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All Seats

£5

The 2 Sides of Eddie Ramone

A new play by Chris Sullivan 6pm at the Royal College of Surgeons

Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DW

ESPACE @Venue 53

COMEDY

Happiness Ester and Son / PBH's Free Fringe

The idea of a father-son double act giving a "happiness" seminar does give one the sensation of having a little bit of bile in one's mouth, doesn't it? However, this sketch show was well on its way to being a Fringe hit. Original and well-written, Barry and son, Clive, work well together - Barry is the embarrassing dad, and Clive the resistant teen; these clichés are worked into weird and wonderful sketches and songs which are rather funny. The audience was quite small, but I thought the confident pair would be even better to a bigger crowd. Although a work in progress now, some polishing will have it push to the 4 or 5-star mark in no

The Voodoo Rooms, 6 – 27 Aug (not 16, 23), 12:20pm (1:15pm), free, fpp86. tw rating 3/5 [dg]

Casual Violence: Choose Death

Casual Violence! Comedy

Never before has death warranted so much celebration. This group's warped and perverse characters are so brilliantly constructed, and performed with such comic finesse, that the audience are in danger of unwittingly revealing their own most disturbed sensibilities in their reactions. Such is their skill, these actors present ludicrously inventive ideas, such as an armless serial killer and Siamese twin hit-men, whilst steering well clear of the trap of irritating, over-the-top theatricality into which many of their contemporaries fall. Atmospheric musical accompaniment complements the dark and twisted writing and contributes to the more subtle, heart-wrenching scenes of tragicomedy - involving, for example, a suicidal clown - to produce an accomplished and diverse show displaying the extent of this group's talent.

Just The Tonic @ The Store, 4 - 28 Aug (not 16, 23), 10.40pm (11.40pm), £5.00 - £6.00, fpp54. tw rating

Instant Sunshine

There is something very refreshing about a comedy that does not rely on smut or controversy to incite laughter. This charming, clever act uses a mixture of acting, characters and music to amuse its (more mature) audience. The music, in truth, could last on its own - soft reedy voices sing wry lyrics about the perils of holidays and going to see the doctor. These veteran performers are skilled at the instruments they play and the surly double bass player is a nice touch. This is, however, sold as a comedy show and in honesty, it's a bit too kitsch to be really funny. Nonetheless, a classic show that is suitable for all the family - particularly

Pleasance Dome, 5 – 13 Aug, 2.30pm (3.30pm), £8.00 - £9.00, fpp92. tw rating 3/5 [sm]

Josie Long: The Future Is Another Place Just The Tonic

I'm in love. Josie Long is impassioned, funny and adorable. My heart says: give her 5/5 and maybe she'll marry you (Shh. Don't question the logic). My head says:

memorable to date."

this isn't quite a 5/5 show. Damn head. 'The Future Is Another Place' is Long's soapbox: she uses it to tell the tale of her Tory-hatred-inspired conversion to political activism. She's well-informed and her style is endearingly informal; the music we hear as we enter comes from Long's iPod, to which she's holding a microphone, and we each receive a cute hand-drawn "showgramme". Many brilliantly funny moments but - a little disappointingly - it ends in a jokeless rant. Has to be 4/5. The marriage would never work without honesty - right, Josie? Pleasance Dome, 4 - 28 Aug (not 15, 22), 7.00pm (8.00pm), £10.00 - £12.00, fpp102. tw rating 4/5

Gareth Richards, It's Not The **End Of The World**

Avalon Promotions

For a self-professed optimist, Richards spends a lot of his show talking about what he would remove from the world if he had the chance. He examines our need for an apocalypse reasonably well, and has uplifting moments, but then launches into a story of unrequited love and having a rubbish job, both of which seem out of place. Bouts of nervous stand-up and storytelling are interspersed with songs - played on a strange instrument from the 1970s - which, again, focus too much on the negative, though are at times genuinely funny. Having seen the horrible grey parts of life, he informs us, there won't be an end - not the best thing to hear on a rainy Edinburgh

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 – 28 Aug (not 18), 8,30pm (9.30pm), £7.00 - £9.50, fpp82. tw rating 2/5 [ja]

Juliet Meyers: I'm Not Spartacus!

She may not be Spartacus but anyone who *Caesar* may also wonder whether Juliet Meyers is an entertaining comedian either. That's not to say some of her material doesn't hit the mark, as her pleasing patter engages well with the audience, and some members are even invited on stage to perform a scene from Spartacus itself. Sadly, this is also the main disadvantage with the show – much of the comedy generated comes from the audience's stories of their attempts to "be Spartacus" either by some form of recent protest or complaining. Whilst the theme works well as a template for the show, it doesn't make up for the several awkward pauses that sadly give this comedy the thumbs down.

Just The Tonic At The Store, 4 – 28 Aug (not 16), 5.40 pm (6.40pm) £6.00 - £8.00, fpp103. tw rating 2/5 [ljc]

Funny As Muck

Merseyside Uncut Comedy Kollective

Six stand-up comedians and thirty-odd slightly rain-drenched people shuffle into the back room of Bannermans pub, ostensibly for some comedy, but mostly just to get out of the rain. Opening with a magician in this situation is probably a wise idea particularly one as good as David Alnwick. Following it with a completely misjudged and poorly delivered set from Ben Blazer?



SNAP OF THE DAY: Can someone tell Joe Bor at Just The Tonic @ The Tron that fish suppers won't help if he's 'In Search Of A Six Pack'. Photo: Kat Gollock

Not so much. The following three acts scramble to salvage something from the mess, and succeed for the most - Jonathan Paylor's insightful set on class and sexuality is particularly brilliant. But the damage has already been done. There is, however, a varying lineup and you might well get a slightly more palatable one. As seen? It needed trimming...

Bannermans, 4 – 27 Aug, 3.00pm (4.00pm), free, fpp n/a. tw rating 3/5 [rss]

Jem Brookes: Pintification - Free

Jem Brookes / Laughing Horse Free Festival

Sometimes a room downstairs in a club is where the next big talent will be discovered; sadly this is not the case where Jem Brookes is concerned. A more excruciating hour has rarely been spent by six people (later only four) in a room where there is also alcohol. Brookes is very likeable and chats in a friendly way to his audience but I didn't once hear anything resembling a punch line pass his lips, only the kind of

drunken anecdotes that we sometimes do not put up with from our closest friends. This is a comedian with no sense of what is funny and no comic timing: tragically, a rather endearing woman in the audience cracked more jokes than him.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 4 – 28 Aug, 4.45pm (5.45pm), free, fpp97. tw rating 1/5 [rs]

Laughing Horse's Funny Fillies -Free

Laughing Horse Comedy and Sajeela Kershi In

Association With www.funnyfemales.org.uk Everywhere I hear it said: "the spirit of the Fringe". People yearn, pine, mourn for it, say it is lost, gone forever, say it's not to be found anywhere near a £3.80 pint and a note-taking telly commissioner. Where m I to find this spirit? Well, how ab back room where 50% of the audience are performers who themselves seem to be. well, a little down on their commercial luck?

We all sat together on sofas and chatted;

"a gripping look at the both the humour and pain of the tragic comic... Chris Sullivan's performance is his most **Box Office** 0845 508 8515

Jasmine ! Gwangju 1980 meets Tunis 2011 "A must-see show" Sunday Herald 13 - 19 August, 5.30pm venue150@EICC www.venue150.com

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cont>> one of the acts was clearly a confused stripper who ran off before her act, and there were no male comics doing jokes about wanking. This chill-out evening was easy-going and pleasant: the Fringe spirit lies within the Free Fringe!

The White Horse, 4 - 28 Aug, 11.50pm (12.50am), free, fpp108. tw rating 4/5 [jh]

Laughing Horse Free Pick Of The Fringe

Laughing Horse Free Festival

Although saddled with a compere (Ivor Dembina) possessing all the charisma and pizzazz of a comatose John Cooper Clarke, the show - rather spectacularly - didn't utterly bomb. Ria Lina's musical humour electrified the audience with her relaxed yet biting wit. The self-deprecating, blunt sexual comedy of David Lee Nelson dealt with topics ranging from octogenarian drug dealers to Super Mario Brothers, with a charmingly agitated style of delivery. Nelson proved difficult for Tobias Persson to follow; however, Persson's lengthy digression concerning a "duck Pope" was a refreshing taste of absurdity, comfortably mastered by the Swedish comic. Finally, despite looking like a "physics teacher" James Dowdeswell's anecdotal tales of Bartholomew, the wellread homeless man, proved a particular success. Free and not too shabby Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 4 - 28 Aug, times vary, free, fpp107. tw rating 3/5 [jlb]

Lewis Schaffer Is Free Until

Famous - 18th Year Lewis Schaffer

Do you have a perverse urge to watch a harrowing midlife crisis unfold before your eyes? If so, reserve front row seats for jaded 54-year-old divorcé Lewis Schaffer's nightmarish performance: his harrowingly confessional act contains more uncomfortable navel-gazing than Portsmouth dockyard's dilapidated viewing gallery. Disarming humility and dry irreverence are admirable virtues in moderation, but an entire set devoted to brutal self-flagellation, dated misogyny and appalling jokes about the Holocaust quickly becomes whiny and embarrassing He delights in playing the masochist and misanthrope, so I'm sure he won't mind receiving another caustic one star review. If you love solemn anti-comedy, see Edward Aczel, Andrew Lawrence or Stewart Lee instead – you have several Schaffer bets. Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 4 – 28 Aug, 7.30pm (8.30pm), free, fpp109. tw rating: 1/5 [jf]

Mary Mary Quite Contrary

It's four in the afternoon in the basement of a gay bar, the mic has cut out and at one point the backdrop disintegrates, but Mary Bourke shines throughout. From the outset, Bourke refuses to pander to any comedic gimmicks, informing the audience this will be a "Joke TKO" and she doesn't disappoint. She uses a mixture of humorous observances (Rosé really IS liquid shame!) and anecdotes which are intermingled with high brow literary and cultural references and, conversely, bald-faced filth. Despite the intimate surroundings, Bourke commands the room and takes everything in her stride, her only failure perhaps being the section on tweets which didn't always translate An absolute gem of the free fringe; catch it while it's free.

The Street, 6 - 29 Aug, 4.00pm (5.00pm), free, fpp115. tw rating 4/5 [ec]

Pointless Anger, Righteous Ire 2:

Robin Ince and Michael Legge / The Stand Comedy Club

"The Daily Express is akin to someone squatting in a cellar fearing something foreign is coming," is a quip you may or may not hear from comedians Ince and Legge in their comedy show. The reason for the "may or may not" is due to the mad lack of structure in the show, where each comedian discusses his - and the audience's - pet hates, then gets them to vote on whether the auibble is "pointless" or "righteous". Much of the comedy stems from throwaway comments that build into what could be a whole show on its own. Give or take the very occasional weak gag, this show is a definite stand out from normal stand-up.

The Stand Comedy Club V, 4 – 28 Aug (not 15), times vary, £7.00 - £8.00, fpp136. tw rating 4/5 [ljc]

Radiohead Redux Dan Willis

Fringe hero Dan Willis returns this year with 'Radiohead Redux', using music as its central focus. After easing the audience's anxiety with banter concerning whether he should keep or change his introduction music, he launches into his set, playing tracks and then allowing stories, jokes and memories to blossom, Proustian style, from the tunes. He does chat to the audience throughout, though he never sacrifices his jokes to pounce on cheap laughs, instead working what he gets from the audience back into his routine. If there is a criticism. it's in the relative lack of truly belly-shaking gags, with Willis content to keep his audience only heartily amused for the duration of the show.

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 4 - 28 Aug, 5.00pm (6.00pm), free, fpp140 tw rating 4/5 [rss]

Nick Helm - Dare To Dream

Bound and Gagged Comedy In Arrangement With Glorious Management

Helm seems to be of the "If I shout, I will be funny" school of comedy. If you like your comedy arrogant and shameless, this may well be the show for you. But for the rest of us, the voiceless, stoic backing band was by far more appealing than their frontman. Helm sees himself as part rockstar, part lifestyle coach, and though it's hard to disagree with his advocacy for dreaming, the show was too much like a dream itself - disconnected, jolting and ultimately unfulfilled. Alarming mood-swings and too much nudity so early in the day made an uncertain show, and though the songs had moments of humour, this was not enough to merit an audience.

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 – 29 Aug (not 10, 17), 4:00pm (5:00pm), £9.50 - £12.00, fpp126. tw rating

Richard Herring: What Is Love Anyway?

Avalon Promotions

Goodness, he's loud and fast this year. He's in a vast, cavernous Victorian hall and perhaps he's trying to fill the room - not only with punters - but also with his voice. Last year's show was about the irrationality of religion; this year it's about the irrationality of love. There are, of course, crude sex jokes aplenty, amongst self-deprecating navelgazing, and shocking anti-romanticism. I was initially disappointed that the show didn't seem to contain any of Herring's trademark sentimental meanderings, but of course he saved it till the end and then delivered a whopper - an extended story about his grandmother recited over Debussy followed by a soppy philosophical rom-com ending to bring this sweet evening to a fittingly mawkish close.

Udderbelly's Pasture, 3 – 29 Aug, 8.50pm (9.50pm), £10.50 – 14.50, fpp140. tw rating 4/5 [jh]

EXHIBITIONS

Hiroshi Sugimoto

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art

The Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto fancies himself as a modern-day Henry Fox Talbot, and you're likely to leave this exhibition knowing more about the nineteenth-century pioneer of photography. The exhibition consists of Sugimoto's recent series, which have little in common besides Talbot's lingering spectre. The former, following his discoveries, is Sugimoto's experimentations with electrical discharges on photographic film. These dramatic black prints, seared with light, resemble frozen lightning flashes. For the latter, Sugimoto acquired rare Talbot paper negatives and developed these into large-scale prints. It is to this master that we must give credit for the interest of this exhibition, which, despite the poetic and haunting beauty of the works, gives a disjointed overview of Sugimoto's

Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 4 Aug - 25 Sept, 10.00am - 6.00pm (5.00pm from 1 Sept), £7.00, eifpp55. tw rating 3/5 [jb]

MUSICALS

Baby

International Collegiate Theatre Festival

An updated production of the hit Broadway musical, this adaptation of 'Baby' by the University of Florida School of Theatre and Dance's chronicles the ups and downs of three couples who suddenly become pregnant. The story is thin and predictable, appearing to dry up by the midway point. However, despite the plot lacking substance, a sophisticated and witty musical score

saves the day. Combining elements of many musical genres, from lively jazz pieces to poignant ballads, the memorable numbers are performed competently by an enthusiastic and animated cast, whose on-stage chemistry is endearing to witness. While the production won't quite have you screaming "Oh Baby!" you'll be sure to leave the venue uplifted, if a little broody. theSpace @ Venue45, 8 - 13 Aug (not 9, 11), times vary, £5.00, fpp224. tw rating 3/5 [st]

Doris Day Can F**k Off

Greg McLaren

Be aware: Greg McLaren certainly delivers on the one-man opera advertised. Everything is sung, no matter how humdrum the content. There is no particular narrative, either; rather, it's a collation of results from his social experiment of communicating solely through song for three weeks. For the most part, his tribulations are easy to follow, and his account of his sung life is very absorbing and comic. McLaren is a talented musician, but his mode of delivery - to be likened with tuneless whistling - comes into its own during more composed numbers. Cameos provided by his 'stolen' recordings are definite comic highlights, charmingly observing people's idiosyncrasies. Ultimately, his insistence on song is a touch alienating but also oddly liberating.

Zoo Southside, 8-29 Aug, 6.15pm (7.15pm), £7.00 -£9.00, fpp257. tw rating 3/5 [db]

The Kist

Fiona Kennedy, Marcus Hummon and Outstanding Singers and Musicians

"Music is the stitching of the fabric of our lives." claims this performance of music loosely inspired by Scottish folk music, which, despite the apparent variation on offer, ended up sounding all too similar. While the performances themselves are technically excellent, the whole performance lacks energy, a situation hardly helped by a script discussing Scottish history in a patronisingly cheesy way. The songs themselves are catchy enough, but this performance fails to represent any of the true passion of the music of Scotland, mainly by choosing to represent it through the medium of its interpretation by lilting American pop music. Even a performance of the Proclaimers' seminal '500 Miles' seems lifeless, which is an impressively hard thing to achieve. New Town Theatre, 4 - 21 Aug, 9.00pm (10.15pm), £15.00, fpp227. tw rating 2/5 [sj]

The Selfish Gene: The Musical

Some things in life are just meant to be together: fish and chips; gin and tonic; Marks and Spencer; genealogical science and musical theatre... right? Okay, so Richard Dawkins isn't your average inspirational figure for a musical, but the impressive amount of information crammed in between the jokes and jazz hands of 'The Selfish Gene: The Musical' makes it a thoroughly engaging show. Though the production is not exceptional musically, the BEX Productions quintet do well to power their way through over an hour of cheesy but tuneful numbers, accompanied by a generally tight threepiece band. So, after a lukewarm start, acting skills prevail to deliver a lively and enthusiastic performance in this highly entertaining romp.

Zoo Roxv. Aua 5 - 20 (not 15) 12:30pm (1.40pm) £5.00 -£9.00, fpp232 tw rating 3/5 [kl]

THEATRE

The Golden Dragon

ATC & Drum Theatre, Plymouth

The problem with avant-garde is if it's not self-consciously funny it just becomes risible. And this play is damagingly po-faced. The comings and goings of a Asian takeaway mingle with a story about an ant renting a cricket out for sex, pronounced stage directions - "short pause!" - and incessant reciting of the restaurant's menu. Later on, a Chinese family sprout out of the kitchen porter's gums - you don't get to see them. These stories fail to advance any understanding of restaurants, immigrant experiences, or entomology. The script is badly written and doesn't allow for empathy with characters. With poor acting, too - that is hesitant and underwhelming, perhaps because the actors are aware of the play's shortcomings - it is a wholly joyless experience.

Traverse Theatre, 4 – 28 Aug (not 8, 15, 22), times vary, £6.00 - £17.00, fpp267. tw rating 2/5 [jh]

Taketh Me Away

The Girl Next Door Theatre Company

Be taken back into the early 1990s when the band Take That had just rose to stardom. This is an account of a then-starstruck teenager on her obsession with Jason Orange and the rest of the boys. A comedy-drama featuring story-lines of death and broken relationships, this is so much more than a simple tale of a typical teenage crush. With its focus on solid acting, giving a voice to inner-most thoughts. this play epitomises theatrical minimalism at its best, and has its hilarious and heartbreaking moments, even drawing tears from the audience. It's genuine and engaging enough, but with its subject matter, is not exceptionally mind-blowing. Enjoyable fare nevertheless, tickling the whims of 90s

Pleasance Courtyard, 3 - 29 Aug (not 15), 3.15pm (4.15pm), £7.50 - £10.00, fpp301. tw rating 3/5 [cm]

Waterloo

DV Productions

Arthur Conan Doyle's popular comedic characters - two veterans of the Battle of Waterloo on opposing sides - relive their finest moments in this one-man play. However, although Richard Smithies gives a credible and enjoyable performance as both gratingly exuberant Corporal Gregory Brewster and stereotypically vain Frenchman Brigadier Gerard, the humour is not very obvious if you're not already familiar with these characters. As the second part consists of just Brigadier Gerard's monologue, describing the Battle of Waterloo from the French perspective in great detail, the lack of humour means that this half drags a bit if you're not interested in military history. If you're already a fan of these characters, this production is worth

New Town Theatre, 4-28 Aug (not 16), 4.30pm (5.30pm), £7.00 - £10.00, fpp310. tw rating 3/5 [km]

Witzelsucht And Moria

Morgan opens his solo show by miming playing the viola while dribbling some kind of black goo down himself. It's not entirely clear why. He's playing the part of a psychiatrist, recreating the speech he gave at a conference in 1987, detailing the story of his life and the two patients that defined his career. He describes it in the Fringe Programme as "absurdist". Perhaps he thinks this means "worthless nonsense", as his story seems like barely coherent drivel. At times I wondered if it was all an elaborate prank on the audience, particularly when he complains of an ex-patient who constantly told "long, boring, rambling stories". It's a truly bizarre piece, and definitely not in a

Zoo Roxy, 5 - 29 Aug (not 15), 9.30pm (10.30pm), £7.00 - £10.00, fpp311. tw rating 1/5 [im]

The World According To Bertie

Andy Jordan Productions

Andy Jordan's latest contribution to the Fringe is a faithful adaptation of the much loved novel '44 Scotland Street' by Alexander McCall Smith. It seeks to explore the innocence and honesty of childhood in a world that constantly questions the manner in which children should be raised. With various sub-plots intertwined with the overarching story of love and friendship, this is a well-orchestrated piece of theatre that serves as a poignant representation of our own society. The naivety found in the titular character comes across as both endearing yet depressing when one considers the corruption of youth experienced in adolescence. This is a beautifully charming show that can be enjoyed by young and old

C soco. 4 - 29 Aug (not 15), times vary. £6.50 -£10.50, fpp312, tw rating 3/5 [gg]

Your Last Breath

Curious Directive

Despite the use of live music, film projection. and a complex script, this play never becomes overwhelmed. 'Your Last Breath' forces you to create its Norwegian setting. and its different periods, from 1876 to 2034. The four overlapping storylines are deftly handled: the main star of this piece is clearly the tight direction. Jack Lowe draws all threads of story together till all the characters, despite being separated by time, inhabit the same physical space. Creative use of the minimalist set keeps the audience's imagination afire and the stage becomes a rich environment - tables becoming trains, chairs into reindeer, and

doors into sheets of ice. Sound, music, and projection all suggest the setting without being overly explicit. A strong production throughout.

Pleasance Dome, 3 – 18 Aug, 12.15am (1.15pm), £8.00 - £10.00, fpp314. tw rating 4/5 [jfb]

Stacy

PlayOn Theatre Company

Comic, poignant and chilling - often all at once - 'Stacy' is a rare find. Simply one man and a projector, it's absolutely captivating throughout; Jack Thorne's razor-sharp writing melds beautifully with Nic McQuillan's pitch-perfect performance. The narrator of the piece, Rob, bumbles his way through life, until a one-night-stand with his best friend and its aftermath changes everything. When the play swings from light-hearted Nick Hornby-esque fluff to something much darker and more unsettling, it is a masterpiece of timing, with the audience becoming slowly aware - seconds ahead of the narration - that all is not right. It is a breathtaking moment in a show which offers something truly special.

Zoo Roxy, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 Aug, 3.00pm (4.10pm), £6.50 - £8.00, fpp301 tw rating 5/5 [eb]

Little Matter

River People

What could you become? What might you have been? This enchanting puppet show seeks to explore the nature of potential and the possibility of second chances through the medium of live music, puppetry, and storytelling. The story is original and is lent a sufficiently epic, mythic quality - so much so that it feels as though it's been told around campfires, under open stars for millennia. Despite its charming exterior, the show is suffused with grace notes of despair and ambiguity; this is a surprisingly adult fairytale. A delicious, dark chocolate of a show; 'Little Matter' bequiles its audience with a mixture of whimsical humour and charming melancholy, and, with its skilful execution, more than realises its potential.

Bedlam Chambers, 8 - 28 Aug, 7.00pm (8.30pm)/ 1:00pm (2:30pm), £8.00 - £9.00, fpp277. tw rating 5/5 [jc]

Fire And The Rose

George Innes

In the basement of a bar on Victoria Street, there is a cool dark room, two dimly lit spotlights, a black backdrop and George Innes. There is no music, the setting is modest, but Innes' performance is mighty. It is not in the least light-hearted; arduous thought has gone into putting this piece together, with its big ideas about the human condition. Innes obviously feels connected to these pieces - it would be impossible to act with such majesty without having an understanding that runs deeper than your average performer might. This is one show that breaks away from the hard and fast entertainment so readily available at the Fringe. Raw and refreshing; I urge you to

Laughing Horse @ Espionage, 6 – 28 Aug, 3.45pm (4.45pm), free, fpp262. tw rating 4/5 [sm]



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