistens with masterfully-controlled indignation - never angsty or enraged, though, that would be "unbeautiful". Logan is clearly in love with Wilde's words, and he'll make you fall in love too. "I must transform [everything] into a near-spiritual experience," writes Wilde in 'De Profundis', and so he must.

Assembly Hall, until 31 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Murphy]

### Portraits In Motion (Volker Gerling in association with Aurora Nova)

Volker Gerling calls himself a "flipbook filmmaker." Since 2003, the Berlin-based artist has been taking long walks, mostly in Germany, and photographing people; 36 shots in 12 seconds, on a loud and heavy Nikon F3. The black-and-white results, assembled into flipbooks, are a stunning twist on time-lapse photography. Sometimes he shoots solo portraits, at other times a mother and daughter or a trio of teenagers (wait 'til you see what happens there). For this show, Gerling stands before us with an unassuming but professorial air, telling stories and flipping through each book three times, images projected behind him. It's a quiet but deeply moving study - the face can adopt an astonishing range of expressions in 12 seconds - punctuated by warm and genuine humour.

Summerhall, until 30 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Rebecca Jacobson]

### Walking The Tightrope, The Tension Between Art And Politics (Offstage Theatre / Underbelly Productions)

WTR trod a delicate line by refusing to take a single standpoint on the artistic freedom debate, as demonstrated by its format: eight separate response-pieces. In a beautifully riled tirade, Julian Stolzenberg ties himself up in knots trying to make sense of an artistic world which can't escape politics, muddled by issues of corrupt funding, shadily-motivated censorship. He reaches boiling point before a conclusion. I can't praise the writers enough for managing to condense seething, of-the-moment controversies into clever, digestible drama, all whilst living through the realities. WTR is brutal, sometimes explicitly so - Neil LaBute's 'Exhibit A' is the obvious example here, a shock-tactic piece clearly intended to polarise audiences. Slick, razor-sharp, and simmering with righteous anger throughout.

Underbelly Topside, until 31 Aug.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Murphy]



5/5

### Confirmation (Chris Thorpe and Rachel Chavkin)

Nobody thinks they are wrong. Everyone thinks their beliefs to be true, obviously; but not everyone can be right all the time, so how do we justify those beliefs, and are we going about it in the same way as everyone else? Chris Thorpe explores this one idea in his eighty-minute piece 'Confirmation'. Directed by Rachel Chavkin, the set up is simple: one man in a room, one microphone, some paper and a costume change, while the audience sit around the sides of the room, creating the square stage in the middle. Manically changing dialogues and characters, passionate, engaged, and angry; exploring multiple view points, 'Confirmation' takes a stark look at the way in which we believe. Exceptional, thought provoking theatre.

Summerhall, until 29 Aug. tw rating 5/5 | [Bethan Highgate-Betts]

get more: [threeweeks.co.uk/reviews](http://threeweeks.co.uk/reviews)

## Some of our favourite Fringe performers share words, thoughts and maybe even some wisdom...

### Keith Farnan: The Fringe survival guide for children

Keith Farnan is at the Fringe with a child in tow for the first time this year. So here he is with a few pointers. For the children of Fringe performers forced to live in amongst all this madness for a month.

For years now, the Edinburgh Fringe has been running as a 24/7 festival, which everyone assumes refers to the excess of partying, boozing and cavorting (what a lovely word to describe a range of sins, cavorting), that takes place all day and all night, except for that one hour when the bars must shut to take a breath.

However, the Fringe's 24/7 hour claim is also possible because of all the morning and lunchtime shows, a large portion of which are now dedicated to the industry of children's entertainment. Most comedians are aware of this because they are enticed



to try their hand at lovely shows like 'Comedy Club 4 Kids', which allows you to try to entertain a mass of unruly children and fail with a grace unheard of on the adult circuit.

So we all know there are children at the Fringe. And that's fine. I hope you're

all having fun. Though I'm not writing this for children attending shows at the Fringe. Nor for the people who perform at them. I am writing this for the children of people working at the Festival, because this is my first Fringe when I've turned up with a child in tow (and yes, it is my child, this isn't some babysitting job gone horribly wrong).

There are a number of things that should be made clear to all kids of Fringe performers, who are suffering this August due to the life decisions their parents have made. They are as follows...

1. Yes, we still love you. We're just a little distracted by things that seem really important right now, but which will be of little consequence in about three weeks.
2. Your diet can always do with a little bit of variety and your immune system could probably do with a challenge.
3. There are many important lessons to be learned at the Fringe. I will take you to an improv show, so that you can see how people can enjoy each other's company on stage and help each other to build a rich comedy tableau. I will then take you to a student revue to show you where ruthlessness is born.
4. You waking up in the middle of the night doesn't seem to have the same traumatic affect as it does at home, because this is Edinburgh and, if needs be, we'll pop you in the pram and take you to a free "cabaret" show which will make you sleep soundly for the rest of the month. Or at least pretend to sleep soundly.
5. We won't exploit you for the purpose

of increasing audience numbers. Too much.

6. We won't make you sit through our own shows. Your mother will, however, take you to another stand-up show during the day without telling your father, and he will hide how hurt he is that the first show you saw wasn't his. He will never talk of this show ever again and you will never know.

7. We all make sacrifices. This article was originally meant to be an interview piece with Mark Nelson, one of Scotland's finest comedy exports and an experienced Fringe-father, but if you think we could possibly have been allowed the time to wander off for a few pints to conduct an "interview", think again.

8. Feel free to eat other people's flyers, but have the decency to wait until their back is turned. They may be the actual performer of the show, who has invested many months, no, years, putting this show together, rather than just someone who made the decision to try their hand at flyering yesterday.

9. The fact that you smile when introduced to everyone is a joy and allows everybody to forget their troubles for a second. And the fact that you cried when a dodgy promoter tried to say hello is a treasured memory.

10. You're right, we should just go home and watch 'In The Night Garden', it is much more fun... but just one more stop.

**THE SHOW:** Keith Farnan: Anonymous, Underbelly Cowgate, until 30 Aug

**THE LINK:** [keithfarnan.com](http://keithfarnan.com)  
Photo by Charlotte Barnes

### Ria Lina: A punter's guide to Fringe marketing and hype

As well as navigating the thousands of shows at the Edinburgh Fringe, festival-goers have to process the flood of flyers and raft of reviews too... in order to navigate the thousands of shows at the Edinburgh Fringe. Ria Lina shares some of the secrets of Fringe show marketing - so you punters can spot the tricks as the Festival reaches its climax and everyone has that last big marketing push.

As a punter, fresh-faced and culturally open-minded, it can be a minefield navigating the thousands of shows that are put on at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival every year. Thank goodness for flyers and posters. How else would you divvy up your meagre ticket budget without small slices of the rainforest to help you decide? But knowing how to read a flyer and discern which acts are actually worth your time is a skill in itself. Here are six Fringe marketing taboos that all performers engage in, but no-one will ever admit to.

#### 1. Quote manipulation

It's impossible for every reviewer to like every act. That's just the nature of personal taste. So many of the quotes you see - and the reason they are often only two or three words long - have been carefully selected from a much larger piece that isn't as complimentary as the quote would have you believe.

So this review:  
"She looked incredibly hot under the glaring stagelights; not unlike a rabbit in traffic to whom you constantly resist the urge to shout 'Watch out!'" Review Weakly

Would become:  
"Incredibly hot...watch out" Review Weakly

And:

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/comedy



“As funny as anything” Trying Times

Probably started life as: “His routine on wooden spoons made him about as funny as anything you would find in a cutlery drawer, and made me wonder why I didn’t stay in and watch my drainer.” Trying Times

Lesson: The longer the quote, the more believable it is. (NB Before you start Googling all my quotes, “Blows Expectations Away” Loaded Magazine was referring figuratively to my comedy, not literally to... something else).

### 2. Quotes from ‘peers’

Often newbies come to the Fringe but don’t have any reviews to quote on their poster. More often, acts that aren’t funny (yet), come to the Fringe but don’t have any good reviews to quote on their poster. Thus the trend of getting quotes from other performers was born. And many of these are legitimate quotes. The act has gone up to someone famous, who was in the room while they were onstage, and asked them for their opinion. They then stored those words in their short-term memory long enough to run to the green room and scribble it down.

But even more oftener than that, the ‘quote’ is something that has been said either in passing, or as Mr TV-Credits has introduced the act onstage at whatever charity/new-act competition they happened to be hosting. And please be aware: any good host will pretend that every act he introduces is amazing, but that doesn’t make it true. And it doesn’t make him your friend.

So quotes like:

“This guy is frigging hilarious” Mr Panel Show

Was probably followed shortly after by: “so please put your hands together and welcome to the stage...”

Lesson: A quote from a reputable publication is worth two from an unbeknownst-putz.

### 3. Ignoring bad reviews

So you’ve come up halfway through the Festival in order to take advantage of existing reviews to help you decide what to see. This is smart. By now, if a show doesn’t have a little piece of paper stapled to the flyer with a few stars or quotes on it, that probably means... it hasn’t been reviewed yet. BUT, it can also mean, it has been reviewed but the review wasn’t good enough to publicise. Things to bear in mind:

- A quote with no stars doesn’t mean none were awarded, it could mean the review was 3\* or less.
- A raft of 4 and 5 star reviews doesn’t mean there aren’t 1,2, or 3\* reviews out there.
- Anything less than 3 is usually not advertised. So if a flash (stapled paper) has a 3-star review on there, the rest of the reviews were worse.
- Just because a website/blog name has ‘Fringe’ in the title doesn’t mean it’s reputable. Remember, ‘fringe’ means outskirts.

This is the time where you will start to hear phrases such as “it was a two-star review but it read like a four”. And this is probably the case, the star rating system remains a mystery to this day. Well, except

to the editors that devise them.

### 4. “Selling-out” (vs a “technical sell-out”)

As I found out last year, there is a difference between a “sell-out”, where every seat in the place is taken, and a “technical sell-out”, which is where every ticket allocated to various box offices is sold. Apparently both qualify a show for the sell-out board in the front of the venue, but one doesn’t make you some of the £6,000 back that the show cost to produce.

As a few tickets are always held back for last minute press or

industry requests it is always worth waiting around right at the last minute and confirming that there is definitely no way you can possibly get in to see my show. Because I for one would much prefer you in one of those empty six seats than... well the empty seats.

### 5. Putting their name in their title

Oh it’s so cute. And clever sn’t it clever? David Jones is going to spend an hour talking about himself in his debut hour “Jonesy-ing about”. We’ve all done it (I’m no exception, my show last year was called ‘School Of Riason’) but the truth is, we’re all ashamed that we have.

Yes, it’s hack, we know it is. And we never hear the end of it from our peers who haven’t done it - but not the peers flying their hearts out on the Royal Mile with us - the peers that never bring a show to the Festival ever. So they can have whatever opinion they want about my show title because ‘School of Riason’ was seen at Ed Fringe and subsequently commissioned by Radio 4. And their show? Oh that’s right, they didn’t write anything to put their name to.

But on a more constructive note, a title should tell you what the show is about, whether their name is in it or not. eg ‘School Of Riason’ was a comedic treatise of Gove’s education policies and my subsequent decision to homeschool my kids for a year (totes hilar right?). So if the title is just some clever way of repeating their own name without any insight... don’t feel guilty about going to see Scunthorpe’s Saturday Drama School production of ‘Much Ado About Nothing’: at least it says what it is on the tin.

### 6. Award winning shows

Every year a handful of shows will get nominated for the few big awards that are the cherry atop a performer’s festival sundae. This will almost certainly guarantee a sell-out for the rest of the run. Does it mean the best acts were nominated? No. Not according to every other act at the Festival.

Does it mean those acts are good? YES. Yes they are. Go see them. Enjoy a moneys-worth guarantee because even utilising all the skills you’ve acquired here today, you are still going to end up sitting through at least one hour of

sewage dressed up as Arts Council Funding during your trip.

So that’s it. That is the best tutorial I can give you in how to navigate Fringe marketing strategies to ensure yourself the most culturally-enlightening experience for your dollar. But in the spirit of the Fringe I am going to give you one last tip (like a blogger’s loyalty card reward: read a list of six, get a seventh free).

### 7. Reverse Psychology Quotes

NEVER, EVER go see a show where the flyer specifically indicates the show might be shit. It isn’t funny. If the flyer says: “This is the worst show I ever saw” Mr. D-List Celebrity, now deceased, it most definitely is.

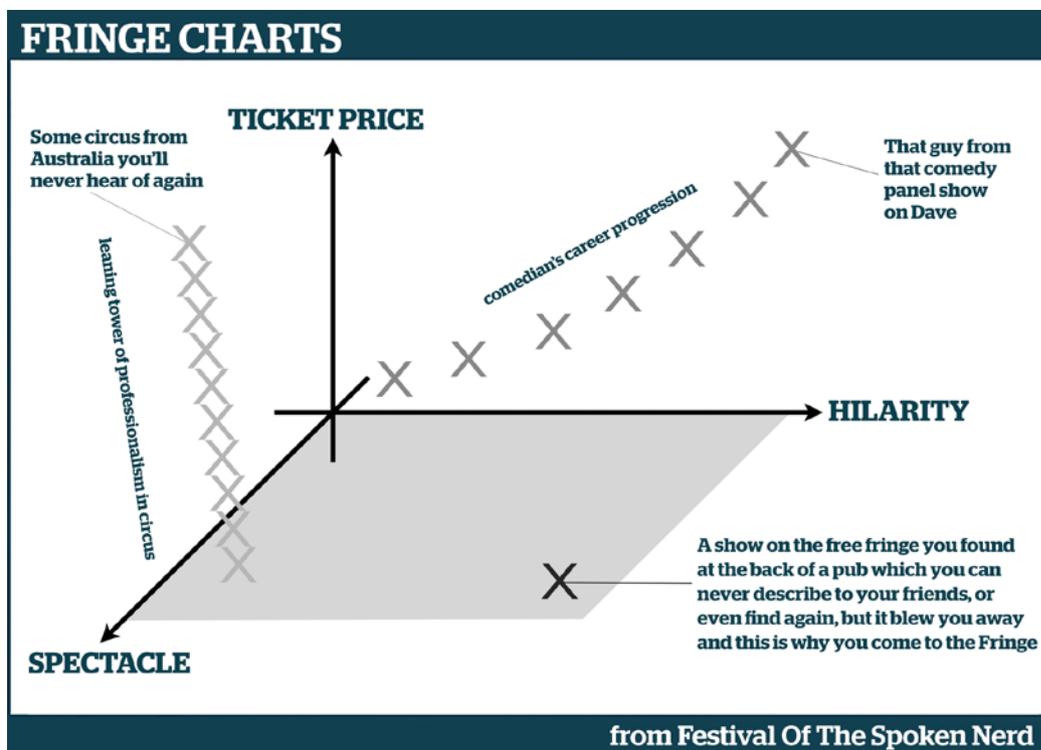
Save your money for someone who at least is trying to pass themselves off as the real deal, because you never know, in another year or two, they might just well be.

Ria Lina is utilising all these strategies to try and get people into her show ‘Ria Lina: Taboo Raider’ at The Stand 2 from 5 until 30 Aug.

THE LINK: [rialina.com](http://rialina.com)

## Festival Of The Spoken Nerd: Fringe Charts

“Science comedy phenomenon” no less, Festival Of The Spoken Nerd are back, and this time “they’re off the chart!” Which got us thinking. What would the Fringe look like in chart form? The comedy nerds have the answer. And here is their final Fringe chart of the Festival.



from Festival Of The Spoken Nerd

THE SHOW: Festival Of The Spoken Nerd: Just For Graphs, Assembly George Square, until 30 Aug  
THE LINK: [festivalofthespokennerd.com](http://festivalofthespokennerd.com)

## Chris Betts: Bar etiquette during the Fringe

**You'll likely be spending a lot of time in pubs and bars during the Festival, and while you're there to relax a little in your downtime, it's also important to remember that other people are busy working. Chris Betts "loves to watch people and his favourite view is from behind the bar" says the blurb to his show 'Social Animal'. And here he is with a quick guide to treating our beloved Festival bar staff well.**

1. If asked how your Fringe is going at the bar, say "well thanks" and pay for your drinks. The bartender is just making conversation and doesn't actually care if you

don't feel like you're being appreciated, and that a reviewer got it totally wrong, and some drunk guy ruined your Friday show. Drunk guys are ruining the bartender's entire Friday night. You may or may not be one of them. Keep it brief and positive and take your complaints back to a table full of other acts who are willing to trade bellyaching for bellyaching.

2. We generally drink in the same three bars for the month, so if you can afford it, buy your bartender a drink. If you can't, obviously, don't worry about it, the Fringe is expensive, I understand. But if you have a good bucket take one day, or find a ten pound note on the ground, get them a pint or a shot. They're working hard and never get applause at the end.

3. Don't put your gum under the table. This goes for everyone forever.

4. If you're getting hot and heavy with another act, or a particularly engaged fan, or anyone really, while in a bar, take it home. Or at least to the park. People are going to have to clean that seat. Don't be gross.

5. Don't try out material on the

bartenders. They're people, not Twitter.

6. Get the bar staff's names, talk to them, remember they're the only non-Fringe people you're likely to meet this month, cherish that.

7. If you try it on with the staff don't make it weird, and if you do, make amends. You don't want to lose your bar and they shouldn't feel uncomfortable at work just because your brain has been Fringed.

8. Tip if you can but if you can't make eye contact and mean your "thank you".

9. Be polite and patient.

10. If you're thinking of singing loudly to something, it better be 'For (S)He's A Jolly Good Fellow (Or Fellowess)', and it better be about the barstaff, because if anyone sings that goddamn Journey song one more time I swear to god....

Okay, that last one might just be me projecting, but the sentiment stands.

Goodnight and good liquor.

Chris Betts: Social Animal, Pleasance Courtyard, until 30 Aug.



/comedy



## The Kinsey Sicks Fringe playlist

**We've been asking Fringe stars to select their favourite songs for getting through the Festival. You can listen to some of the resulting playlists online at [ThreeWeeks.co.uk/playlists](http://ThreeWeeks.co.uk/playlists). Though this last selection from The Kinsey Sicks - who offer up an unforgettable hour of 'dragapella', a unique take on a cappella, every day at the Gilded Balloon, might require some surfing of YouTube. Either way, play this lot and you can kiss goodbye to any Fringe blues.**

### 01 Pat Boone singing Smoke On The Water

Look this up on YouTube. This is like an issue-spotting exam for "what is wrong with this picture?" As a result, there's no way to listen to this without feeling better about yourself.

### 02 Any isolated live feed of Britney Spears in concert "singing along" to her pre-recorded tracks

See point #1 above. Plus it helps thousands of unknown singers know that they never need to ask themselves if they're not talented enough to be famous.

### 03 The Judy Garland/Barbara Streisand duet of 'Happy Days Are Here Again'

If you have to ask why this is one of our favourite songs, you never need to question your sexuality again: you are incorrigibly straight. We're gay, loving this song is part of the contract.

### 04 Happy Birthday

Because we love supporting edgy, avant-garde material. Added bonus: there's nothing more satisfying than knowing that every time this inane jingle plays on TV, film, the internet or the radio, some undeserving corporate schmuck collects royalties

### 05 Dragapella Chorus by The Kinsey Sicks

Because we can't get enough of singing this fucking song every night in front of the Gilded Balloon, we have to listen to it too.

The Kinsey Sicks: America's Next Top Bachelor Housewife Celebrity Hoarder Makeover Star Gone Wild!, Gilded Balloon, until 31 Aug.

Photo by Paco Ojeda

## The lowdown...

### LONGEST ESTABLISHED:

ThreeWeeks is the longest established specialist 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 update, 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.

### ALL OVER EDINBURGH:

The ThreeWeeks weekly magazine is available to pick up for free at sites all over Edinburgh during August, with pick-up points in bars, cafes and box offices at all the key festival venues. Meanwhile the preview edition is also delivered direct to homes all over central Edinburgh.

### TWO DECADES OF EXPERIENCE:

The ThreeWeeks editors have been covering the Edinburgh Festival for twenty years, and provide their expertise and continued passion for the world's greatest cultural extravaganza each August, interviewing performers, directors and producers, commissioning guest columns, and reporting on key events in the Festival City.

### VIBRANT REVIEW TEAM:

This experience is complemented each year by a vibrant young review team who take in hundreds of shows first hand, sharing their opinions in ThreeWeeks, and helping us spot and champion the best new talent.

### MEDIA-SKILLS PROGRAMME:

From 1996 to 2013 ThreeWeeks also ran an acclaimed media-skills training programme each summer, providing formal and on-the-ground arts journalism training to hundreds of great young writers, giving future arts and media talent guidance, feedback and unique access to the world's most exciting festival. We are currently redeveloping this programme and hope to relaunch it ahead of Edinburgh Festival 2016.

### THREEWEEKS WEEKLY EDITION:

The ThreeWeeks Weekly Edition is our flagship publication, a full-colour tabloid-sized magazine, published weekly during August and packed with reviews, interviews and exclusive columns.

This is the Week Three edition of that very magazine! You can pick up your free copy of each issue from all the key venues at the Edinburgh Festival and numerous other places across the city as well.

### THREEWEEKS DAILY EDITION

The ThreeWeeks Daily Edition lands in the inbox of thousands and thousands

of Fringe fans every day, in the run up to and during the Festival. It provides all the latest news, interviews, columns and reviews in one place. To sign up for free go to [ThreeWeeks.co.uk/signup](https://ThreeWeeks.co.uk/signup)

### THREEWEEKS ONLINE

In addition to the magazine and daily email, there is ThreeWeeks Online. All our features and reviews appear here, plus you can search content by genre and venue. And it's here you will find the ever popular TW Podcast for audio coverage of the Festival.

For updates on new content as it appears online during August, follow ThreeWeeks on Twitter or Facebook, or sign-up for the email updates.

### THISWEEK LONDON

Just like ThreeWeeks Edinburgh discovers and champions great shows, performers and new talent at the Edinburgh Festival, ThisWeek London does the same all year round, with a daily helping of Three To See recommendations every day of the year plus the Caro Meets interviews with some of our favourite performers, producers and directors.

ThisWeek London also benefits from the two decades ThreeWeeks has been covering the Edinburgh Festival, tipping Fringe favourites old and new (and brand new) as they appear in London. Check it all out at [thisweeklondon.com](https://thisweeklondon.com) or sign up for the weekly bulletin at [ThisWeekLondon.com/signup](https://ThisWeekLondon.com/signup).

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[ThisWeekLondon.com/signup](https://ThisWeekLondon.com/signup)

# C the Festival



The MGA Academy  
**Zanna, Don't**

5-30 Aug 7.30pm C



Lucid Arts and Music  
**The Secretary  
Turned CEO**

5-31 Aug 7.20pm C



Theater Margot (Korea)  
**The Cherry Orchard:  
Beyond the Truth**

5-31 Aug 2.40pm C nova



Ryukyu Cirque (Japan)  
**Clown Macbeth**

5-31 Aug 4.00pm C



JSLN Dance Company  
(Germany & Singapore)  
**Transitions of (I)dentify**

6-31 Aug 1.15pm C south



Attic Erratic (Australia)  
**Angus Brown: Get Ready.  
Get Set. Ahhh F\*%k It**

6-31 Aug 10.15pm C south



Tramp  
**Confessional**

6-31 Aug 7.05pm C cubed



Laboratory Theatre Company  
**Threesome**

19-31 Aug 8.15pm C nova



Hidden Bell Productions  
**Mistaken: A Quartet of  
Plays for One Actor**

5-31 Aug 8.45pm C nova



Tammer Productions  
**Mancunian Rhapsody**

6-29 Aug 9.45pm C cubed



Papermoon Puppet Theatre (Indonesia)  
**Mwathirika**

15-31 Aug 10.10pm C



Kande (Indonesia)  
**Aceh Meukondroe**

19-31 Aug 7.30pm C

With more than 200 shows and events across our venues in the heart of Edinburgh, we celebrate our 24th Fringe with an inspiring international programme of cabaret, comedy, circus, dance, musicals, theatre and family shows. See it all with C venues.

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