

# ThreeWeeks IN EDINBURGH

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## CABARET

### The Bongo Club Cabaret

I like cabaret, especially when it's loud, colourful and funny (perhaps even making the audience participate a tad more than they were expecting to). By that definition, last night's cabaret at the Bongo Club was a wonderful experience, showcasing some of the Fringe's most entertaining acts. Our host, Dusty Limits, has a biting sense of humour and an incredibly luscious singing voice; combine the two and what you get is a song about the 'Twelve Days Of Fringe,' complete with deprecating comments about student stand ups. Acts such as 'The Not Quite Quartet' and the '3 Gaga Heads' stood out, but my personal favourite was Piff The Magic Dragon who got me on stage to do tricks with him.

The Bongo Club, 7 - 30 Aug (not 14, 20), 10.15pm,  
£7.00 - £8.00, fpp 233. [ms]  
tw rating 4/5

## CHILDREN'S SHOWS

### The Dandelion Story Modl Theatre (Korea)

Quite simply, this show is a breath of fresh air. Amid a children's programme packed with fairytale parodies and book adaptations, this inventive and refreshingly insightful story involving mesmerising physical theatre really stands out. If you can get over the fact that the protagonist is a 'doggy poo', you can't help but be charmed by the sunny, infectious radiance of the actors and the play's message that everything in the world has a use and is meaningful. Beautifully staged, lit and choreographed, you'll be treated to a celestial light show, bubbles raining from the ceiling and that satisfying feeling of warm fuzziness. Visually and conceptually, it's thought-provoking, surprising, and wholly deserving of large audiences both young and old. Go see.

C, 15 - 30 Aug, 1.50pm (2.40pm), £5.50 - £10.50, fpp 10. [gjs]  
tw rating 4/5

### The Jungle Book: The Next Chapter

Glenn Elston and the Australian Shakespeare Co

Walking into the auditorium I had high hopes: a smoky stage, low lighting, jungle noises and foliage formed a tropical atmosphere. However, this is a chronic case of commercial style over substance; the multimedia aspect is merely an intricate PowerPoint, the original songs are unremarkable, the plot line of an adult Mowgli visiting Baloo to reminisce over his jungle days is lazy, while the over-enthusiastic use of water-pistols makes several young children cry. It was perhaps unfortunate that the crowd was unusually reserved, as the performance relies heavily on audience participation, but although the actors work valiantly to keep the pace, the material is just too poorly crafted to fully engage anyone. Better to stay at home and watch the original.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 4 - 30 Aug (not 16, 23),  
11.30am (12.30pm), £5.00 - £8.00, fpp 13. [gjs]  
tw rating 2/5



**SNAP OF THE DAY:** The Janey Godley guest edited ThreeWeeks weekly edition is out now, pick up a copy and plan your final Fringe weekend. Photo: Kate Edwards

## PINOCCHIO Indefinite Articles

Rarely can a chunk of wood be loveable, but this show gives the famous wooden boy such heart that every child in the room will fall in love with him. One man in his workshop tells of Pinocchio's adventures from his 'birth' to his encounters with dubious folk; the workshop is life-size, but doubles as a stage on which Gepetto can play puppet-master, using various tools and seemingly unimportant objects to bring characters such as Jiminy Cricket to life. The play also combines this inventive puppetry with a shadow puppet sequence, entralling the audience with stunning visuals. The live music adds to what can only be described as a constantly surprising and atmospheric interpretation of a well-loved classic.

Zoo Roxy, 6 - 24 Aug, 10.20am (11.20am), £6.50, fpp 15. [cnm]  
tw rating 4/5

## Prince of Cringe Gag Reflex Management

The 'Prince of Cringe' is delightful, and I never thought I'd use those words in the same sentence. I'm not kidding; Sam Wills tells the story of a Prince's journey home using circus tricks, an enjoyable method of narrative illustration. Two simple art forms are combined to give what could be a simple show comedic and cringe-worthy substance. I did cringe several times, but not due to embarrassment or the desire to be elsewhere; some of Wills' tricks look genuinely painful (he was bleeding and sweating by the end), but he pulls them off with ease and humour. This is not slick theatre, but Wills is an absorbing and entertaining performer who is definitely not just for children.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 5 - 29 Aug, 12.15pm (1.15pm), £6.00 - £8.00, fpp 16. [cnm]  
tw rating 4/5

## COMEDY

### Ava Vidal: Lessons I Should Have Learnt

Ava Vidal/ The Stand Comedy Club

Ava Vidal's 'Lessons I Have Learnt' is a crash course in how accomplished comedy requires both strong jokes and a dynamic stage presence. Vidal's material suffers because of her nervousness, her tremulous voice and awkward pauses slackening her comedic momentum and thwarting her punchlines. Her show centres on an account of a horrific love affair, a story that is gripping, but again, Vidal sabotages its flow by pausing to show embarrassing, resolutely unfunny, unrelated video clips. What's frustrating is that Vidal's patter is intelligent, original and pleasingly caustic, with much more genuine insight and wit than many of the burgeoning stand ups at the Fringe. A very funny, polished show lurks within 'Lessons.' Here's hoping it eventually gets out.

The Stand Comedy Club III & IV, 5 - 29 Aug, 3.15pm (4.15pm), £8.00, fpp 30. [kc]  
tw rating 3/5

### Free & Easy - Free

Stu and Garry/ The Stand Comedy Club

I know it's a cliché, but what a lovely way to start the day? It was so refreshing to see these two comics avoid all the pitfalls that seem commonplace in most improv comedy; there was no patchy dialogue with questionable grammar or syntax, overly melodramatic acting and dialogue or a lack of pleasant, consistent flow. They had such good rapport and natural understanding of each other that one would be forgiven for thinking it had been scripted and rehearsed. Each round was given a task such as guess the audience super power, weakness and day

job game. Brilliant for all with a passion for improv, but perfect for those who fear its hit and miss nature.

The Stand Comedy Club, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, 29 Aug, 12.30pm (1.55pm), free, fpp 64. [tv]

tw rating 4/5

### Hans Teeuwen: Smooth And Painful

Bound & Gagged Comedy By Arrangement With Debi Allen Associates

Teeuwen's surrealist approach to stand up will leave some in fits of hysterics and others bemused in what has to be one of the strangest comedy shows at the Fringe. With an emphasis on physical comedy, he combines exaggerated facial expressions with obscure and often unintelligible character voices to create a fantastically absurd set. His use of song works to great comedic effect, aptly fitting his style and providing some of the highlights of the show. However, in places it feels like Teeuwen is essentially pulling faces and saying words in an abstruse manner to get laughs, while there are also moments when the shock factor is just too high.

Pleasance Courtyard, 4 - 29 Aug (not 11, 18, 25),  
10.30pm (11.30pm), £8.00 - £15.00, fpp 69. [aq]

tw rating 3/5

## IT ALL ENDS HERE...

Well, sort of. This is the last installment of the ThreeWeeks Daily Edition for Fringe 2010. But more reviews will appear in the eDaily each day through to Monday, so sign up at [www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/subscribe](http://www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/subscribe). And do remember to pick up the final weekly edition of 2010 to help you plan your final Fringe weekend.

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## Legend of the Card Ninja

Javier Jarquin

'Ninnjjaaa'. Harvey tells the story of his love of cards and magic and his engagement, all the while cleverly illustrating the story with card tricks, as well as completing five ninja trials to prove his worth. However, I'm not sure I would describe him as a ninja: his tricks, which I am sure require a lot of skill, do not look impressive and very often take him a few goes to succeed. The showman himself is entertaining, endearing and gets the audience on his side early on, so even though we do wait through a good five minutes of hs trying to get the set's finale right, we feel real joy when he achieves his trick. A fun show.

Assembly, 5 – 29 Aug (not 16, 23), 9.15pm (10.15pm), £5.00 – £11.00, fpp 88. [sk]

tw rating 3/5

## Not 'Let's Learn English Yourself'

Alex Love, Moz and Paul Langton

This was meant to be 'Let's Learn English Yourself', but its performer was nowhere to be found (perhaps he was stuck at a language barrier somewhere). This being the Fringe, however, there were three other comedians (Alex Love, Moz and Paul Langton) only metres away who kindly stepped in to entertain us. Love made much of his similarities to Ant and Dec; Langton unleashed a slightly booze-fuelled invective against the musical preferences of 'the youth'; Moz was 'Viz' magazine personified and treated us to two fantastically crude sketches. No one may have learned any English, but no one seemed to mind much. Thanks must go to the trio for providing us with an hour of laughs at a minute's notice.

Laughing Horse @ Counting House, 22 Aug, 5.00pm (6.00pm), Free. [gg]

tw rating 3/5

## The Sunday Defensive: Further Complications

Mick Perrin for Just for Laughs Live

This bespectacled pair has many of the classic prerequisites of a double-act, whilst maintaining a quirky absurdist edge that sets them apart. Taking advantage of the contrast between a weedier, ordered, instigative comic and an urbane, moronic and hedonistic clown, the pair offer a pleasing variation on the double-act genre, and some of the most gruesomely hilarious sneering I have ever seen. There are moments when it all suffers from the perennial problem of double-acts, where the good material is clearly ill-divided between them, creating a sub-dynamic of an aloof and applauded performer being reined in by his counterpart when the tangential floodgates open. However, such a division is far from unprecedented and the performers wield it with uproarious results.

Pleasance Courtyard, 4 – 30 Aug (not 18), 4.45pm (5.45pm), £7.00 – £9.00, fpp 127. [np]

tw rating 4/5

## The Unexpected Items

When at university, it is probable that there will be many who bang on about their 'Gap Yahs' and boast that they have "just chundered everywhere". But, although some may be genuine, others will be quoting the Gap Yah skit from YouTube that now has over 2 million hits. This is the group behind this phenomenon. Their show is funny, with an energetic opening and humorous sketches; there's a funny folk singer parody and a children's TV sketch that goes a bit wrong. However, I do feel as though I've seen many of these jokes before, and to be honest, there wasn't a sketch that was as hilaarious as 'Gap Yah', which of course, featured in the show.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 4 - 30 Aug (not 17, 24), 4.30pm (5.30pm), £5.00 - £10.00, fpp 138. [cc]

tw rating 3/5

## MUSICALS AND OPERA

### Sharron Matthews Superstar – World Domination Tour 2010

Sharron Matthews

Sharron Matthews calls herself 'Superstar' and doesn't care what you think. Luckily I think she has the credentials to pull off such an audacious title. Conquering the world one venue at a time, she narrates her hysterical and at times poignant journey from small-town Canada to 'superstardom' with music, her pitch-perfect voice emotionally expressive and impressively used as she flits between songs that are either insane or inspired choices for a cabaret show. From her homage to Britney Spears, her mash-up of Madonna and Shirley Bassey to a heartfelt rendition of Radiohead, Matthews sings

with attitude and humour in a show that has more musical surprises and mood swings than a foul-mouthed episode of 'Glee'. World Domination beckons.

theSpaces@ Surgeons Hall, 16 – 28 Aug, 9.05pm (9.55pm), £10.00, fpp 217. [cnn]

tw rating 4/5

## MUSIC

### Jest Like Danny Kaye

Russell Fletcher (Musical Director: Greg Riddell)

Reviewing a tribute act is problematic when you have no more than a passing acquaintance with the original article, which perhaps leaves me unable to draw comparisons that die-hard fans would validate. I can vouch, however, that such a position does not hinder the enjoyment of this show for an ignoramus such as myself. Greg Riddell's musical accompaniments veil the show with a sense of farcical buffoonery, heralding the Hollywood golden age Kaye rose in; Russell Fletcher's performance commemorates the star's past film roles, physical comedy, and titillating tongue twisters. Whilst I cannot offer superlative feedback with real authority, I can state that fans appeared enthused, and my first action afterwards was to watch Kaye clips at the nearest Wifi hotspot.

The Famous Spiegeltent, 8 – 29 Aug (not 9, 16, 23), 2.00pm (3.00pm), £5.00 – £28.00, fpp 77. [np]

tw rating 3/5

## THEATRE

### My Face

Gorilla Suit

You can be anything you want to be virtually. The show is set 'online', and Suzie and friends are staged at lecterns, and mimic typing their lines as they chat. Communication on the social network is via carefully constructed profiles, often concealing their owners' 'real' lives. The potential for deception is shown up when, controversially, Suzie invites her friends to a real life party: she is excited about meeting Dave but Dave is Mark's alter ego, invented to woo Suzie but with the ultimate design fault - he doesn't actually exist. Mark is not the only one to cover up his true identity. Emma blatantly wears a gorilla suit. This is sheer entertainment providing food for thought long after the hour is up.

C Central, 18 – 30 Aug, 7.15pm, £6.50 – £9.50, fpp273. [cm]

tw rating 3/5

### Shakers

Reading University Drama Society

With flashy names and obscure ingredients, cocktails always seem to be trying too hard. The same goes for this remix of Godber's bar-room play. The four- woman cast attack the multiple roles of waitresses and customers like students on pound-a-pint night and with tongues deep in cheeks, but don't get the measures right; unable to articulate this as a sly comedy of everyday struggles, it ends up a dirty blend of unsympathetic characters and tacky, indiscriminate dramatic devices, clunky monologues and awkward performances. Playing up the humour, the company drains off the social commentary, leaving only hideous caricatures which reduce women to squeaky-voiced simps and men to one-track Neanderthals. You'll leave needing a stiff drink.

theSpaces on the Mile @ The Radisson, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27 Aug, 1.00pm (1.50pm), £5.00 – £6.00, fpp 287. [df]

tw rating 1/5

### Amy, Fate and Me - Free

Laughing Horse Free Festival/Sandra Risser

One woman, two chairs and a bagful of cigarettes are all that is needed to take the audience on a journey through the bleakest parts of the American countryside and Risser's characters' damaged pasts. Slipping into character eerily convincingly, the actress blurs the lines between autobiography and fiction enough to keep the audience guessing how much came from her own experience and how much was invented. The storyline was a little too fateful for me, slipping into cliché at times and with a speedy, unconvincing tie-up at the end. Risser's lilting American accent was charming to listen to, however, and her show was a welcome piece of theatre in an area of the Fringe often dominated by comics.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 5 - 29 Aug, 4.15pm (5.15pm), free, fpp 225. [es]

tw rating 3/5

## Deathwish

The Rep Theatre Company

This new play, written and directed by Jack Fookes, deals with the fraught subject of euthanasia. A star rugby player is injured, resulting in quadriplegia and a difficult decision. The company of young actors deals quite sensitively with the difficult subject, portraying characters and situations light years away from their life experiences. Parts of the show are very engagingly played, with some well-rehearsed, rather compelling physical sequences. Others lag a little, with a long, static scene of the rugby player's list of his tribulations somewhat belabouring the point. A digression into how euthanasia compares to abortion or being brain dead is treated too broadly and too briefly to enhance the script. Overall however, this challenging choice is well handled.

C soco, 22 - 30 Aug, 1.30pm (2.30pm), £6.50 – £9.50, fpp 242. [ve]

tw rating 3/5

## Departures

360 Theatre Company

John Godber's comedy drama 'Departures' offers the audience a view of fragments of relationships as they develop in the lounges of different airports. The real protagonist is the lounge itself, where the characters reflect on their lives and the possibility of changing them, while waiting for their flights. Different kinds of relationships are explored, such as Jim's attraction to the much younger Zoe, his unsatisfying marriage and his daughter's relationship with an older pilot. The very young cast deliver varying performances in terms of credibility, among which Becky Warwick, who plays Jim's wife, stands out. Although at times this production truly engages the audience, it could benefit from a bit more dynamism, as the limited space of the lounge can be boring. theSpaces on the Mile @ The Radisson, 22 - 27 Aug, 11.30am (1.00pm), £3.00 – £5.00, fpp 243. [clm]

tw rating 3/5

## Diary Of A Welshcake (Reboot)

Ripley Theatre Company

The Welsh national anthem starts playing and Gregory Ashton offers a plate of Welsh cakes to the audience: it's only the promising start to an even better play. 'Diary of a Welshcake' is a one-man show about understanding one's identity through travelling and relationships. Welshman Ralph moves to Hong Kong to write the big Welsh novel; there he will accomplish much more, including his first heterosexual relationship. The show features some funny, non-scary interaction with the audience, who are, for example, asked to throw candy on stage. Ashton offers a brilliant, touching performance, and he takes on the role of Ralph so completely that you forget he's acting someone else's script and believe he's opening his heart to the audience.

Venue 13, 22 - 29 Aug, 2.00pm (3.00pm), £5.00 – £8.00, fpp 244. [clm]

tw rating 4/5

## The Diva Drag

Ripley Theatre

Lesley's Ross's "The Drag Diva" is a wonderful bite size piece of theatre, an intimate and moving dialogue between a dead mother and her son (a drag queen) who did not go to her funeral. Pip Minnithrope's direction is careful and precise in every detail; the essential and aesthetically fascinating set, the symmetric use of space, the simple but effective lighting,

costumes that perfectly suit the characters and extremely believable acting give depth to the relationship between the two characters. Each element of the scene seems to be the result of a weighed directing choice, whose purpose is to highlight the text and transmit its message to the audience. Half an hour of theatre "bien fait".

Venue 13, 22 – 29 Aug, 6.30 pm (7.00pm), £5.00 – £8.00, fpp 245. [ga]

tw rating 3/5

## A Dream Play

KinkyFish

Sometimes simple ideas are the most effective. Staring into the audience at the outset, grinning and mimicking, KinkyFish forge a connection that carries you through the fragmented scenes that follow: a succession of everyday memories and surreal images, small joys and tiny tragedies. The company (each dressed in a different colour) ably tackles Strindberg's nervous breakdown induced masterpiece, handling fast transitions between character, performer and story without sacrificing clarity. Bare-minimum staging leaves plenty of room for the imagination, but they're less inventive than they have the scope for, opting for uncomplicated physicality rather than taking more memorable risks. As it is, it's likely to fade as quickly as a dream – but it leaves a sense of understated satisfaction. theSpace @ Venue 45, 21 – 28 Aug (not 22), times vary, £5.00 - £8.00, fpp 247. [df]

tw rating 3/5

## Metamorphoses

Yvonne Arnaud Theatre

This youth theatre company made a daring choice picking Ovid's wonderful stories of transformation to stretch their developing talents. The tragic tales of mythological characters such as Orpheus, Echo and Narcissus allow the cast to depict grief, revenge, lust, obsessive love and even infanticide, to play mortals and immortals, living souls and dead. There is a lot packed into this show, perhaps too much, since in trying to keep pace with the action the staging became confused. However, the cast do not rush their cornucopia of material, but mostly allow themselves to commit fully and bravely to each moment. Interestingly, loss rather than metamorphosis is emphasised by the production; this lent it an aspect more human than divine and magical.

The Vault, 17 – 28 Aug (not 28), 3.45pm (4.45pm) £8.00 – £6.00, fpp 271. [dp]

tw rating 3/5

## I Wish You Love

Gambolling Arena Theatre Co

A magnificent and gripping performance from start to finish, my attention never faltered. This conversation between Edith Piaf and Marlene Dietrich reveals a friendship upon which both depend; Dietrich (Clare Chandler) is quite the "wiser, older sister", advising Piaf, on the basis of her own worldly experience, how to run her personal and professional life. Piaf (Babette Bell) tries hard to please whilst struggling with an inner anguish borne of grief which is spectacularly conveyed. Both deliver powerful renditions of their respective heroines' songs, at once engaging the audience and, cleverly, engendering an impression we were observing performances given to their Parisian public. Excellent production. Had there been a second

showing I would have willingly sat through it, 'no regrets'.

theSpaces on the Mile @ The Radisson, 23 – 28 Aug, 7.00pm, £7.00, fpp 262. [cm]

tw rating 5/5

## The Peddler's Tale

In Extremis Theater Company

A mysterious rendering of the classical concept of the fairy tale, 'The Peddler's Tale' deals with topics as diverse as homosexuality and incest, with a love spoon thrown in for good measure. Moments of the play were highly enjoyable with brief stints of good acting and a number of glimpses of comedy, but these were inconsistent and were undermined by stumbled lines. The story appeared a little jumbled and confused, whilst the ending was arguably incongruous, with a twist that seemed out of place. This combined with a generally unpolished performance, means that despite good intentions just rewards cannot be given. A play that has potential, which isn't being met yet.

The Zoo, 22 - 30 Aug, 8.15pm (9.30pm), £6.00 – £9.00, fpp278. [aa]

tw rating 2/5

## Lipstick

Roundhouse Productions

I was instantly attracted to the surreal set up, with the Daliesque Red Sofa centre stage. Unfortunately, this play, however quirky, did not live up to expectations. Jane and Archibald are getting marriage counselling from a profoundly irritating puppet named Veronica; Archibald too is deeply annoying, failing to hear anything Jane tells him in scenes that attempt to be comic, but end up being as frustrating to the audience as they are to Jane. The play trots out clichés about feminism, mother-in-laws and women discovering their sexuality, and at points seems like a badly pieced together collage of ideas. However, the character of Jane is engaging and keeps the audience at least vaguely interested throughout.

Hill Street Theatre, 22 – 30, 5.45pm (6.55pm), £7.00 – £9.00, fpp 267. [hw]

tw rating 2/5

## Potted Panto

CBBC's Dan and Jeff – Festival Highlights

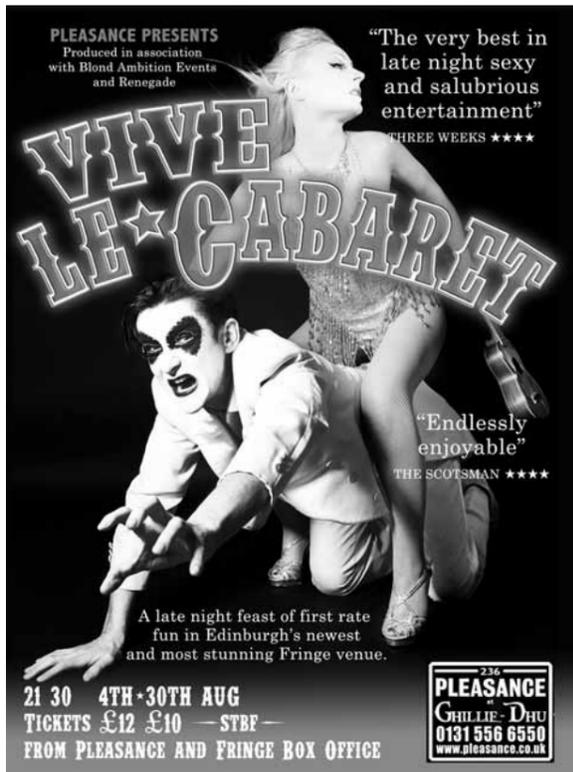
This reminded me of how much I both loathe and love panto. Dan and Jeff cram seven of the best-known and most loved pantos into a delightfully hectic seventy minutes, and make the whole experience a pleasure. Their comedy is at just the right level for it to appeal to the kids (who approved painfully loudly), while at the same time not leave the adults behind. You are led by the hand into their imaginative short course in the pantomime, get thrown sweets, water-gunned, and literally up out of your chairs in an imaginary '3d' pumpkin-come-carriage on the way to the ball. A charmingly daft joy for the whole family. Pleasance Courtyard, 7 – 29 Aug (not 18, 25), 2.50pm (4.00pm), £8.00 – £10.00, fpp 281. [mb]

tw rating 4/5

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