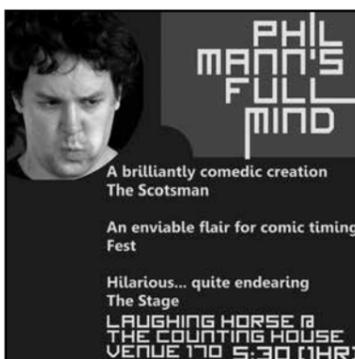


# ThreeWeeks EDINBURGH



## COMEDY

### Stewart Lee - Carpet Remnant World Stewart Lee / The Assembly Rooms

Classic Stewart Lee; alternative comedy with a kick up the arse. In this ironic combat against observational comedy, he accuses pockets of the audience of not understanding his humour and having come to admire the redecoration of the Music Hall. "Don't bring your friends, it's patronising," he says to his fans - much to their amusement - before returning the favour by explaining his jokes. Perhaps too much time was spent on his perceived battle with the audience and venue, although often that worked well, and the show built to a fantastic climax as Lee shed light on his choice of title, 'Carpet Remnant World', to applause and howls of laughter. If you love Stewart Lee you'll love this, but do try before you buy; else he probably doesn't want you there anyway.

The Assembly Rooms, 5-26 Aug, 6.05 pm.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Joe Mountford-Smith]

### Vladimir McTavish And Keir McAllister Look At The State Of Scotland

Vladimir McTavish / Keir McAllister / The Stand Comedy Club

Focusing on what modern Scotland represents, this show is a quick witted to and fro between two of Scotland's best acts on the comedy circuit. Switching from political satire to cheap shots faster than Chris Hoy round a velodrome, the pair discussed the positives, the negatives and the journey towards Scottish Independence. However, because the show focuses so much on modern Scottish issues, some of the content may sweep over the heads of those of you who are not year round residents. The fast tempo can also result in a slight loss of direction, and might engender a sense of the show having stopped, rather than finished. Still, it offers an insightful comedic look into the Scottish psyche, with all the highlander stuff removed, and lots of laughs added.

The Stand Comedy Club, 5-25 (not 13) Aug, 7.00pm.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Conor Riordan]

### Through The Looking Screen Anne Chmielewsky

Clare Presland stars as Annabel, a shy girl who just wants to find love - online. In a wonderful musical tale of attraction, love and despair in the internet age, Presland's performance is hilarious, and perfectly accompanied by Elizabeth Challenger on the piano on this occasion (different performers appear on different nights). The audience are drawn in as events unfold, and you just can't help but sympathise with Annabel's comic exploits; Anne Chmielewsky's story is funny, poignant and will strike a chord with anyone who has ever dated (and everyone who has ever slyly checked out a crush's



**SNAP OF THE DAY:** Eddie Izzard was in town earlier this week to help promote the Pleasance shows of Trevor Noah and Michael Mittermeier (also pictured), which he is co-producing. While here, he found time to do a show with Trevor and Michael, and another on his own. That one in French, naturally. Photo: Paul Collins

Facebook page). If you can't imagine being on the edge of your seat, waiting for a fictional reply to a Facebook message... think again.

Underbelly, 5 - 26 Aug, 3.35pm.  
tw rating 5/5 | [pallavi patel]

### Afternoon Delight Just The Tonic

Choosing shows from the comedy section of the Fringe Programme can be daunting. If you want to sample lots of acts before committing to anyone's full gig then 'Afternoon Delight', with its changing selection of comedy acts from Just the Tonic venues, is for you. Various sketches, characters, songs and stand-up were united in this highly enjoyable collection, which included a memorable pass-the-parcel sketch from the Leeds Tealights and spot-on musical gags from Anthony King. Naturally with such a format, the appeal of the show you happen to see is down to chance, but if every day yields acts as thoroughly entertaining as the ones I encountered, you're in for a truly delightful treat.

Just the Tonic at The Caves, 2-26 Aug (not 14), 1.15pm.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Emily Pulsford]

### The Best Of Irish Comedy

The Stand Comedy Club  
Reviewing 'The Best Of Irish Comedy' is

in some ways a futile exercise because the line-up is different each night, and anyone I praise or condemn might never return. However, I would recommend seeing this show for several reasons: firstly, you are guaranteed an intimate but lively atmosphere; secondly, Guinness is available on tap; and thirdly, there is a nice mixture between lesser-known and more established acts. My highlights on this occasion were Mary Bourke, whose very sweet exterior hid a caustic, Charlie Brooker-esque wit, and the headliner Neil Delamere, who managed to make the dull topics of balloon inflation and water conservation hysterically amusing. Certainly consider this show - you may well be Dublin over with laughter by the end. Sorry.

The Stand Comedy Club III & IV, 3 - 26 Aug, 6pm.  
tw rating 4/5 | [Joseph Fleming]

### Trevor Browne: I Think... I Am Danger Overhead

Trevor Browne - the greatest folk-rock singer of all time, who inspired The Beatles - idly decides to come out of retirement to share his musical meditations on the meaning of life. This character is hilariously brought to life with an aloof air of condescension, uninterested audience interaction and the narcissistic facial expressions of a self-confessed Rock n' Roll God. The audience was captivated by his remarkable self-importance as he recites

his underwhelming poetry and divinely inspired lyrics with a guitar, banjo and harmonica; Browne is an unquestionably talented musician and skillfully engages the audience throughout. But, although the character is a clever concept, faultlessly performed and his tunes are thoroughly enjoyable, it's not as funny as it could be.

The Gilded Balloon, 2-26 Aug (not 13), 7.00pm  
tw rating 3/5 | [Nathaniel Meyers]

### Barry Morgan's World Of Organs Strut & Fret And Liblab Music

Dare to challenge Barry Morgan's unsurpassed passion for his organ and you will undoubtedly lose. Here he presents a detailed lesson about his instrument, adding some excitement by over-dramatically demonstrating the many sound effects that his 1981 Hammond Aurora Classic can produce. The character's jewel heavy, ring clad fingers match his extravagant theatrical manner and appearance as he demonstrates his adoration for the organ through exaggerated facial expressions and cries of amazement. Although definitely comical in places (and a very good advert for the organ), this show peaked too early for me and lost its impact towards the end. Having said this, you can't fault Barry's enthusiasm for that instrument...

Underbelly, Bristo Square, 3-27 Aug, 7.20pm  
tw rating 3/5 | [Bethanie Pochin]

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## Aidan Killian: Free To Obey

Aidan Killian does not like the establishment, and has put behind him a career in the banking sector. He's endearing from the off, but his conventional image dissolves fairly rapidly, as he launches into a fast, comic tirade, and spills endless disillusionment about the modern world. He discusses money, corporate greed, politics and more, and what emerges above all else is Killian's intelligence; his grasp of the absurdity of law is staggering, as is his command of language and his passion for living free from rules. It does risk becoming a pseudo-motivational talk rather than comedy act, and whilst it will raise smiles, Killian's liberal message is more galvanising and anarchic than funny. But given what he is trying to put across, it seems unlikely that he will care.

Alternative Fringe @ The Hive, 3 - 27 Aug (not 21, 24), 6.45pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Olivia Sleet]

## BEASTS Gravel Comedy

2012 is not just the year that has brought us the Jubilympics, it is the year that has brought us 'BEASTS': a sketch show performed by a trio of three talented gentlemen, Owen Roberts, James McNicholas and Ciarán Dowd. Their show starts with a hilarious opening that would have the Royal Ballet wincing and cleverly comes full circle with its final montage of sketches. Often you will be caught laughing before they've opened their mouths, as even their facial expressions and physicality are side-splittingly funny. Some of the sketches took a while to get into, perhaps because they were a bit niche, but others offer witty observations that everyone can relate to... and may leave you wondering if you eat your biscuits the right way up.

Pleasance Courtyard, 4-27 Aug (not 14), 2.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Emma Obank]

## Gordon Southern's A Brief History Of History

### Gordon Southern

It was a momentous year, 1989. The Berlin Wall came down, and suitcases on wheels were invented. The two events probably weren't connected, but that doesn't hinder Gordon Southern. The teacher you wish you'd had (as long as you weren't relying on decent grades), he rattles through this, and virtually every other significant year in history, aided only by a projector and, occasionally, bizarrely entertaining raps. One of Southern's strengths is that he pitches his references at a broad crowd: young and old, highbrow and lowbrow are all catered for. The downside of this is that parts of his audience can get lost in places - but then, what teacher ever held an entire class's attention?

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-26 Aug (not 8), times vary.

tw rating 3/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

## Chris Dugdale's 2 Faced Deception

### Middleton Enterprises

Perhaps unsurprisingly - given that his magic show is called 2 Faced Deception - I felt like there was a lack of genuineness about Chris Dugdale. Of course magic is all just tricks, but the use of masks, videos and cameras seemed to prevent the audience from ever really connecting with the magician. What's more, possibly as a consequence of his much-discussed time in Las Vegas, Dugdale is overly slick, with little of the warmth of similar acts. This overall lack of rapport meant that even when tricks were quite impressive, the applause almost always had to be prompted. However, applause came much more easily than laughter, which is somewhat worrying for a show is listed in the comedy section.

Assembly George Square, 1-27 Aug, 6.10pm. tw rating 2/5 | [Holly Close]

## Chortle Presents: Fast Fringe Chortle

Get ready for comedy in the fast lane with this speedy showcase featuring a different line-up of twelve comedians each night. Having completely different performers on from one night to the next means that each show will never be the same, but it's obvious that organisers are trying to cover

every base of comedy at the Fringe. Its selling point, however, is also its weakness, as the whole thing seems rather rushed; both house staff and comedians seemed rather harassed, creating something of a nervous atmosphere in the room. Saying that, with only one dud in the dozen, the only real problem was that the acts would whet your appetite then cruelly let you go.

Pleasance Dome, 4-25 Aug, 6.40pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Patricia-Ann Young]

## MUSIC

### Elsa Jean McTaggart

At first glance Elsa Jean McTaggart may seem like a normal Scottish woman, but do not be fooled because she is actually a Scottish superwoman of music. Alternating between four traditional folk instruments (the pennywhistle, Scottish fiddle, silent guitar, and the squeezebox) McTaggart ignites the room with her awe-inspiring mastery and passion for music of all genres. With her all-original pieces, she takes the audience on a phenomenal musical journey through the ups and downs of her life, capturing the simple beauty of each note and magnifying it with such precision and poise, one can't help but be envious of her endless talent. McTaggart infuses jazz, folk, and even electronica into her traditional folk basis to create an absolutely magnificent show.

SpaceCabaret @ 54, 5-25 Aug, 3.30pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Ellie Willis]

## Free Fringe Music National Museum Of Scotland

The National Scottish Museum's Grand Gallery plays host to a selection of Fringe musicians throughout August, two of which crossed the Irish Sea to treat a lucky few to a Saturday afternoon of African drumming. They began beating a traditional Ghanaian rhythm on simple djembe drums, slowly introducing rare instruments, such as the asalato - made of small nuts from the Asalato tree. The jamming duo soon transformed their session into an interactive workshop, inviting spectators to play instruments, chant or dance to the beat. New sights and sounds delighted children, while doting parents looked on, recording the precious moments on iPads. The Gallery provides a gorgeous setting in which to wile away a summer afternoon - not to mention great acoustics!

Grand Gallery - National Museum of Scotland, 4-26 Aug, 12.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Christy Brown]

## MUSICALS AND OPERA

## Clinton The Musical Egdoh Theatre

A raucous, outrageous and sexual affair, 'Clinton' isn't for the faint-hearted. A striptease, sex scandal and jazzy numbers about "Vast Right Wing Conspiracy" gave an uproarious take on past American constitution. Making its debut, the show saw a near schizophrenic performance from duo Stephen Arden and John McLarnon - also performing in 'The Improvised Musical' - as straight-laced, wife loving, WJ Clinton and scandal loving, sex-crazed Billy. With spectacular performances from Paul Hodge as Kenneth Starr, "double r", and Ruthie Luff as Hillary, the "strongest teabag you'll ever know." Although lyrical timing was a slight issue during group numbers, seamless accompaniment from a live band and fast-paced, frivolous choreography from Alissa Keogh made 'Clinton' fantastic Fringe fun.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 4-27 Aug (not 14), 1.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

## Once On This Island Forth Children's Theatre

Once on this Island is set in the French Antilles in the Caribbean sea and tells the story of Ti-Moune, a peasant girl, who falls in love with a son of a rich landowner, Daniel. The islands' class divide between rich and poor means the couple's love is star-crossed. With beautiful scenery, colourful costumes and slick dancing FCT give a performance that sparkles with

energy; Song Rain stands out as vibrant chorus number and Ti-Moune's dance at a ball is uplifting as she demonstrates pride in her individuality. This amateur dramatic production was filled with family and friends and despite a few shaky notes, it was lovely to see some promising young performers take part in such a creative enterprise.

Inverleith Church Hall, 6-11 Aug, 7.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 stars | [Isobel Rogers]

## THEATRE

### The Fantasist Theatre Témoins

The Fantasist delves into the psyche of an individual who is slowly losing their grip on reality. Julia Yevnine is phenomenal as Louise, a woman with bipolar disorder, giving not only a great physical performance but also an intensely emotional one, expertly weaving through the highs and lows of Louise's illness. The puppets, brought to life by Catherine Gerrard and Julia Corrêa, are worth the ticket price alone. But while the stagecraft and performances are all excellent, it's the story that's the dud. We see Louise repeatedly create a new world for herself, but after a while that becomes incredibly tedious to watch. It's a shame, but the fantasy is only fun for the fantasist.

Underbelly Bistro Square, 5-27 Aug (not 15), 12.25pm

tw rating 2/5 | [Patricia-Ann Young]

## Antigone Emanuel Theatre Company

Jean Anouilh's version of Sophocles's Antigone was first produced under the German occupation of France, and it is during this period, transferred to the United Kingdom, that ETC's adaptation locates the action of the play. Little of the classical myth is altered but the costumes, which are sumptuous nonetheless. A violin accompaniment at the opening and close adds a melancholy beauty to events, and a scene featuring Antigone and her guard shortly before she is consigned to her fate provides a touch of light humour. This is a respectable production that makes the most of a large cast, and though it does not offer a particularly original slant on the myth, it remains strong, engaging and well performed.

The Space on the Mile, 3-4, 6-11 Aug, 1.45pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

## Bane 1, 2 & 3 Whitebone Productions

Hollywood moguls better hold on to their hats. With only one guy and a guitar player, this fantastic film noir parody does more than they can with their bloated, over-budgeted movies. Joe Bone plays every single character on stage, as well as every creature, weapon or indeed sound effect that strays into eponymous character Bruce Bane's path. Bane is a hired killer who suddenly becomes the mark, and this Tarantino meets Mel Brooks comedy perfectly captures everything that's right and wrong about those classic Hollywood thrillers. Ben Roe adds to the show by playing Spanish guitar music throughout, giving the comedy an atmospheric edge. Bane is a fantastic and innovative piece of entertainment, an absolute and complete must see.

Pleasance Dome, 4-26 Aug (Bane 1 on Tuesdays and Fridays, Bane 2 on Wednesdays and Saturdays, Bane 3 on Mondays, Thursdays and Sundays), 5.20pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Patricia-Ann Young]

## Boy In A Dress Critical Mass / The Stand Comedy Club

Part cabaret, part comedy, part autobiographical theatre: this is a show which, like its protagonist, defies categorisation. La JohnJoseph, the "boy" from the title, is a transdrogynous former New York stripper and fashion model. He is also a lapsed Catholic who grew up on a Liverpool council estate and, as a child, was mistaken for a girl in the local Woolworths. This story of his struggle with and against identity is at times extremely funny, often thought provoking, and almost always entertaining. He combines song, striptease and philosophy to clever effect. The delivery was not always perfect, and some scenes felt overly

drawn out, but overall this is an enjoyable show by an arresting and captivating performer.

The Stand Comedy Club III & IV, 2 - 26 Aug (not 13), 4.20pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

## Cancer Time Instant Reaction

On an empty stage sit two boxes, each wrapped in a bow and each holding the fate of a character inside. It's an interesting plot device in what quickly becomes an interesting and original show. This piece, which opens with brilliantly humorous scenes between work colleagues Iola and Mared, quickly takes a dark turn when one experiences a personal tragedy. As sweeping in its aims as in its appeal, the piece explores personal loss in the context of the mundane tragedy of modern society. Fantastic acting from both Alex Bull and Emily Rees ensures the audience is gripped throughout, while brilliantly comic moments contrast sharply with the underlying tragic themes. Unmissable.

Venue 13, 3-18 Aug (not 13), 1.15pm and 19-25 Aug, 2.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Charlotte Ryan]

## Carnival Of Crows Little Friday Theatre

Claustrophobic, stony and tucked away behind a thick red curtain, you couldn't find a more appropriate venue for this show than the Gothic Room at The Free Sisters. A tale of marred innocence and twisted psyches, this new script is filled with the freshness of Roald Dahl's 'Rotten Rhymes' and the nauseating monstrosity of 'Sweeney Todd'. Although the stories seemed a little disconnected at times, Molly Beth White displays an obvious gift for physical theatre and confident, but not overbearing, audience interaction. Definitely not for the easily queasy (the bolognese I had planned for dinner didn't seem so appetising by the show's conclusion), but if gothic grisliness is right up your street then make your way to the carnival...if you dare.

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, 3-24 Aug (not 4, 11, 18), 1.30pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Ciara Knowles]

## Female Gothic Dryad Productions

The forgotten ghost stories of female gothic writers such as Gaskell, Wharton and Eliot are celebrated in this intelligent production, where they are adapted and performed by Rebecca Vaughan. Director Guy Masterson does a fantastic job of creating the spooky yet subtle atmosphere in which this content thrives while clever lighting, combined with Vaughan's nuanced delivery, means the space alternates between cosy and chilling, allowing the terror of the original material to shine. A macabre masterpiece, every aspect of this production comes together perfectly, and a spectacularly enthralling performance from Vaughan lifts it to awesome heights. Ghostly, grisly and gorgeous, this show is as fantastic as it is phantasmic. Don't miss it.

Assembly George Square, 2-27 Aug (not 14), 11.45am.

tw rating 5/5 | [Alexandra Payne]

## Kaya - Dream Interpreter Kaya

"I was born under the star of change," claims Kaya, somewhat obtusely, in the admittedly visually impressive pre-roll that precedes his appearance on stage. More a lecture than a piece of theatre, this show sees Kaya explain his theory of dreams. If the idea of dream interpretation is already too far-fetched for you, Kaya's confusing use of English and seemingly made-up terminology (what is an "aspect" or a "polarity," please?) won't help, as it goes wholly unexplained and so buying into his theory is somewhat difficult. Other audience members seemed convinced, however, as their dreams were interpreted, but to me it all sounded like faux-scientific psychobabble. This show won't be converting anyone soon: definitely not for cynics.

Assembly George Square, 2-27 Aug (not 13, 21), 10.00am.

tw rating 2/5 | [Alexandra Payne]

## Exterminating Angel - An Improvisation

### Future Ruins

Five young adults are in the midst of an apparently normal middle class dinner party; yet as the mundane conversation trails off, and none of the guests seem willing to leave, it quickly becomes something more spine-tingingly sinister. Little is revealed throughout, which is impressive but rather frustrating, as you are left unsure of the overall message of the play. However, each character has been intricately thought out, and the acting - or improvising - succeeds in both confusing and chilling the audience; Tom McHugh's eeriness as one of the temperamental hosts provides a particular highlight. Yet the whole show is superbly tense, powering the performance towards a shattering conclusion.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug, 2.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Eloise Kohler]

## Hell's Bells By Lynne Truss Pleasance Theatre Trust / Lynne Truss / Simon Scullion

As the recording of a DVD audio commentary for the fictional costume drama series 'Mrs Milliner' progresses, politeness and good intentions descend into acid-tongued bickering, leading ultimately to the wanton destruction of some very fine hats. Truss's script is shrewd, droll, and delights in playing with language; among a palette of hat descriptions of every conceivable design we come across an aurally delicious line about a pink cloche, apparently adorned with "witty woollen prawns". A wonderful cast make this piece a joy to experience, and the back-and-forth banter between characters is light and irresistibly endearing: "was there really a trilby shortage in Albania in the 1920s, or did you make that up?" Original, warm, and worth every minute.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 11.45am. tw rating 4/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

## I Shall Be Remembered - The Story Of Madame de Pompadour

### Heritage Productions

An unfortunate title for a play that is so forgettable. Famous eighteenth century courtesan Madame de Pompadour sits in her boudoir telling us her life story from beginning to end, and it's quite soothing, but bland; the controversial aspects of her life are not condemned or defended but brushed over, and the character lacks depth. We don't feel sympathy for or dislike her; she just is. The show lacks any real drama, and even the events of the Seven Years' War seems to have all the impact of a fight in a pub. The stage is simply too big for the intimacy of the piece, and an eventful life is made to seem rather dull.

Venue150 @ EICC, 2-19 Aug (not 13, 14), times vary. tw rating 2/5 | [Roz Tuplin]

## Juana in a Million Vicky Araico Casas

If this review was based solely on the quality of the acting performance, it would earn five stars: Vicky Araico Casas is never less than brilliant, bringing real heartache to her performance as Mexican immigrant Juana, struggling to find her place in London. Something lets this play down though, some combination of the writing, the plot, and the format itself. Of course the audience empathises with Casas's portrayal of Juana. Of course we disapprove of the unscrupulous employers and sexually abusive men who strive to take advantage of her vulnerability. But her flight from Mexico is unconvincing, perhaps because we are told, not shown, and that undermines the pathos of her predicament.

Pleasance Dome, 4-26 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 4.15pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Andrew Leask]

## ThreeWeeks

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