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COMEDY

Activism Is Fun

Chris Coltrane/ PBH's Free Fringe

This is a political stand-up set of protest stories to inspire and delight. Coltrane pulls off a tricky task, humorously conveying a serious topic in an easily-digestible way, making for deliciously entertaining food for thought. Talking from a left-wing perspective, he discusses the problems facing British society today: recession, tax avoidance, the Tories and the ways in which peaceful protest can help tackle these problems. Irrespective of your political views, Coltrane is someone that I would recommend you see. He gives an exciting and exuberant performance which is as informative as it is funny. Walking out you feel not only that you want to make a difference, but that you can.

The Glove, 4-25 Aug, 2.15pm
tw rating 5/5 | [Miranda Cannibal]

Bad Musical

The Trap - Festival Highlights

Before the show, an announcement is made: due to time constraints, the performance has been reduced from three hours to fifty-five minutes. Oh, and the lead actress has left. Kicking off to a terribly funny start, the trio best known for 'Bad Play' stumble and swear their way through this cleverly observational script. Often the singing misses the mark, but this only adds to the contrived m el e and doesn't distract from the marvellous facial expressions and witty - yet sometimes crass - lyrics. Prepare for technical hiccups, stereotypical Broadway numbers, a leading lady played by an unusual suspect and a tale of a young boy searching for a life in "Lon-Edinburgh". Not for the easily offended - be warned!

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-27 Aug (not 13), 5.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

Deborah Frances-White: Cult Following

Deborah Frances White / SO Comedy

Knock, knock. Who's there? It's Deborah Frances-White with a show about her young life as a Jehovah's Witness. The production is a personal journey through her feelings and regrets towards what she describes as "being part of cult", and the show is almost a therapy session for Frances-White, the jokes being the medicine. She admits that it is a healing process, and talks about her younger self as a different person, with the comedy separating the two. The material is funny and poignant, but the theme can become intense, particularly the darker parts about her door-to-door conversion attempts. But these moments are needed to add to the atmosphere. If I wasn't a fan before, I've been converted.

Assembly Roxy, 1-27 (not 13) Aug, 4.15pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Conor Riordan]



SNAP OF THE DAY: Peter Marino is Desperately Seeking The Exit - see him at Edinburgh City Football Club and read the interview in next week's ThreeWeeks. Photo: Kat Gollock

Brides Of Comedy

Williamson And Jones

Ambling on-stage with the "Hangover from Hell" and promptly throwing up over the curtains, these Brides couldn't be further from blushing: there's nothing coy about Paula Williamson and Claire Jones, as we quickly find out. In an energetic routine that hits you like a punch in the stomach, their show is rude and crude, but sadly not all that funny. Throughout, I found myself teetering on the verge of involuntary laughter, but I never quite made it. As if over-compensating for the old chestnut that women simply aren't funny, the pair's laddish performance is overdone, and the swearing, farting and cock jokes quickly become wearing. But then, 'Brides of Stereotype-Bashing' doesn't have the same ring to it.

C aquila, 2-27 Aug, 7.45pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Rebecca Low]

Caimh McDonnell: The Art Of Conversation Fluid Thinking

As a self-confessed albino gibbon look-a-like who's bad at small talk, Caimh McDonnell may struggle with the art of conversation, but he has no problem generating laughs. The Irish comedian produces a series of humorous and silly tales from life, using, among other elements, a megaphone, some Amazon reviews and a whole section dedicated to his happy-go-lucky grandfather. As befits a seasoned comedian, McDonnell is an accomplished performer with a solid grasp of his material and a willingness to interact

with the audience. His classic style may not be ground-breaking, but if a good old laugh at some entertaining stories is your thing, this guy is well worth checking out.

Just the Tonic at The Tron, 2-26 Aug (not 14), 6.20pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Emily Pulsford]

Control Alt Delete - The Funny Side Of Computers

Dan Willis

Dan Willis, who is doing six different stand-up shows this year, has used his background in computer programming and his geeky charm to assemble this show. Complete with the inevitable Powerpoint, it is not about infuriating computers, as might conceivably be expected, but about the funny side of people who use computers and their relationship with the machines. Willis has a likeable, conversational style and manages to use the audience's IT experience to humorous effect. While some of the jokes are a bit technical, many of the anecdotes, including a surprising cheese-based finale, have universal appeal. He may not be about to set the world on fire, but Willis is an interesting guy with some funny stories to tell.

Laughing Horse @ City Cafe, 3-26 (not 7, 14, 21), 1.45pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Emily Pulsford]

Denise Scott: Regrets

Denise Scott

Despite being blonde and glamorous, Aussie "Scotty" spent most of her set endearingly picking out her own

shortcomings (mostly to do with age, her insecurities about stand-up, and of course, her regrets in life), and ridiculing them. The set was, however, accessible to every audience member, not just those experiencing similar issues. Extremely likeable, she countered her self-deprecation with her confident wittiness, interacting with us with the kind of sincerity you only get from a well-seasoned comedian. Expertly weaving successful hooks in and out of stories to keep us chuckling, she is the kind of comedian whose jokes you want to take home and repeat to your friends. She's one of a kind!

Assembly Hall, 1-26 Aug, 6.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Grace Hardy]

Leads and Stern

At the beginning of the show, Leads and Stern make the sad announcement that the third member of their group, Devondre, has died. His picture, in which he looks like a big time hip hop star, can be seen on the stage surrounded by fake candles. The big question is: can they carry on without him? Yes! Admittedly some of the sketches are a lot funnier than others and the moments when they break the 'fourth wall' of the sketches are the best of the bunch. But, their best is very good. Some clever trickery with voice-overs is also very amusing and adds a different dimension to the show. As a newly formed duo, they definitely don't have anything to worry about.

Underbelly Cowgate, 2-26 August, 5.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Anna McDonald]

JOIN US FOR BREAKFAST
Free at all 10:30 performances
Going Green the Wong Way
4 - 18 Aug (not 6 or 13)

CaLARTS Festival Theater
VENUE 13 Lochend Close
100m past Cannongate Kirk

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with C theatre

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★★★★★ 'Awesome' Fringe Biscuit
★★★★★ 'Hilarious' Remote Goat
★★★★★ 'Genius' Exeunt
★★★★★ 'Foot-tapping' Broadway Baby
★★★★★ 'Wild, raw... fieriness & heart' The List

Ed Fest

The hit debut act! Underbelly, 9.10pm

Mace And Burton: Heartbreak Hotel Mace And Burton / PBH's Free Fringe

Time spent with the Heartbreak Hotel team is like a group therapy session based on past relationships, but very well dressed up as an interactive comedy show, so there is no need to feel silly or awkward. The two girls took the small audience through an emotional detox in a whimsical and entertaining way. The show also features a different guest every night - usually another performer from the Fringe - who is interviewed about a past heartbreak and how it has had a positive effect on their life. Whilst remaining strictly light-hearted, the show raises important mental health issues, and whilst it's not a laugh a minute, the girls engaged everyone, and we all came out feeling uplifted and happier.

Bufs Club (RAOB), 4-25 Aug (not 7, 14, 21), 7.30pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Grace Hardy]

Mark Cooper-Jones: Geography Teacher - Free PBH's Free Fringe

Is Easter Island a country? I don't know... but 33.3% of WitTank, and part-time geography teacher, Mark Cooper-Jones does. If geography made you snore at school you'll be wetting yourself with laughter at Mr Cooper-Jones' silly classroom anecdotes, educational puns and his terrifyingly funny teacher persona. This free show is a must-see, and the concept behind it is absolutely capital. Although, you may want to brush up on your geography beforehand, as Mr Cooper-Jones has an afternoon of geography fun in store - you'll easel-y enjoy yourselves! This show definitely deserves five gold stars, and this formidable sketch and stand-up comedian is sooper-cooper.

The Cabaret Voltaire, 1-24 August (not 14, 20), 3.50pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Emma Obank]

My Stepson Stole My Sonic Screwdriver

Toby Hadoke - Festival Highlights

The Master of everything 'Doctor Who', Toby Hadoke, presents the eagerly anticipated sequel to 'Moths Ate My Doctor Who Scarf', putting 'number one' fans to shame. Hadoke's descriptions of episode plots are quicker than the speed of light. If you think that you're a fan of the Doctor now; you'll leave the show thinking, "No...I just watch television". This entertaining spectacle is not just for budding 'whovians', however; I personally have never seen a single episode but found Hadoke to be quick witted, gloriously self-deprecating and a captivating storyteller, especially in touching on his relationship with his deaf stepson. Even if you've never heard of a Dalek, the Doctor or David Tennant, this show will entertain.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-26 Aug (not 15), 3.10pm tw rating 4/5 | [Emma Obank]

Rory & Tim: Good For Nothing PBH's Free Fringe

Cheeky chappies 'Rory & Tim' (and Ian) are a sketch trio to look out for. These three charismatic performers were once part of the Oxford Revue, and have banded together to form this incredibly talented and strong sketch troupe. The writing is cutting-edge and original - you'll find yourself thinking, "how on earth did they come up with that?!" - while the show is extremely entertaining. The short clips of song recordings are both absolute genius and utterly hilarious, and the boys offer a perfect combination of both witty and silly sketches. The venue resounded with roaring laughter, and you could hear the audience whispering words of praise. As the cheeky trio put it themselves: "this show is good... for nothing".

The Voodoo Rooms, 4-25 August (not 13), 5.05pm

tw rating 5/5 | [Emma Obank]

Sally-Anne Hayward: The Inbetweeny Lady

Sally-Anne Hayward/ Free Festival

The departure point for Sally-Anne Hayward's stand-up show was her life since her Edinburgh run last year, meaning that she covers some trivial subjects, such as sunbathing in Australia and something

significantly less trivial; the death of her father. It's a risky tactic to bring up death so personally and Hayward dwelt on it for too long, unable to fully dispel the humourless cloud that such a subject created. However, when she moved onto different topics, such as childhood dreams, she was able to create a more light-hearted, jokey atmosphere, with excerpts from prank job applications and their responses a highlight. Hayward put an amusing spin on many of the anecdotes she had up her sleeve in a performance that was full of bright moments.

The Stand Comedy Club III & IV, 1 - 26 Aug (not 3, 13), times vary. tw rating 3/5 | [Emily Pulsford]

AI Pitcher - Tiny Triumphs Gilded Balloon in Association with JBJ Management

A lot of comedians like to generate material from their own pessimism, but AI Pitcher has a glass half-full mentality. His act is centred around celebrating the small triumphs everyone has in life, the funny sights we see on the way to work, and the amusingly awkward moments that happen to us all. He keeps the audience entertained with humour that is neither vulgar nor crude, and interacts with everyone present, getting more excited and personable as the show progresses. The act is accompanied by a slide-show full of pictures taken on a walk through Edinburgh, showing the funny things that normally might be missed on the rushed journey from A to B. He's full of hilarious surprises.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-26 Aug, 8.15pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Lauren Houghton]

Tom Deacon: Deaconator Avalon Promotions

It is made clear early on that this show is not about football, it's about stickers. Obviously it's about slightly more than stickers, but Tom Deacon turns the story of completing his 2010 World Cup sticker collection into an uplifting, life-affirming journey. A very funny life-affirming journey; this is a comedy routine after all. As Deacon progresses through his tale of heartbreak, triumph, and a bit more heartbreak, he gets stronger and stronger, and easily deviates from his script, talks to the audience and finds his way back into his sticker tales. This is Deacon's third solo at the festival and despite the Radio 1 image, he is becoming an accomplished comedian.

Pleasance Dome, 1-25 Aug, 7.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [David O'Connor]

DANCE AND PHYSICAL THEATRE

Say Something

h2dance/ Escalator East to Edinburgh

'Say Something' needs a disclaimer: high levels of audience participation required. I normally shy away from shows like this, however 'Say Something' got it just right. We are led into a well lit room with no chairs, and encouraged to use the space as we please. The dancers are all among us, singing as they throw themselves across the floor. The music is enchanting and otherworldly, whilst the dancing is exciting. The cast creep and crawl amongst the audience, inviting us to join them. We are led in circles, as we watch the story unfold. This show is not for the shy, but if you go and see it, you are guaranteed to have something to say. Marvellous.

Summerhall, 7-9, 11-12, 14-15, 21-23, 25-26 Aug, times vary.

tw rating 4/5 | [Alexandra Wilks]

THEATRE

Breathing Corpses Exeter University Theatre Company

Initially confusing, 'Breathing Corpses' unexpectedly twists into a surreal tale which subtly reveals a series of terrifyingly unexpected truths. Cleverly misleading, the opening scene begins with the adorable and talkative Amy and it seems that from the light-hearted, curious nature

of her dialogue that there is nothing eerie to gather here. But characters go through some shocking developments, exploring the tensions and the disturbance that can follow a traumatic discovery. At times, the acting lacks energy and is close to that of an over-dramatic TV soap, and transitions are a little messy, but like the twisting nature of the plot, the energy eventually soars into gripping episodes of shockingly good drama.

Zoo, 8-27 Aug, 5.00pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Khristine Gallagher]

Pinch in Love Deck Theatre Company

What a joy. Oh these little ones, aren't they cute? Yes, they fight a bit, sometimes, but, oh, they are just p e r f e c t! Mum, two toddlers and a new baby, in the longest morning ever... Pinch and Seedy are jealous. How could mum dare to bring this object into their home? Why is she not singing them lullabies any more? With a mixture of the innocent wit of Twain's 'Diary Of Adam And Eve', of 'Family Guy' Baby Stewie's brainstorming to overthrow the world, and of 'Tom and Jerry'-like funny, cruel violence, the two troubled toddlers eventually come round. If you can't get rid it, you better embrace it. Brain tickling acting, storyline and dialogue.

Paradise in The Vault, 5-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 8.50pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Veronika Kallus]

Rubies In The Attic

The Ruby Dolls And Assembly

Up in the rafters of the Roxy, the Ruby Dolls invite you into their attic to share tales about their heritage and the people who made them who they are today. With their witty storytelling and gorgeous close harmonies, the Dolls take us on a musical journey across the globe, mixing Noel Coward with African folk music and Italian opera. Hugely talented and perfectly poised in their shiny red shoes, the Dolls are cheeky, warm and truly sparkle on stage in a show that is charming and often poignant. Holding their audience under a nostalgic spell, they don't need their ruby slippers to find their way back home. Their magical voices and touching stories do that with class and style.

Assembly Roxy, 2 - 27 Aug (not 13, 20), 6.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Rebecca Low]

The Half Guy Masterson - TTI

The play's the thing - but panicking is half of it. Guy Masterson delivers a hilarious comedy about preparations for a one-man production of 'Hamlet', playing an anxious, paranoid actor whose wife recently left him, and who is struggling with the stresses of opening night. Hilarious, honest, and insightful in its execution, the play showcases spectacular acting skills, demonstrated in particular by Masterson's one-man sword fight against himself and an amusing series of suicide attempts. The lines between acting and reality are blurred as Masterson spirals into a state of madness much like Hamlet's; indeed, the play itself morphs into an adapted version of the Shakespeare script. This is an entertaining show; half insightful, half comical, 100% entertaining!

Assembly George Square, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 2.00pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Ana-Claudia Magaña]

The Lad Himself

Treason Productions And Boundary Events

Set in limbo, 'The Lad Himself' examines the life of famous comic actor Tony Hancock. Hancock has just died, and is waiting to be judged by St. Peter, to see if he will be "playing ping pong with Hitler" or entering the "pearly gates". 'The Lad Himself' is full of laughs, and brilliant one liners. Cleverly, it does well not to hero worship Hancock and addresses some of the more complex themes of his life, for example his misogyny and megalomania. Mark Brailsford (Hancock) is devilishly good, and does justice to the great man himself. In an interesting twist, God and St. Peter are both women, a device which elicits some good jokes. Thoroughly enjoyable, even if you are not familiar with Hancock's work.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-26 Aug (not 11), 1.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Alexandra Wilks]

Thinking Of You

Knot Theory

A dynamic story of four broken lives: the lonely Woman, frustrated Man, terrified Girl and drunken Boy. This free Fringe play has a clever way of keeping the audience entranced, weaving between past and present, reality and fantasy worlds. It was too simple at times, missing out points in the narrative I for one would have liked to have known, such as the age of the girl. Each character has his or her own story to tell and this edgy, dark comedy resonated a little with everyone. Whether it be the image of the fractured family, or the individual stories themselves; the universal themes of loneliness, frustration and wanting one's voice to be heard in volatile times, the audience understands.

Laughing Horse @ Phoenix Bar, 2-26 Aug, (not 6, 13, 20), 4.30pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Charlotte Mortimer-Talman]

Translunar Paradise

Theatre Ad Infinitum

Avant Garde expressionism works wonders in George Mann's existential production that tackles death through surrealist movement theatre. Kim Heron, George Mann and Deborah Pugh are exceptional during a 70-minute production which suggests death can be as freeing as it is oppressive. Using face masks to forge an instant relation between life and death, youth and old age, the production is an apt, subtle and decadent portrait of love and loss. Somewhat jumping upon the Zeitgeist with its stylish silence; the performance entirely omits spoken word and relies on minimal props, tight choreography and the juxtaposition between face and masked figure to express its eternal themes. This production, encapsulating so much that is en vogue, ought to, by rights , achieve notoriety in no time at all.

Pleasance Dome, Assembly, Aug 1-27, 5.25pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Adam Bloodworth]

Unhappy Birthday

Amy Lamé

Amy Lamé is clearly likeable; 'Unhappy Birthday' is not. As you enter the room you are greeted with a party hat and a party popper, and audience participation is evidently vital to the show. There is initially a nice atmosphere as Morrissey's music fills the room; however the soundtrack quickly becomes the only decent part of the performance because what follows is a collaborative but pointless exercise in humiliation and moronic behaviour. From the moment Lamé shoves her face into a cake; to when she rubs on lipstick and chases an audience member around the room; to when she tries to suffocate everyone with hairspray: this is performance art at its worst. The show is structured around Morrissey tracks, but the point of it remains a mystery to me.

Assembly George Square, 2-26 Aug, 6.40pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [India Doyle]

Camille Claudel

Gaël Le Cornec / Footprint Project

Camille Claudel's struggle to assert herself as a visionary sculptor in her own right, rather than a mere echo of Auguste Rodin, was overshadowed not only by her relationship with the artist, but also by the period's prevailing attitude towards women in the arts. Le Cornec's monologue gives a voice and a vital wildness to Camille, developing her as a character in a performance that captures both her budding individuality as a sculptor and the overwhelming fear and madness that would consume her in later years. 'Camille Claudel' is an in-depth study of Claudel's life that portrays her with teasing charm, incorporating works such as 'La Valse' and 'La Vague' into a compelling exposé of her artistic development.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug (not 7, 14, 21), 1.30pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

Cubicle Four

Between The Bars

A short play set in one cubicle of an Accident and Emergency department, 'Cubicle Four' gives a glimpse into the lives of the cubicle's different inhabitants

over a 24-hour period. This includes a grandmother and grandson, two brothers and a husband and wife, each brought into hospital unexpectedly and all dealing with it in different ways. It packs a powerful emotional punch and every character has something we can sympathise with, each having a distressing back story to unfold as they converse. The acting is powerful and extremely convincing and raises questions about how we in the audience would handle similar situations. A thought-provoking play focused on how life can change in one short moment.

Paradise in the Vault, 4-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 4.14pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Lauren Houghton]

Gilbert And Sullivan In Brief(s)

Ingenious Paradox / Nick Brooke Productions / Pleasance Theatre Trust

This show combines comedy, theatre and opera as a charismatic foursome condense the fourteen operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan into seventy minutes, or before they bite each other's heads off. There's a lot going on here with frivolous props and baffling operettas, and I eventually found myself absent-mindedly enjoying the singing without paying attention to the abridged plots. The bits in between the operettas are more overtly comic, with witty asides, audience addresses and comedic fall-outs about who should play which role. The slapstick acting occasionally seems forced but heavenly singing and scintillating musical compositions redeem it. The musical performance of this show is worth seeing, but the combination with stage-play makes it hard to stick with.

Pleasance Courtyard, 2-27 Aug (not 13, 21), 4.30pm

tw rating 3/5 | [Nathaniel Meyers]

Gob Shop

Cathartic Connections Theatre

Two girls accosted me with: "What did you think of that? We thought it was awful". But I enjoyed this show about strippers in a strip club. The boundaries between fact and fantasy become blurred, as performers break out of character to commentate on the action. Although initially jarring, these commentaries, performances in themselves, answer our questions - we're all nosy about the venue's night job (but if you're after cut-price titillation, don't bother: the pole dancing is at a minimum). They provide some much needed structure and occasional explanation for some of the little scenes exploring the possibilities in strip clubs. But you should make your own mind up; after all, you've got to admit that you're curious.

Sapphire Rooms, 8-26 Aug (not 13, 14, 20, 21), 4.30pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Lia Sanders]

Grit Tortoise In A Nutshell

Using table top rod and accomplished shadow puppetry, 'Grit' poignantly displays the emotional impact of conflict and war. We're shown a daughter recalling her father's journey to make a difference, unravelling his various personal experiences from the vast canvas of war. A simple collection of cardboard boxes and steel wires transform the set into stunning three-dimensional scenes that leave the audience amazed and wide-eyed whilst the manipulation of projections adamantly focuses our attention upon the close-up inspection of a brutal and intolerant war. The show is accompanied by a great soundtrack, and with this, and its powerfully evoked scenes, 'Grit' successfully draws its audience into the past.

Bedlam Theatre, 3-25 (not 12) Aug, 8.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Paige Wilson]

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