

ThreeWeeks IN EDINBURGH

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COMEDY

Run, Deaf Boy, Run!

Steve Day / The Stand Comedy Club
As his title would suggest, Steve Day doesn't shy away from his disability, and neither does it impair his comedy. Sporting a pair of hearing-aids, he is the first to make self-deprecating jokes about being "deaf with a little D". The show's focus is the journey of a man in training for the London Marathon. With no hint of a sob-story, Day is warm and inspiring, but honest enough to discourage people from running the 26 miles for themselves, and still prone to tripping over words every now and then. A mixture of storytelling and stand-up, the show is pleasant without being belly-laugh funny, but at least Day is comfortable enough to find humour in the size of his audience.

The Stand Comedy Club, 3 - 28 Aug (not 4, 15), 1:10pm (2:10pm), £7.00 - £8.00, fpp145, tw rating 3/5 [j]

Seymour Mace: Happypotamus

Seymour Mace / The Stand Comedy Club
Mental illness and diarrhoea are not obvious topics for a show called 'Happypotamus', but Seymour Mace takes these difficult subjects and makes us laugh. Charting Mace's struggles with depression, 'Happypotamus' covers some dark ground, but it is in these pitch-black moments that the show is at its funniest. Mace's fight with the kitchen bin and the expression of his desire not to become one of the "local characters" are razor-sharp comic moments. However, when Mace is "being silly", the set loses focus and pace, with sections of wacky drawings and humorous poems feeling like weak padding. On topic, Mace is darkly funny, but when he tries to be zany, he falls short of the mark, resulting in a distinctly mixed set.

The Stand Comedy Club II, 3 - 28 Aug (not 4, 15), times vary, £6.00 - £7.00, fpp149, tw rating 3/5 [ab]

The Antics: Premature Ejokeulation

The Antics
"Much better than the title suggested." This was the consensus as we left the theatre after watching this, er, interestingly named show. Title aside, this is a very funny group of men who seem to enjoy their improv games - standard fare a la 'Whose Line...?' and 'Mock The Week' - as much as their audience did. The funniest moment of the show came when hapless Gav was unable to guess what his team-mates were miming to him; the audience howled with laughter as his team-mates grew more and more breathless and frustrated. They're not the slickest, or the wittiest at the improv game, but this show still offers unadulterated fun from a group of fairly skilled performers.
C, 3 - 13 Aug, 4.45pm (5.35pm), £6.50 - £9.50, fpp40, tw rating 3/5 [rs]

The Helicopter

Holly Walsh
Some stand-ups rely on vulgarity and the shock factor to coax laughter out of their

audience. Not Holly Walsh. Instead, she combines original humour, personal anecdotes, and Venn diagrams to string together a hilarious narrative anyone can relate to. Detailing the true story of one epic broken elbow, complete with x-rays, she manages to comment on what it means to be a scared British woman. She jumps off a high dive, fights a Nazi, flirts with Rambo, and has the pictures to prove it. By the end of the show, I felt like I was sitting in her living-room watching her home movies. Not to miss for anyone looking for a light-hearted laugh and stories of rogue flashers.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 - 29 Aug (not 15), 6.00pm (7.00pm), £7.00 - £9.50, fpp88, tw rating 4/5 [tw]

Tim Clare: How To Be A Leader

Show + Tell / Escalator East to Edinburgh / Tilt
'How to Be a Leader' is a show with an intelligent premise, performed by an even more intelligent comedian. This seminar on leadership is multidimensional and worryingly, despite Tim explicitly highlighting the simple tools leaders employ to gain power, by the end of the show, the audience are hanging on to his every word. It's like submitting to a true leader and competing for a reward for laughing the hardest. Giving everything from tyrannical rule and assassination attempts a skewed and comedic twist, Tim's show is entertaining, fast-paced and clever, forcing the audience to remain on their toes and engaged. In addition, hilarious raps on historical female figures demonstrate Tim's skills as a wordsmith and his extensive potential.

Underbelly Cowgate, 4 - 28 Aug (not 15), 8.55pm (9.55pm), £8.00 - £10.00, fpp158, tw rating 4/5 [kc]

Transformer

With their surrealist approach to sketch comedy that seeks to move away from cheap laughs and lurid gags, 'Transformer' have produced fifty minutes of comedy that is refreshingly different. Minimally offensive, they focus on producing quick scenes with memorable personae that are genuinely funny. The return of earlier characters at just the right moments throughout the show is testament to its structural success, while their disregard for the fourth wall provides an innovative approach to the genre. It is just a shame that they lack this intensity in all their scenes. Arguably, it's forgivable as sketches move at a decent pace, allowing the audience to be quickly introduced to something different, but sadly it prevents them from being truly brilliant.

Bedlam Theatre, 5 - 27 Aug, 18:00 (18.50), £6.00 - £8.00, fpp162, tw rating 3/5 [aq]

Joel Sanders - Jokes That Got Me Kicked Out Of Tennessee

Joel Sanders / PBH's Free Fringe
Joel Sanders is almost apologetically sincere; he humbly thanks his audience about five times for coming along. Anecdotes from twenty years in the US are reeled out one by one, and, while the show has a nice flow, it contains no real structure. His best material includes thoughts on feeling a disconnect with gay men in the



SNAP OF THE DAY: 'Anton's Uncles' get physical at the Bedlam Theatre this Fringe. Photo: Kat Gollock

public eye and a humorous letter-exchange with a solicitor. Unfortunately, for all Joel's charm, the jokes are sparse, so this show feels more like that of a fairly accomplished storyteller rather than a comedian. He also has a habit of announcing his punchlines with, "Wait for it," and finishing them with, "I thought that was good." This doesn't serve him well, either.

Dragonfly, 5 - 29 Aug (not 15), 6.40pm (7.40pm), free, fpp100, tw rating 2/5 [ek]

John Robins: Lift Your Skinny Fists Like Antennas To Heaven

John Robins
The immensely likeable John Robins possesses the remarkable ability of making the awkward and outdated charming and stylish. He utters the quaint adjective "smashing" eleven times during this performance without the slightest hint of irony; it makes him exactly the sort of polite, articulate man that you'd be delighted to

introduce to your grandparents. Conversely, he's so exuberant and idiosyncratic that he'd be a tremendous late-night drinking partner. After hanging onto his every antiquated turn of phrase and laughing at his heart-warming anecdotes, I left the show wishing he were my best friend. Go and see him now before he'll be headlining at the biggest venues. You will have an absolutely smashing time, I promise.

Just The Tonic at The Caves, 4 - 28 Aug (not 17), 7.00pm (8.00pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp101, tw rating: 5/5 [fl]

Sharron Matthews Superstar: Jesus Thinks I'm Funny

Sharron Matthews
Not only is Sharron Matthews a superstar, she is a force of nature. Far from her homeland of Ontario, Canada, she has squeezed herself into something black and shiny with feathers on the shoulders,

cont>>

cont>> bringing some sparkle to our drizzly Edinburgh evenings. She talks to us about pop-culture, a little of her real life and a bit about the visitation she had which inspired her quest to become an international rock star. Bursting into song with a gorgeous cabaret voice, this comedy character is passionate and strong, if a little rambling, and doesn't shy away from sexuality or age. By the end, we're all convinced that we, too, are superstars – through the medium of song, of course.

SpaceCabaret @ 54, 5 - 28 Aug (not 21), 8:05pm (9:10pm), £10.50 - £12.50, fpp150. tw rating 4/5 [ja]

The Kingsley and I (Free Stand Up Compilation Show)

Various Special Guests and MCs Daily / Laughing Horse Free Festival

There's an element of luck involved in this show as each day a comedian and MC gets the chance to showcase their talent and pull in punters for their performances. Damian Kingsley occupies a regular spot, and though his routine is polished, it was somewhat outshone by the compère who flaunted his razor-sharp wit to hilarious effect against a heckler, leaving the audience bent over double and craving him to take over the hour-long slot. Kingsley is followed by a comedienne who, despite being incredibly ill, amused with her nonchalant style. You're unlikely to know what you're going to get as you step into the venue, but take a gamble and you might just get lucky.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 4 - 28 Aug, 10.00pm (11.00pm), free, fpp107. tw rating 3/5 [fm]

Toby - Lucky

The Invisible Dot Ltd.

One is a spoilt, vindictive Haribo-addict desperate for fame. The other is the long-suffering prop for her sister's ego. Real-life siblings Sarah and Lizzie Daykin take the old premise of performers breaking down mid-act and squander all its comic potential, pushing the boundaries of comedy by not actually being funny. Relying instead on deadpan discomfort and passive-aggressive needling, their awkward, infantile sketches are drawn out interminably as this doomed vanity project unravels into long silences and tantrums. Their admirable attempt to create believable, damaged characters misfires precisely because they never let the audience in on the joke. It's meant to be excruciating, it's meant to be amateurish; the problem is that it succeeds.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 - 29 Aug (not 15), 4.30pm (5.25pm), £8.50 - £9.50, fpp159. tw rating 1/5 [df]

Rosie's Pop Diary

Rosie Wilby

With an audience soaked to the skin cramped into a stuffy basement, Rosie really had to deliver to please her audience. And she did: her warm and bubbly personality erased all memory of the gloomy weather, engrossed as we were in this well-told story of how she came to be doing this show. A truly beautiful, though unrefined, singing voice complements her humorous tale, recounting her feelings along the way with very well-written lyrics. This show is an altogether generally lovely experience: it's a cosy acoustic concert as well as an interesting and funny account of the road to sort-of fame. As I re-entered the pouring rain, Rosie's mellow tones ran through my thoroughly dampened head.

Just The Tonic At The Tron, 4 - 28 Aug (not 15, 16), 6.20pm (7.20pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp144. tw rating 4/5 [mm]

Naz Osmanoglu: 1000% Awesome

Avalon Promotions

The prominently bearded Naz Osmanoglu bristles with confidence. Not only is he a long-standing Fringe favourite as a member of sketch trio WitTank, but he is also the nineteenth person in line to the Ottoman throne. In his brilliant debut solo hour, Naz, half repressed Englishman and half passionate Turk, ruminates on masculine idealism and bipolar identity - the confusing juxtaposition of being as likely to open the door courteously for a woman as spear the infidel in bloodthirsty conflict. The rapturous audience frequently erupt into applause during this masterfully structured performance, and I'd be disappointed if Osmanoglu wasn't nominated for "Best Newcomer" in a fortnight's time. Forget Suleiman - it's Naz who is truly magnificent.

Udderbelly's Pasture, 3 - 29 Aug, 9.15pm (10.15pm), £7.00 - £9.50, fpp124. tw rating 5/5 [jf]

Nathan Penlington: Uri And Me

Nathan Penlington's po-faced performance mixes comedy with occasional magic. More of a lecture on Uri Geller than a stand-up gig, his deeply researched project is a bizarrely riveting hour – I never thought I'd get myself so caught up in the story of Uri's life, but Penlington draws his audience in with quick cutting humour and an endearingly open persona that's enhanced by the intimacy of the venue. His tricks, though fairly standard, aren't the dull hyperbolic performances many of his peers employ, and one still has me scratching my head as to how it was done. Quickly building a great rapport with his audience, this hour with Penlington is a good way to spend a rainy afternoon.

Udderbelly's Pasture, 3 - 29 Aug (not 15), 4.10pm (5.10pm), £8.50 - £10.50, fpp124. tw rating 3/5 [fb]

EXHIBITIONS

David Mach: Precious Light

City Art Centre

Coat-hanger crucifixes, a matchstick Jesus to be set alight in September, and kitsch collages of biblical scenes form this audacious and intense exhibition of Scottish artist David Mach. The exhibition is not overtly religious but filled with social commentary; Mach's dense, large-scale and fascinating collages evoke the culture of excess and chaos of contemporary society, whilst his colossal, explosive crucifixes capture agony and drama with such startling realism. The exhibition would benefit from more wall information but it nevertheless demonstrates the diversity of Mach's practice. His London studio has even been relocated to the gallery to prepare the new, monumental collage 'The Last Supper'. For its intensity and controversy alone, this exhibition is unlike anything else in Edinburgh.

City Art Centre, 30 July - 16 October, 10.00am - 5.00pm (12.00pm - 5.00pm Sun), £5.00, fpp188. tw rating 4/5 [jb]

MUSIC

Girl With The Guitar – Free

Alison Chabloz / Laughing Horse Free Festival

Alison Chabloz, our 'Girl with the Guitar', provides a delightful hour of music. She builds a great rapport with the small audience gathered before her as she leads us on a musical journey covering the likes of internet-stalking, getting dumped, the fall of 'News of the World' and free-diving. When the staff in the café venue became too noisy, she was quick to jump in and tell them all to zip it, never once losing her composure. Through her songs and asides her personal-ity shines. Her friends might think she's crazy for her recent decision to quit the rat-race and tour the Festival circuit, but, while it might not have been financially sensible, it certainly seems to be paying off.

Laughing Horse @ Café Renroc, 5 - 28 Aug (not 14), 7.20pm (8.20pm), free, fpp206. tw rating 3/5 [mp]

THEATRE

Belleville Rendez-Vous

Fellswoop Theatre Company

Perfectly capturing the surreal look, melancholic feel and depression-era French blues sound of the original animated film, this delightful adaptation stays true to its source material without becoming its slave. The excellent ensemble transport us into the weird world of Champion the cyclist, all the while accompanied by a talented three piece band. Inventively staged, cunningly choreographed and brilliantly scored, this production dazzles with its wit and imagination despite choosing a difficult source to adapt. Although it runs a touch long-the dream dance sequences could do with trimming down and the dancers aren't quite sharp enough-this is a strong, enjoyable and intelligent production. You'll never look at bicycle wheels the same way again!

Bedlam Theatre, 8 - 20 Aug (not 14), 11.00am (12.00pm), £8.00, fpp241. tw rating 4/5 [ab]

Hydronomicon

PBH'S Free Fringe

Emcee Harlequinade is a recognisable face on Edinburgh's slam poetry circuit, even when hidden under kinky, creepy clown makeup. Here he's taking the plunge into

storytelling with an apocalyptic tale of hell and high water flooded with references to H P Lovecraft, twisted wordplay and subversive lyricism. Channelling hip-hop rhythms and tribal chants, he's impressive in full flow, conjuring images of postmodern, post-catastrophe wastelands or mocking politics and pop culture in hyperactive verbal cascades. It's held together by a subtle, sinister soundscape by regular collaborator Asthmatic Astronaut. When the beat drops out, though, the thin narrative loses its way, and the fragmentary style starts to feel schizophrenic. Although occasionally out of its depth, this is appealingly different, defiant and slick.

The Banshee Labyrinth, 6 - 27 Aug, 7.30pm (8.15pm), free, fpp270. tw rating 3/5 [df]

Mildred McManus For World Minister

Francesca Cox

If you are a girl in early adolescent - which I am not - then this show might be for you. It is performed much in the form of edited chapters of a novel, where the eponymous hero struggles with her parents, job-seeking and her love affair with sleep. While the script is witty and well-observed, its few musical interludes seem unnecessary and the whole thing feels a bit episodic. This script has strong potential, and Francesca Cox is full of ideas which she fails to fully bring to life for the duration of her rather one-paced performance. Still, this show is highly likely to appeal to anyone who is, has been, or wants to be, a teenage girl.

theSpaces on North Bridge, 5 - 20 Aug (not 7, 14), 5.10pm (6.25pm), £6.00 - £8.00, fpp281. tw rating 3/5 [sj]

One Under

PartingShot

In order to gain inspiration for 'One Under', PartingShot went onto the tube in London, handed the passengers a pen and paper, and asked them to write down what they had been thinking about before they were interrupted. The result of this experiment is something quite marvellous - a play which presents four very different characters who, although strangers to each other, are forced together in the tube's intimate space. As the internal monologues of these characters unfold, we witness their deep concerns, their petty worries and, ultimately, the connections and disconnections the underground fosters. The characters are all superbly played, and the play is beautifully structured and near-perfectly pitched, offering both amusement and quiet heartbreak. A neat idea which is excellently developed and executed.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 - 29 Aug (not 15, 23), 12.45pm (1.45pm), £6.00 - £8.50, fpp286. tw rating 4/5 [lm]

Real Men Dream In Black And White

Real Men

There are many meditations on the difficulties that come with the so called time of "coming of age": some mature, others leaving many who are still passing through that phase simply having to ask the question, "were those involved born an adult?" Luckily, this show fits snugly into the former of these, as we follow four male characters discussing what it is that supposedly makes a "real man". Some of the lines feel forced, and there's a visible discomfort around the discussion of the essential ingredients for masculinity - a problematic hypothesis to say the least. Nevertheless, this is an honest look at the disaffection of youths - a strikingly relevant topic considering recent national events.

Greenside, 5 - 20 Aug (not 14), 1.55pm (2.40pm), £5.00, fpp291. tw rating 3/5 [jc]

The Little Mermaid

Jackinabox Productions

Hans Christian Anderson's classic fairytale is brought to life in this lovely little production. You're transported into the depths of the ocean with a set that twinkles and shimmers with tea lights. Whilst you might imagine a light hearted experience (thanks to Disney), this retelling is actually quite dark., and the language of the dialogue is also quite complex so this is probably not one for younger children. The cast features an ensemble of very competent young actors, although parts of the movement-based sections could have used a bit more polishing. At times it feels a bit amateur, as though perhaps Jackinabox could have tried for more of an edgy retelling; but overall this

is very enjoyable bit of theatrical escapism.

Zoo, 5 - 20 Aug, 12.40pm (1.30pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp275. tw rating 3/5 [ah]

The Moon Under The Water

Z Theatre Company

In both content and execution, this devised show makes for uneasy viewing. The content - what happens when people drink to get drunk - is not for those in search of sweetness and light. The show is not without comedy and the occasional affecting moment, but overall it fails to realise the potential of its chosen subject. The self-conscious and inconsistent production results in the show lacking focus and depth; there are too many characters and consequently too little character development - the personal narratives which should carry us through the show are never sustained. The piece merely skims the surface of the challenging issue of Britain's binge drinking and, when the humour has fallen away, leaves only the most nebulous impression of excess.

theSpace on Niddry St, 8 - 18 Aug (not 14), times vary, £3.00 - £5.00, fpp282. tw rating 2/5 [dp]

The Prodigals

Inspire

Thankfully this show was only an hour long; I would not have been able to bear it any longer. Two brothers are in the army, one drops out to pursue a career in an awful euro trance group and gets mixed up with drugs. The other stays and is angry about this and that. All the music and songs are terrible and the actor playing the father gives a spectacularly bad performances, closely followed by the rest of the cast. Despite there being an anti-drugs message and one of the characters dying of a heroin overdose, I couldn't help thinking that a bit of smack would have made the whole viewing experience slightly more endurable.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 29 Aug (not 4), 5.00pm (6.00pm), £11.00 - £15.00, fpp290. tw rating 1/5 [mp]

The Yellow Wallpaper

Amarillo Arts

Feminism or insanity? This one-woman adaptation of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's classic short story offers no easy answers. Lesley Free deftly draws the audience into her quest for selfhood as she portrays a woman who goes mad, or is driven mad by patriarchy in the form of her eminently practical husband, or is mad all along, or isn't mad but rebels against the predetermined patterns of 19th century gender constructs. Free depicts the chaos of an adult mind trapped behind nursery bars with a wide-eyed innocence that blends well with the character's enforced dependency. However, with an extremely short running time, the show cries out for an extended exploration of the wallpaper's sinister impact.

theSpaces @ Surgeons Hall, 5 - 20 Aug (not 7), 1.10pm (1.55pm), £8.00, fpp313. tw rating 3/5 [tsr]

Jamie Blake

Ravenrock Theatre Company

If you've ever had your heart stomped on by a pair of stilettos, then slept with anything that walks to try and get through the pain, this show will make you laugh and cry at the same time. This is the director's first script, and he is as skilled with language as he is with theatrics. Music, dance, comedy, and fantastic acting collide in this original tale of failed romance. The script is sharp, the vocal percussion superb, and the ever present acoustic guitarist sings sweet melodies behind Jamie Blake narrating his own love story. Both witty and compelling, you'll leave the show wondering if Mr or Mrs Right really is "the one". I may even go see it again.

Zoo Roxy, 5 - 29 Aug (odd dates only), 2.30pm - 3.30pm, £6.50 - £9.50, fpp272. tw rating 5/5 [tw]

Le Cochon Entier

Waste Of Paint Productions

A startling and extremely effective piece of physical theatre sets the tone for this extraordinarily accomplished performance from Waste of Paint Productions. 'Le Cochon Entier' creates a world of abrasive violence with a masterful combination of live on stage music and puppetry. It fails to deliver on the plot, however, as at times the show moves in large blockish sections that fail to entertain or engage - but this is to be expected from a work in progress. It has all the raw edginess of the startlingly new, and the ending is utterly fulfilling as a single

smile convincingly confers and finally settles the ambiguous tone of the entire piece. An enviably talented young troupe who will no doubt go far.

Zoo Roxy, 5 - 20 Aug, 8.00pm (8.50pm), £7.50, fpp274. tw rating 4/5 [jj]

Young Pretender

Nabokov, Escalator East To Edinburgh And Hull Truck Theatre Present

Bonnie Prince Charlie, young and excitable, wants to lead a rebellion. He's going to fight to the death to beat political corruption and classist oppression. Youth-led riots, did you say? I bet Nabokov didn't think their Festival contribution would be quite so topical when they started rehearsing. Fundamentally, the acting is of a high standard; our Charlie shouts a little too much but the Withnail-and-Iesque relationship between his twitchy character and the steadfast Donald offers a warm humour to what is pretty heavy stuff, and all three cast members have confident stage presence. If the rioters of our day were as certain of their cause, there'd be trouble!

Underbelly Cowgate, 4 - 28 Aug (not 17), 4.40pm (5.40pm), £8.50 - £10.50, fpp314. tw rating 3/5 [kl]

Bones

Fifth Word Theatre

A young man: crude, raw, tough, too lazy to work, not giving a shit about his family, too stupid to fulfil his duties, and only wanting a MacDonald's Big Mac and a blow job. His fault, right? But - is it really? Actor Joe Doherty performs stunningly: when he talks, screams, whispers, you hear it; you feel the sun on your skin, hanging out with him in the park, see what he sees looking up girls' shirts. You feel your hand hit a woman's face. You feel the baby he holds, wiggling, shaking in your hands. Storytelling to perfection, the performance of this shockingly realistic script - ever more pertinent in light of the recent riots - left me agape in wide-eyed awe.

Zoo, 5 - 28 Aug (not 22), 4.10pm (4.55pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp246. tw rating 5/5 [vk]

Can't Stand Up For Falling Down

The Main Road Theatre Company

Royce Boland is a bad'un: a wife-beater, stalker and near-murderer. Thankfully, this horrific character never appears on stage. Instead, 'Can't Stand Up For Falling Down' is the story of three women whose lives have been touched and in some way ruined by this man, and their eventual revenge. It's a lyrical - though somewhat slow - play told through three interlocking monologues, working its effects through the rich Yorkshire dialect of playwright Richard Cameron. Unfortunately, the play is slowed further by a number set changes which interrupt the action seemingly unnecessarily. The cast, however, act with conviction and carry the play on their three excellent performances which are only slightly spoiled by what must be the least soundproofed venue in Edinburgh.

Greenside, 5 - 27 Aug (not 14, 21), 5.20pm (6.35pm) £5.00 - £7.00, fpp247. tw rating 3/5 [nw]



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