

ThreeWeeks EDINBURGH



COMEDY

Grant's True Tales Presents Spark London Storytelling Grant's True Tales

Without question, this show is time well spent. Professional - we assume - storytellers from quite literally all walks of life spend an hour and half mesmerising the audience with tales from their own lives, and in so doing, remind us how intriguing the forgotten art of personal narrative can be. The very range of tales is fantastic, from personal decline to heartbreak, and even the Second World War. The hosting between speakers seems slightly unnecessary and almost shifts the show from heartfelt sentiment to variety show, but nevertheless, sitting for a while - with complimentary whiskey, of course - and just listening to the experiences of others in comfort and quiet, turns out to make for an incredibly therapeutic evening.

Riddle's Court, 4-14 Aug, 5.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Olivia Sleet]

Rob Auton - The Yellow Show PBH's Free Fringe

From rubber gloves to rubber ducks, Rob Auton has an inexplicable love for the colour yellow. Auton is no lemon himself; his wordy poetic monologues and songs about all things yellow are rather impressive. This show is extremely watchable (and won't hurt your wallet as it is part of the free festival), and although you might not chuckle all the way through, you'll probably leave wanting to know more about this curious and intelligent character. The downside is that at times the show became completely nonsensical and unfunny, with Auton rambling on like a mad man. Yet as a whole, this bizarre show concept worked, was a little addictive, and will leave you with a smile on your face. And yes, Rob Auton really can talk about yellow for one whole hour...

The Banshee Labyrinth, 5-25 Aug (not 14), 4.00pm
tw rating 3/5 | [Emma Obank]

Mae Day Mae Martin

Want to know more about Mae? Mae is a twenty-five year old musical comedian who recently travelled across the seas with the aim of 'finding herself' here in the UK. If as part of that, the plan is to make a mark on the Fringe, it's an ambition she seems to be well on the way to achieving. This adorable character sings quirky songs about the end of the world, and tells captivating stories about her early lesbian crushes on high school teachers and camp leaders. Although her delivery seems somewhat anxious, this only adds an extra dimension to her onstage persona, making her the kind of endearing character that we should expect to see all over the television in coming years. Mae Martin had the audience in the palm of her hand for the entire show, yet that audience left



SNAP OF THE DAY: This way to the 'Departure Lounge' - taking off daily, more usually at Paradise in Augustines. Photo: Kat Gollock

clearly wanting to take Mae home in their pockets.

Just The Tonic At The Caves, 6-26 Aug (not 14), 4.00pm
tw rating 4/5 | [Emma Obank]

The Three Englishmen: Squares Live Nation And MHA

The Three Englishmen's lively musical opening "You've done it", shows this undoubtedly talented sketch group at their best - catchy lyrics, clever, funny observations and excellent delivery. Unfortunately though, this only comes through in patches in this show. While there are some great sketches, especially a reworking of 'Going To The Chapel' and a brilliantly entertaining portrayal of a local wine shop, others seem laboured, leaving you feeling that the group hasn't quite got into gear. This may be because the balance has shifted slightly away from musical comedy compared with previous Edinburgh shows: the troupe's witty re-workings of popular songs remain among their stand out moments. They've proved already they can do it - but this year, they haven't quite.

Pleasance Dome, 1-27 Aug (not 11), 5.40pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

Michael Redmond: Mannequins, Fishmongers, Guacamole And Me... And Other Things

Michael Redmond
Michael Redmond delivers a masterclass in

the art of comic timing but in this case, the comedian is funnier than his material. The show is unstructured and a little gratuitous in parts, as Redmond whimsically darts from topic to topic there appears to be no unifying theme or any enlightening story behind the title. That's not to say his endless digressions aren't funny and the charismatic comedian clearly enjoys himself, exuding a relaxed stage presence with the full support of the snickering audience. Every joke seems to end prematurely - but not unsatisfactorily - as he expertly drops sudden and unexpected one-liners with polished aplomb. The draw here, though, is a clever comic, not a ground-breaking new show.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 5.15pm
tw rating 3/5 | [Nathaniel Meyers]

Steve Gribbin: Viva Gribbostania! Steve Gribbin / The Stand Comedy Club

Steve Gribbin has had it up to here with this country; it's all banking scandals and teenagers listening to overly loud music. Rather than just complaining about it, he's set up a country of his own: Gribbostania. Gribbin looks at what makes a national identity - flags, borders and entry into Eurovision - helped along by an interesting range of songs. Though nervous that some material was untested, it was often these jokes that worked best, such as an excellent visual gag about the difference between Scottish and Irish dancing. Unfortunately these funnier moments

were often lost amongst timing issues and a reliance on already overworked topical references. It's not quite nul points for Steve, but there's definitely room for improvement.

The Stand Comedy Club III & IV, 2-26 Aug (Not 13), 8.10pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Holly Close]

10 Films with my Dad

Aidan Goatley / PBH Free Fringe
A stand up routine that is both funny and genuinely touching is a rare thing, but Aidan Goatley has achieved it here, as he explores a topic we can all sympathise with: the difficulty of communicating with parents. Through many amusing anecdotes he informs us of how he connected with his father ('a man's man') through trips to the cinema to see a diverse range of films, from John Wayne classics to more recent 3D ventures. The show includes clips of Goatley's own takes on some of these well-known movies, featuring a special canine guest star, and with a few serious moments along with a barrage of funny ones, this show is a great example of family-friendly humour. The Voodoo Rooms, 6-25 Aug (not 14), 2.40pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Lauren Houghton]

Andrew Ryan: Ryanopoly CKP
Andrew Ryan has a novel approach to ensuring he gets laughs: threatening to turn off the aircon if his audience falls silent. So the fact I spent most of cont>



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cont> his show wishing I had a jumper tells you the Irishman's doing pretty well in his first solo Fringe performance. His pacey stand up contains plenty of entertaining observations, on topics from turning 30 to how to defeat telesales staff. A lot of the material treads familiar ground but there are some memorably clever touches, including a painfully funny taped call with an insurance seller. The show's power-of-money theme, however, doesn't really crystallise until late on, and it feels like Ryan tries too hard to make it work as a result.

Just the Tonic at the Tron, 2-26 Aug (not 14), 7.40pm

tw rating 3/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

An Indie Boy's Guide To Sex And Girls

Marc Burrows / PBH's Free Fringe

For a brief while I felt like I was watching that famous Ricky Gervais character thanks to Marc Burrows' habit of smirking at his own jokes, a habit which is only bordering on the acceptable even if you're not a comedian. Wandering through a manifesto on the link between sexual identity and musical taste, rarely does this show produce anything that wouldn't be best described as crass, although it does contain the occasional unexpectedly chauvinist joke. Which is unfortunate. Throughout the show Marc goes to great lengths to inform the audience that he has an ideological approach to entertainment, so perhaps this show is designed solely for an audience attracted by the word indie, and I happened to miss the point.

Chiquito, 5-25 Aug, 3.40pm

tw rating 2/5 | [Nicholas Jones]

Austentatious: An Improvised Jane Austen Novel Milk Monitors / Laughing Horse Free Festival

An hour is a long time in improvisation and it takes skill and wit to keep the audience laughing that long. Thankfully, The Milk Monitors have plenty of talent to go around. Riffing on "lost" Jane Austen titles suggested by the capacity crowd, they weave a delightfully silly tale of ribbons, romance and text messages off the cuff to much merriment. Some scenes work better than others - they could stand to take more audience suggestions than just the title to stop things getting stale - but the cast never falter or let their energy drop. Funny, frilly and family friendly, you don't need to be an Austen fan to enjoy this lunchtime cracker. Just be there early to get a seat!

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 2-26 Aug (not 14), 1.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Andrew Bell]

Big Value Comedy Show - Late

Just the Tonic has a good reputation for combining some of the better acts of the Festival into these big bundles of hilarity. The host of the late night selection, Ramesh Ranganathan, is one of the funniest of the bunch, establishing a good atmosphere for the hour ahead. He is followed by Brian Lacey and Adam Staunton, who begins by clarifying that despite his slight stature, he is in fact twenty-four; what he lacks in height he certainly makes up for in talent, getting the biggest laughs of the night. Finally, Bobby Mair gives an awkward performance, spotting the line of good taste and sprinting right over it, receiving a mixed reaction in the process. It's a real mix; great if you like a bit of variety in your comedy.

Just the Tonic @ The Caves, 2-26 August, 9.00pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Anna McDonald]

Billy Kirkwood: Show Me Your Tattoo 2012

Billy Kirkwood starts his show with a warning, "if you don't like swearing or offensive images, I don't mind if you leave now". No one does though, instead they egg Billy on to push the boundaries of audience participation and share stories of embarrassing tattoos with him - tattoos are evidently a big part of Billy's life. His passion for this subject matter, combined with his quick fire comebacks make his show hugely original and downright hilarious. Kirkwood discusses the funny

side of the art with fellow comedian Tony Jamieson, before pressing a fake tattoo on to the neck of a ballsy volunteer to conclude. Kirkwood's set is non-scripted and new each day, showcasing him as one of Scotland's most innovative comedians.

The Beehive Inn, 2 - 25 Aug (not 4, 13, 21), 2.45pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Susan Ford]

Bristol Revunions: Destination Adventure Bristol Revunions

The Bristol Revunions are a highly polished university sketch troupe, who in 'Destination Adventure' convincingly evoke a group of junior maritime rangers - helped by some itsy bitsy shorts and equally flattering mustard kerchiefs. An unlikely romance, a homage to Fenton , and a recurring gag about Biff Carruthers, a man so hard he calls a coma a "Biff Sleep", are just a couple of the daft, yet entertaining sketches put on by the performers. The funnies are shared equally between the whole group, and they work best when all on stage together. It's definitely choc-a-block with japes, though some of the skits are a touch on the safe side, but their enthusiasm and a few stomach-crampingly funny lines make this a triumph.

Just The Tonic at The Caves, 1-26 Aug (not 14), 2.00pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Eloise Kohler]

Gemma Arrowsmith: Defender Of The Earth Gemma Arrowsmith / PBH's Free Fringe

With boundless, bouncing energy and a flair for vocal impressions, Arrowsmith takes you on an epically geeky journey of parodies and hilarity. Faced with having to save mankind from total annihilation, more average than average Lucy Raven is faced to come up with a compelling argument as to why we should all be saved. Covering a vast array of material, Arrowsmith astounds with an ability to capture a diverse range of characters with their mannerisms, voices and actions nailed, and if that isn't enough, the script furnishes these many characters with sharply written and memorable one-liners. The massive range of material leads to some impressions being flatter than others, but this negative is more than overcome by Arrowsmith's compelling magnetism and hilarious script.

Le Monde, 6-25 Aug, 3.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Khristine Gallagher]

Gentlemen Bears Nicholson, Cooke And Rowan/ PBH's Free Fringe

Gentlemen Bears introduces new talent in the form of the critical Keiron, the disturbed persona of Laurie, and the linguistically confident Nicholas, all of whom offer their own moments of innovative imagination. Each are talented and refreshing in their own right, albeit with a few controversial jokes which possibly take things a step too far; highlights included Laurie's disturbing disappointment and Nicholas' irrational obsession with conspiracy theories. Indeed, Nicholas is a magnetic individual who has the ability to pull you in to his vivaciously imaginative yet disturbing world. Although a little shaky in a few places and lacking some confidence, each of these comedians certainly has the potential to fill their own hour-long spots.

The Hudson Hotel, 6-25 Aug, 1.30pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Khristine Gallagher]

James Christopher: Bring Me The Head Of Russell Kane - Free YorkshireComedy.com / PBH's Free Fringe

James Christopher's set is an almost archetypal free stand up gig. Endearing more than charismatic? Check. Twenty minutes of decent material padded out to an hour? Check. Awkward section about ex-girlfriends that falls flat? Check. Anecdotes with no punchlines? Check. The odd surprisingly good bit? Check. Complaints about other, more successful comedians? Check. A joke that he knows never works but which he is keeping in because he likes it? Check. Gimmick that hinders more than helps (much like this review)? Check. To be fair, Christopher does do a good line in audience banter

and when he hits three gags on the trot he's properly funny, he's just not sharp enough to maintain that consistency for a full hour.

The Banshee Labyrinth, 4-25 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 5.30pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Andrew Bell]

Jessie Cave: Bookworm Live Nation

Our hostess claims to suffer from Bovarysme, an affliction that manifests itself in a compulsive identification with fictional heroines. Covering a range of topics, from the childbearing trials of Babar's Queen Celeste to Miss Trunchbull's polycystic ovaries, Jessie Cave invites her book group audience to tour a fantasy world via a prop-filled set that colourfully showcases her background in illustration. Her well-crafted act also reveals a strong comic relationship between Jessie and little sister Bebe, who is hilarious in her own right. Since appearing in the Harry Potter films, Cave has launched her own comedy website and collaborated with Simon Amstell, and as you might expect from someone so clearly upwardly mobile, her first Fringe show is a great success: perfectly capturing an exuberant young book-lover, and mocking bookworms of all ages with great energy, wit and affection.

Underbelly, 2-26 Aug (not 13), 2.30pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Eve Lacey]

DANCE & PHYSICAL THEATRE

Golden Gloves

Box Theatre

If you just read the description in the Fringe Programme and dismissed it as a simple 'Fight Club' style story, then you don't know what you're going to miss; the joys, sadness, beauty and absurdities of human life are so vividly celebrated. It made me laugh, it made me cry. The skilful acting and music-performance, from the heartbroken "best mama" to the melody improvised via boxing gloves and broom, are in no way reduced by the simple stage setting. What are we all searching for, fighting for, or running away from? From the same old fear: ourselves. I recommend this show very sincerely if you like something fun, moving, inspiring and thought-provoking. Plus, they have the most multi-talented cleaning lady, and the most robust stripteaser.

Bongo Club, 6-12 Aug, 7.00pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Ting Guo]

Puppet. Book Of Splendor neTTheatre

This peice transports the audience to another world far removed from reality. A concoction of live music, visual art, dance and physical theatre, it persistently questions the relationship between God and Man. One gets the sense that meaning is deeply encrypted in this play and it is easy, at times, to be unsure of what is going on; however, the audience is so consumed by the dedicated cast and stunning visual display (which is at times a little disturbing) that a lack of linear narrative simply doesn't matter. A well crafted piece of art, this show is for avid theatregoers who enjoy deciphering meaning for themselves.

Summerhall, 3-13 Aug, 9.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Paige Wilson]

Time / Dropper And Driftwood Jose Agudo and Luke Murphy

A powerful strength coupled with intricate attention to detail in movement made this show stand out. The two dancers Jose Agudo and Luke Murphy perform independent sets that differ greatly in style, naturally highlighting their individual creativity. With a notable ability to change the mood of the room, Jose Agudo seamlessly switches from a slow tempo, using minimal movement for effect, into highly energetic, technically impressive scenes that let his dance ability shine. Luke Murphy follows with an emotional performance through movement with music and background speech adding to the effect. Dealing with the destructive nature of natural disasters, Luke gets the rooms undivided attention

as he expresses himself through dance. This was a truly mesmerising show.

Dance Base - National Centre For Dance, 7-12 Aug, times vary.

tw rating 5/5 | [Bethanie Pochin]

THEATRE

Script In Hand Piece Of Work

You could say that this is a play about Paul Renner: German typeface designer, creator of the 'Futura' font, and exiled by the Nazis for his political ideology. But this radical work from writer Sean Gregory is about much more than that; it's about modernism, instability, change, and liberty of expression through language and art under threat of censorship. We are handed the play's script - an urtext if you will - but the actors toy with it, embellish it, run with it. The fourth wall is smashed with gusto. This is also a play about the conflict between the traditional and the modern, and the power struggle between Gothic and Roman typefaces. Most importantly, this is a remarkable piece of theatre.

Summerhall, 6-18 Aug, 5.30pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

Proof

Sell A Door Theatre Company Ltd.

Dirctor David Hutchinson's evocatively-staged adaptation of David Auburn's touching play about trust and struggling with real and potential illness was riveting. When mathematical genius Robert dies after years of mental illness, his daughter and carer, Catherine, is left to grapple with her fear of having inherited the same tainted intellectual brilliance that plagued her father and to struggle against intervention from her sister and a former student of Robert. Holly Easterbrook gave a convincing performance in the tricky lead role, capturing the haunted yet gutsy Catherine perfectly. She was backed up by a solid support cast and the gripping non-linear plot; the overall combination produced a heart-rending piece of theatre that was thought-provoking and emotionally involving.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug, 2.00pm

tw rating 5/5 | [Emily Pulsford]

Lingua Frank Mercenario Productions

A brief discussion on patriotic art adequately expresses the playfulness of this uproarious outing from Mercenario Productions: as a foreign student points to a series of zealous Scottish paintings for clarification, the symbolism of 'William Wallace, naked on his horse, charging for freedom' and 'Alex Salmond, naked on his chaise-longue, reclining for freedom' is left to hang in the air like a sparkly sporrان. National and international rivalries are subject to much teasing, as competing teachers resort to duelling and kidnap in this outrageously funny piece of theatre. In a script both deviously witty and endlessly quotable, language and meaning are prodded, juggled, and pulled apart like play-dough, resulting in an excellent show that is refreshingly tongue-in-cheek in its outlook.

The Playhouse On The Fringe, 1-27 Aug (not 13), 4.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

Razing Eddie Horizon Arts with Richard Jordan Productions Ltd

Bad lad Eddie is out of prison and intends to set his life back on track. Forcing himself on the mercy of his ex-girlfriend, Eddie finds a lot of things have changed since he left, most notably the fact that both of them are now being haunted by ghosts from their past. This rather harrowing production features extremely powerful acting and takes a hard look at the culture of football hooliganism and casual violence. The constant high level of emotion can be exhausting so the flashes of dark humour are much appreciated, but they do nothing to lessen the hard-hitting scenes as the play explores how one moment of madness can shatter a life. Not to be missed.

Underbelly, Cowgate, 5-26 Aug (not 13), 12.00pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Lauren Houghton]

Satan's Playground Sacred and Profane

Two actors perform a story about a Jewish scholar who encourages his wife to adultery, using a bit of 'interpretive' reading of the Talmud as justification for what seem to be self-destructive urges. This adaptation of a story by a Polish-born, Jewish-American author is unusual, but it has charm. The acting is assured, the chants and music are striking, and the use of audio effects, including audio looping, is impressive but also surprisingly unobtrusive. What the logic is behind creating such a well-formed piece about the devil's influence in 19th century Poland is a little difficult to gather, but the piece is highly commendable and engaging nonetheless. It may not be a play for our times but it's certainly good theatre.

Underbelly, 2-26 Aug, 2.20pm

tw rating 3/5 | [Thom May]

Slapdash Galaxy Bunk Puppets and Scamp Theatre

Slapdash Galaxy is a mess, and not just a kitsch, Fringe mess; an actual mess. The man responsible emerges from a spaceship carrying jerry-rigged smoke cannons, bubble machines, with puppets strapped to all of his limbs, and climbs over the audience projecting a story of 'two brothers' flying across space in the style of a 1950s Looney Tunes cartoon, all set to freak-folk. Monsters are destroyed, spaceships explode, and somehow shadow puppets are made to cry. The story's structure is as messy as the stage but no one cares because it's magic. One young boy in the front row burst out of his seat into a lone standing ovation at the end, and I caught myself grinning at intervals throughout.

Underbelly, 2-26 Aug (not 13th), 1.00pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Thom May]

A Soldier's Song Guy Masterson - TTI

Modern gaming often makes a mockery out of war. Yet the same accusation cannot be levelled at ex-para Ken Lukowiak's dignified account of the inner torment and restrained agony of the Falklands War. Visually forcing you into the battle, you feel appropriately astonished, inwardly uneasy and surprisingly self-reflective on watching this powerful and passionate performance. Other than a hard-hitting show, here's hoping this does its bit to bring this gaming generation to a more realistic of the true cost and impact of a shot to the head. After seeing this, no doubt you will agree that, thirty years later, or three hundred, "we will remember them" - a show like this makes it hard to forget.

Assembly Roxy, 2-26 Aug (not 13), 5.05pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Ciara Knowles]

Shakespeare's Queens: She-Wolves and Serpents

Straylight Australia

Shakespeare is stuck between a rock and a hard place in this odd show focusing on the many queens who featured throughout his plays. Basically just excerpts of scenes and speeches made by monarchs in the Bard's works, it is strung together, rather strangely, by an imagined chat between Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots and Shakespeare himself, centuries after their deaths. All three actors seem to be having fun playing a wide variety of parts, but deliberately hammy performances do no justice to the famous playwright's words, which in turn lets the whole show down. In a time (and a festival) where Shakespeare has been done to death, sheer enthusiasm is not enough to pay homage to the Bard.

C eca, 5-25 Aug, 2pm

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

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