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Jason John Whitehead
letters from mindy

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underbelly.co.uk | 3-28 August 2011 (not 16) | dairy room

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The Melody Blog
a modern musical

★★★★★
FRINGE REVIEW

ZOO ROXY

COMEDY

Thom Tuck Goes Straight To DVD

Turlygod

'Straight-to-DVD' Disney movies: it's an unusual topic for a young, male performer, but dealt with as Thom Tuck does - with intelligence, irony and additional levels of impassioned annoyance and tragicomedy - they make for an inspired and hugely entertaining show. Thom, from successful comedy group 'The Penny Dreadfuls,' demonstrates his pedigree in character acting but also that he has the charm and winning comic ability to go solo. Referencing the many times he has been left heartbroken, Thom draws subtle parallels between how Disney has let him down and the reality that life itself is not how Walt would have intended, allowing for an endearing show that has the audience laughing in agreement, despite perhaps not comprehending every Disney reference.

Pleasance Dome, 3 - 28 Aug (not 21), 20.10pm (21.10pm), £8.00 - £10.00, fpp158. tw rating 4/5 [kc]

James Dowdeswell: Doofus

James Dowdeswell/The Stand Comedy Club

Before James Dowdeswell takes to the stage, someone comes round with free nuts. "James' sister owns a nut company," he explains, offering samples to the audience. It's an odd way to commence, but once Dowdeswell starts talking, it begins to make perfect sense: within ten minutes, the affable comic manages to make the audience feel like old and trusted friends. It's a style of comedy absolutely perfect for this small room: gently funny anecdotes are endearingly addressed directly to audience members, giving the show an intimate feel, as though we've all just met down the pub. Chatty and cheerful, it's great fun throughout, and unlike real pub sessions, nobody gets drunk and weepy.

The Stand Comedy Club III & IV, 5 - 28 Aug (not 15), 4.45pm (5.45pm), £5.00 - £8.00, fpp94. tw rating 4/5 [eb]

Pockets of Suspense

Relax, Eat And Breathe / Laughing Horse Free Festival

'Pockets of Suspense' is a fitting title for this show, as the denouement of each sketch routinely holds an amusing, yet often morbid, surprise. The two performers, who proved very amiable indeed, delightfully enacted eighteen short sketches, covering topics like family oddities, an overly inept detective, or strange encounters between friends. The performance space was small, and the props non-existent, but the actors still managed to pull off an entirely convincing show. It must be admitted, however, that the macabre punchlines and, at times, macabre revolving references, were not to everyone's liking. Nevertheless, 'Pockets of Suspense' proved entertaining for most of those who stayed for the full forty-five minutes. Time well spent indeed.

Laughing @ Espionage, 8 - 27 Aug, 1.35pm (2.20pm), free, fpp135. tw rating 4/5 [ma]

Kieran And The Joes: Teampowered

Kieran And The Joes

This entertaining and frivolous sketch show, masquerading as an informative and serious lifestyle seminar, promised to improve all audience members' personalities beyond recognition in only 60 minutes. Our charismatic leaders proudly guaranteed that they would transform the meek and estranged into a polished team of confident winners without obstacles or bickering - but how wrong they were. The trio's increasingly dysfunctional training exercises, featuring the least romantic marriage proposal imaginable and a birthday celebration that suddenly turned torturous, were consistently pleasurable to watch and participate in. Several provoked fits of laughter among my new-found colleagues, but, aside from a moment of brilliant confusion involving 'Jurassic Park' and the Second World War, there wasn't an outstanding set-piece that merited a four-star review.

Just The Tonic At The Store, 4 - 28 Aug (not 16), 1.20pm (2.20pm), £7.00 - £8.50, fpp105. tw rating: 3/5 [jf]

Richard Dawkins Does Not Exist, And We Can Prove It

Mark Quinn and Charlotte Young / PBH's Free Fringe

"We would like to stress - this is not a comedy show featuring maths. It is a maths show that occasionally features comedy". It's a fair warning: this is not a comedy in the conventional sense. In fact, despite its witty, mass appeal title, this is a show that could only possibly be convinced as comic if you have a good grasp of maths and maybe physics, but I wouldn't know. There were 'knock, knock' jokes to prove mathematical terms - or was it theorems? - and flip charts and equation heavy punch lines. If $\cos + \sin(\pi) = 1$ is your idea of a good premise for a double entendre, then run for a ticket - the show was packed out. If not, give this a miss.

The Canons' Gait, 6 - 28 Aug (not 16, 23), 3.40pm (4.40pm), free, fpp140. tw rating 2/5 [jj]

The Midnight Hour

PBH's Free Fringe

Housing London's Soho Comedy Club, the warm mahogany design of the Canon's Gait pub provides an ideal venue for some chilled out, late night comedy. Unfolding in the throes of a convivial underground bunker, the gig offers fresh guests every show, compered by the wonderfully inured circuit veteran Kate Smurthwaite. Highlights included some light news probing from David Mulholland, which fed sharply into Kiwi Benjamin Crellin's set on British idiosyncrasies and New Zealand lifestyle. Though a little slow at times, and perhaps missing the intimacy which a venue such as The Stand affords, the comics flirted with the audience's boundaries before rounding the night off with style, whoops and just enough cheers - not to forget the beers! The Canons' Gait, 5 - 29 Aug (not 6, 7, 14, 21, 28), 11.59pm (1.00am), free, fpp119. tw 3/5 [aj]



SNAP OF THE DAY: Twisted cabaret takes over the Voodoo Rooms at the Free Fringe, it's 'Kabarett: Alternative Variety'. Photo: Richard Dyson

Frisky And Mannish: Pop Centre Plus

Phil McIntyre Entertainments By Arrangement With United Agents

Rihanna's chains and whips aren't nearly as exciting as this year's F&M show. Poking fun at pop seems to be a recurring theme of this year's fringe, with shows like 'Dead Cat Bounce' and 'HitComet'. More than making pop culture references, this double-act get to the heart of the problems of today's Top 40, highlighting trends of artists who sell themselves as original, but who are actually just recycling chord progressions. They reach out to a range of musical generations, with numbers like Rihanna's 'Rude Boy' in the style of the Bee Gees, and an anthology of Madonna. The audience participation could afford to be more original, but talent is in the air and I like the sound of it.

Udderbelly's Pasture, 3 - 28 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 9.30pm (10.30pm), £10.50 - £14.00, fpp80. tw rating 4/5 [cid]

Phill Jupitus Quartet - 'Made Up'

Gilded Balloon

Phill Jupitus leads this joyfully funny and antagonistic set of improvised comedy, where the performers compete and challenge each other to even greater heights, egged on by an audience that is soon engrossed in their crazy onstage games. The most surreal of their wonderfully madcap collection of sketches is when each one takes the voice of another, which essentially just results in Phill Jupitus being forced to dance "the dance of love" every time his character is voiced. Despite taking a while to get going, this is brilliant improvised comedy that soon has the audience completely enthralled, as a long sketch about an Icelandic poet hit the comedic heights that only the best can reach.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 5 - 28 Aug (not 9, 16, 23, 26), 3.30pm (4.30pm), £11.00 - £14.00, fpp133. tw rating 4/5 [sj]

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Bristol Revunions: National Friends

Bristol Revunions

This limp and uninspiring sketch show by five undergraduates from the University of Bristol contained fewer than Severn amusing jokes. Unfortunately, despite generally respectable performances and some convincing impressions, the group were hindered by eccentric material that was disappointing at best. As well as downgrading their venue from the Pleasance Courtyard to The Store this year, they appeared to have forgotten how to compose memorable punch lines; if I hadn't listed the scenarios in turn, I would have struggled to remember them after I'd left. It appeared as though they'd exhausted their creative energies on the gently cerebral country-naming skit, which was the single saving grace in this otherwise rambling and unfocussed travesty. Consider outsourcing the writing next time, Bristol.

Just The Tonic At The Store, 4 – 28 Aug (not 16), 3.40pm (4.40pm), £6.50 - £8.50, fpp52.
tw rating: 2/5 [jf]

Josh Widdicombe: If This Show Saves One Life

Off The Kerb Productions

The constantly bemused Josh Widdicombe - a young man more tightly wound than his curly mop of blond hair - knows how to write a fantastic stand-up routine. Hysteria-inducing jokes arrive in lightning quick succession during this frighteningly impressive debut hour, with only momentary respite for the audience to regain composure before another torrent of amusement strikes. A natural raconteur, Widdicombe's exasperated diatribes on life's petty irritations are never childish or self-indulgent, but mature and concerning subjects that punters can appreciate regardless of age or gender. This everyman quality makes him a strong contender to headline corporate arenas in the future – ask master comedian Rhod Gilbert, who must've noticed his crown resting uneasily as he watched the prodigious apprentice in action.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 – 28 Aug (not 15), 7.15pm (8.15pm), £8.50 - £11.00, fpp102.
tw rating: 5/5 [jf]

Steve Hall's Very Still Life

Avalon Promotions

Poor Steve Hall, sensible member of madcap sketch trio 'We Are Klang': not only was his Australian wife's visa rejected during the first eight months of his marriage, leaving him alone and heartbroken in London, but he's no longer the most famous Steve Hall in the entertainment industry after that embarrassing pensioner danced into the limelight on 'Britain's Got Talent'. This bitter-sweet performance is as polished and entertaining as you'd expect from the man chosen to be Russell Howard's support act on recent stadium tours. Hall's self-deprecating anecdotes work brilliantly, with an absolutely lovely story about chatting up women via online Scrabble. Unfortunately, his risqué jokes are inappropriate and misguided; don't drop such clangers next time, Steve.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 – 29 Aug (not 15), 8.30pm (9.30pm), £7.00 - £9.50, fpp155.
tw rating: 3/5 [jf]

Amateur Transplants: Adam Kay's Smutty Songs

Live Nation

"This made me very, very happy," Stephen Fry once said. Stephen, I concur. Adam Kay, growling at the piano stool and downing a bottle of white wine, provides the most dour life-affirmation I have ever heard. His songs of smut bring joy to every grown up face in the audience: these filthy comedic gems these are definitely songs for adults. And although the genre is hardly original, Kay sings his tunes with wine-drenched, blasé, mad piano skills, and is better than almost any other comedy-musician I've ever seen. Imagine Jack Dee in a punch-up with Lady Gaga while Leonard Cohen watches ringside and you're essentially there.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 – 29 Aug, 7.00pm (8.00pm), £9.00 - £11.50, fpp38.
tw rating 4/5 [ls]

Armageddapocalypse: The Explosioning

Exploding Fist Productions

A photocopy of a photocopy is always a bit fuzzy; the same goes for a spoof of a spoof. Blockbuster action films are easy targets with their rigidly drawn stock characters – that's why they have been lampooned time and time again. Indeed, even action movie

legends have jumped on the band wagon with hits like 'Tropic Thunder', in whose footsteps 'Armageddapocalypse' so closely treads, and which, sadly, fails to generate much laughter. The acting can't be faulted, as the young cast simmer with energy and possess brilliant comic timing, and as a result, most of the audience seem to enjoy the show. However, much like a fuzzy photocopied picture, this has already been done, and the script is stale.

Just The Tonic at The Caves, 4 – 28 Aug (not 17), 10.00pm (11.00pm), £7.50 - £9.50, fpp40.
tw rating 2/5 [ls]

Come Hell Or High Water This Sick World Will Know I Was Here

Gregory Akerman / Free Festival

Fame – why seek it? This is a question many performers must ask themselves during the madness of the Fringe, and it's the question at the centre of Gregory Akerman's show. Part lecture, and part autobiographical recall, Akerman takes us through the history of fame and his own personal encounter with it. His content is humorous and recalls a touch of Ricky Gervais in its dry, deadpan and occasionally cringe-worthy tone. However, much is lost in the delivery. Akerman paces constantly, mumbles and continuously reaches for his water bottle, and his set ends half an hour early. If this were not the free festival, you would definitely feel cheated. Oh wait, I still did. Although promising, Akerman is not quite there.

Laughing Horse @ Jekyll & Hyde, 13 - 28 Aug, 12.35 pm (1.35pm), free, fpp60.
tw rating 2/5 [am]

David Kelly Is Shameless – Free

David Kelly / Laughing Horse Free Festival

It's harder to be a good comedian in a small space, I reckon. The faces are right there; the reactions, the cringing, the groaning – all audible. But you would not have thought so from David Kelly's performance. Teaming up with the energetic Laura Carr, he ensured that the hour-long performance flew by. Both had moments of true originality and wit, and both handled the occasional heckles from the crowd - a hazard at any comedy gig - with ease and aplomb. Carr was personable and confiding in her anecdotal and personal quips, if occasionally rushing through her material; Kelly was a little quiet, but his understated humour was cerebral and his descriptive jokes about his Prince phase had the crowd in stitches. Shamelessly good comedy indeed.

Laughing Horse @ Meadow Bar, 4 – 28 Aug (not 15, 22), 21.00 (10.00pm), free, fpp64.
tw rating 4/5 [at]

Ford And Akram: Humdinger

Live Nation

Louise Ford is a bum-bag wearing 'slow romantic'; Yasmine Akram decided she was too beautiful to live in Ireland any longer. Together they make a pretty dysfunctional team. Here they look back at the various escapades that have strained their relationship, including bar mitzvahs, mime school and encounters with Colin Farrell. This show is only gently humorous and rarely riotously funny; at times the pace seems to drag, feeling too scripted and forced. That said, there is a lot of potential in this show and parts of it are very funny. Overall, it's a perfectly good way to spend an hour, but not what you'd call a stand-out success.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 – 29 Aug (not 15), 3.30pm (4.25pm), £7.00 - £9.50, fpp76.
tw rating 3/5 [km]

Idiots Of Ants

Pleasance

Idiots of Ants are very, very pleased with themselves. They're funny, they're there to have as much fun as the audience and, somehow, it really works for them. Their sketches strike a wonderful balance between total absurdity and clever observation, with their best being the simple construct of taking reality and changing one of its parameters - for instance, "what would the world be like if every conversation happened at gunpoint?". The funniest moments, however, are those which appear unscripted, when the members are squabbling on stage, stealing each others' lines or gratuitously blasting each other with fire extinguishers: these really make the show stand out above the competition. Their enthusiasm truly succeeds in bringing the audience to its feet.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 - 29 Aug (not 15, 22), 8.30pm (9.30pm), £9.00 - £11.50, fpp90.
tw rating 4/5 [sj]

Joe Bor: In Search Of The Six Pack

Joe Bor

Perhaps the fact that he hails from my home turf of Crouch End gave me a predisposition for liking Joe Bor. He does indeed come across as a jolly nice guy... in search of a six-pack. With the aid of some video clips and a PowerPoint presentation he talks us through the past year of his life, in which he has attempted to address his insecurities about his girlfriend's buff ex-boyfriend, 'Mitch', by growing a six-pack. The theme and resulting content of this show are pretty entertaining, keeping the audience engaged throughout, and it's complemented by some friendly interaction. There are lots of people there to interact with too, as he undoubtedly draws some of the biggest crowds at the Fringe.

Just The Tonic At The Tron, 4 - 28 Aug (not 16), 5.00pm (6.00pm), £5.00 - £8.00, fpp99.
tw rating 4/5 [efs]

Morgan & West: Crime Solving Magicians

Morgan & West

By Jove! What a sensationally satisfying sleuthing showcase this was! The Gilded Balloon finally lived up to its somewhat peculiar name by hosting this twenty-four carat gold, tremendously uplifting hour of miraculous mind-reading, which left embittered cynics and hopeless romantics alike to wander Edinburgh's windswept streets, cheerier and more dumbfounded than before. Inspired by Victorian culture, featuring tricks sharper than a Swiss army knife, tickets to watch these charmingly old-fashioned conjurers should be compulsory antidotes prescribed to every dejected performer and rain-battered spectator during the festival's bleakest moments. Even if you aren't moustachioed, infatuated with Sherlock Holmes, or dressed in an immaculate three-piece suit and cravat, your spirits will be raised immeasurably by this delightful, family-friendly show. Simply spiffing!

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 – 29 Aug (not 17), 3.30pm (4.30pm), £8.50 - £10.50, fpp121.
tw rating: 5/5 [jf]

Patrick Monahan: Hug Me I Feel Good

Vivienne Smith Management / Phil McIntyre Entertainment

Patrick Monahan is one of the most likeable and naturally funny comics on the circuit and in his show 'Hug Me I Feel Good,' his infectious enthusiasm acts like a warm embrace uniting the audience. The show is loosely based around Patrick's recent attempts at performing good deeds, but it is his extensive audience interaction that provides the most brilliant moments of the night and allows his effortless quick-wit to shine. Far from striking fear into the heart of the audience with cutting quips or scathing put-downs, Monahan's ability to riff with people of all ages means that rather than shrinking away, the audience is putty in his hands. Unadulterated and galvanising fun from a genuine and excitable comedian.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 28 Aug (not 15, 22), 8.00pm (9.00pm), £9.00 - £12.50, fpp130.
tw rating 5/5 [kc]

THEATRE

Traumatikon

Counter-Active

Traumatikon's programme name-checks eleven modernist names, with Tadeusz Kantor being the key – "Kantorian" seems to mean repetitive, grotesque, and nonlinear. We follow a restaurant's large macabre cast through tics, non-dialogue, boozy sing-a-longs and transformations. Characters take it in turns to break through routine with some absurd great change that gives both them and us a short reprieve from passive horror: a 'queen' becomes Pablo Picasso; a mute emerges as Frida Kahlo; a cheery girl channels the goddess Freya in wrath; the grim restaurant itself suddenly becomes a gory circus. Traumatikon is cruel to beauty, but if you have patience, and the stomach for masses of irony and black, it's meaty. Meat that's going green.

Summerhall, 4 - 24 Aug, 4.15pm (5.45pm) £5.00 - £8.00, fpp n/a.
tw rating: 4/5 [gl]

Belt Up's Outland

Belt Up Theatre In Association With Jethro Compton Ltd

Nestled deep amidst the borogroves of the C venue, down a rabbit hole, you'll

find 'Beltup's Outland'. If you enjoyed that sentence, you'll probably enjoy the show. 'Outland' is about the life and works of fantasy writer, Lewis Carroll. Carroll's characters, from Alice to the lesser known Sylvie and Bruno, sporadically appear alongside Carroll in this interactive show. The creative set creates an imprisoned feeling, intensifying the writing's macabre playfulness. However, the characters tend to change too frequently, thus aren't fully developed; presumably to compensate, the actors maintain an emotionally high level throughout, producing a melodramatic and slightly ridiculous atmosphere which, unfortunately, dampens the effectiveness of the production. Even so, the result is nothing short of satisfying.

C soco, 3 - 29 Aug, 8.30pm (9.30) £8.50 - 12.50, fpp241.
tw rating 3/5 [lmm]

7 Day Drunk

Bryony Kimmings / Soho Theatre / Junction Escalator East To Edinburgh

Formulated on a seven-day stint of monitored and filmed drunkenness, this part-documentary, part-drunken fantasy explores the highs and lows of alcohol use and abuse, taking the audience for a ride through this artist's inner desires and experiences with substance abuse. Bryony is completely kooky; muttering to herself, messing up the set – she would probably be annoying if she wasn't so damn cute! Women will find this absolutely hilarious, while men may squirm a little with flashbacks of drunken girlfriends. It's visually delightful: we are dazzled with sparkling costumes, soft toys, video projections and lights. In the end, Bryony provides us with some sobering statistics on alcohol, while inspiring the crowd to ascend into a euphoric celebration.

Assembly George Square, 4 - 28 Aug (not 15, 22), 8.00pm (9.00pm), £10.00 - £12.00, fpp296.
tw rating 5/5 [efs]

An Imagined History of Tango Teatro Del Parpadeo (Italy and Mexico)

As we were divided into ladies and gentlemen at entrance, I cringed inwardly. But this is a history of tango, a dance of great gender divide, so let's not be overly critical. In fact, I want to let all criticisms go, because Anna Cetti, the sole deviser and performer of this piece, is thoroughly engaging. She even managed to charm her audience into dancing. However, being lovely is not enough to make a great show; while she tickled me at times and was inventive with some of her staging, there simply wasn't enough here. Although Cetti tried to offer depth when meaning was sought, it was clumsily found. Her story of how she fell in love with fiery tango ultimately left me cold.

C aquila, 4 – 29 Aug (not 15), 4.55pm (5.55pm), £5.50 - £9.50, fpp.271.
tw rating 2/5 [ls]

Free Run

Underbelly Productions and South Bank Centre

Taking an activity which grew spontaneously in open urban space and bringing it indoors, professional runners 3Run put on an enjoyable show despite the loss of some of the freedom and shin-shattering peril of jumping off high walls in a city centre. Leaping and clambering all around the audience, the athletic performers showcase their skills in solo stunts and ensemble routines of gymnastics and martial arts. Flashy, flickering video projections and a token plot involving some robot ninjas serve to change the pace, delighting younger elements of the 'all ages' audience but merely seeming distracting to the rest of us. It's unnecessary, too, because despite the restrictions of the space, their sheer joyful physicality is impressive in itself.

Udderbelly's Pasture, 3 – 15, 17 – 21, 23 – 29 Aug, 6.20 pm (7.20 pm), £10.50 - £17.00, fpp264.
tw rating 3/5 [df]

Generation 9/11: So Far/So Close

Chris Wolfe

As the lights come up on 'Generation 9/11', Chris Wolfe's one-man play about the fall of the Twin Towers, he fixes the audience with a cold stare. "Where were you then?" he asks, half-accusing, half-curious. It's typical of the way this fascinating, innovative piece of theatre engages the audience throughout. Wolfe's ability to transform with just a change of tone is extraordinary; with the help of a few simple props – a hat, a scarf – he has a cast of at least a dozen. Though the subject might lend itself to over-seriousness, Wolfe is actually very funny, and the

audience laugh several times. It's this touch that makes 'Generation 9/11' a truly fresh and exciting experience. Unmissable.

theSpaces @ Surgeons Hall, 5 – 27 Aug (not 7, 14, 21), times vary, £6.00 - £7.00, fpp265
tw rating 5/5 [eb]

Sleeping Beauty

Another Soup Productions

I have never seen an adaptation of 'Sleeping Beauty' in which the pivotal kiss waking the Princess after a century of slumber was executed with such a lack of drama and conviction. This lack was symptomatic of the whole show; coherent emotional interpretation of the Brothers Grimm story was near to non-existent, with line delivery either stilted and underpowered or rushed and hammy. The production suffered from a glut of ideas: the lovely puppets were lost among a mish-mash of theatrical styles, and the cast's unnecessary skittering about the stage was a real distraction. Fundamentally, the problem was the bad acting, for which even their act of sweetly sitting children from the audience on the stage itself couldn't make amends.

theSpaces on North Bridge, 5 - 27 Aug (not 14, 21), 4.10pm (4.55pm), £5.50 - £7.50, £24.00 F, fpp 298.
tw rating 1/5 [dp]

The Caroll Myth

Schmucks Theatre Company

A logician one moment and lacking any logic the next, Charles Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, is forced to sit back and watch his imagination literally run wild, desperately endeavouring to revive the adventures of 'Alice in Wonderland'. Faced with critique for his "nonsensical" writing and deprived of his eleven-year-old muse, it proves harder and harder for Dodgson to tame his imaginary characters or ignore the detrimental consequence they are having on his professional life. Superbly enacted by the entire cast, 'The Caroll Myth' provides an enchanting exploration of the fantastical mindset of one of literature's most renowned authors. Enhanced by mystical music, riveting rhymes and the captivating lobster quadrille, this performance was nothing short of five stars.

Sweet Grassmarket, 4 – 28 Aug, 7.10pm (8.25pm), £8.00 - £10.00, fpp247.
tw rating 5/5 [ma]

The Girl Who Thought She Was Irish

Biddy O'Loughlin

Fringe performers are all "egomaniacs with low self-esteem". At least, that's how this performer describes herself and her contemporaries. As the title implies, despite her name (Biddy O'Loughlin), she is in no way Irish, and in this show, she tells her story with straight-faced obscenities and hilariously dry humour. After feeling out of place growing up in the Australian desert with an alcoholic Catholic family and imaginary friends, Ireland (the land of faeries, Guinness and good craic) appealed to her. Combining story-telling, stand-up and beautifully sung musical interludes, this is a great performance covering a wide range of social issues – but it's definitely not for the easily offended or faint-hearted.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3 - 24 Aug (not 15 - 22), 12.45pm (1.40pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp266
tw rating 4/5 [efs]

Waterproof

How It Ended Productions

No one will fail to notice the relevance of the title to this year's Festival weather. However, this one-woman show featuring Eva Sampson as Laura, is not about rain but about the sea, and its association with adventure. A lonely aquarium employee recounts the story of her obsession with a handsome visitor. Invigorated by the bright colours of the tropical fish, Laura escapes dreary Luton by entering into a fantasy world based on Hollywood romance; a strategy which, of course, leads to disappointment. The props Laura uses to embellish her tale are unnecessary and distracting in their bizarreness, and tt times, the pace slackens. However, Sampson is wonderfully endearing, and this funny, engaging play will strike a chord with romantics.

Pleasance Dome, 3 - 28 Aug (not 16), 1.30pm (2.30pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp310.
tw rating 4/5 [lk]

ThreeWeeks Publishing, a division of UnLimited Media, Unicorn House, 221 Shoreditch High Street, London, E1 6PJ.
Printing by Smart Design & Print.

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