

# ThreeWeeks EDINBURGH



## COMEDY

### A Good Catholic Boy Massimo

Extremely loud and incredibly close is undeniably the best way to describe the "three levels of comedy" that Italian/Canadian Massimo takes his audience through. Happily living up to every Italian stereotype known to man, Massimo explains how he deals with being a "Jesus man" and a "hardcore" comedian. Massimo's zest and passion can occasionally become excessive. However, his promising cultural diatribes and highly amusing personal anecdotes will certainly come to yield further rewards in the laughter stakes. Finishing with a dark and intelligent insight into how Hitler may have initially been treated as a stand-up, Massimo competently demonstrates that he can be both physical and cerebral at once.

Laughing Horse @ The Phoenix, 3-26 Aug, 8.15pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Christopher Rumbles]

### Who is Nish Kumar?

Nish Kumar

Combining sharp wit and crushing self-deprecation, Nish Kumar's 'Who is Nish Kumar' is one of the Fringe's better alternative stand-up shows. Energetic and enthusiastic, Kumar's first solo performance at the Fringe is a success, as the pessimistic comic shines a light on the humours of daily life as a British Indian. From letting down his parents who want a doctor for a son, to apologising to a racist man in the street, Nish's blend of pride in his Indian roots and a very British upbringing are augmented by excellent writing and a charming demeanour. Despite a packed first show, Nish's well-rehearsed comedy didn't create as many laugh-out-loud moments as he would have hoped, instead leaving the audience grinning throughout.

Underbelly Bristo Square, 3-27 Aug, 8.20pm

tw rating 4/5 | [James Valentine]

### Jim Jefferies: Fully functional Get Comedy

Jim Jefferies' stand-up is deeply offensive to almost every category of human-being. He's quite clear that we shouldn't be offended by his material, however, because we should have seen his stuff before, and therefore "know what we were in for" - lots of jokes that are offensive on many different levels. "This is not a show you come and see on a whim", he tells the audience and I couldn't agree more. Don't see this if you're easily offended. In fact, make a point of seeing this show if you enjoy offensive jokes (they probably won't be at your expense if you're a white, heterosexual male who isn't American or Christian). However, despite all of that, I have to say... he really is quite funny.

Assembly Hall, 3-26 Aug, 9.00pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Olivia Lyth]



## SNAP OF THE DAY: The Fringe's 'Horrible Histories' can mainly be found at the Pleasance Courtyard this year. Photo: Paul Collins

### It's Not Us, It's You - Free

Laughing Horse Free Festival

It's early days at this year's festival; shows and performers are still finding their rhythm, and, bearing that in mind, "It's Not Us, It's You" shows some sign of promise. Three comedians take the "stage" in the venue known as the Yurt Locker, and Larry, the host, is engaging and funny, enough to make one think that a full hour's set from him might be preferable to what's subsequently offered here. As a whole, the comics put on a reasonably entertaining series of skits, though they do feel a bit disjointed, begin to drag, and, at times, regress into rants; a good rant has a venerable place in comedy, of course, but these don't really generate enough humour. That said, with a bit of polish, this has the potential to be an enjoyable afternoon's comedy.

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, 2-26 Aug, 2.45pm

tw rating 2/5 | [David O'Connor]

### Frenemies Daphna Baram and Peyvand Khorsandi

This original set of stand-up sees the loud and vivacious Israeli Daphna tempered by the gentle humour of Iran-born Peyvand, as the pair discuss native stereotypes and the possibility of nuclear war between their homelands. The start, however, had something of the unsteadiness of Bambi's first steps, with a ten-minute diversion showing the ease with which they could be distracted. Eventually they righted themselves, however, and the show got

progressively better (although some political knowledge is required in order to fully appreciate the material). Perhaps the back and forth between the two could be a little more lively, and the timings be a little more slick, but it has potential, and makes for a thought-provoking evening.

Laughing Horse @ The Jekyll and Hyde, 2-11 Aug, 9.20pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Jessamine McHugh]

### Xavier Toby: Binge Thinking Showdown Productions (Australia)

Xavier Toby was relaxed and welcoming; joking about the latest Olympic action as seats were filled. His show blends immature yet effective sex jokes with serious, thought provoking topics like education and the environment, and his creative use of props drew lots of laughter from the crowd. He should probably place more emphasis on serious topics, however, as that's what his act is marketed on; he explored the damaging effect of social networking upon younger generations with good humour, but when it came to the economy and the environment I felt he could have delved deeper. His best bits were spontaneous, the moments when he responded to things going wrong, or to audience reaction. See this show for a laugh and some minor stimulation, but don't expect Xavier to lead the thinking revolution.

C nova, 3-27 Aug, 6.00pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Joe Mountford-Smith]

### Jerry Bucham: Freelance Activist Rob Gilroy

A misleading poster campaign meant that it wasn't until the end of the show that I realised that 'Jerry Bucham' was a parody of an activist, rather than simply a bad political comedian. He touches upon even the most serious cause with little more than pub banter before launching into Bob Dylan-lite ditties about each subject. He riffs on ideas that sit uneasily as neither relevant, nor funny, and it soon becomes apparent that he's happier shoehorning in commonplace jokes than examining the reasons people become activists. Jerry has a likeable stage presence, providing a few laughs and hummable tunes, but his comedy struggles to be insightful or entertaining and in the end, comes across as lazy.

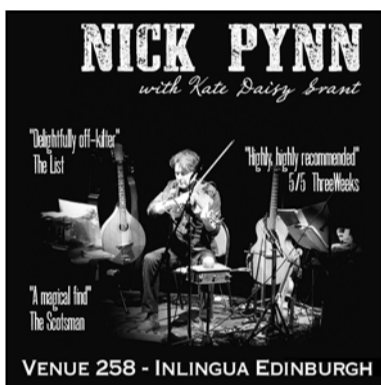
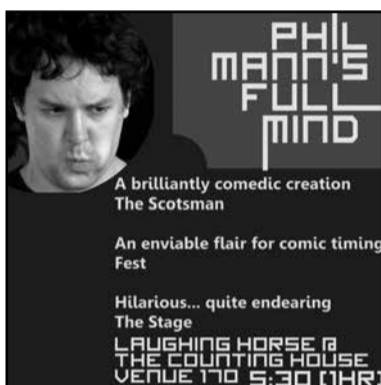
Laughing Horse @ Jekyll & Hyde, 2-26 Aug (not 12, 16), 12.00pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Jo Barrow]

### Nutters Of The British Isles: The Complete Field Guide - Free Royal Society For The Promotion Of Nutters/Free Festival

The average Fringe-goer is likely to encounter more than a few nutters on Edinburgh streets. Chris Gau and George Cassavetti set out to educate the audience in the art of spotting these rare breeds and deciphering their calls. As we are welcomed to the 'conference' with a name badge and pledge to support their Society, the performance offers a promising

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**cont**>> start. Audience interaction for the most part works well; but overall the moments of humour and witty anecdotes do not quite compensate for the majority of material, which veers steadily into the unoriginal; after the halfway mark time begins to drag. Apply the same rule here that you would to that quietly mumbling figure on the bus behind you - treat with caution; approach at your own risk.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 2-26 Aug (not 14), 2.15pm. tw rating 2/5 | [Pallavi Patel]

### Rob Deb - The Dork Knight Triumphant

#### Robin Deb / Laughing Horse Free Festival

Rob Deb is a comic book fan who should not be a comic. From the moment he arrived to his painful early exit, his attempt at stand up was excruciating. I'm no sci-fi buff, but the problem wasn't that jokes went over my head. The bloke who walked out half way through clearly felt the same - and he was wearing a Star Wars T-shirt. Deb's 'performance' consisted mainly of shouty one-upmanship over superhero references - "You don't KNOW about BATSHIT?!" - with no discernible point. Any jokes were so obvious ("I went on a date. I didn't wear this, I wore the cape") I hoped some kryptonite would emerge to shut him up. Many comedians use geekiness to their advantage. Not Deb.

Laughing Horse @ Jekyll and Hyde, 2-26 Aug (not 16), 8.15pm.

tw rating 1/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

### Danny McLoughlin - The Truth, The Half-Truth And Nothing Like The Truth

#### Phil McIntyre Management

Danny McLoughlin is a class act. The Cheshire comic is confident, easy-going and projects a comfortable stage presence as he sifts through a range of personal anecdotes to expose the truth, the half-lies and the downright fabricated. The show is packed to the brim full of thigh-slapping, cheek-aching, feel-good comedy, with brilliant observational nuggets frequently thrown into a wheezy and hysterical crowd. McLoughlin is not always scripted, occasionally interacting with the audience and always finding time for a hilarious off-the-cuff rant on matters from student culture to Pinocchio. His innate comic timing, insightful digressions and ability to think on his feet puts him alongside the most talented and genuinely funny comedians. This is a must-see show.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 8.30pm tw rating 5/5 | [Nathaniel Meyers]

### I Am Google

#### Craig Ricci Shaynak/Kingswell Productions

Google personified? If you're picturing a recluse, alone in a basement surrounded by piles of reference books, you'd be correct. Craig Ricci Shaynak invites us into his home (cookies compulsory), for a look into the life of a search engine, and the insight proves warmly humorous. The audience tries out Translate, Maps, and a voice search and hears Google relate tales of his brother Jeeves, his mate Wikipedia and his sexy new crush, all interspersed with queries from search-engine users - he works 24/7, naturally. The comedy is fun, and cheesy in the best possible way. While occasionally the internet-based puns begin to drag; Google never loses his enthusiasm. This show achieves witty comedy for computer geeks and technophobes alike.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 2 - 26 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 3.45pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Pallavi Patel]

### Upstaging: A Modern Guide to Acting For Gentlemen and Gentleladies - Free

#### Ged & Jamie/ Laughing Horse Free Festival

I thought I'd finished with formal education, but was pulled back into the world of learning by forced enrolment in Maurice Cock and Belvedere Bagg's acting school. Covering key thespian topics, such as voice, methodology and the arrival of the dreaded critic, 'Upstaging' treads a fine line between awfully funny and just

awful, and the longer the show went on, the more that line was crossed. In the guise of Cock and Bagg, Ged Cogley and Jamie McCarney did have a good onstage rapport and a great line in well-timed snideness, but this was tempered by some self-indulgent, unfunny skits and a real loss of concentration in the second half. I don't think I'll be renewing my tuition fees.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 2-26 (not 6, 13, 20), 7.15pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Holly Close]

### Phil Mann's Full Mind Phil Mann

Several festivals ago, a chance conversation in the Bedlam Theatre cafe about £2 coins set Phil Mann off down a path of comedic research, putting together mini-lectures on random subjects, with some well-timed jokes of varying quality thrown in for good measure. Every audience suggests new topics and the next crowd gets to hear his findings. Incredibly knowledgeable and charmingly inquisitive, within one show he discussed alternative medicine, woodchucks and Rolf Harris conspiracy theories, though his enthusiasm meant that he could veer alarmingly from normal delivery to manic shouting without any kind of payoff. That said, even if certain bits don't leave you rolling in the aisles, you will at least come away feeling like you've learnt something.

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 2-26 Aug, 5.30pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Holly Close]

### Kaput

#### Strut & Fret And Tom Flanagan

Like a cross between Laurel and Hardy and The Chuckle Brothers, Australian Tom Flanagan combines good ol' fashioned slapstick with silent movie stylings and impressive acrobatics for his debut solo show at the Fringe. 'Kaput' sees Flanagan as the mute projectionist at a chaotic cinema, where he struggles to complete even the simplest of tasks without calamity ensuing. There are some charming conceits and nice bits of audience participation, but I did find that some of the slapstick set pieces wore a bit thin and a few seemed to lose momentum part way through. For the most part though, Flanagan's endearing style and amazing tumbling was enough for the show to prove enjoyable for audience members both old and young.

Underbelly Bristo Square, 1-27 (not 13, 20), 3.05pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Holly Close]

## THEATRE

### Right Honourable Member FreeRange Productions

'Right Honourable Member' was exactly what I wasn't expecting from a show which blatantly uses double-entendre in its title; a brilliantly intelligent piece of satire which manages to be both fantastically funny and desperately poignant. Connie, a bright and privileged Oxbridge candidate, has just messed up the most important speech of her young life and takes the slightly unexpected decision to seek solace in the arms of a male prostitute. Brilliantly alternating moments of humour and tragedy follow, as Connie's young life unravels in front of this unsuspecting escort. All three cast members shine and audience members find themselves alternately laughing at the oblivious male brilliantly played by Matthew Hopkinson and cringing at the raw ambition and emotion of Emily Spetch's Connie.

C aquila, 3-27 Aug, 4.45pm tw rating 4/5 | [Charlotte Ryan]

### The Cagebirds New Celts Productions With 41st 92nd Theatre Company

David Campton's 'comedy of menace' transfers the stirrings of a revolution to a cage of twittering domestic birds, and in this play the planting of the seed of an idea into their feathery brains by an outsider - who brings the reality of life, with all its sensual glory, liberty, independence and danger, into their cosy

lives - makes for a fascinating piece of theatre. The cast of 'The Cagebirds' are utterly convincing in their movements and mannerisms, and performances are equally compelling as a flock and as individuals. This is a very enjoyable production, in which the themes of hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and fear of what the 'Wild One' represents: ties with the primal self, are explored with talent and vitality.

C eca, 2-26 Aug (even dates), 2.50pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

### Belt Up Theatre's The Boy James

#### Belt Up Theatre and Jethro Compton Ltd

We all squat down in a cosy bedroom late at night and tell stories to our newest bestest friend. And we play games. And our host shares some of his adventures with us, liike when they made more rings around Saturn with their footprints, or when they found the time shift toy. But things start to get a bit more serious when a girl turns up, and when James doesn't want to take us on his journey. 'The boy James' is intriguingly written and performed with appealing vulnerability, in a most delicate, sweet and touching way that makes hearts melt and eyes shiny. A bit long-winded at times, but everyone's involvement in the whole room still conjured a magical quickly-passing hour of growing-up.

C nova, 2-27 Aug, 10.45pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Veronika Kallus]

### Married with Snails Reality Theatre

Bernie and Miranda are dreamers, not doers. He is a car park attendant, she is a librarian, and together they are hopeless romantics stuck in a rut. Complete hilarity ensues as Miranda re-enacts some of her travelling dreams to an enraptured Bernie, which rekindles whatever sexual desire they have between them. Whilst their dynamic as a couple is believable, and perhaps easily related to, it's the role of Dorothy that throws things off balance in this intriguing power struggle. A musical interlude, from Robert Miller on guitar, helps the flow of the piece but frequent scene changes - before, after and during Paris - become disorientating. As for the snails, they remain confined to their box, waiting for their moment to shine.

Sweet Grassmarket, 2-17 Aug, 1.10pm tw rating 3/5 | [Lucinda Al-Zoghbi]

### Nothing is Really Difficult Theatergroep WAK

When three Dutch guys wearing shorts and braces start dad-dancing in the street to bring in the crowds, you know you're onto a winner. Nothing is Really Difficult takes place inside a life-size wooden box but the performers are nowhere to be seen. One by one, they emerge from all corners, in all manner of entrances. Loud bangs, blackouts - the phrase "expect the unexpected" has never been more applicable. This laugh out loud, grotesquely funny production will have you on the edge of your seat. Just as well that it takes place in a box - if you gave these guys a stage, goodness knows what they'd do to it.

Assembly George Square, Aug 2-6, 8-12, 15-19, 22-26, times vary.

tw rating 4/5 | [Lucinda Al-Zoghbi]

### Treasure Island SJC Productions

Skilful storytelling and enough conviction can transform an empty room into a ship, a tropical island or a cave full of treasure. It's a shame, then, that SJC never quite convince, despite the enthusiasm they bring to Stevenson's classic. An admirably faithful adaptation, their script would nevertheless benefit from tighter editing, as the production lacks the energy or ingenuity to stay afloat, repeatedly missing opportunities to enliven the familiar story. While the small ensemble play their parts to the hilt, they never quite hit the mark between serious characterisation and shiver-me-timbers, pseudo-Pugwash mugging. Relying too heavily on the audience's imagination and too little on the company's skill, this show

founders soon after it leaves the harbour.

C too, 2 - 27 Aug (not 14), 3.30pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

### 25: 13 Red, 12 Blue Middle Child Theatre

"What can you change when you wake up in the morning? Your hair!?" A crude and factual observation of common hardship and young people's difficult lives and desolate expectations in a contemporary British city: Hull. Voted the UK's worst city to live in - twice. And because it's so cheap to live there, people on benefits need less to live on, right? Conservative, Labour, LibDem - what difference does it make? Red, blue - what can you do? Adapt, and struggle, work two jobs to live, fit in, put up with it. Honestly acted, sharply written, simply put to stage! You might recognise yourself in it, or your friends, or the guy who works at your chippy."You can change everything!" Really?

C aquila, 2 - 27 Aug (not 13), 4.20pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Veronika Kallus]

### Executive Stress / Corporate Retreat

#### Applespiel (Australia)

The object of interactive theatre should be to give the audience access to a fictional world by giving them a stake in it. 'Executive Stress / Corporate Retreat' suffers because it does not manage to create a convincing fictional world at all, focusing too much on the audience themselves. There are hints of a storyline, but mostly the performers are too busy giving the audience tasks to do to actually perform convincing characters or build a narrative. In many ways it would benefit from losing the interactive aspect altogether, to let the characters and ideas emerge. As it is, the show fails to say anything coherent enough to merit audience participation.

C eca 2-13, 15-27 Aug, 1.50pm tw rating 1/5 | [Roz Tuplin]

### Tea with the Old Queen Graham Woolnough Productions

An Oxford English hour of sipping tea, gin, punch and other liberal spirits while gossiping on a most noble level. Structured around the remarkable life story of William Tallon - know as 'Backstairs Billy' - this show lets the audience witness glimpses of the normal days and delights of always-in-the-spotlight royal and political celebrities. Snippets one is likely to find in the glossy tabloids the backstairs butlers might take delight in, as they put up with yet another joke, with the suffered relatives, the lower royals, all the while protecting the table silver, and travelling from royal home to royal home. A clever and well structured script, professionally performed, an opulently furnished set (even the flat screen has a golden frame), and a noble piece of tittle-tattle. Cheers!

C Aquila, 2-27 Aug, 5.25pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Veronika Kallus]

### Crypted Negative Capability

With deeply philosophical, complex dialogue at points, playwright Freddy Syborn gives the audience numerous interesting ideas to contemplate both during and after the show (one of them providing a particularly strong opening to the performance). Unfortunately, due to the depth and breadth of the content covered, the narrative feels rushed. Alan Turing's development of computer science and his work as a code-breaker during World War Two is nodded towards but never fully developed upon. For a show which seems to endorse the notion of triumph of human devotion over cold, hard machines, the cast are all at times a little stiff and robotic. The production was smooth and clearly well-rehearsed, but this young company remain promising rather than fulfilling.

C Venues, 3-26 Aug (not 13), 2.00pm. tw rating 2/5 | [Stephanie Taylor]

### Belt Up Theatre's Outland Belt Up Theatre and Jethro Compton Ltd

Watching this show while imprisoned in a small, cushy room with three characters

who showed varying degrees of madness, I found myself in a strange position - most of the time I had no idea what was going on, but I was still enjoying it immensely. Belt Up Theatre explores Lewis Carroll's fantasy lands, characters and stories in an exciting yet intense manner, with all three actors changing roles so quickly the audience have to concentrate hard to keep up. Despite this the acting is flawless, and audience members are welcome - indeed forced - to join in, with actors jumping among them and dragging them centre stage. If it's your kind of thing, it's spectacular. If not, you'll probably feel a bit awkward.

C, 3-27 Aug, 9.05pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Lauren Houghton]

### The Hand-Me-Down People The New Theatre (University of Nottingham)

If the premise of a show is monotonous repetition and a lack of stories to tell, the hour isn't going to be riveting. Discarded figurines left with nothing but one another discuss throwing themselves off their dusty shelf, but the dark humour this suggests isn't translated successfully onto the stage. A giant music box housing a mute ballerina - who provides live keyboard accompaniment - is a nice addition to stock toy characters, but only if you can bear to hear the same tune over and over. Ideal for families, with a simple plotline and a few innocent giggles. Although, perhaps after this run Adam H. Wells' new play should be shelved, just like the abandoned toys he writes about.

C, 3-27 Aug (not 13), 4.25pm. tw rating 2/5 [Stephanie Taylor]

### Kiss Me And You Will See How Important I Am

#### Sunday's Child (Ireland)

This teen-angst play takes its title from a Sylvia Plath poem, but starts promisingly. A depressed girl talks about the insult of being medicated out of what, to a teenager, seems to be a logical expression of disgust at a world not entirely figured to her needs. Other characters are dealing with autism, homosexuality, and the temptation to have vaginoplasty. The play is occasionally insightful, and the actors frequently show virtue. The style is strange but engaging, but the piece is badly structured and as a result the real drama is not fully realised. Two short dance pieces emerge from the chaos, not unimpressive but by no means seamlessly integrated, and though the show engages it fails to satisfy.

C aquila, 3-27 Aug, 8.50pm. tw rating 2/5 | [Thom May]

### Joyced!

#### Breda Cashe

After 70 years of protection by an infamously strict estate, the works of James Joyce are out of copyright this year. 'Joyced!' threads a fresh story around a 22 year old Joyce and through the streets of Dublin in the style of his greatest work, 'Ulysses'. Katie O'Kelly gives a remarkable performance as dozens of characters, and the writing eloquently weaves rhythms and strands from Joyce's books and biography together into engaging, enlightening and dramatic theatre. The work is academically and artistically rigorous, and whilst the poetry of the language may not be as consistently astonishing as Joyce's own, it is adapted to performance brilliantly. This virtuous production proves that the end of Joyce's copyright is a beginning for Joycean theatre.

Assembly George Square, 2-26 Aug, 4.45pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Thom May]

# ThreeWeeks

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