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CHILDREN'S SHOWS

The I Hate Children Children's Show

Comedy on the Square

First a confession: the jaded cynicism expressed in this show's title may have resonated with me a little too much prior to viewing. Nevertheless, it is now with confident objectivity that I attest to the genuine all round wonderfulness of this comedic show! Magician Paul Nathan exudes unpretentious charisma by the bucket load and, assisted by his equally personable sidekick Al, each and every child is invited to partake in at least one of his mesmerising magic tricks. Sharp and full of dry humour, Nathan unashamedly indulges in a spot of playful child-mockery - something which can evoke an initial sense of audience shock. It is not long, however, before shock morphs into laughter from all corners. Cannot recommend enough!

Zoo Roxy, 6 - 30 Aug, 12.00pm (1.00pm), £5.00, fpp 13. [kr]

tw rating 5/5

COMEDY

The Axis of Awesome: Songs in the Key of Awesome

Axis of Awesome

The Axis of Awesome are rapidly becoming Fringe legends, and rightly so. There's a long tradition of antipodean comic songsmiths - from the Doug Anthony All Stars to Flight of the Conchords - and these boys are right up there with them. This year's gig includes a song lamenting the lack of lasers in modern life, an excellent deconstruction of clichéd boy-band love songs, and their most well-known song 'Four Chords', a medley of famous tracks which all use the same 4 chords. The stand out for me was their literal cover version of 'Hotel California'. Their set romps through more musical genres than you may expect, but every number is a hilarious barnstormer. This show rocks; go see it!

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 4 - 30 Aug (not 18, 25), 19.45 (20.45), £9.00 - £10.00, fpp 30. [al]

tw rating 5/5

Caroline Rhea Gilded Balloon

Completely mental, completely unstructured and completely fabulous. You might remember Rhea from 'Sabrina the Teenage Witch' but after this show you'll know her simply as a spellbinding comedian. Introduced by her support act, her lacklustre husband, Rhea is a ball of energy and scatty enthusiasm. She recounts amusing mishaps and offers advice such as, "avoid the pill: its like a sexual credit card, you end up taking things home you would never normally buy". We're constantly wondering what Rhea will come out with next, and I'm pretty sure she is too. The show's haphazard nature adds to its brilliance, although it does lose momentum in places. A loveable lady with a truly entertaining show - but honey, lose the husband.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 6 - 25, 9.30pm (10.30pm), £10.00 - £15.00, fpp 41. [sk]

tw rating 4/5

Dig for Victory Sketch Show - Free

Dig For Victory/ PBH's Free Fringe

To keep this review simple, sand to reflect the nature of the show itself, I shall begin with the good points. One joke stood out as the funniest, a sketch about the after-effects of a Facebook rape; the punchline caught me off guard and consequently caused a meaningful laugh. And thus ends my list of good points. Consistently, the material was of a type that, if jokingly told to your friend on the spur of the moment, might evoke a grin or perhaps even dig up a chuckle. The show simply didn't pack enough intelligence in the writing, or conviction in the delivery, to really deal a professional blow. New sketches and better actors needed desperately.

The Voodoo Rooms, 9 - 27 Aug, 3.00pm (4.00pm), free, fpp 56. [tv]

tw rating 1/5

The Rap Guide To Human Nature

Baba Brinkman

Baba Brinkman returns to the Fringe with another educational insight explained through the art of rap, dealing with creationism, ovulation and the evolution of gayness in this hour of energetic and insightful rap. He confronts issues that most rappers wouldn't dare to touch with both intelligence and humour. Although the show is cleverly written, it does have a few faults however; the audience interaction is awkward at times and some of the material flew straight over my head. However, don't let these minor issues put you off going to see this enjoyable show. If you're looking for something different, this educational and original production is well worth an hour of your time.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 4 - 30 Aug (not 9, 16, 23), 3.45pm (4.45pm), £8.00 - £10.50, fpp 113. [sr]

tw rating 3/5

Gordon Southern - Borders

Gordon Southern

Rat-a-tat-tat goes the machine-gun fire of jokes from this free-wheeling comedian, who takes few intakes of breath during the show. Somewhat twitchy during his performance, Southern constantly gropes the mic stand, occasionally putting the mic back in for a fraction of a second then taking it straight back out. It's also odd to see him at one point check his mobile phone mid joke: maybe it was an important text? That isn't to say his set about borders and boundaries isn't amusing, however, and there is a nice arc to his stories and a good set finale, but this is unfortunately crippled by a joke in incredibly bad taste about the death of Steve Irwin.

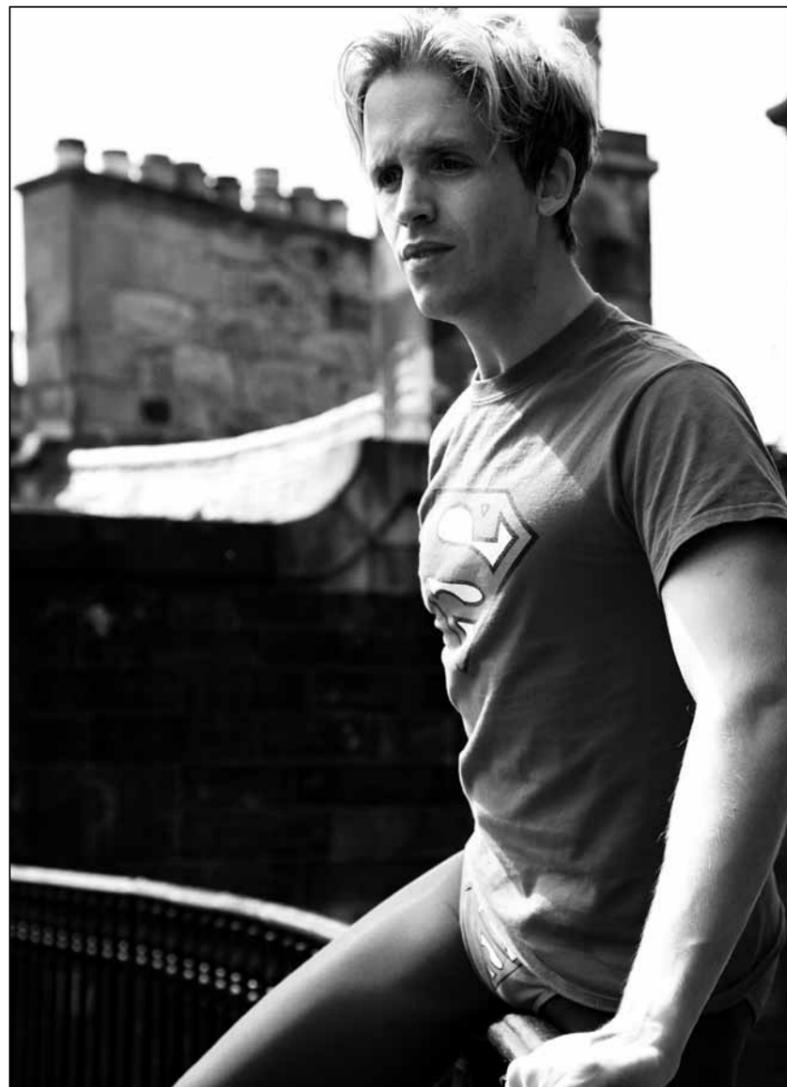
Downstairs At The Tron, 5 - 29 Aug (11, 25), 9.00pm (10.00pm), £5.00, fpp 68. [ta]

tw rating 3/5

James Sherwood - One Man And His Piano

James Sherwood

James Sherwood is a bright-eyed comic with great presence and warm confidence who really comes alive when tinkling the ivories. Like a musical David Mitchell, he is knowingly clever without being smug, but this mixture of straight stand up and musical accompaniment is hot and cold. I particularly



SNAP OF THE DAY: Who's that in the sky? Why, it's Jonathan Eio from 'Jump The Musical' at the Pleasance Dome. Photo: Kate Edwards

enjoyed his Lib Dem disco and he can make up catchy songs in his sleep. Yet though he is a very able storyteller, his straight routines drag the show down a bit; these sections just don't share the verve and pace that the music inevitably brings to the set. However, this is elegantly written and charmingly delivered, a very enjoyable way to spend an hour and a fiver.

The GRV, 6 - 29 Aug (not 23), 7.00pm (8.00pm), £5.00, fpp75 [cnm]

tw rating 3/5

Kevin Eldon Is Titting About

Kevin Eldon/ The Stand Comedy Club

Kevin Eldon makes his Fringe debut with the panache of a Fringe veteran: of course, he doesn't need to conform to the style of the ubiquitous nice guy comedians who natter on about shoe sizes and bus tickets, nor does he need to produce a 'well rehearsed' and 'professional' piece. Eldon thinks he can just tit around: and he is just so right.

This show is the perfect antidote to the soft and flabby comedian who delivers pithy observational comedy or engages in tête-à-tête with audience members. It is instead an observation of observation that is odiously clever, and pant-wettingly funny. I sincerely hope Eldon makes a return to the Fringe, if he continues to perform with such sterling sublimity.

The Stand Comedy Club, 2.30pm (3.10pm), 6 - 30 Aug (not 16, 23), £7.00 - £8.00, fpp 84. [mb]

tw rating 4/5

Morgan & West: Time Travelling Magicians

Stage magic can [and probably should] always be funny, and since the combination of Victoriana and comedy seems to go down well in Edinburgh, these two Victorian-comedian-magicians ought to be on to a winner. Morgan and West are obviously very amusing men, because they are funniest in their more conversational stretches. Their

cont>>

C (+1) 4-30 Aug (not 16) at 12:15pm

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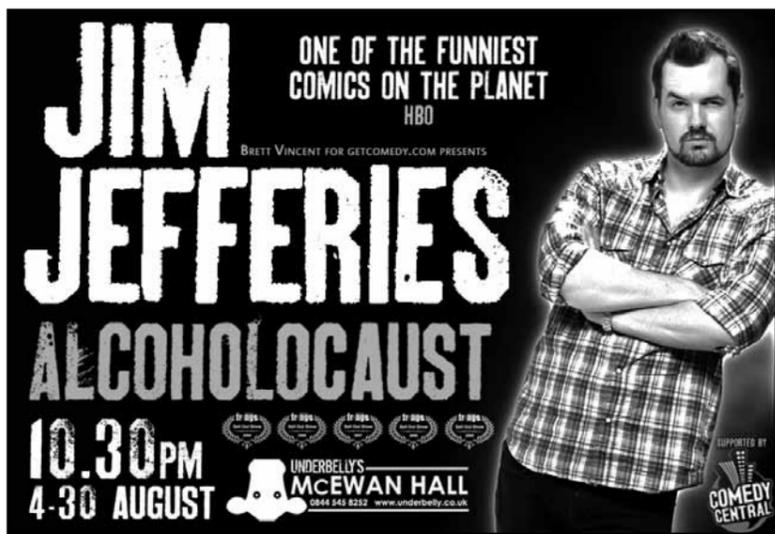
SWING!

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'Blistering musical satire' *The List*

★★★★★ *Scotsgay*
★★★★ *Broadway Baby*

Gilded Balloon
4pm daily



cont>> tricks are consistently entertaining and deft and, while there is perhaps nothing of astounding ingenuity, they are varied and absorbing enough to make the show worth its ticket-price. Affordable and cheery as they are, however, they lack the charisma and panache which stage magic requires to prevent the props from looking like toys and the room like a birthday party. Perhaps they just deserve a bigger venue.

Gilded Balloon Tiviot, 4 - 29 Aug, 3.45pm (4.45pm), £7.50 - £9.50, fpp 100. [kb]

tw rating 3/5

Under The Stars Peter Buckley Hill

This show is helmed by Peter Buckley Hill, the man himself, organiser of the PBH Free Fringe, and his persona is so affable and engaging that it threatens to overshadow his invited performers. His appearance and vernacular make him uncannily resemble a genetic merger between Bill Bailey and Boris Johnson. Whilst there are a few questionable self-accompanied songs, and one extremely dubious Nazi salute, his material is warming and enthralling. The show has a very tender undertone, as glimpses emerge of a very shy, bumbling man, wrapped up in an engaging, witty, and sometimes salacious coating. His stage presence is amicable, and his comedy has an urbane sense of spontaneity.

The Canon's Gait, 7 - 29 Aug (not 11, 18, 25), 6.05pm (7.00pm), free, fpp 138. [np]

tw rating 4/5

EVENTS

Graveyards, Mystery and Murder Tour

Saints & Sinners Walking Tours

This themed walking tour meanders through Edinburgh's picturesque old town, re-tracing the deadly steps of the capital's most notorious murderers. The content is historical - we're talking mainly 1600-1800s here, not coverage of any recent unfortunate events - and is delivered by an enthusiastic and likeable local. Commencing in Greyfriars Kirkyard and ending in Canongate Kirk, the event recounts tales of Edinburgh's seedy past and shady residents in various dark closes and murky alleyways en route. The format is simple and effective, though certain attempts at humour and the dodgy sing-song that marked the end of the tour seemed a tad out of place. If you go, get a group together and an informative, enjoyable, experience through Edinburgh's old town is guaranteed.

Outside Greyfriars Bobby Bar, 6 - 7, 9 - 10, 12 - 14, 16 - 17, 19 - 21, 23 - 24, 26 - 28 Aug, 7.00pm (8.30pm), £7.50 - £8.50, fpp 160. [kr]

tw rating 3/5

EXHIBITIONS

The Lewis Chessmen Unmasked

The National Museum of Scotland

Looking more like medieval Aardman characters than Viking warriors, these dark age chess pieces challenge our notion of our relationship with Scandinavia. Though there's a limit to the appeal of such minute figures, when set among Viking stonework and other items from the period the well-preserved craftsmanship of the chessmen shows. The extent of the mysteries unmasked is perhaps overstated. However, the exhibition does find a number of stories in the pieces' features, with informative displays linking buck teeth and bulbous eyes to real life historic figures. Their interest as a part of the history of gaming is not overlooked either. Opportunities

are provided to play chess and the Lewis Chessmen's part in the Harry Potter films is explored.

National Museum of Scotland, 2 Aug - 5 Sept, 10.00am-5.00pm, free, fpp 169. [cmc]

tw rating 3/5

MUSIC

In The Pink - Fabulous All-Female A Cappella!

Expect some fun from this female a cappella group who blend genres, mash-ups and medleys to create engaging unaccompanied music. Moments of their performance were exceptional, including a Moulin Rouge arrangement and a cover of 'The Feeling' which sent shivers down the spine. Sadly, this was let down by the switching of lead vocalists, which, although a nice idea, didn't work as some of the members sang better than others and while the choreography in places worked very well and added comedy to the performance, it sometimes appeared jumbled and disorganised. However, most of their harmonies were impeccable and their choice of songs was diverse, making this a genuinely enjoyable experience.

C, 15 - 30 Aug, 4.45pm (5.30pm), £5.50 - £10.50, fpp 188. [aq]

tw rating 3/5

MUSICALS AND OPERA

The Improvised Musical No Shoes Theatre

Almost an antidote to the professional efficiency of the fringe's other improvised musicals, No Shoes Theatre's version actually feels more energetic, more imaginative, and certainly more fun than its heavily marketed rivals across town. Tonight's show - although improvised musicals aren't easy to summarise - was about a gruff sheriff trying to apprehend a beautiful diamond smuggler in the quaint town of 'Sleepy Sleepings,' and comprised madcap comedy, inappropriate accents and, bizarrely, falconry, all put together by a fantastically talented cast with charisma coming out of their ears. If only it had come together a bit more smoothly at the end, this would have been a five-star show, but still, it had me happily smiling the whole way through.

C, 4 - 30 Aug (not 14), 6.30pm (7.30pm), £5.50 - £10.50, fpp 212. [ef]

tw rating 4/5

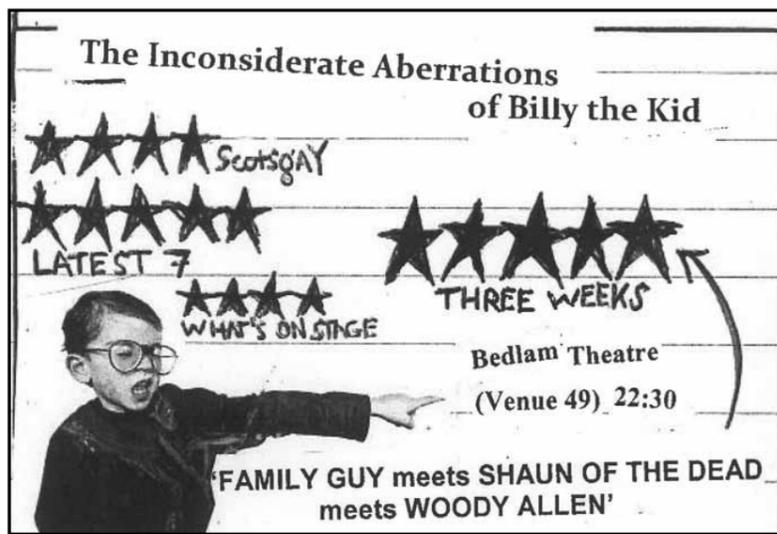
THEATRE

Dracula Oneohone Theatre

A handsome, uniformly talented cast are wasted in this loud, abrasive adaptation. Set in an insane asylum, the script is far too clever, yet never illuminating; those without a deep knowledge of Stoker's text will experience an utterly muddled narrative that struggles to reconcile itself in the closing fifteen minutes. I could count on one hand the instances of actual dialogue - instead, one actor speaks (or screams) for a bit, while the rest 'insanely' play with their feet, or fit, or fight, or hiss tiresomely. Most worrying of all though, are the moments when performers throw themselves into the air, before crashing artlessly to the ground. This promise of broken limbs is the only thing that makes 'Dracula' truly terrifying.

C Soco, 15 - 30 Aug, 12.00am (1.05am), £7.50 - £10.50, fpp n/a. [tm]

tw rating 1/5



Six And A Half Loves

Terry Saunders

Using back projections of endearingly stylised cartoon drawings, Terry Saunders skilfully interweaves the stories of his love-lorn characters, having the name of each character, as he discusses them, projected onto his T-shirt. At times funny, at times desperately sad, often both, this was a lovely bitter-sweet play about what it means to be utterly heartbroken. The story of Nigel, a man who buys a blow up doll to fill the void in his life, is strangely moving, as is the tale of a character referred to throughout as 'Thingy', because the man she loves does not know her name. A kind of cartoon version of 'Love, Actually', without the happy endings.

Pleasance Courtyard, 17 - 30 Aug, 3.15pm (4.15pm), £6.50 - £8.00, fpp 288. [hw]

tw rating 4/5

John Knox: Turn Again

John Shedden

There is not quite enough drama in this dramatisation of the writings of Reformation clergyman John Knox, as performed by John Shedden. This is a dense script with a whole regiment of characters, and at times it's rather difficult to follow the narrative thread; furthermore, the potentially interesting story of fellow reformer George Wishart - whom Knox defended then deserted - is sadly confused. Shedden is convincing as Knox, but does not vary his tone or embody the different characters enough to bring this complicated story to life. This is a laudable attempt to reanimate a little-known historical event, but it is perhaps too faithful to Knox's own words, and unfortunately feels too much like a sermon to be wholly enjoyable.

Scottish Storytelling Centre, 10 Aug - 4 Sept (even dates only), 5.00pm (5.50pm), £6.00 - £8.00, fpp 263. [gg]

tw rating 2/5

Poignant

MT

So close to its intended interactivity yet so far; this multi-media installation seemed to do all the right things but missed its mark. The audience were led down pitch-black passages

into uninhabited rooms, all the while hearing whispered Argentinian stories through headphones. This should have made for an intense experience, but the stories we heard narrated and watched on film were hard to follow and (except for the tale of a football triumph) not engaging. While we sensed our breathing in the darkness and lay together on a bed our bodies may have been 'interacting' with the show, but heads and hearts were not. The supposedly mysterious narrative content of the piece was insufficiently dramatic or meaningful - poignant only in name.

The Melting Pot, 6 - 28 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), times vary, £4.00 - £5.00, fpp 280. [dp]

tw rating 2/5

It's Always Right Now, Until It's Later

Daniel Kitson

There's a lot of hype surrounding Daniel Kitson's latest project, but his play more than lives up to the buzz. With a minimal but innovative setting consisting of light bulbs representing tiny moments in the lives of two individuals, Kitson keeps the audience enthralled for an hour and a half with a supremely engaging performance that is a true testament to his skill as a storyteller. Kitson's play is a compassionate, wry and moving glimpse into the moments that make up the minutes, hours and eventually years of our lives, reminding us that it is not just the big events that count. If you can get your hands on a ticket, do not miss the opportunity to see this inspiring work.

Traverse Theatre, 10 - 29 Aug (not 16, 23), 10.00am (11.30am), £10.00 - £12.00, fpp 262. [lw]

tw rating 5/5

Jack Pratchard

Jonathan Storey

Masterful, measured and macabre; Jonathan Storey's unusual form of storytelling depicts the somewhat sinister fairytale which centres around the murdered Jack Pratchard on his quest to the City of the Dead. Using an elaborate wooden puppet theatre filled with intriguing nooks and crannies, Storey tells this peculiar little tale with a hint of sinister knowing, yet, also a bespectacled innocence,

enthusiasm and clarity. Every prop has multiple uses and no part of the wooden story frame is left underused. Storey is wonderfully resourceful, and the audience chuckle and gasp with delight as he deftly manoeuvres his canvas and record player resulting in surreal humour, a dreamlike story and a touch of the disturbing that make this quite unlike anything you may have seen before.

Zoo Roxy, 6 - 30 Aug (not 18), 3.55pm (4.45pm), £5.00 - £8.00, fpp. 262. [gjs]

tw rating 4/5

@Virtually_Real

Roundhouse Theatre Company

This quirky new play explores the difference between virtual life and reality, and their tendency to blur together. The play lacks a plot but rather focuses on a bunch of characters who interact both online and in real life and the combination of a fantastically talented cast, good writing and strong direction make each personality extremely real. To the amusement of the audience, when the actors switch to the virtual world inhabited by their avatars, they assume the physicality of characters from video games, plus, the set is beautiful and the staging smart; the audience can never confuse cyberspace and reality. Both funny and tragic, this play is an interesting reflection on the presence of the virtual in our lives.

Assembly, 9-30 Aug (not 24), 1.15 pm (2.15pm), £8.00-£10.00, fpp. 302. [clm]

tw rating 4/5

Sex Idiot

Bryony Kimmings/Escolator East to Edinburgh

Bryony Kimmings proves to be one of the most vital young artists at this year's Fringe, with a performance brim-full of character and with a real zest for life. 'Sex Idiot' begins with Kimmings retracing her sexual footsteps upon discovering she had contracted an STI, and what ensues is a candid exploration of modern sexuality and love. Using elaborate costumes, dances, imaginative props (one sequence sees her hitting herself repeatedly with a bunch of flowers) and brilliantly constructed songs, the show is ultimately unique amongst a plethora of one-actor shows, with such originality that's rarely seen. And despite the frankness of the show's themes, Kimmings also seems immensely warm-hearted in a showy but never pretentious performance of real depth and emotion.

Zoo Roxy, 6 - 30 Aug (not 7), 8.20pm (9.20pm), £7.00, fpp 287 [ef]

tw rating 4/5

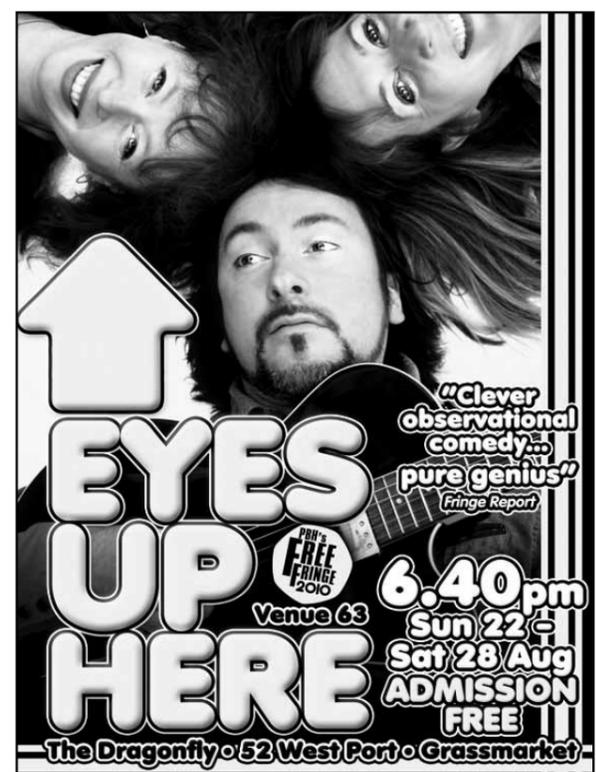
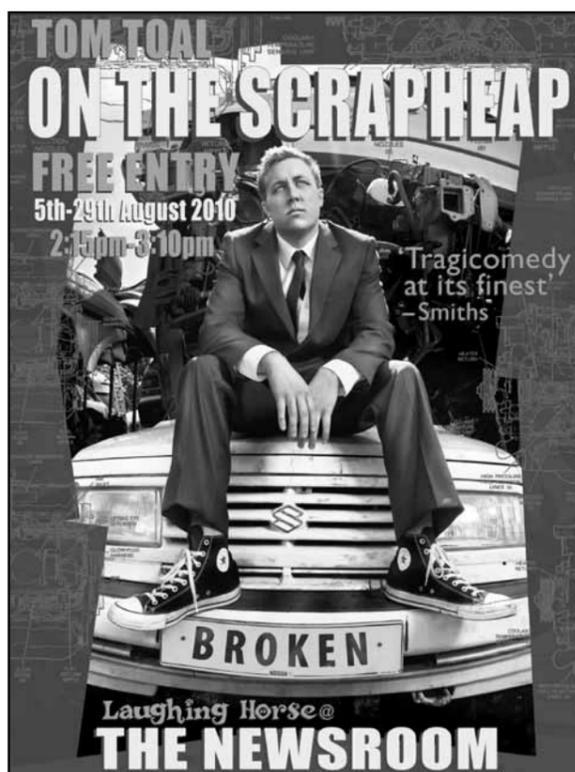
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Publishers Chris Cooke, Caroline Moses

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TW RATINGS EXPLAINED: 1/5 BAD | 2/5 MEDIOCRE | 3/5 GOOD | 4/5 VERY GOOD | 5/5 BRILLIANT