YOUR DAILY SHEET OF EDINBURGH FESTIVAL REVIEWS | #15 FRIDAY 17 / SATURDAY 18 AUG 2012

ThreeWeeksedinburgh

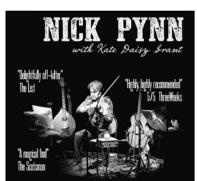




farce: two venues, two shows, two audiences linked by a live video stream.

Pleasance Courtyard, 11:30am

Three Weeks



VENUE 258 - INLINGUA EDINBURGH





COMEDY

Graham Rex Graham

It is performed with the style and confidence of Festival veterans; so much so that you would never guess that 'Graham Rex' is the debut Fringe show for sketch troupe Graham - a winning guartet made up of Luke Andrew, Tom Moore, Arthur Sturridge and Paddy Delaney. Based sporadically around the narrative of Graham's route to Edinburgh, there's a great mix of sharply-written sketches and an esoteric set of cultural references - it's not often 'Pokémon' and 'Frasier' are mentioned within one show. The boys have great on-stage rapport and are all equally talented as performers. My personal highlight was Sturridge's unusual take on Alan Yentob - in a perfectly-pitched sketch about BBC4 documentaries though Moore's Gandalf impression comes a close second. Definitely ones to watch. Underbelly Bristo Square, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 12.10pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Holly Close]

Graters: Julian Ignores His Friend And Talks To A Pretty Girl Graters

Julian protests that he's not a creep; he's an entertainer, and performing is "kinda [his] raison d'être". This UCL sketch show then revolves around his unsuccessful attempts to pick up girls in a bar by presenting them with a series of sketch ideas. The subsequent scenes are somewhat erratic but the script is cuttingly funny and satirises everything from IVF clinics to game show culture to Orange Wednesdays. The acting is of a good standard overall, though the performers vary in their ability to exploit the witty dialogue. The high point of show comes with a tragi-comic moment when Julian's co-star serenades the drunken, sodden, miserable entertainer with a guitar and an Oedipal ode to mother's milk.

Underbelly Cowgate, 2-26 Aug (not 13) 11.50am. tw rating 4/5 | [Eve Lacey]

Hal Cruttenden CKP

Hal Cruttenden is a very charismatic man. He is so endearing that, despite being ushered to the front row centre seat and bearing the brunt of his mockery for sixty minutes. I left the venue with a cheerful spring in my step. Fortunately, it was teasing in the kindest way possible - entertaining without being overly malicious. Cruttenden's non-improvised material was equally as impressive, featuring dexterous wordplay aplenty and smooth transitions between each anecdote. The show's social and political critiques were thoughtful without being too preachy, and peppered with enough disarming self-deprecation to keep viewers on his side. An hour in Cruttenden's exuberant company will pass quickly. Enjoy it while it lasts. But perhaps



SNAP OF THE DAY: So what style do you want the caption in? Oh, straight plug. The Bedlam Theatre's Improverts are improvising their way through another **Fringe, each night at half past midnight.** Photo: Charlotte Mortimer Talman

Hannah Gadsby -Mary. Contrary. Token Events

If you have ever dozed in church then have no fear, as Hannah Gadsby is here to fill the gaps with her alternative education. The Australian comedian fuses her degree in Art History with her quick wit to take you on a tour of the many faces of the Virgin Mary. The show concept is genius: Gadsby looks deeper into paintings of the Madonna and picks out humorous observations that would usually go unnoticed - silly asides between portrait characters made Gadsby instantly loveable. Sometimes the show dragged because of a classroom-like feel, due to the hour long slide show. However, thou shalt not let the Powerpoint dissuade thee, as Gadsby's show is an innovative treat!

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-26 Aug (not 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22), 2.00 pm. tw rating: 4/5 | [Emma Obank]

Humans vs. Nature: Engineering FTW Matt Parker

and Timandra Harkness Unlike most comedy shows at the Fringe, 'Humans vs. Nature' is a delightful combination of goofy stand-up and educational programming on the history of mankind's achievements. Matt Parker and Timandra Harkness produce a boxing rounds in order to determine which entity is superior. Using a plethora of comical flow charts, poorly constructed top hats, moustaches, and monocles (to illustrate the past obviously), the duo delivers an entertaining and unique show. Suffice it to say, the premise is somewhat outlandish but the facts are interesting and the comedy genuine.

Assembly George Sq, 2-16 Aug, 10.40am. tw rating 4/5 | [Ellie Willis]

Iszi Lawrence's Wotnot Iszi Lawrence

Although appearing to be a bit of a jumble of anecdotes, jokes and ideas, Iszi Lawrence's stand-up has some exceptionally funny moments. Centring on her white middle-class Oxford upbringing and the awkwardness of being a teenager who doesn't fit in (and her attempts to win the heart of her Geography teacher). quirky Lawrence's set is delivered masterfully with infectious enthusiasm. She possesses a very assured manner on stage, and is a comedian who fully engages with her audience; I think it'd be hard for anyone to not like her. And despite the hour of somewhat unorthodox stand-up, Lawrence's set had me leaving the club beaming. A wonderful way to spend an afternoon; see her before she

Jessica Fostekew: Brave New Word CKP

Jessica Fostekew sure does have a way with words. And in fact, she returns to Edinburgh this year with a show exploring and analysing the etymology of words and phrases. I know what you're thinking: this doesn't sound like a fun hour of laughs. But rest assured, Fostekew delivers her lesson with wit and well-honed comedic talent. Her confident stage presence immediately puts the audience at ease as she takes us through a school day, from assembly to history to the end of school talent show. exploring the origins and meanings of a whole range of words and expressions. Even a mid-performance power-cut couldn't disrupt this tour de force. This is stand-up with an educational twist. A+. Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-26 Aug (not 14), 6.30pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Simon Thornton]

Heath Franklin's Chopper In A Hard Bastard's Guide To Life

Chopper / Underbelly Productions

When a comedian walks on-stage with joggers on and a beer in hand, you know it's going to be a relaxed show. He does swear a lot, but it's all part of the character's Australian charm and



avoid sitting in my place.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 9.45pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Joseph Fleming] match arena in which a robot dressed as a tree nymph advocates for nature against a spunky Timandra who champions for mankind in a series of thought-provoking hits the big time.

The Stand Comedy Club, 2-26 Aug (not 13), 1.10pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Simon Thornton]

honest style. I love nothing more than watching someone incredibly funny doing observational jokes about the things I personally hate, and **cont>**



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cont> Chopper absolutely nailed this. From the second he comes on stage the audience is fully involved, even the back row, and there is absolutely no escaping from being dragged on to stage, even if you're hiding in the darkest corner of the room. He even continues telling jokes when he's off-stage and the show has finished - that's commitment. Underbelly Bristo Square, 1-19 Aug, 8,50pm tw Rating 4/5 | [Rachel Campbell]

Helsinki Under Dogs

If you're having a rough time, then taking a snoop at the Under Dogs might not be such a bad idea. Kate Roxburgh and Shae Kuehlman present something just plain silly and fun here, in their character comedy sketch show which includes murder mystery, lap dancing and a 1940's war-torn love story. While the material on Midsomer Murders and World War II romances isn't exactly cutting edge, there are some great moments to be found in their musical sketches. Their cover of the Goo Goo Dolls is hilarious, and snappy back and forth sketches stop the show from ever feeling tired or dull. It's enough to leave you with your tail wagging. Jekyll & Hyde, 3-26 (not 16, 23) Aug), 2.05pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Conor Riordan]

Horse & Louis: The Curse Of...

Horse And Louis

This two man comedy show impresses with its stars' ability to combine so many different styles of comedy into one hour; punchy one liners, sketch comedy and audience interaction to name a few. Their musical comedy takes in every style from folk to Nirvana (they really are a multitalented pair!), and most of it is very funny. The show is based around the theme that the two comedians are cursed... Random? Perhaps, but it created the basis for some great 'scary' material. Horse and Louis' energy never flagged for a second and they coped remarkably well with such a small audience; it's entirely fair to say they deserve a much bigger one.

Underbelly, Cowgate, 2-26 Aug (not 14), 12.55pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Bethanie Pochin]

Kevin Shepherd: **Thus Spoke Kev - Free**

Kevin Shepherd/ Laughing Horse Free Festival

A disjointed combination of lads' pub banter, relate therapy session and philosophical discussion, 'Thus Spoke Kev' is the no-holds-barred story of Kevin Shepherd's divorce, interspersed with some bits about Nietzsche. Shepherd draws some interesting parallels between his own life and the writings of the German philosopher, but they sit awkwardly against the comedian's graphic and somewhat crude descriptions of his extra-marital sexploits and subsequent relationship with an American iournalist. There are a few moments of thoughtful poignancy, and an unusual modern take on Nietzsche's novel 'Thus Spake Zarathustra' which partially takes place in Nandos, but Shepherd is not enough of a natural storyteller to blend these elements together well. It's all quite awkward to watch.

Laughing Horse @ Captain Taylor's Coffee House, 2-26 Aug, 9.15pm. tw rating 2/5 | [Holly Close]

Lights! Camera! Improvise!

Loretta Maine: Bipolar

Chambers Management

Watching Loretta Maine's performance is like watching that drunken mess at a party loudly perform Britney Spears classics in the centre of the room as everyone else claps along uneasily. It's partially sad, somewhat disturbing, but mostly incredibly entertaining. One of the best character comedians around. Maine stumbles across the stage bleating out dark ballads like 'White Wine Witch' and a perky little number about murdering her ex. As her poster indicates, Loretta Maine is manic depression personified in the most hilarious way. Though as she plays her character so well (chugging an entire bottle of wine in under 20 seconds on stage) some may find her performance unnerving and uncomfortable, and at times laughter seems cruel despite the invitation.

Just the Tonic @ the Caves, 2-26 Aug, 6.00pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Ellie Willis]

Luke Benson - Backseat Hero RBM

Performed in an inflatable igloo, Luke Benson's material is fresh and original. In his 2012 show, the charming 'Geordie giant' tells the story of being the victim of a hit and run accident in London, and how the not-so-knowledgeable cabbie who clipped his bike became his terrifying stalker. His set features a pleasing number of puns, as well as some clever slow burners that will leave you scratching your head for minutes. The small audience did not put Benson off; the instantly lovable and clever comic used the intimate setting to create a warm, friendly atmosphere. The show was pieced together like a jigsaw, and if you don't stalk the man himself, you should definitely start stalking his career

Pleasance, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 8.45pm tw rating: 4/5 | [Emma Obank]

Marlon Davis: Enter The Davism

Off The Kerb Productions Marlon Davis is rightly being heralded as an up-and-coming talent. His debut

Edinburgh routine showcases glimpses of genius, with incisive words on playground etiquette, fatherhood and a hilarious characterisation of his parents. Davis is confident, smiley and self-assured, which gives him a great rapport with the audience from the outset. During the course of his set, however, he questions whether his material needs to be more high-brow for the Fringe. Whilst London slang and references to "mandem" can be perfectly funny, they are inaccessible to a large part of his Edinburgh audience. Given the type of universal observational comedy that he opens with, he maybe needs to think more about audiences outside of the M25

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug (not 14), 7.15pm tw rating 3/5 | [Nathaniel Meyers]

Nathan Cassidy: Free Pound Nathan Cassidy

Nathan Cassidy is a reviewer's worst nightmare. He begins by listing all the bad reviews he's had, even offering us a potential headline: "Nathan Cassidy can't even pay you to enjoy his show.' For that's his show's premise: by paying every audience member £1, Cassidy hopes to teach you about generosity.

nerdy jumper and sweating profusely. He is riveting to watch and howlingly funny, with every derailed train of thought perfectly timed. Despite seeming to all the world like a bumbling fool, his maths stunts truly knock the audience for six. Presumably there is some very simple trick behind them all - I don't know, I studied the arts - but, like magic (which he also does), the effect is astonishing.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug, 6.00pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Roz Tuplin]

Claudia O'Doherty - The

Telescope The Invisible Dot Ltd This is by far one of the strangest comedy shows I've ever seen. It's also one of the best. It's likely it will be a little too weird for some people, as this is anything but traditional puns and one-liners. Claudia O'Doherty takes us on a journey - setting the scene, introducing herself, playing on her natural dramatic ability - and then explains how she is abandoning comedy for "difficult theatre". Part satire, part stand up, the faux-improvisation is such an witty, convincing format that I forget I'm watching an incredibly well-rehearsed show and instead admire her comic capabilities, which appear limitless. This performance is a master-class in offbeat humour: I'm now officially a fan of Claudia O'Doherty.

Underbelly Cowgate, 2-26 Aug (not 13), 7.45pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Olivia Sleet]

Sad Faces Remember It **Differently** Sad Faces

Sad Faces invite you to follow the Green Rabbit down the rabbit hole of this weird and wonderful sketch comedy show. A comedic four person exploration of a morning in the life of the Sad Faces group, 'Remember It Differently' recounts the adventure behind Tobi's green porcelain rabbit, Tom's quest for true love, Rosie's scheme to swindle nuns and Jack's experience of Poundland, and other tales too. Very funny and well produced, I was fully entertained by the eccentric and wacky narrative of this charming show. Clever and witty, the performers worked amazingly hard to portray the various characters, creating an enjoyable lighthearted watch bound to put a smile on anyone's face.

Underbelly Cowgate, 2-26 Aug, 1.00pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Miranda Cannibal]

Doc Faustus Sound and Fury

Within the first two minutes, I realised that the group aim to mock just about everything and everyone (including themselves), but in an original, somehow inoffensive and thoroughly hilarious way. The story is loosely based on Christopher Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus', but of course it was the bloopers which made this show so amusing: collapsing scenery, unexpected sound-clips added by the technical team, and costume mishaps made for giggles galore; whilst with their improvisation, banter and natural comic timing, the cast really proved their comedy potential. Offering all this, as well as a plethora of puns, parody and pastiche, Sound and Fury were never going to leave our sides intact. Underbelly, Cowgate, 2-26 Aug, 8.00pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Grace Hardy]

MUSIC

THEATRE

Love Child

Early Worx in Theatre And Art And Higher Ground Inc

The dramatic swells of the opening bars of music set the tone for this striking piece. Though the actors get off to a slightly stiff start, they soon get into their stride. The chemistry between the two leads is what makes the play so wonderful- Chrissie Page's Anna, an emotionally-stunted. ageing hippy, flowerchild contrasts beautifully with Anna Cheney's Billie, who wears her heart on her sleeve. Meeting as mother and daughter for the first time, they struggle to match their expectations with the reality, as they debate wider themes of love and feminism. Brilliant acting and a surprising twist made this one of the most enjoyable theatre pieces I've seen so far.

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 2-27 Aug(not 13, 20), 1.15pm

tw rating 4/5 | [Charlotte Ryan]

Marple, Murder And Me **Gilded Balloon**

It's an Agatha Christie mystery, but this time it's Agatha's own little grey cells that are being put to the test. Janet Prince stars as the famous actress Margaret Rutherford, and also as the great detective writer Ms Christie, in a play that studies the tentatively formed friendship that grew between them during the making of the Miss Marple films. Rutherford is warm and funny, Christie is a little icy and suspicious, and their relationship is one of both one-upmanship and mutual respect. It is a lively, playful performance by Prince, who is likeable and convincing as both of these remarkable women. The audience seemed taken in by the mystery, but it's the character study that really gets your brain working

Gilded Balloon Teviot, 1-26 Aug (not 13, 20), 3.15pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Roz Tuplin]

Maurice's Jubilee

Pleasance and PW Productions in association with Wild Thyme Productions

Maurice's royal love has left a significant impact on his life and the lives of his his family. 60 years after that fateful encounter with her majesty, Maurice, played by Julian Glover, is dying from terminal cancer. The appearance of Nichola McAuliffe, as new nurse Katy, finally brings about the revelations of the secrets of six decades of dishonesty. McAuliffe, Glover and Sheila Reid all perform as brilliantly as you expect and, accompanied by a brilliant script and a perfect set, give the audience a warm and amusing evening. Maurice's Jubilee is a must for theatre fans: a wonderful opportunity to see three national stars tell an intimate story of devotion, obsession and delusion.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-27 Aug, 4.25pm tw rating 4/5 | [James Valentine]

People Like Us Savage Theatre

Centring around a realistic-looking hospital bed, 'People Like Us' follows the last days of Simon Arthur Harper as he lays dying of HIV. The young cast handle the fragile subject matter carefully and sensitively, and Ruby Witear's performance as Simon's girlfriend Stacey is particularly believable. Simon hallucinates on his medication, seeing his ex-partner Sharon, who has also died of the disease. Sharon seems unstable though, and when she tells Simon they will be together again in death, it's unclear whether this is a blessing or a curse. The constant interruption by the two nurses, shooing visitors away when Simon needs rest was also a clever device, making the moments between him and Stacey all the more precious.

backwards to reveal how the couple first met. Pedro Pinhal is endearing as boyfriend H, earning money as a magician and using new tricks to keep his love with Gem alive. Unfortunately Katherine Gibbons plays a whinier, more irritating character, who doesn't seem to have agency in her own life; staying with H whilst repeatedly telling him she "needs a change". The pair are visibly lacking in any chemistry, and fate (apart from the heavyhanded use of playing cards) is never outwardly discussed, with scenes too short and unclear to even consider where the term comes into it. Short and sweet. but without any real substance. theSpace @ Surgeons Hall, 3-18 Aug (not 5,12),

tw rating 2/5 | [Stephanie Taylor]

Porphyria

New Theatre, University of Nottingham

Some fantasies are best left at the back of your mind. Striving to be a psychosexual tragicomedy, Porphyria is an unispiring story of a married man falling for his au pair - who just happens to be his dream woman. And then it all unravels, inevitably, into madness. Despite a weak plot which manages to be simultaneously overly familiar and unbelievable, the dialogue is undeniably sharp in places, giving the cast just enough room to be playful. Liz Stevens steals every scene as the bitter. bitchy wife of philandering madman Reginald - the utterly unsympathetic husband played like an agitated Lee Evans. Like its flawed anti-hero, this is a show which doesn't know what it really wants. Zoo Southside, 6 - 20 Aug, 3.15pm. tw rating 2/5 | [Dave Fargnoli]

Rémy

Everything I Own

Fringe-goers who only take in shows at the 'big four' venues risk overlooking creative enterprises such as this one from Everything I Own. In the period of the Napoleonic Wars, the imprisoned Rémy transforms objects in his cell into guillotines and horses in order to illustrate accounts of his adventures around Europe, casting his reveries of freedom and the natural world over the surfaces of the prison's stone walls. Claire Gaydon's performance incarnates a dreamer; Rémy speaks in earnest and with conviction of his hero, Napoleon Bonaparte, who for many British poets and intellectuals, Shelley and Byron among them, remained a symbol of liberty and progress. This is a thoughtful work of imaginative storytelling told with much spirit.

Paradise In The Vault, 4-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 5.00pm.

tw rating 3/5 | [Colette M Talbot]

Salome by Oscar Wilde

Time Zone Theatre

When irresistible beauty is rejected in this biblically rooted story, the result is excessively ugly. Time Zone Theatre has pulled British and international creatives together to tackle this new production of Oscar Wilde's play. We see the princess Salome fall in lust with the prophet lokanaan, but when he spurns her. Salome uses her stepfather's lust to bind him into securing the prophet's head on a platter. Pamela Schermann's direction reveals an ambitious yet minimalist vision: the few props are used to great effect and the actors' performances are strong and gritty. Although Salome's descent into madness feels too much like a sudden drop, and Hector's authority seems ill-defined, this remains a provocative and enthralling production.

Scat Pack

Ridiculously funny, the Scat Pack are back to win gold for British improv. Demonstrating a knack for improvisation that will leave you completely flabbergasted, the cast of 'Lights! Camera! Improvise!' offer fun for all the family. Audience members decide on show title, genre, and location - the rest is up to the actors. Oscar, our off-screen narrator, holds the power of the remote control and is able to show special features including deleted scenes and flashbacks. Last night's 'Kiss Kiss Bang Bang' was so immaculately performed that it was almost impossible to believe that it had been made up on the spot. These films are so tightly produced that they could be fully-fledged shows in their own right.

Underbelly Bristo Square, 1-27 Aug (not 13), 4.50pm.

tw rating 5/5 | [Emma Obank]

So far, so good. However, the content of his show is appallingly niche - his Tony Green (sometime co-presenter of 80s TV hit Bullseye) impression may have been brilliant for all I know. It is a shame, as proceeds from the show go to charity. In short, if you love 80s TV and hate Alzheimers, he's probably perfect for vou, otherwise I'd recommend donating another way and saving your time. The Royal Mile Tavern, Aug 4-25 (not 15), 8.30pm. tw rating 2/5 | [Joanna Barrow]

Nick Mohammed Is Mr Swallow:

2012 The Invisible Dot Ltd. Nick Mohammed is gloriously mad. Using graphs, a whiteboard and your mobile phone calculators, his Mr Swallow character illustrates the beauty of patterns in mathematics. The pop music-obsessed Mr Swallow is camp, socially inept and occasionally a bit frightening, clad in a

Colours Of Tango

Tango On!

'Colours Of Tango' brings a fresh new style to the more traditional live music sector at the Fringe. Hailing from South America, Poland and the UK, this troupe brings the music of Argentinian brothels to the lavish Royal Scots Club without ever seeming out of place. Whether the lush arrangements are flitting between delicate plucking or frenzied mambo beats, the artists are note perfect. The aural delights are also accompanied by a pair of dancers and, whilst it may not be the most passionate display you'll ever see, it completes the authentic image perfectly. The seamless back and forth from English to Spanish enables the cosmopolitan cast to manage a difficult feat: maintaining a foreign allure, without ever feeling distant.

The Royal Scots Club, 1-18 Aug (not 7 or 12), 3.00pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Lewis Wade]

theSpace on North Bridge 3-18 Aug (not 5,12), 7.40pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Stephanie Taylor]

Playing Fate

Enkore Drama

A two-hander about a failing relationship, Playing Fate begins at the end and works

Zoo Southside, 4-26 Aug (even dates only), 2.00pm.

tw rating 4/5 | [Jessamine McHugh]

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