

ThreeWeeks EDINBURGH



CABARET

Blues And Burlesque

B 'n' B Group / Laughing Horse Free Festival

I'm glad that I am not shy nor easily scared. From the start of the show it was obvious that audience participation was a key element and, while it was funny in an old-fashioned slapstick way, it did prove uncomfortable at times. 'Blues And Burlesque' features an on-stage keyboard player providing the blues and two beautiful ladies providing the burlesque. The singing, teamed with ballet and tap, was well thought out and well executed, and the whole audience was pleasantly surprised when the keyboard player put a jazzy edge on Nirvana's classic 'Smells Like Teen Spirit', but with no real storyline the show felt a tad random and lacked purpose. This show is good, but definitely not for the faint hearted.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 3-17 Aug, 2.45pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Rachel Campbell]

Tricity Vogue's Ukulele Cabaret

Laughing Horse Free Festival

A different show each night, this ukulele extravaganza showcases both audience and performer talent. For their third year at the Fringe, Tricity Vogue and her glamorous assistants are staging the 'Uke of Edinburgh Awards,' encouraging festival-goers to compete for the chance to strum the ukulele which is situated atop Tricity's head. Proceedings started and ended with cheerful sing-a-longs of 'You are my Sunshine' and 'Hit the Road Jack' respectively, and ukes were handed to audience members, who were the judges of the night's competition. At times the songs about evil cats gave this a resemblance to an over the top Phoebe Buffay concert. Nevertheless, hilarious lyrics, beautiful vocals and witty commentary made this cheesy cabaret at its very best.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 3-26 Aug, 9.30pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

COMEDY

Marcel Lucont: Gallic Symbol

Corrie McGuire For Objective Talent

Built around a collection of Gallic stereotypes which I think were last seen on BBC 1 circa 1976, this was certainly not a show packed with ground-breaking ideas. Which was perfect. Rather than wasting time trying to add depth by expounding on some arbitrary theme, the character of Marcel Lucont instead provided a simple platform from which a series of smart and funny jokes could be delivered: a highly effective approach which had the audience laughing throughout. The deliberately shambolic tone could not hide the fact that this show had been carefully constructed, making good use of music



SNAP OF THE DAY: Maurice Roëves plays the real Lady Chatterley's Lover, Angelo Ravagli, in the new comedy 'Just A Gigolo' at Assembly George Square. Photo: Paul Collins

and video, meaning that the hour passed smoothly and easily overcame the venue's intermittent sabotage. Definitely one to see.

Underbelly Cowgate, 2-26 Aug (not 14), 10.25pm tw rating 5/5 | [Nicholas Jones]

Aaaand Now For Something Completely Improvised Racing Minds

The show's name may reference Python, but the Racing Minds team seem to take a studious interest in comedy and popular culture in general, which gives them a wide range of references to play with. This improvised show never loses momentum thanks to the abundant joy and energy from the performers. Their ability to skilfully make light of continuity errors and enjoy moments of failure is as much of a credit to their ingenuity and wit as their impressive ability to jointly construct an entirely believable world out of a few suggestions. They could probably have used the audience more than they did, but they seemed to be enjoying themselves enough up there. A quick-witted, energetic and confident show.

Laughing Horse @ Meadow Bar, 2-26 Aug, 12.00pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Roz Tuplin]

Survivor - A Broad Irish Idiot

Jon Brennan

For some the Fringe is all about catching new comedians performing their first full show and in 'Survivor - A Broad Irish Idiot' you can watch Jon Brennan do just that.

Far from being nervous, the Irish stand-up seemed unfazed, drawing the audience into his thoughts on life and relationships with his chatty, fast-paced delivery. Many find a comedian using their young children as a source for material problematic, but Brennan brought out the universal silliness of family life. The show was not perfect: sometimes the chatter, though engaging, lacked real punchlines and the cruder strands became graphic description rather than comic observation. However, for a first attempt this was really not bad and, after all, practice makes perfect.

Laughing Horse @ Finnegan's Wake, 2 - 11 Aug (not 5), 12.00pm tw rating 3/5 | [Emily Pulsford]

Diane Spencer: Exquisite Bad Taste

Diane Spencer

Dirty jokes mixed with glittery intervals. Diane Spencer's is a one-woman comedy act which brilliantly pushes the boundaries of edgy. Her bright and bubbly attitude works well with her perverse mind and dark humour as she guides her audience through a fast-paced, eccentric comedy on the trials and tribulations of being a sexually frustrated, single, red-headed woman. Her story is zany, very funny and one many can relate to. However, this is not a show for those with a sensitive mind, as I think the poor old lady next to me found out a bit too late. Sick, perverse and hilarious, Diane Spencer is definitely worth a watch, if you have the stomach for it.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 3-26 Aug, 5.00pm tw rating 4/5 | [Miranda Cannibal]

The Three Half Pints

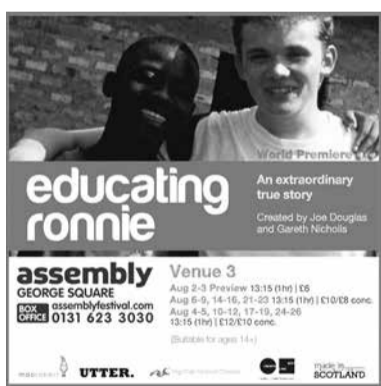
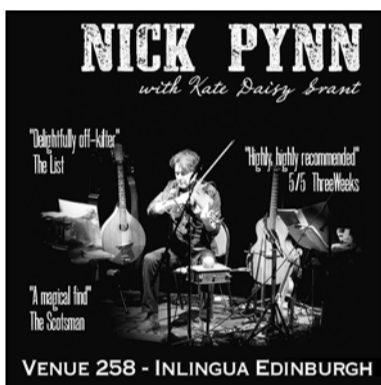
Everything goes wrong in the eccentrically posh world of The Three Half Pints! Gleefully silly and full of surprises, three brothers - Ernie, Derrick and Dick - present a range of sharply witty and "weally, weally good" sketches. Using gentlemanly banter and embracing the use of shockingly convincing, yet delightfully hilarious, moments of stage combat, The Three Half Pints dazzle with well-executed Monty Python-esque slapstick humour. Richard Frank's adorably dim portrayal of Dick induces belly-aching laughs and is reminiscent of the dim-witted Frank Spencer from 'Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em'. This show is sure to captivate you - it is refreshing to see such brilliant and young talent in the Festival.

Laughing Horse @ Edinburgh City Football Club, 2-26 Aug (not 8, 22), 1.05pm tw rating 5/5 | [Khristine Gallagher]

Vinegar Knickers: On The Edge

Vinegar Knickers
With little research done into the show, when I first heard of Vinegar Knickers I thought of some outlandish, crazy, purposefully over-the-top show; which is exactly what I got. What I did not expect was how amazingly well this would be done and how much I would be laughing out loud. Performing various skits, loosely based around a laundrette, the girls carry out the perfect mix of kookiness, craziness and raw bacon. Breaking out into dance, rap or pseudo-Danish there's nothing Harriet, Sam and Katie

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cont> can't make absolutely side-splittingly funny. Each character is hilarious, each skit perfectly written and every joke entertaining. The best bit of silliness I've seen in a long time.

Just the Tonic At The Caves, 3 - 26 Aug, 2.40pm
tw rating 5/5 | [Miranda Cannibal]

Anthony King: Songs Of Love And Death

A comedy act based around a man and his guitar, with songs of love, hate, obsession and pet mutilation. Anthony King is an engaging character, who looks at the darker sides of love, death and everything in between. King's jokes mostly come off as awkward and not very funny, his singing can be sketchy and the show lacks any real direction, making it seem quite forcefully kooky. However, this is not to take away from some of the more positive aspects of the act. The songs are imaginative, catchy and funny, in many ways saving the show. When the jokes are carried out well they're hilarious, it's just a shame these moments are so few and far between.

Just The Tonic At The Caves, 3-26 Aug, 1.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Miranda Cannibal]

Sean Hegarty and Tom O'Mahoney Live - Free

Did someone pull these guys off the street? It's easy to imagine after watching Irish boys Sean Hegarty and Tom O'Mahoney struggle to get through an hour of stand-up comedy. Hegarty seemed as if he hadn't prepared enough material, struggling after twenty minutes into a half hour set. O'Mahoney pulled off his routine with confidence and ease, but the jokes were only almost funny, never getting more than a few chuckles out of the audience. The only reason neither completely died on their backsides was because both were pretty likeable, and their charisma saved them from having a completely dismal show. Sadly for these guys, likeability does not a comedy show make, and comedy was mostly lacking here.

Captain Taylor's Coffee House, 3-26 Aug, 3.45pm
tw rating 2/5 | [Patricia-Ann Young]

The Good, The Bad and The Irish!

Michael Porter/Free Festival

Another batch of Irish comedians has made for Edinburgh to showcase their craic-inducing talents. Gary Lynch was an excellent compère, engaging and drawing in the audience, whilst the comedians themselves were all experienced and confident in their material, making for an easy-going and highly enjoyable evening. The topics ranged wildly, from the conception of aftershave to the inadvisability of taking Facebook out of the virtual sphere, yet a high level of energy was maintained throughout. Unfortunately, the headline act, Michael Porter, strayed a bit too far into uncomfortable territory and seemed out of touch with his audience, which made for an awkward end-note. Nevertheless, it was good fun, with a bit of bad taste, and definitely all-Irish.

Laughing Horse @ Jekyll and Hyde, 2-26 Aug (not 16), 10.45pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Jessamine McHugh]

Heroes Of Alternative Fringe

Greatest Show On The Fringe...

We were warned at the beginning, "anything could happen", and they were right. This show is an attempt to recreate the spirit of the original Fringe through non-conformist comedy. Unfortunately too often spirits are drained and nobody laughs. It depends on long periods of audience interaction, which often means insults and members of the crowd leaving. Too much time is filled with awkward silences and the jokes are too few or too poor to recover. Nonetheless, some talent shines through, leaving you laughing out loud. Master of Ceremonies Bob Slayer in particular manages to deliver a manic performance that adds some of the show's only real humour. So if you are looking for something fun and alternative, try somewhere different.

The Hive, 3-27 Aug, times vary.
tw rating 2/5 | [Conor Riordan]

Lewis Schaffer: No YOU Shut Up!

Lewis Schaffer is Free until Famous

It is sometimes with some scepticism that I approach a free act at the Fringe, expecting an inexperienced teenager trying their hand at dismal stand-up or something woefully acted with low production values. Lewis Schaffer surprised and delighted me by surpassing my low expectations. Quick, slick and, most importantly, very funny, Schaffer violates all stand-up rules (even, at one point, sitting down), but a man of his energy and charisma could make anything funny. His steady rapport with the audience is comfortable, and he somehow manages to flirt, kiss and racially abuse without anyone really minding. This unfailingly affable man can get away with anything - go and see him, it can only be worth it.

Alternative Fringe @ The Hive, 2-26 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 4.45pm. Also at Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, same dates, 8.15pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Alexandra Payne]

101 Comedy Club - Free

Laughing Horse Free Festival

There are times when the direction this show takes is confusing or even non-existent. This, however, seems to be the point: it's organised comedic chaos. The comedians bring a dark and flippant sense of humour to the stage and, with the Master of Ceremonies being a ginger Australian koala bear playing the mandolin and serenading (shouting at) members of the audience, this show may not be for the faint-hearted. But with acts changing every ten minutes the tempo and confusion is kept high, which is all part of the fun and helps to keep the audience involved. Matt Wills, Ian Miller and Tony Harris deserve credit for putting together a pandemonic production that is funny, fast and free.

Meadow Bar, 3-26 Aug, 7.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Conor Riordan]

Aaaaaaaargh! It's The Monster Stand-Up Show- Free

Monster Comedy

Closing the show, loveable compère Harriet Dyer put it best by saying "there is something here for everyone". The stand-up variety show features four new comics each night, with yesterday's line-up including Scott Adams, Aaron Twitcher, Jay Handley and Masai Graham. Admittedly some of the comedians were mediocre and the air in the room turned a tad awkward as the 'dark' line was overstepped, but luckily the delightful compère made up for this. It was refreshing to see such a vibrant young woman host an all-male stand up-show; Dyer made the audience feel at home and managed to wow the crowd by playing 'guess the song' with her 'Finding Nemo' whale impression.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 3-26 Aug, 8.45pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Emma Obank]

The Bob Blackman Appreciation Society Presents - Free

Bob Blackman Appreciation

Society / Laughing Horse Free Fringe

This is a tricky show to recommend: on the one hand, it is brilliant, so it deserves to be seen by more people. On the other, watching it in an audience of five in a dingy room above a pub actually enhances the experience. It's a risky gambit to present "crap" comedians as your onstage schtick, but luckily it pays off here. There's more than a touch of Reeves & Mortimer to this gloriously funny show; even when you think a joke has misfired, it turns out to be the set up for another joke instead. Genuinely hilarious, and better than most things you'll pay to see, my face is still sore from laughing hours afterwards.

Laughing Horse @ Meadow Bar, 3-12 Aug, 4.30pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Andrew Leask]

Angela Barnes and Matt Richardson

A stand-up double header which developed clearly into a tale of two halves

as the set wore on. 21-year-old Matt Richardson chatted with the audience during his 20 minutes with a casual and justified confidence beyond his years. His relatable material might have suffered from some teething problems, but with some editing and an increase in his slight cockiness, his 2013 debut solo show should be one for the diary. Angela Barnes' follow-up did not show the same bright promise, as she plodded through her slightly lacklustre set. Her material (single 30-something) has been covered with more verve elsewhere, and her weak moments outweighed her stronger ones. Due to his slicker and funnier delivery, Matt Richardson certainly shone as the one to watch.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 2-26 Aug (not 15), 2.30pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Sarah Macartney]

Danielle Ward - Speakeasy/ Playdead Mick Perrin for Just For Laughs Live

Any comic who opens their show by serving the audience G&Ts from a teapot is a winner in my eyes. Yet, as she proclaimed during her set, perhaps she should indeed have plied us with slightly more booze. Ward's set aimed to highlight the misogyny still present in society but, despite a very well thought-out and witty show, at times it seemed to lack coherence and the audience tried, but clearly struggled, to follow. I felt as if I was rooting for her against a crowd who were not quite as receptive as she'd hoped. I do believe this to be a show that will only gain strength as the run, and the gin, continues.

Pleasance Dome, 1-27 Aug (not 7), 8.20pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Simon Thornton]

Cheap Laughs (Are Better Than No Laughs) Eric Gudmunsen

Homely Eric Gudmunsen has successfully created a truly funny low-brow comedy show: a night of potty humour and off-colour puns, paired with quirky songs and musings. Normally a street musician, he's trying his hand at comedy, and his speciality is telling the kind of jokes your grandfather might produce around the family supper table. Gudmensen questions why people get married and why everyone is so concerned with being politically correct whilst flitting between cheesy puns and Bruce Springsteen covers, but ultimately, the show seemed to lack a solid theme. Clearly a great musician, Gudmensen should probably keep his serious songs for the streets in order to maintain the light humour of the show.

Laughing Horse @ Captain Taylor's Coffee House, 3-26 Aug, 10:30pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Ellie Willis]

MUSIC

Jane Bom-Bane

Jane Bom-Bane / Laughing Horse Free Festival Watery themes predominate in this wonderfully quirky set from Jane Bom-Bane. Accompanied by a harmonium and a ukulele, she sails through endearing stories of swimming-pool mermaids and brooding Brighton fishermen with wit and immense charm. Jane's warmth, together with her peaceful attitude, create a relaxed and intimate atmosphere from the start, and it is with ease that she draws the audience into her performance once they begin to get a feel for the music. Tributes to Albert Einstein and Edinburgh Castle Rock in particular are creative and full of surprises. Refreshing, playful and brimming with energy, this is a truly original mixed media performance that combines music, poetry, artwork, and some very nifty hat tricks.

Laughing Horse @ Finnegan's Wake, 2-25 Aug (not 5, 12, 19), 4.45pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

MUSICALS AND OPERA

Bereavement: The Musical

Cambridge University Musical Theatre Society

Bereavement is an emotive topic, so it is surprising then that 'Bereavement: The Musical' is such a listless piece. The

musical looks at six characters going through the loss of a loved one and how they react to this tragedy. The story-line is vague and the characters are generally not engaging, while the mixture of comedy and darker elements should have the potential to work, but actually makes the show feel muddled and cringe-worthy. The musical routines are performed well, with excellent vocals from the performers and good choreography, though they rarely complement the overall story. Ultimately it felt that too much had been crammed into this production, to the point where it is hard to understand what the creators are trying to convey.

C, 2-27 Aug, 7.40pm
tw rating 2/5 | [Miranda Cannibal]

THEATRE

Wrong Place, Right Time

Léonie Higgins, Lowri Evans and Sophie Willan

Three lovely ladies take us on board the Comedy Bus to a new dimension of storytelling, music, and humour. Sophie incorporates an entertaining repertoire about the old and wise women in her life, but her outfit suggests a distracting amount of cleavage, which can be off-putting at close range. Léonie and her singing provide highlights in a show also featuring her electronic voice machine and engaging storytelling. Lowri's segment is funny and witty, yet the humour is almost lost by the end and the halves of her performance seem disjointed. The ladies use props to their advantage, including photographs and funny hats for audience members to wear, so overall, the show was entertaining and the ladies were pleasurable company; it was an hour well-spent.

The Free Sisters, 2-12 Aug, 1.45pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Ana-Claudia Magaña]

Bound

Noosfeer (Belgium)

On a well lit stage in the early afternoon, three people jump into a boxcar on a freight train; what follows is an exploration of freedom and relationships. With background music from the guitar and the banjo, 'Bound' started well and seemed promising. However, the energy soon began to wane as humour gave way to cliché. This was mostly the fault of the script, which laboured ideas as opposed to suggesting them and failed to create authentic characters. Each individual performance was strong, but a lack of chemistry between the actors made the relationships unbelievable. At moments the play was thought-provoking and funny, however; enjoyable, but not life-changing.

C, 2-27 Aug, 1.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [India Doyle]

Formby

Salida Productions

A good actor doesn't need much in the way of set or props. Ewan Wardrop doesn't even need any co-actors. 'Formby' is a one man play about George Formby's rise to success (remember him 'Cleaning Windows?') and the people he meets along the way. However, all these people are played by the one man: using the likes of a pipe, a feather boa or even simply a tilt of a hat, Wardrop slickly and seamlessly morphs from one strikingly different person to another. Even while playing a ukulele his facial expressions mesmerise his audience and keep them locked into the characters' world. A simple set, a simple plot and simple characterisation, beautifully executed.

Assembly George Square 3-27 Aug (not 13, 21) 4.45pm
tw rating 5/5 | [Rachel Campbell]

Someone Who'll Watch Over Me

New Celts Productions with Inkwell Productions

In this captivating theatrical production about insanity, religion, and the inexplicable nature of war, three men are kidnapped in Lebanon. All three actors were spectacular in their performance, yet the highlight was Irish prisoner Edward

(played by Christopher Cubitt), who moved the audience to tears and laughter as he conveyed raw, honest emotion. The American character's accent was messy and unconvincing, but this was a well-directed revival of Frank McGuinness's 1992 script. The play incorporates a good mix of humour whilst retaining its dramatic qualities; at times, it was unclear whether the audience should laugh or cry, or both. The set design was simplistic, keeping our attention on the actors and story.

Ceca, 4-26 Aug (even dates only), 4.50pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Ana-Claudia Magaña]

On The Harmful Effects Of Tobacco/Can Cause Death

Esra Taf Theatre

Tragic combines with comic in this double-bill of Chekhov's short play and an accompanying monologue by Alison Carr. Gordon Russell gives a staggering performance as both Chekhov's disillusioned and world-weary Nyukhin, who abandons a lecture on tobacco to share his marital miseries, and disappointed wife Popova giving his eulogy after his death. It's not the most cheerful of subject matters, but Russell infuses each monologue with hints of dark comedy and witty asides that lift this otherwise contemplative and serious production. Intriguing, poignant and touching, this vignette into the woes of an outwardly-happy couple is searingly tragic, and the flaws of both parties are explored (by the other) until the audience isn't really sure who to blame.

Caquila, 3-27 Aug, 7.10pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Alexandra Payne]

A Brief History Of Scotland...We Done Loads

DBS Productions

In 'A Brief History Of Scotland...We Done Loads', Sean Connery is God, Robert Burns is a drunk and Mel Gibson knows nothing about Scotland. The show offers some laugh out loud material through a rediscovery of Scotland's history, culture and place in the world. Most of the best jokes, however, are followed by a monologue from Sean Connery's voice in periods of darkness, which breaks the rhythm of the show.The more the production progresses, the better it gets, and real humour emerges from their ability to make fun of their home nation. The most suitable description to give this show would be: "it's nae bad, ken?"
Sweet Grassmarket, 3-24 Aug, 5.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Conor Riordan]

BOX

Ninesidedbox

B O X is a play about two highly-strung women, confined to their apartment by fears of the outside world, who receive mysterious red boxes. The dialogue is suitably tense between the two main characters, though the constant bickering is sometimes overwhelming; fortunately, Adriana Colón and Margaret Kerr are both endearing in their roles, whilst the staging and costumes demonstrate excellent attention to detail. The predominantly red, white and blue design and the characters' obsession with health and beauty regimes suggests that there may be an interesting commentary on Western womanhood somewhere within this unusual piece, yet it is certainly not emphasised. A play about security: how comfortable would you feel stepping out of your routine?

C nova, 2 - 26 Aug, 12.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Beth Dawson]

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