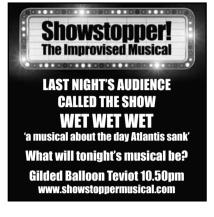
YOUR DAILY SHEET OF EDINBURGH FESTIVAL REVIEWS: #10 SUNDAY 15/MONDAY 16 AUG

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CHILDREN'S SHOWS

The White Dalmatian

Something like a cross between Toy Story and Shrek: when Claire's polka dot Dalmatian loses his spots, he and his friends from the toy box must go on a quest to Fairyland to retrieve them. 'The White Dalmatian' is a visual treat for kids, with great costumes, catchy songs and bags of humour. The talented, vivacious cast create loveable characters, and the world of the play is chaotic and exciting (if you go down into Fairyland, you're sure to meet Little Red Riding Hood, but also funky monkeys and disco butterflies). However, there were issues with the actors' clarity, and this show might not be suitable for the very youngest children as the script is fairly complex and the storyline slightly scattergun. New Town Theatre, 5 - 29 Aug (not 17), 11.45am (12.45pm), £6.00 - £11.00. [crc] tw rating 3/5

COMEDY

Gareth Richards: Stand Up Between Songs Avalon Promotions Ltd

In stand-up comedy, the mark of a pro is the ability to make the best of a small audience, and coax laughter from an unreceptive crowd. This lifeless routine by Gareth Richards, however, proved he has not yet reached that level. The Bournemouth comedian never hit his stride, nor managed to shed his air of embarrassment, delivering personal anecdotes and musings on mortality almost as if completing a chore. His manner was amiable enough, and the musical interludes on the novel Omnichord provided some variety, but overall, time really dragged in this show. No surprise, really, since when a comedian makes it so apparent that he'd rather be elsewhere, his audience will inevitably begin to feel the same. Pleasance Courtyard, 4 – 30 Aug, 6.00pm (7.00pm), £7.00 - £9.50, fpp 66. [ac] tw rating 2/5

Ali Cook: Pieces of Strange

Bound & Gagged Comedy By Arrangement With International Artistes

We are promised that "this is a modern magic show", but in fact, Cook's set has a decidedly retro feel. Like the duck and chicken he fused together at the start, this was an odd hybrid of comedy and magic that didn't sink, but couldn't quite take off. Cook is most at home performing his tricks, which are genuinely mind-boggling, along with a nice mixture of classic work with cards, watches, and tanks of water, as well as newer, more rock'n'roll razor blade eating. Yet they sit uneasily alongside jokes so dated I wouldn't have been surprised to hear him complain about his mother-in-law.



SNAP OF THE DAY: Remarkable stuff – Scott Free in 'Pink Sinatra: Swing With A Twist' and Ross Gurney-Randall in 'Mussolini - A One Man Political Farce' at the Hill Street Theatre. Photo: Adam Bell

Jollie: Roger!

Jollie

John and Ollie ('Jollie') are a winsome twosome, supposedly fresh from a stint as cruise-ship troubadours. The wonderfully detailed tensions in their relationship. purportedly marinated over months sharing a cabin, add savour to the sketches; and their breathtaking musical talent sets them apart from other double acts. I did want to disembark during the on-board chat show, which does not quite live up to the initial gag about its name, but perhaps this lull in the excitement is an accurate representation of a cruise. The slight dip is worth it for the glorious climax of a cod-Victorian murder mystery, followed by some of the most vigorous accordion playing I have ever witnessed. Don't miss the boat on this delightful duo.

Pleasance Dome, 4 - 30 Aug (not 23), 7.00pm (7.55pm), £7.50 - £10.50, fpp 81. [gg]

tw rating 4/5

John-Luke Roberts Distracts You From A Murder

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John Luke Roberts is not a skilled, subtle

comedy to distract us from a gory murder he promises to commit during the performance. This clever format lifts what is essentially an act composed of kooky one-liners into a brilliantly cohesive show. Utterly original and thigh-slappingly funny, the show is a must-see, and, not least for his on-stage costume change, Roberts is one to watch. Pleasance Dome, 4 - 30 Aug (not 16), 8.10pm (9.05pm), £8.00 - £10.50, fpp 80. [ka] tw rating 4/5

Jason Cook: The End (Part 1)

Jason Cook/The Stand Comedy Club You'd be forgiven for not recognising the Jason Cook who appears on stage as the man in his programme entry: he's recently had a drastic haircut - just one of the discrepancies in this mildly amusing show. As Cook talks near-death experiences, platitudes like 'life-affirming' and 'charming' spring to mind, but a yawn and a sigh later, these crisp thoughts have slipped softly down into the area the brain recognises as 'gentle comedy'. Maybe this has to do with his show's early time slot: after dark things might be sharper, since his attempts at banter with the audience suggest a more receptive crowd could work for Cook. If not, then perhaps his

Kev Orkian – The Illegal Tour

Clever, classical and clean, Kev Orkian's set of musical comedy is the funniest take on the genre I've seen since Bill Bailey's. The comedian's off-beat set features some very talented and frenzied piano playing and one of the best medleys I have ever witnessed anyone compile. When he's not being majestic on the piano, he is telling some hysterical jokes, and he doesn't have to resort to swearing in order to be funny, which is refreshing. The show does take a little while to get used to, but when you get used to it, you soon appreciate Kev's talent. He is an extremely gifted pianist, and his music (if not his jokes) will have you marvelling at his skills. Underbelly, Cowgate, 5 – 29 Aug, 7.05pm, £6.00 -£12.00, fpp 85. [dc]

tw rating 4/5

The Buffoons

Hiatus Theatre In Association With The Scat Pack There are two essential elements to any comedy show: The script and the performance, and one cannot stand without the other. Comedy troupe The Buffoons took on the towering topics of music and popular television, and created some great parodies: taboo subjects were approached head-on, and I liked that. As a whole, the performance was well staged with clever scene changes

Advertise in ThreeWeeks www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk/ advertising However, with a little less comedy, and a more generous sprinkling of showmanship, this show has the potential to be magic. Gilded Balloon Teviot, 4 - 30 Aug (not 11, 18), 9.45pm (10.45pm), £9.50 - £12.00, fpp 24. [gg] tw rating 3/5

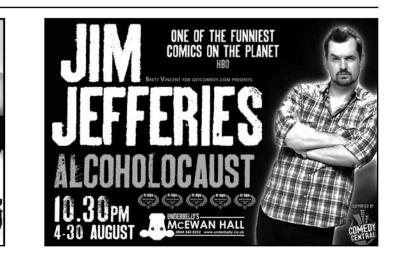
murderer but he s certainly a very talented comedian – similar in style to Jimmy Carr, if Carr was younger, cooler and more off the wall. As the title suggests, rather than engaging in straight stand-up, Roberts attempts to use his whimsical, esoteric

strongest comedic powers were lost along with his hair.

The Stand Comedy Club III & IV, 4 – 29 Aug (not 16), 3.00pm (4.00pm), £6.00 - £7.00, fpp76. [rj]

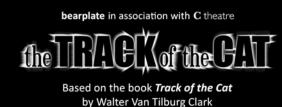
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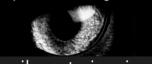


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C VENUES VIBRANT VIVACIOUS VARIETY box office hotline 0845 260 1234 online programme www.CtheFestival.com

cont>> and a good juxtaposition of sketches, however the actual script was what was lacking. The humour felt strained and a little overdone, and though I am a fan of satire and pushing the accepted limits, I thought some of it was overly crude and the scenes dragged on too long. Much work had clearly gone into the production, and it was a shame then, that it was the writing itself that let the performers down

C soco, 4 - 30 Aug (not 16), 9.00pm (10.00pm), £7.50 - £10.50, fpp 38. [ajb] tw rating 2/5

All Joking Aside

Smile and Noc

When this title was dreamed up, it's possible that any potential irony wasn't considered. Unfortunately this was the longest fifty minutes of improvisation I've ever seen, and the jokes really are put aside. The problem is down to a hazy concept, poorly executed; Four random words from the audience are used as jumping off points, and then improvised scenes continue until they begin to flounder, at which point another performer rings a bell and starts a new scene. Then old scenes return, but the shoddy plots and indistinct characters don't support a second visit. This troupe needs to realise that things aren't funny simply because they are spontaneous.

C aquila, 1 - 30 Aug, 2.40pm (3.30pm), £6.50 - £9.50, fpp 24. [ve]

tw rating 1/5

Matt Green: Bleeding Funny RBM

'Bleeding Funny' is a very bold claim for a man who is only mildly amusing. Matt Green's set was a collection of his most embarrassing moments, which unfortunately, all seemed to revolve around going to the toilet. From tales of pissing in his eye to wiping his bum on a hand towel, I felt many of his anecdotes should also have been flushed down the loo. However, the crowd was generous, with one of the biggest laughs of the night erupting after Green pronounced the words "doing a number two". He was energetic and his audience heckling was good, but for this act to succeed he needs to spend less time in the men's room and more time observing the little quirks of life that make stand-up truly bleeding funny.

Pleasance Courtyard, 4 - 29 Aug (not 16), 8.15pm (9.15pm), £7.00 - £10.00, fpp 95. [ka] tw rating 2/5

Tara Flynn – Big Noise

Tara Flynn

Combine Irish humour, bizarre themes and screwball song lyrics and you could end up with a mess, but in this case you get Tara Flynn's delightful set of musical comedy. With a range of different styles, and subjects that defy description. Flynn frequently had her audience in stitches. Added to the lyrical humour was great banter with the audience between songs – the source of most of my own laughter. From a musical perspective I found that despite their original lyrics and beautiful delivery, the songs themselves weren't all that catchy. Still, that is not to detract from Tara and her wonderfully twisted sense of humour. Good fun and great lyrics make this well worth seeing. Gilded Balloon Teviot, 4 - 30 Aug (not 17), 8.15pm (9.05pm), £8.00 - £10.00, fpp 130. [dc] tw rating 3/5

The Shrimps Present : ShrimpTale The Shrimps This show has nothing to do with those accompanied a man in a box to the Fringe this year via Royal Mail – yes, that's right - a man posted himself to the Fringe. This human package and his comedy sidekick hosted the comic hour and even performed a song, (available on iTunes apparently). The show is informal, like having a chat with some random guys you just met, about a crazy idea they once had. It was amusing but had no structure, which created some awkward silences and the duo might suffer if presented with an unresponsive audience. Luckily, in this instance the comedy duo cajoled a large Scottish gentleman from the audience to spend the entirety of the show in the box, which was comedy gold.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 6 – 20, 1.00pm (1.55pm), free, fpp 110. [sk] tw rating 3/5

MUSICALS AND OPERA

War Notes

Gag Reflex Management

'There'll be bluebirds over...' is the sound of the good old days, when in even wartime there was wonderful music being made. This relaxing performance featured songs from the 1910s to the 1940s, and with effortless charm, the leading lady gave a beautiful vocal performance that showcased her passion for this musical era. Unfortunately the nature of the piece made it feel like three different shows had been strung together in an hour's slot. While singing, the performer gave the audience a glimpse of a mesmerising burlesque songstress, only to drop this character in between numbers. Alongside this, the addition of letters written by soldiers in Iraq added another element that felt somewhat misplaced. Although the music may ultimately mean more to those of an older generation, for anyone in need of a nostalgia fix this is a good place to start. Gilded Balloon Teviot, 5 – 29 Aug (not 16), 1.30pm (2.30pm), £7.00 - £9.00, fpp 220. [sj] tw rating 3/5

DANCE AND PHYSICAL THEATRE

The Regretrospective

Juliet Aster/Escalator East to Edinburgh/Colchester Arts Centre

Fancy seeing a horse seduce a tiger with the art of flamenco dancing? 'The Regretrospective' is a dance installation piece that follows Ned the horse and his relationship with a tiger (don't worry it's only stuffed) highlighting the tension between our human and animal urges. Juliet Aster has fashioned a surreal yet touching one woman show with nightmarish stop motion animation and puppetry that is deliciously disturbing. Aster's skill in combining hip-hop, tap and flamenco dancing with animal-like mannerisms is also undeniable, however this piece does flag in the middle as the dance is overly repetitive. The show also walks a dangerous line between intensely serious and hilarious and the end may find you blinking in bemused disbelief

Zoo Roxy, 10 - 30 Aug, 9.00pm, £8.00-£10.00, fpp153 [gm] tw rating: 3/5

Death Of A Samurai A-LIGHT

Prepare to be blown away by this Manga-style spectacular. Exhilarating fight choreography, costumes inspired by comics and a good dose of slapstick humour combine to form a

all over it! This incredibly well written script by playwright James Gaddas has been meticulously considered by The Lincoln Company. However it is the sheer courage that emanates from the stage that really captivates the audience: delivering a strong and charismatic performance, Jonny Collis-Scurll has the audience hanging on his every word: he is completely believable in the role of a young boxing champion struggling to cope with his fight in and out of the ring. This is an outstanding piece that challenges stereotypes of homosexuality and masculinity without feeling contrived, and a performance which all involved should feel thoroughly proud

C soco, 4 – 30 Aug (not 16), 8.55pm (9.45pm), £8.50 - £10.50, fpp 287. [sj] tw rating 5/5

Belt Up's 'The Boy James' Belt Up Theatre

Well worth seeing, this moving play makes you laugh throughout, but also resonates with an underlying sense of melancholy. Once again, Belt Up Theatre Company, by transforming a tiny venue into a living room, creates a world around the viewer; with their signature use of audience interaction, each audience member plays the part of a child in the production, partaking in games of tag and stuck-in-the-mud, and becoming part of the narrative. Experiencing the playful naivety of youth and then encountering the somewhat depressing reality of growing up, leaves the audience to ponder upon the preciousness of the childhood they have left behind. C soco, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 27, 29 Aug, 1.00pm

(2.55pm), £7.50 - £10.50, fpp 231. [aq] tw rating 4/5

Five Clever Courtesans

Imagine the television programme 'Secret Diary of a Call Girl' in period costume, and you'll get the basic idea of this show: Crude and embarrassingly cringe-worthy, this play about five prostitutes bought together by Venus struggles to entertain. There didn't seem to be much direction to the performance, just five static bodies on five still chairs, and although it was trying to depict sexually empowered women, I was left feeling like decades of feminism were being thrown out of the window. In aiming to be deliciously dirty, the play just felt like a crude attempt to titillate us into talking about sex - this would be better directed at horny teenage boys rather than a serious paying audience. C aquila, 5 – 30 Aug (not 17), 8.50pm (10.20pm), £7.50 - £10.50, fpp 251. [sj]

tw rating 2/5

Emma Thompson Presents: Fair Trade Shatterbox

This cleverly written piece offers a glimpse into the lives of two young women, trafficked and then traded for sex in the UK. It's a difficult subject to tackle, but the play tells a chilling story without descending into theatrical shock tactics. However, despite the intelligent script and competent acting, the slow pace of the performance allowed boredom to creep up on the audience. The live band felt sorely under-used as the overall atmosphere could really have benefited from some extra tension, and this was not helped by the poor projection of some of the lead characters, who were almost inaudible at crucial times in the story. In the end the play was saved by a beautiful ending that introduced the verbatim nature of the script. but though poignant, this piece has flaws that cannot be overlooked.

Pleasance Dome, 4 – 30 Aug (not 16, 23), 3.30pm (4.30pm), £7.50 - £10.00, fpp 248. [sj]

Another Someone

RashDash

Holly is an ambitious law student who's really going places, Alicia is a waitress who can't keep her mouth shut and Jim is a laid-back chef in a bad French restaurant. RashDash fuse movement, music and a delicate, honest script to tell a story of love and happiness found in unlikely places. In its best moments the writing perfectly and poignantly captures the tribulations of modern life and the dating game, and the dance and songs are stronger still. At times it's a bit too consciously sweet and kooky, but the cast's happiness and excitement (even while waiting at the side watching others perform) is infectious and inspirational - they get a standing ovation.

Bedlam Theatre, 6 - 28 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 9.00pm (10.00pm), £5.00 - £8.00, fpp 226. [crc] tw rating 4/5

Bane 2

Whitebone Productions

It's pretty incredible for one man to be able to put on a play reminiscent of 'Sin City,' but Joe Bone manages it, switching from character to character with great dexterity. In seconds, he changes from portraying the questionable hero Bruce Bane to becoming his enemies, the amusingly clichéd Ivan and Nikolai, and the pathetic, wimpy Jones, who just wants "to get out of here and get a house in the suburbs". A few of the jokes were a little lame, and there were the briefest moments when the performance felt a little stiff, but all in all, the audience loved this fast-paced satire and it is definitely worth seeing for its quirkiness and ingenuity.

Pleasance Dome, 4 - 29 Aug (not 23), 8.20pm (9.20pm), £7.00 - £9.50, fpp 229. [hw] tw rating 4/5

Reverie

Three's Company

When you dream, do you know that you're dreaming? 'Reverie' attempts to bring the world of lucid dreams onstage, and it proves to be a rather difficult challenge. It's refreshing to see a play that takes an analytical look at dreaming, rather than slipping over into familiar wonderland territory. But Three's Company has perhaps taken things too far the other way: the script is mundane and at times this impacts on the actors' performances, which become rather one-note. It's true that it's often difficult to tell if we're watching the central character's dreams or his reality, which plays some clever tricks on the mind. But I don't think it was just the talk about sleep and dreaming that had my mind wandering.

Pleasance Dome, 4 - 30 (not 17), 5.40pm (6.45pm), £5.00 - £9.00, fpp 283. [crc] tw rating 2/5

The Last Trilogy Part 2 - Free

Laughing Horse Free Festival

Despite this multi-disciplinary show's overt messages about the state of our planet, it ultimately focuses on its creator and sole performer, Spencer. Maybe it is an expressionist self-portrait: Spencer reveals himself as devilish provocateur, strident eco-activist and motivational speaker in one. Tense and extrovertedly impulsive, his bloodshot eyes gleam with wild intent as he sings, jokes, dances, and generally holds forth. His extraordinarily snake-like hips alone are a sight to be seen. Although Spencer's music is not exactly slick and somewhat raspy, it vibrantly narrates his ideas on topics as diverse as climate change and lust. My

personal favourite was the song 'Bus Route to Self-Realisation' - like much of the show it

drawings that were projected behind Katie in a beautifully innovative design. Underbelly, 5 - 29 Aug, 2.10pm (3.10pm), £8.00 -£10.00, fpp 235. [jm] tw rating 4/5

River In Hiding

Blonde Majority Productions

Imagine River Phoenix did not die on the pavement outside the Viper Room nightclub in 1993, and instead has been living a strange half life re-reading his own biographies in a Scottish basement ever since. The major question of how on earth he might have got there unobserved is wisely never explored in this spell-binding and delicate new drama. Beth Friend should be commended for her sure-footed script and light directorial touch. Chris Craig Harvey (who is handsome enough to be credible as a movie star) and Rosie Al-Mulla act out what might, in the wrong hands, have seemed an absurd premise, with unwavering naturalism: the claustrophobic intimacy between them is magical to watch. theSpace on the Mile @ The Radisson, 6 - 28 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), 8.05pm (8.55pm), fpp 283. [gg] tw rating 4/5

The Tempest

Aces Wild Theatre

Shakespeare's magical play is rendered almost unrecognisable in this depressing and thoughtless production. The interesting possibilities of a female Prospero were left unexplored and casting other characters as women seemed pointless. Meanwhile, the 'multimedia' element consisted merely of pictures projected onto the backdrop and, when the projector broke after ten minutes, the pitiful level of acting was painfully exposed. For some reason, the famous first scene was almost entirely lost, whilst the majesty of Shakespeare's iambic pentameters was horribly mangled in a production whose lack of imagination and intelligence constitutes a crime against the bard. Ariel, one of Shakespeare's most intriguing creations, was merely a 2D magician in a production with little to redeem it.

C too, 9 - 21 Aug, 11.00am (12.10pm), £4.50 - £7.50, fpp 294. [mm]

tw rating 1/5

Now Is The Winter

Alarum Theatre

This new one-woman play inspired by the famous speech in Shakespeare's Richard III is beautifully acted yet confusing, atmospheric vet remote. Helen McGregor gives a strong. sensitive performance as the watchful, loyal Bess, servant to Richard, who narrates her experience of the final volatile days of Edward IV's reign. However, unless you are particularly familiar with the Shakespeare or have absorbed the programme synopsis beforehand it is difficult to follow the story, delving as it does into England's history and the complexities of the monastic line. McGregor makes up for this; she brings warmth and immediacy to the stage, valiantly sustaining tension and momentum all the way through, allowing us to enjoy this lively pop-up from history's obscure book

The Vault, 7 – 30 Aug (not 23), 6.45pm (7.45pm), £6.00 – £8.00, fpp 275. [dp] tw rating 3/5

THREEWEEKS IN EDINBURGH

Publishers Chris Cooke, Caroline Moses Concept and content © ThreeWeeks Publications.

decapod crustaceans often found in sandwiches or sushi; Shrimps stands for Sheffield Improvisations, a group of thirteen student performers, who delivered an impressively solid show. Revolving around an improvised story created by the audience and rotating in groups of five per scene, the show touch on a number of topics, approached with different styles of humour: silly light-heartedness contrasting with the dark and sinister. The performers were intelligent and sharp and used lots of diverse characterisation and plot lines, including fun, original improvisation games. The Shrimps are a great, versatile cast that provide an unpredictable and enjoyable hour.

Sweet Grassmarket, 5 – 17 Aug, 2.55pm (3.55pm), £5.00 - £7.00, fpp 122 [cc]

tw rating 3/5

Post Me To The Fringe

Think Outside the Box, Live In It

Marmite, Slim-Fast and a wind up torch

thrilling show unlike anything I've ever seen before. Much of the script is in Japanese, but this really is no problem, as the crazy, kaleidoscopic images and fight sequences tell the whole story. The plot is very loosely drawn from Shakespeare, but the addition of a lovesick ninja, a girl whose kiss has the power to make men immortal and a young boy who's ashamed of his third eye can only be an improvement. The cast's energy and enthusiasm are incredible, get tickets if you can!

Augustine's, 7 - 30 Aug (not 16, 23) 7.45pm (8.45pm), £5.00 - £13.00, fpp 146. [crc] tw rating 5/5

THEATRE

Shadow Boxing The Lincoln Company

Someone please secure the movie rights because this has Guy Ritchie's name written tw rating 3/5

Sherlock Holmes And The Sound Of The **Baskervilles**

Two Shades Of Blue

Oxbridge amdrams perform theatrical abortion. There's much cackling and gurning from the cast, and even more groaning from the audience: the jokes are risible, the acting worse, and the singing by turns inaudible, unintelligible, and flat. Two half-redeeming features (there are only two): a decent turn by Gareth Smith as the master detective's put-upon sidekick, and a running gag about his note-taking that deserves a sketch of its own. As the play limps to a close, watching it comes close to unbearable. To the discerning public, I say 'avoid', but if you enjoyed 'light entertainment' at university, then you've probably already bought your ticket.

The Vault, 9 – 15 Aug, 2.30pm (3.30pm), \$7.50 - \$8.50, fpp 288. [tm]

tw rating 1/5

leaves a smile on your face. Laughing Horse @ City Cafe, 5 – 29 Aug, 5.00pm (6.00pm), free, fpp 265. [dp]

tw rating 3/5

Bunny

Nabokov/Watford Palace Theatre/Mercury Theatre Colchester/Escalator East to Edinburgh.

Captivatingly performed by Rosie Wyatt, this is the story of a teenager trying to find a balance between being clever and being cool, who gets caught up in a fight between her boyfriend and another young man. Wyatt not only imbues the protagonist, Katie, with a great deal of complexity, she also vividly conjures the other characters who occupy Katie's world. Jack Thorne's script is mostly tightly written and the character's voice is strong and clear throughout, although the ending, while certainly unpredictable, felt too abrupt. The play felt like it should have continued, although perhaps that was just the temptation to keep following the moving line

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TW RATINGS EXPLAINED: 1/5 BAD | 2/5 MEDIOCRE | 3/5 GOOD | 4/5 VERY GOOD | 5/5 BRILLIANT