

**EDITION #11:
TUE 13 AUG 2013**

COMEDY

Joe Bor Is Jasper Cromwell Jones

Joe Bor makes a welcome return to the Festival, this time poking fun at obscenely wealthy youngsters. He plays the part of a spoiled toff very well and ensures there are plenty of amusing references to his privileged upbringing. The focus is mainly on the character's mountaineering attempts, and to that effect he supplements his stand-up with great props and a couple of clips of the character seemingly atop mountains, which effectively keep the audience engaged; a few more videos would have been welcome, in fact. Joe was consistently funny throughout, and, although he relied a little too much on the repetition of jokes, his delivery was perfectly honed. A couple of quickly improvised gags helped further endear him to the crowd. A highly polished performance.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 2 - 26 Aug (not 7, 14 Aug), 7.00pm.

tw rating | 4/5 | [Ian Freeman]

Old Jewish Jokes (Ivor Dembina / Free Festival)

Ivor Dembina has a warning for any reviewers in the room: don't overlook the title of his show. "These are meant to be old jokes, all right?" As long as anyone going pays a similar moment's attention - to both the terms 'old' and 'Jewish' - they'll be in for a pleasurable evening. The veteran comic presents his selection of the best observational jokes and one liners from a rich tradition of cultural comedy, within the neat framework of badging it as material he supposedly wasn't allowed to perform at a synagogue benefit gig. Some routines are better known than others, but all are delivered near-flawlessly by Dembina. So, if old Jewish jokes are your thing, why go anywhere else?

Laughing Horse @ Bar 50, until 25 Aug (not 6, 13, 20), 6.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

Talking To Strangers On Buses (Christiane O'Mahony and Alison Spittle)

'Talking To Strangers On Buses' isn't just a few randoms talking at you on a bus; some sing, and one or two even dance for you too. A fun, lovely showcase of a few comedians

at the Festival this year, the line-up changes everyday. Perhaps it was the ambience created by the top floor of the dinky bus, but I'm sure the cool and laid back atmosphere will remain throughout its run. It felt like a few really funny people coming together for a laugh, which made a nice change from some of the other slightly over-polished shows at the Festival. So prepare to belt up for a chilled ride through the Fringe's rocky comedic landscape (although unfortunately, the bus doesn't actually move).

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, until 25 Aug, 4.15pm.

tw rating: 3/5 [Patricia-Ann Young]

The St Andrews Revue

The St Andrews Revue provided a decent and engaging set of sketches at the delightful Caves venue. There was a tendency for a couple of the performers to frequently take the more dominant role in scenes, but all members of the cast demonstrated equal comedic capability. A restaurant date scenario, in which a creepy narrator was intent on imposing himself on the hapless couple, generated the most laughs of the evening. Some sketches, however, seemed to drag a little and did not match this high standard. This was particularly true of the group's take on the psyche of "controlling" Judy Murray; a subject that numerous sketch acts seem to be relying on across the Fringe this year.

Just The Tonic @ The Caves, until 25 Aug (not 13), 3.20pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Jonathan Mayo]

The Leeds Tealights: The Ultimate Indoor Experience (Leeds Tealights)

Masters of misdirection disguising themselves in the drab homogeneous garb of manufactured boy-bands, these four performers are anything but, skilfully navigating the boundaries of good taste without ever transgressing into shocking for the sake of it. Sketches are quick-fire and transition smoothly, helping to keep the audience on their toes. A premise is established, then quickly dropped for the good of the gag. Well-framed in the context of a press conference, the writing is tuned to the strengths of each performer; only one breaks character at a highly appropriate and hilarious moment, bringing the audience with him. Well written and mapping the line between the cerebral, scatological and self-consciously silly, with an impish unpredictability

that will warm audiences to them.

Just The Tonic @ The Caves until 25 Aug (not 13), 5.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Joe Abel]

The Maydays: Confessions (EMX Management in association with The Maydays presents)

I'm guessing you have never expected your personal confessions to be read aloud in front of a room of strangers, for them then to be dissected and ripped apart by a comedy troupe - and I bet you never expected to like it. Yet here The Maydays are, making play of your dirty little secrets. Riffing from anonymous audience suggestions (submitted before the show) the group do hit their fair share of humdingers, but unfortunately seem to lack the stamina to keep their constructed scenarios going (evidenced by their quick fire round being the strongest section of the show). Still, it is a deliciously interesting idea, if one that is only very nearly pulled off.

Underbelly Cowgate, until 25 Aug (not 13), 2.20pm.

tw rating 3/5 [Patricia-Ann Young]

The Noise Next Door Comedy Lock-In (Bound and Gagged)

Take a step back people, and let the ultimate heroes of improv, Fringe veterans The Noise Next Door, make their way to the stage. Watch in wonder as they make your demands reality, witness their guests (in this case Vicky Stone and Mick Ferry) ease into the spirit of things, and listen out for their brilliance as the audience howls along with them. Clever, puntastic and as sharp as Burke's knife, these five boys will gouge the laughter out of you through their games, individual talent, character and collective enthusiasm, which must surely put pretty much every other improv troupe at this Festival in the shade: mark my words, I have not laughed this much in a long, long time.

Pleasance Courtyard, 24 Aug, 11.00.

tw rating 5/5 | [Joseph Trotter]

Gay Straight Alliance (Veronica Elizabeth)

Veronica Elizabeth is a fine host for this night, which seeks to "break down barriers" between different sexualities. Quite how it intends to achieve this noble end is unclear, as we watch Kevin Dewsbury doing a routine about drink awareness adverts and Anil Desai doing Robert de Niro impressions. Though both

are charming, instantly likeable and enticingly funny. This show probably won't change the world, but the liberal agenda it sets out makes for a pleasant, relaxed evening, free from worries that you'll be bullied for getting up to go to the toilet or coming from some unfashionable town. Also, Veronica is a host as funny as her guests, which is so rare it deserves a medal.

Laughing Horse @The Phoenix, until 26 Aug, 8.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [James Hampson]

Kindness (Sam Brady / PBH's Free Fringe)

Would we all be happier if we valued kindness a little bit more? Sam Brady certainly thinks so, and has dedicated an hour of stand-up comedy to the subject. With this naturally funny and charismatic man, there wasn't one moment of this show that felt contrived or forced. We heard hilarious (and some quite poignant) anecdotes that drove home his point that even though humans are flawed, the little acts of kindness really do make a difference. The show managed to stick to the subject matter without even slightly veering into sanctimonious or self-righteous territory. It's not a lecture, but simply a light-hearted take on human nature and on his own (sometimes failed) attempts at being a good person. Emotional and uplifting.

Cabaret Voltaire, until 24 Aug (not 19), 1.20pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Jessica Cropper]

Funeral Replacement Service (Ghost Bus Tours)

You're invited to celebrate the life of Roger Cocksweets (pronounced "Co-sweets"), and the funeral will be taking place on his old Routemaster bus (pay your respects to the coffin as you board). Theatre on wheels is a great concept, and this unconventional commemoration treats you to video messages from irate relatives, graphic poetry, and a grandson who goes around chatting everyone up. The real problem is that, at 45ish minutes, it's too short - you're just getting warmed up when you're turfed out. There's also no bar, and I imagine booze would put people more in the mood for belting out dubious hymns. An enjoyable, yet unexpectedly sedate experience: bring some mates and have a few pints first to get the best out of it.

Necrobust, until 26 Aug, 11.00pm and 12.30am.

tw rating 3/5 | [Holly Sharp]



SNAP OF THE DAY: Poems to order! On the Meadows. Photo: Mark Dawson

Mitch Benn Is The 37th Beatle (IMWP)

Mitch Benn is an accomplished performer, combining witty musical anecdotes with Beatles parodies (complete with a Lennon voice-enhancer). This expertly-crafted satire is perfect for both hardcore music aficionados and those entirely ignorant; Benn's first song explains who the rock 'n' roll band were through a hilarious comparison to One Direction. His intentionally tenuous claim to be the 37th Beatle was unravelled throughout the show, along with a list of 36 other individuals with more established links to the Fab Four. What really sets the show apart is that it's incredibly well-researched, informative and engaging. Benn's fast-paced trawl through the life and legacy of the Beatles (and why Simon Cowell will never emulate their success) held the audience totally captivated.

The Stand Comedy Club III & IV, until 25 Aug (not 12), 3.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Jonathan Mayo]

Eric And Little Ern (Festival Highlights)

It would have been easy for these talented actors to string together sixty minutes of their best Morecambe and Wise impressions and, with an excitable audience desperate for more trademark

silly giggles, the pair would have certainly got away with it. Their surgically precise timing matched that of the originals, and Jonty Stephens flawlessly captured Eric's endearingly exasperating nature. Yet, it was a pleasure to see the production painting a frame of tragedy around the comedians: demonstrating the sorrow of being the last living half of a double act, rather than simply keeping their audience chortling bi-minutely. Morecambe and Wise appreciators - and otherwise - will enjoy this simple yet lovely production.

Gilded Balloon @ Teviot, until 26 Aug (not 14 Aug), 3.45pm, 5.45pm.

tw rating [4/5] | Kate Pasola

Dave Griffiths: C U In Court (King Cnut)

Dave Griffiths, otherwise known as King Cnut, tells us all about his legal battle with French Connection over trademark and copyright laws and abusing other brands' logos. Aided by a hilarious slideshow and a rack of t-shirts, we discover the tale of a major worldwide company trying to crush the little guy...and failing. It's such an interesting and engaging story that it's almost OK there aren't really any jokes. Griffiths becomes obsessed with getting revenge on the company, to the point that his own life starts to fall apart. This may sound a little tragic, but he's so

passionate about what he's doing that you go with him. A great story and very entertaining, just don't expect too many laugh-out-loud moments.

Just The Tonic @ The Tron, until 25 Aug (not 13), 3.40pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Sophie Nicol]

Mervyn Stutter's Pick Of The Fringe (22nd year)

The Fringe can be intimidating, can't it? With venues spread apart and hidden, and so much to do. Mervyn Stutter's show showcases his best of different genres and acts from ballet to theatre, stand up to cabaret, designed to make the punter's life easier. It's expertly compered by Stutter, who gets the audience warmed up and conducts informative interviews with the acts. Giving a more eclectic spread of performers than other showcases in Edinburgh, it introduces you to a sample of some of the better performers in the Fringe. I thoroughly enjoyed The Les Clochards, a brilliantly unconventional cover band, and Caroline Rea, both of whom have joined my must-see list. A good start to the day if you don't know where to start.

Pleasance Courtyard, until 25 Aug (not 13, 20), 12.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Christopher Spring]

Big Spoon, Little Spoon (Jamie Oliphant and Cio Dav / Free Festival)

In what must be the most outlandish venue at the Fringe, 'Big Spoon, Little Spoon' is a comedy club atop a double-decker bus stationed in a beer garden. Crazy right? Being 1am, however, virtually all of the audience have had a few too many gin and slims to notice, making for a very rowdy hour. All the acts struggle to keep the crowd under control and are susceptible to substantial heckling. Jamie Oliphant and Cio Dav were the best of a meagre bunch but the show quickly plummeted into mediocrity, with jokes that rarely generated more than a mild murmur. Unless you are three sheets to the wind, I would recommend getting the train instead.

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, until 17 Aug (not 4, 11), 10.00am.

tw rating 2/5 | [Peter Dorman]

MUSIC

Gone Native (Nicholson and Gore)

These local Edinburgh singer-songwriters put on a friendly, intimate show, sharing their own songs and some traditional Scottish, Irish and English folk. Each musician has their own individual style which makes for an interesting and entertaining hour. Kevin Gore's set leans more towards traditional Celtic folk which is also reflected in his original tracks, while Bobby Nicholson's songs are funny, often with a political edge or element of social commentary alongside traditional folk covers. Both men are very talented, and I especially enjoyed Nicholson's original songs,

particularly the one about pandas. This is a welcoming, low key event that provides a nice refuge from the hustle and bustle of the Fringe while still providing an evening's entertainment.

The Royal Oak, until 26 Aug, 6pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Elsbeth Rudd]

Richard Digance

From the very moment we walked into the performance area, Richard Digance's charismatic personality filled the room, as he sat in the audience cracking jokes. Beginning with a forced encore from Digance himself, the show carried on in a similar vein, as the singer wittily explained the events that inspired his folk-comedy songs. Digance called for much audience participation, at one point making half the audience act like seagulls and at another forcing them to give him seven encores in a row. Through all the joking, however, it was easy to see how much Digance appreciated both his audience and the chance to perform in Edinburgh. Sharp, funny and incredibly magnetic, Digance is set to give many more unique and entertaining performances.

New Town Theatre, until 25 Aug (not 9, 10), 8.45pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Helena Wadia]

DANCE & PHYSICAL THEATRE

Last Land and 'Il Gioco Del Gregge Di Capre' (Maria Nilsson Waller and Fabrizio Favale)

This double bill presents two well-crafted and complementary shows. In 'Last Land', inspired by the last two un-owned lands on our

planet, the dancers perform a highly physical piece with strength and precision, while the choreography captures the immensity and timelessness of the landscapes. The beautiful newspaper set, at first reminiscent of maps, is cleverly utilised as the surrounding landscape, and the sublime nature of the piece is enhanced by exquisite music, performed by onstage musicians. The second performance, 'Il Gioco', was inspired by the agility and rhythms of the bodies of mountain goats. Fabrizio Favale, a solo performer, commits a remarkable agility and expression to the piece, filling the space with at once precise and passionate movements.

Dance Base, until 17 Aug (not 5, 12), 2.00pm, 3.00pm, 5.00pm, 6.00pm, 7.00pm, 8.00pm, 9.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Immi Calderwood]

Sluts Of Possession (Rosie Kay / Guilherme Miotto / Louis Price)

The blurb says you'll be plunged into a "primitive, possessed state", so perhaps I was meant to fall asleep in 'Sluts Of Possession'. Repetitive rhythms, violent movement and face-paint streaked faces are key components of what is a confusing 45 minutes. The set is vaguely futuristic, films of tribal communities are projected on a silver foil screen. The movement was razor sharp and relentless; if nothing else, I'll applaud any dancer who's sweating enough to fill a bucket yet doesn't break step once. No fault in the execution, it's the content that leaves me at sea. Saying that, there were whoops and cheers at the end, so perhaps it's something brilliant that just zinged over my head.

Dance Base, until 17 Aug plus 20, 23 Aug, times vary.

tw rating 2/5 | [Holly Sharp]

Status Anxiety And Piece Of Mind (Emma Jayne Park and Jackin' the Box)

Social networks not only changed our way of communicating, but also how we express ourselves. Through hip hop, this two-piece performance explores the way society has been transformed by our computerised lives. In 'Status Anxiety', choreographer Emma Jayne Park combines robotic dance steps with acting to give movement to the world of Facebook. While interacting with the audience, the choreography develops into the story of our technological reality. The atmosphere intensifies through the electronic music of Murcof and Daft Punk. 'Peace Of Mind' dives into the hidden thoughts of our minds. The strong movements

and the intensity brought by the all-female dance group are convincingly menacing. Ultimately, these energetic performances are an invitation to re-think the role that technology and communication have had in our lives.

Dance Base - National Centre For Dance, until 17 Aug, times vary.

tw rating 4 / 5 | [Natalia Equihua]

XD (Collettivo Cinetico)

A brilliantly complex and visually witty display by four performers in varying states of undress. In this critique of contemporary pop visual culture, they play with our notions of branding, exposure and vulnerability. Throughout, the performers create small frames around the stage and, often blindfolded or unable to see, place themselves within these spaces for mini performances which delight with their apparent randomness. Collectively, these snippets of physical art create a narrative ridiculing the undue value we place in passing trends and pop culture. The nudity serves to unsettle more than titillate. Their manipulation of the space is expert, their movements calculated yet naturalistic: this troupe, directed by Francesca Pennini, will leave you both smiley and thoughtful.

Venue 13, until 24 Aug (not 12), 2.45pm.

tw rating 2/5 | [Holly Sharp]

Meal Ticket (The Mockingbirds)

'Meal Ticket' deserves a place among the best shows of the 2013 Fringe! It follows bored, part-time catering staff as they provide service for the 'Starstruck Magazine Sassy Sister's Awards'. There are an impressive range of characters, from the achingly narcissistic bosses to the charming yet ditzzy workers, and every actor is superb, giving real life and substance to the characters. When the event turns to chaos, the underlying tensions in the characters' relationships start to emerge, culminating in a violent confrontation. In addition to great humour this show also has intelligent ideas about class and opportunity. The lively atmosphere created by the performers make this the most enjoyable show I've seen so far.

Underbelly Cowgate, until Aug 25, 6.00pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Michael Black]

The Rain That Washes (Chickenshed)

This is a play about a teenage boy's tragic battle with Zimbabwean politics, based on the life of a man who worked for Chickenshed several years ago. His story follows the events which transpired around the black-majority rule in Zimbabwe between the 1970s and 80s. This one-man show focuses on politics, but it's the authentic reactions of a young boy that give us a fuller understanding of this terrible scenario. Ashley Maynard's portrayal of Matthew is occasionally weak, yet somehow thought-provokingly real. The audience are provided with a glossary of terms, a list of political leaders and a timeline of events, making the performance accessible to everybody as they

Assembly Hall, until 25 Aug (not 7, 12, 18, 19) 11.00am.

tw rating 4/5 | [Holly Sharp]

Children Of Mine (Jermin Productions)

An ambitious retelling of the 1966 Aberfan mining disaster, 'Children

Of Mine' has great aspirations but is sadly lacking in nuance and coherence. The performance obliterates the delicate balance between buffoonery and tragedy and ultimately lacks subtlety. In aiming to demonstrate the suddenness of disaster, the show starts by groping for laughs with ludicrous, grotesque caricatures before plunging into screaming, grief and tears. Choral speaking, jumbled interludes of movement and odd repetitive motifs do little but blur words and detract from the gravity of the subject matter. There are moments that move you, but overall this show needs to think more about the lives it's commemorating and less about desperately trying to force a reaction.

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learn the truth. As young Matthew says, "how did we get here?"

Pleasance Dome, until 17 Aug (not 7), 1.40pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Rebecca Lunn]

Safe (Ego Actus)

Two spoilt New York private schoolgirls are the opposite to each other in most ways: one is pill-popping and anorexic, the other has weight issues and worries constantly about her alcoholic mother. This is until she meets Phillip, as he calls himself, a mysterious man who begins to infiltrate her life until it becomes clear that nothing he's said is true, even his name. With excellent performances and a fast-paced script, this play keeps you entertained and engaged, but the plot feels simplistic and the ending is simply trite. Perhaps it has been hemmed in by the almost compulsory hour-long running time of Fringe shows, and if given more time would become a more immersive and better piece of theatre.

theSpace on North Bridge, until 23 Aug (not 11, 18), 12.45.

tw rating 3/5 | [James Hampson]

Stand Up, Woman (Drunken Sailor / Free Festival)

Sam's tale begins in a coffee shop, where she's waiting for her "pathologically late", "toxic" "friend" to show up, a woman she's known for 26 years but never liked. In the absence of this friend, the audience becomes the target for the torrent of released frustration. In the play, Sam takes a stand-up class for its cathartic effect, and it feels as though performer Julia Munrow's motivation is much the same. In detailing "today, the worst day of Sam's life", Munrow appeals to the audience's compassion for her laughs, and she does get them. The material is funny, and Munrow's energy is contagious. Not bad for a few easy chuckles to start the day.

Laughing Horse @ The Free Sisters, until 25 Aug (not 7, 14, 21), 1.30pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Immi Calderwood]

Tracy (Richard Burton Company)

Sophie Morgan-Price accomplishes something impressive here. Her writing, along with her portrayal of Tracy, is actually quite wonderful to behold. There's something sound in Tracy's ludicrous philosophy; her constantly bland, deadpan delivery gives her brash brand of feminism some bite. Her sense of grandeur and moral superiority, combined with her social obliviousness, sexual forwardness and propensity

for awkwardness created some genuinely heartfelt laughs, but didn't fail to be poignant. While slow in parts, 'Tracy' is wonderfully believable. Admittedly, the other characters are only objects of interaction for Tracy, but this does little to diminish the play's surprising warmth. You won't know what makes 'Tracy' such a charming little production, but its charm is undeniable.

Venue 13, until 9 Aug, 11.45am.

tw rating 4/5 | [Otamere Guobadia]

Ten Out Of Ten (TOOT)

Name tags are given out on entry, and we are sat on evenly spaced seats around the room. There is a blackboard on the wall, and murmurs of audience participation. Dread begins to sink in but, as the cast coast around us playing retro synthesisers with beamingly optimistic smiles, we are put at ease. The play looks at how children have objective measures of success- exams, grades, swimming certificates - but in adulthood, all this is lost. The show revives the simplicity of childhood through incessantly positive feedback to the audience's simple tasks, with occasional dalliances in surrealist whimsy and dreamlike musical interludes. The process makes you smile from start to finish and, worryingly, does make your life seem better.

Assembly Hall, until 26 Aug (not 19), 4.00pm

tw rating 4/5 | [James Hampson]

VISUAL ART

Amazing Amber (National Museum of Scotland)

An exhibition only about amber! It may sound like a thin idea, but amber is a substance with fascinating qualities, not least its ability to trap and preserve organisms. On display are many tiny fragments of amber with insects trapped inside, as if once cryogenically frozen simply for us to see today. The format of this exhibition makes the information accessible and it is interesting to see how much amber varies depending on the surrounding environment, and to learn how it has been used in various ways. If you don't find amber amazing by the end, well, it will still have been worth going to have a look around the rest of the National Museum Of Scotland.

National Museum Of Scotland, Mon-Sun, 10.00am-5.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Michael Black]

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