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CHILDREN'S SHOWS

The White Dalmatian
2Londa

Something like a cross between Toy Story and Shrek: when Claire's polka dot Dalmatian loses his spots, he and his friends from the toy box must go on a quest to Fairyland to retrieve them. 'The White Dalmatian' is a visual treat for kids, with great costumes, catchy songs and bags of humour. The talented, vivacious cast create loveable characters, and the world of the play is chaotic and exciting (if you go down into Fairyland, you're sure to meet Little Red Riding Hood, but also funky monkeys and disco butterflies). However, there were issues with the actors' clarity, and this show might not be suitable for the very youngest children as the script is fairly complex and the storyline slightly scattergun.

New Town Theatre, 5 - 29 Aug (not 17), 11.45am (12.45pm), £6.00 - £11.00. [crc]

tw rating 3/5

COMEDY

Gareth Richards: Stand Up Between Songs
Avalon Promotions Ltd

In stand-up comedy, the mark of a pro is the ability to make the best of a small audience, and coax laughter from an unreceptive crowd. This lifeless routine by Gareth Richards, however, proved he has not yet reached that level. The Bournemouth comedian never hit his stride, nor managed to shed his air of embarrassment, delivering personal anecdotes and musings on mortality almost as if completing a chore. His manner was amiable enough, and the musical interludes on the novel Omnicord provided some variety, but overall, time really dragged in this show. No surprise, really, since when a comedian makes it so apparent that he'd rather be elsewhere, his audience will inevitably begin to feel the same.

Pleasance Courtyard, 4 - 30 Aug, 6.00pm (7.00pm), £7.00 - £9.50, fpp 66. [ac]

tw rating 2/5

Ali Cook: Pieces of Strange

Bound & Gagged Comedy By Arrangement With International Artists

We are promised that "this is a modern magic show", but in fact, Cook's set has a decidedly retro feel. Like the duck and chicken he fused together at the start, this was an odd hybrid of comedy and magic that didn't sink, but couldn't quite take off. Cook is most at home performing his tricks, which are genuinely mind-boggling, along with a nice mixture of classic work with cards, watches, and tanks of water, as well as newer, more rock'n'roll razor blade eating. Yet they sit uneasily alongside jokes so dated I wouldn't have been surprised to hear him complain about his mother-in-law. However, with a little less comedy, and a more generous sprinkling of showmanship, this show has the potential to be magic.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 4 - 30 Aug (not 11, 18), 9.45pm (10.45pm), £9.50 - £12.00, fpp 24. [gg]

tw rating 3/5



SNAP OF THE DAY: Remarkable stuff – Scott Free in 'Pink Sinatra: Swing With A Twist' and Ross Gurney-Randall in 'Mussolini - A One Man Political Farce' at the Hill Street Theatre. Photo: Adam Bell

Jollie: Roger!

Jollie

John and Ollie ('Jollie') are a winsome twosome, supposedly fresh from a stint as cruise-ship troubadours. The wonderfully detailed tensions in their relationship, purportedly marinated over months sharing a cabin, add savour to the sketches; and their breathtaking musical talent sets them apart from other double acts. I did want to disembark during the on-board chat show, which does not quite live up to the initial gag about its name, but perhaps this lull in the excitement is an accurate representation of a cruise. The slight dip is worth it for the glorious climax of a cod-Victorian murder mystery, followed by some of the most vigorous accordion playing I have ever witnessed. Don't miss the boat on this delightful duo.

Pleasance Dome, 4 - 30 Aug (not 23), 7.00pm (7.55pm), £7.50 - £10.50, fpp 81. [gg]

tw rating 4/5

John-Luke Roberts Distracts You From A Murder

Invisible Dot Ltd

John Luke Roberts is not a skilled, subtle murderer but he's certainly a very talented comedian – similar in style to Jimmy Carr, if Carr was younger, cooler and more off the wall. As the title suggests, rather than engaging in straight stand-up, Roberts attempts to use his whimsical, esoteric

comedy to distract us from a gory murder he promises to commit during the performance. This clever format lifts what is essentially an act composed of kooky one-liners into a brilliantly cohesive show. Utterly original and thigh-slappingly funny, the show is a must-see, and, not least for his on-stage costume change, Roberts is one to watch.

Pleasance Dome, 4 - 30 Aug (not 16), 8.10pm (9.05pm), £8.00 - £10.50, fpp 80. [ka]

tw rating 4/5

Jason Cook: The End (Part 1)

Jason Cook/The Stand Comedy Club

You'd be forgiven for not recognising the Jason Cook who appears on stage as the man in his programme entry: he's recently had a drastic haircut – just one of the discrepancies in this mildly amusing show. As Cook talks near-death experiences, platitudes like 'life-affirming' and 'charming' spring to mind, but a yawn and a sigh later, these crisp thoughts have slipped softly down into the area the brain recognises as 'gentle comedy'. Maybe this has to do with his show's early time slot: after dark things might be sharper, since his attempts at banter with the audience suggest a more receptive crowd could work for Cook. If not, then perhaps his strongest comedic powers were lost along with his hair.

The Stand Comedy Club III & IV, 4 - 29 Aug (not 16), 3.00pm (4.00pm), £6.00 - £7.00, fpp 76. [rj]

tw rating 3/5

Kev Orkian – The Illegal Tour

NMP

Clever, classical and clean, Kev Orkian's set of musical comedy is the funniest take on the genre I've seen since Bill Bailey's. The comedian's off-beat set features some very talented and frenzied piano playing and one of the best medleys I have ever witnessed anyone compile. When he's not being majestic on the piano, he is telling some hysterical jokes, and he doesn't have to resort to swearing in order to be funny, which is refreshing. The show does take a little while to get used to, but when you get used to it, you soon appreciate Kev's talent. He is an extremely gifted pianist, and his music (if not his jokes) will have you marvelling at his skills.

Underbelly, Cowgate, 5 - 29 Aug, 7.05pm, £6.00 - £12.00, fpp 85. [dc]

tw rating 4/5

The Buffoons

Hiatus Theatre In Association With The Scot Pack

There are two essential elements to any comedy show: The script and the performance, and one cannot stand without the other. Comedy troupe The Buffoons took on the towering topics of music and popular television, and created some great parodies: taboo subjects were approached head-on, and I liked that. As a whole, the performance was well staged with clever scene changes

cont>>

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