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33 PLEASANCE COURTYARD

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COMEDY

Frimston and Rowett: Huge Mistake
Taken for Granted Productions.

A disclaimer is necessary for this review: the version of this show did not, in fact, star Rob Frimston - who was ill - and it was hampered severely by a venue-wide powercut. Yet, a show that can brighten a room in even the most unfavourable of circumstances proves itself as one to watch. Many of the sketches contained within 'Frimston and Rowett: Huge Mistake' were witty, often pun-based and extremely fast-moving; all were laugh-out-loud funny. Their strongest moments were when the sketches were based on wordplay (palindromes, puns) but these were often so clever that their other recurring themes seem weak beside them. Nonetheless, this is excellent, but has the potential to be exceptional.

Just The Tonic at The Caves, Aug 2-26 (not 14), 6.15pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Joanna Barrow]

George Ryegold's God-In-A-Bag
George Ryegold

If you have ever pondered the theological and scientific significance of Battenberg and metal tea-pots, then this is the show for you. The story follows George as he proves himself incompetent at friendships, romance and professionalism, culminating in his heavily ironic proof of the existence of God; an illogically logical argument worthy to counter Douglas Adams's Babelfish. This show may not have you rolling in the aisles, and it somewhat lacks drive, but huge amounts of enjoyment are derived from the clever writing, sustaining a general atmosphere of good-humour. Furthermore, each actor in this is superb, creating fleshed-out and realistic characters whilst retaining their comic value. Perhaps not a divine revelation, but certainly a pleasurable experience.

Underbelly Bristo Square, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 1.45pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Jessamine McHugh]

Jessica Pidsley's I Can Make You Thin(k) Jessica Pidsley

In this multimedia stand-up show, self-help junkie Jess Pidsley offers her advice on how to love our own bodies. While some of the suggestions are fairly obvious, the comic elements overcome this to produce a show that is never boring, as Pidsley tackles everyday female problems such as unhelpful inner monologues, inconsistent clothes sizing and the relationship with food. The comedian combines personal experience of weight loss and accepting her body, and justifiable mystification at false ideals of female beauty, with a vibrant, lively performing style. Add to that some clever mock-adverts and the result is a thoroughly enjoyable show that has everyone laughing, both at their own foibles and at Pidsley's well-pitched, truthful tales.

Underbelly Bristo Square, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 1.40pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Emily Pulsford]



SNAP OF THE DAY: Have you visited the Fringe's Hunt & Darton Cafe and interactive art installation yet? Look out for a Q&A in next week's ThreeWeeks. Photo: Kat Gollock

Kerry Gilbert Triumphs
Kerry Gilbert

Kerry Gilbert's form of comedy doesn't really fit in a box. She dramatically re-enacts choice anecdotes, having split up with her long-term boyfriend in recent years, and entered a period of near-crisis - picture Jess from 'New Girl'. It feels like it should be character comedy, but apparently it's closer to autobiographical. Throwing herself into self-mockery, Gilbert gives an animated and physical performance, creating a fond cast of family members, school friends and strangers on the street. At times hilarious, the dramatic and personal monologue can equally be awkward to watch. She does break character in unpolished interludes, and occasionally has to check she has not forgotten any material but overall this is a brave one-woman show.

Just The Tonic at The Caves, 2-26 (not 14), 6.40pm. tw rating 3/5 | [Nathaniel Meyers]

Barbara Nice: Mrs Nice
Barbara Nice / The Assembly Rooms

This is character comedy at its finest. Janice Connolly plays Barbara Nice, an eccentric, bubbly and opinionated housewife from Stockport. A self-proclaimed fun-smuggler, she maintains that the most important thing in life is to make yourself available for fun and that is exactly what this show is all about. The character is flawlessly convincing and strikes up a brilliant, warm rapport with the audience by organising crowd-

surfing, sprightly sing-alongs and a game of musical chairs, among other party activities. She finds comedic fun in the mundane, from losing her umbrella to carrying out the domestic chores of a housewife. This is light-hearted, unrestrained fun, perfectly suited to the venue and an early afternoon crowd.

The Assembly Rooms, 1-25 Aug (not 2, 13), 2.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Nathaniel Meyers]

Jarlath Regan: The Audacity of Hope and the Inspirational Stupidity of Perseverance
Jarlath Regan / The Assembly Rooms

The set began with a whimsical Powerpoint of Jarlath Regan-related "Someecards", featuring carefree wit to amuse the audience as they entered. The comedian combined observational humour and intellect throughout the show, using his experiences to charm the crowd. Much of his set was built around quips about the audience and observation from within the gig, which was all very fluent. The comic's pre-written material covered topics ranging from recession, seeing bills as "suggestions rather than demands" to 'Pimp my Ride'. Although touching, Regan did sometimes get a tad sentimental on stage, using it as a platform to praise his family. However, some of his stories had many of the crowd rocking with laughter and it was an hour well spent.

The Assembly Rooms, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 5.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

Barry Castagnola In Where's Barry Barry Castagnola / EdCom Productions

"Where's Gary, the guy who is meant to be here?" shouts an audience member, twenty minutes into the show. He meant Barry I'm sure! Barry succeeded in fooling his audience. Barry is late, in bed to be exact, as we see on film. A variety of different characters and personalities grace the stage as we watch Barry make his way through Edinburgh with some interesting detours. The use of film is brilliant and innovative, providing a constant connection between the real Barry and his audience. Although some sketches drag ever so slightly, this merely maintains an impatient audience, feeding into the whole concept of the show. A confrontational, energetic and fantastic piece of character comedy.

Gilded Balloon at Third Door, 1-26 Aug, 7.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Alice Taylor]

Beard Joan of Laugh

You are watching 'Beard': two extremely talented young women, Rosa Robson and Matilda Wnek, bringing an original and brilliant production very much from the Cambridge school of comedy. An intelligently drawn up, character comedy sketch show, played as though watching a series of television programs and commercials. Musical interludes and accompaniments keep the fluidity and fun going: a very nice touch. Despite a few running jokes there seems to be little connecting the sketches, apart **cont>**

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★★★★★ 'Wild, raw... fieriness & heart' The List

The hit debut act! Underbelly, 9.10pm

cont> from their hilarity, but the set runs through faultlessly and keeps the audience laughing. Rosa is wonderfully animated throughout, and Matilda’s often deadpan delivery works perfectly alongside. These two are one to watch for the future, and well worth seeing now.

Assembly Hall, 2-27 (not 15) Aug, 4.00pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Conor Riordan]

Blind Date Ruined My Life
Taylor and Bird

Going to see this show was like watching something my dad had put together with his mate. Nick Taylor contended in ‘Blind Date’ twenty years ago, and this show is based around the problems he has since encountered in life. The performers were aware of their amateurishness, pulling off a few jokes relating to this, and I felt for them, as they had obviously made an effort to put together the show. However, for me, the humour simply failed to deliver; I felt I was tittering out of sympathy. That said, there were a few moments when they raised a decent laugh from the audience, even if it was mostly recorded footage of Taylor’s blind date poking fun at him.

Sweet Grassmarket, 6-26 Aug, 5.05pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Grace Hardy]

Born To Be Mild Andrew Watts
Andrew Watts used to be a fat, single loser. Now he has a girlfriend, has lost weight and has had to change his whole routine. Sporting a plummy accent, suit, tie and floppy hair, Watts looks like he belongs on the Tory front bench, a persona he plays up to with charts and maths jokes. At times he spends too long setting up gags that don’t quite warrant it and some standard fat loser material still makes it into the set. Overall though, he’s charming and assured enough ride out the rough bits, while jokes about happiness make a nice change from the standard lonely man fare. A solid performance from a comedian with a future.

The Shack Comedy Club & Nightclub, 1-25 Aug (not 13), 5.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Andrew Bell]

Mark Watson: The Information
Phil McIntyre Entertainments By Arrangement With Lisa Thomas Management

Fast-talking and whippet-smart, Mark Watson has a knack for finding the comic potential in every sentence - even if that sentence is just the word “ham” repeated over and over again, as he explains a misjudged phonecall to a meat-based customer helpline. This phonecall is just one of the things that caused the charmingly shambolic Bristolian to reassess how much of his information is out there, waiting to be misused by cabs drivers or bearded Scottish comedians. Of course, this doesn’t stop him from collecting information about his own audience, but this provides the basis for some wonderfully non-confrontational banter and an insight into one of Watson’s trademark schemes. You’d be a fool to miss it.

Assembly George Square, 1-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 7.40pm. tw rating 5/5 | [Holly Close]

Mark Little: THEbullsh*tARTIST
Bound and Gagged Comedy by arrangement with Glorious Management

Mark Little’s stage presence only declined after he ran up to the microphone and tap danced around it, Michael McIntyre style. He spent too long charting the demographics in the room to little avail in his consequent jokes, losing the interest and engagement of his audience quickly. He did not radiate confidence and authority as a comedian, and couldn’t stand up to heckling - although once his nerves had resettled he did get some laughs. The set lacked a coherent structure and Little was rarely able to get an enthusiastic reaction from the audience. The best moment came when he recited a surprisingly funny poem; more of that would’ve helped. There are far better comedians charging far less money for admission.

Assembly George Square, 1-27 Aug, 10.20pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Joe Mountford-Smith]

Noise Next Door: Bring The Noise
Bound And Gagged Comedy by arrangement with Comic Voice Management

It is impossible to ignore The Noise Next Door. The sheer energy of this talented five-man improv troupe, together with their raucous delivery, will have you gripped from the outset. Relentlessly entertaining, the group take the most random suggestions the audience can throw at them and turn them into riotous sketches with formidable speed. The results include songs, scenes and even an entire play: in this case, a village amdram production of ‘The Dark Knight Rises’, themed around an infected well and with a bewildered Geordie Wombatman as the hero. It is the songs, though, which are the highlight of the show. Clever, irrepressibly funny and, of course, very loud, The Noise are fast becoming a Fringe favourite.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1 – 27 Aug (not 8, 14), 5.00pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Sarah Richardson]

Nut Allegory
Silky
Silky’s a chirpy chap, clearly comfortable in front of an audience and equipped with an agreeable manner, which meant that his show was a pleasant enough affair. However, at no point did it move beyond pleasant and this caused the hour to drag on. This was probably due to the absence of a clear structure, so the audience was left listening to lonely jokes drifting through the room without a clear destination. In fairness, I ought to say that other spectators appeared to enjoy the show far more than I did, so if you are in the mood for a free-flowing and reasonably acceptable experience then this could just be the show for you.

The Stand Comedy Club II, 1-26 Aug (not 13), 2.20pm. tw rating 2/5 | [Nicholas Jones]

5-Steps To Being German 2.0 - Free Paco Erhard/ Free Festival
According to Paco Erhard, there are actually more than five steps to becoming German, but if you’re worried about that then you’re already too German. Indeed the show is more a playful and riotous look at German and British stereotypes than a rule book for the German psyche. Erhard aims to prove that not everyone hates Germans and that the Brits can be just as annoying. Eventually the ‘Nazi/ You-beat-us-in-the-World-Wars’ jokes start to get a bit samey, especially as Erhard discusses the need for the Germans to create a new national history they can be proud of. Nevertheless, this is a triumphant return for Erhard. Make sure you get there early for a seat!

Laughing Horse @ The Counting House, 2-26 August, 7.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Anna McDonald]

Rachel Stubbings Is Stubbing Out Problems
Something For The Weekend
Agony aunt Rachel Stubbings came to the Fringe to sort out other people’s issues. Instead we end up witnessing her own. It might sound predictable, but Stubbings’ exceptional performance (I doubt you’ll ever see anyone eat a creme egg with more emotional resonance) was enough in itself to keep her from losing her apparently troubled crowd. More ad-libbing to the tune of the audience’s contributions (we were asked to write down our problems before the show) might have provided more excitement in the room, but I actually thought the performance would have worked better as the dramatic monologue it seemed to turn into at the end, rather than an interactive hour of stand-up.

Underbelly, 1-27 Aug (not 14), 3.00pm.
tw rating 3/5 | [Rachel Aroesti]

Return Of The Lumberjacks (Back By Poplar Demand)
Craig Campbell / Glenn Wool / Stewart Francis
As the pre-show montage confirmed, Canada has given a lot to modern culture, including three great comedians: Craig Campbell, Glenn Wool and Stewart

Francis - performing together as The Lumberjacks! As MC, Campbell was excellent, telling well-honed anecdotes about his previous visits to Scotland and riffing off some nationality-based audience banter, whilst bounding around the stage like a Muppet version of a friendly mountain lion. Wool was much more aloof and cool, performing his material on travel, drinking and divorce with brilliant comic timing. Master of the one-liner Francis was also on good form, though I struggled to connect fully with the constant conveyor belt of jokes. Canada should be proud to have produced such great talent.

The Assembly Rooms, 2-26 Aug (not 13, 20), 8.10pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Holly Close]

Eleanor Tiernan - Rogue
Eleanor Tiernan / The Stand Comedy Club

Irish born and bred, Eleanor Tiernan likes to focus her gags on where she comes from. Some might say that this shows a lack of originality, but Tiernan makes it work, and then some; her observations concerning nonsensical geography plus her willingness to laugh at her home town, combined with a laid-back delivery, made for an hour that simply got the laughs. She is just as comfortable making jokes away from home, though; social observations were also made: namely, vaginas are becoming too pruned and Festivals shouldn’t be family-friendly. Random, yes, but delivered with comic precision. Her delivery is somehow a little hesitant, which sometimes affected the flow and ease of performance, but it’s a small consideration, as she is evidently a fine comedian.

The Stand Comedy Club III and IV, 1-26 Aug (not 2, 13), 2.20pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Bethanie Pochin]

THEATRE
Captain Ferguson’s School for Balloon Warfare
Oracle Theatre, Inc

A heart-warming monologue sees U.S. Army Captain Thomas Ferguson enrolling the audience in his Balloon Warfare School. Written by Isaac Rathbone, the play is based on WWI balloon aviator, Captain Chandler. The degree of historical accuracy is unclear, but this didn’t distract from the performance by David Nelson, which was charmingly poignant, with superb delivery and a facial expression for every emotion. With his insecurities and ambitions exposed, it was easy to both dislike and empathise with Ferguson, as his desperation to prove himself drove him to crazed decisions. At times the language became a little tedious and the attempts at audience participation seemed superfluous to the act. However, for those seeking theatrical fulfilment it was a satisfying watch.

Assembly Roxy, 1-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 11.15am.
tw rating 3/5 | [Hannah Sweetnam]

Captain Ko And The Planet Of Rice Dancing Brick/ Escalator East To Edinburgh
I was mesmerised by the fact that in ‘Captain Ko and the Planet of Rice’, the captain was a woman, and not the man I had expected. Then I was also pleasantly surprised by both actors’ abilities and their costumes. This was then cancelled out by the plot, which appeared to have been dreamed and conjured up on some form of hallucinogenic drug, because no sober mind could make sense of how three unrelated parts of the play fitted together. The show, meant to be about the discovery of a new life form on a planet appearing – I think – to possess only rice, had nothing but good actors who made the best of a bad situation.

Underbelly Cowgate, 2-26 Aug (not 13), 8.00pm.
tw rating 2/5 | [Rachel Campbell]

A Clockwork Orange
Action To The Word
‘A Clockwork Orange’ is one of my favourite books, so for me it was incredible to see it come to life in this astounding performance. Through superb direction, production, choreography, scripting and casting this play captures the real essence

of the book. The actors are perfect for their roles, with a notable mention to Martin McCreadie who is as beautiful and captivating as he is terrifying, playing the perfect Alex. The script remained true to the book while being understandable and the choreography had me on the edge of my seat. This portrayal highlights the underlying themes of the novel amazingly and is electric, thought-provoking and thrilling. An amazing performance that does the classic novel proud.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug, 3.40pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Miranda Cannibal]

1984 EmpathEyes Theatre in Association With UCLU
An interesting adaptation of George Orwell’s ‘1984’, performed by a young company creating political and psychological theatre, this show leaves the audience with much to think about. A clever use of minimal props in this production makes the individual nature of the protagonist, Winston Smith, shine through, and Theo Gordon, who portrays Smith, perfectly channels the character’s apathy and anger towards Big Brother. Kate Hesketh’s Julia is sexy and confident, offering the best performance in the production. The establishment’s O’Brien, played by Michael Chessum, is clearly separated from the others by clever use of costuming, while the technical elements are strong. Some scenes need sharpening up, but this is very good for so young a theatre company.

Zoo, 3-27 August (not 8, 15, 22) Aug, 6.40pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Conor Riordan]

After The Rainfall
Curious Directive

Curious Directive weaves together four stories that span four epochs using carefully crafted movement, multi-media and music. The stories’ thematic base comes from the story of John, who has written a book ‘After the Rainfall’ in 2022, which describes the communication of ants. Just as the workings of an ant colony can reflect the way human ideas travel, the piece intelligently explores how artefacts, objects and photos can symbolise moments in history and provide tangible focal points, when time is ephemeral. A touching scene between Rashida and Satu, meeting on a train, is believable and engaging, as are the other conversations between travellers. Unfortunately the overwhelming amount of information can sometimes cloud potential for empathy with the characters’ losses and stories.

Pleasance Dome, 1-27 Aug, 3.40pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Isobel Rogers]

A Real Man’s Guide To Sainthood Milk Presents
If the Famous Five retold the myth of St. George in an attic full of junk it might look something like this. Part ‘Boy’s Own’ adventure, part allegorical unravelling of gender identity, it’s performed with flair and frenetic energy, utilising an appealingly scrappy style which belies its inspired ingenuity. Overhead projectors, mirrors and tricks of light are used effectively throughout, creating striking images from simple props. As innocent George becomes the hero he’s expected to be, there’s a subtle and unnerving shift of tone made all the more effective by a playful beginning. At a time when ideals of patriotism and athleticism saturate the media, this silly, striking show is a timely dissection of the conflicts of modern masculinity.

Underbelly Cowgate, 2-26 Aug (not 9, 10), 6.40pm. tw rating 4/5 | [David Fargnoli]

Bottleneck
HighTide Festival Theatre / Escalator East to Edinburgh
Playwright Luke Barnes has two original plays on at the Fringe: ‘Bottleneck’ and ‘Chapel Street’. ‘Bottleneck’ is the historical offering, exploring one of the most culturally significant disasters in the history of Northern England from the perspective of a Liverpooldlian fourteen-year old. Where Barnes really succeeds is in fixing the play’s emotional heart away from the disaster (no spoilers), which allows them to break down its horror and transform it into a symbol of a wider issue: working class political malaise. The script

is itself bottlenecked – a little looser at the ends and tighter in the middle – but it’s still a good bet that Barnes is one of the best new writer at the Fringe, and James Cooney is exceptional as Greg.

Pleasance Courtyard, 1-26 Aug, 2.00pm.
tw rating 5/5 | [Thom May]

Dirty Barbie Whole Theatre
The saying goes: family – can’t live with them, can’t live without them. As Deedee plays around this point, prepare to be taken along on her effortlessly honest and wonderfully cathartic journey. Putting the audience at ease with her Southern Yankee twang, Deedee’s gift at simultaneously playing a part onstage and playing herself saves this show of true-life tales from becoming self-pitying or glib. Covering Christmas cards to college, abuse to alcoholism, this is that rare play that many people can connect with, regardless of sex, or nationality. So long as girls continue to play with Barbie, may Deedee continue to tell her story.

Assembly Hall, 2-27 Aug (not 14, 21), 1.30pm.
tw rating 4/5 | [Ciara Knowles]

Appointment With The Wicker Man National Theatre of Scotland / The Assembly Rooms
Life begins to imitate art in National Theatre of Scotland’s bawdy comedy ‘An Appointment with the Wicker Man’. TV actor Rory Mulligan joins The Loch Parry Players’ “spooky glam” re-imagining of horror classic ‘The Wicker Man’, and suspects something fishy is going on when no one will tell him what happened to the actor he’s replacing. So over-the-top daft you could class it as an adult pantomime, its off-the-wall silliness makes for a hugely entertaining show, even if not all of the jokes stick (Paul Riley’s Fran is a particular bum note). A must-see for fans of ‘Still Game’ and ‘Chewin’ the Fat’, this wacky musical is as Scottish as it is funny.

The Assembly Rooms, 1-26 Aug (not 6, 13, 20), 3.10pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Patricia-Ann Young]

A Midsummer Night’s Dream Drunk Tank Productions
Fast quick moving – stupendous – 50s song – the apocalypse – nuclear smoke and Oberon wearing a gas mask. Titania with the sweetest voice rendering ‘Summertime’. Words can hardly keep up in describing this fast moving production! Modern Shakespeare adaptations aren’t usually to everyone’s taste, but this tremendous short-cut to the heart of ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ could be an exception. A versatile, large and most talented cast of young Irish actors and singers puts this exaggerated, speeded-up version on stage with some flamboyance. Just one hour long, it still contains all the essential threads of the original play. And Puck played by a grumpy Irish man? That is what Shakespeare must have thought of when he created the part!

Paradise in St Augustine’s, 4-27 Aug (not 13, 20), 4.30pm. tw rating 4/5 | [Veronika Kallus]

And No More Shall We Part Hampstead Theatre
Bring a mountain of tissues, because there won’t be a dry eye in the house. A heartbreaking new drama by Tom Holloway, ‘And No More Shall We Part’ looks at the consequences of a lifetime’s love staying strong in the hardest circumstances. Pam and Dom have shared their life together, brought up and let go of their children; now Pam is sick and it will only get worse. So the couple have tough choices to make, including how to spend their final moments together. With a clever, revolving set, real food, and a plot that hurts so very much, join Pam and Dom as she lies in their bed, belly full of pills, and he has to let her go.

Traverse Theatre, 4-26 Aug (not 6, 13, 20) times vary.
tw rating 3/5 | [Charlotte Mortimer-Talman]

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