

the daily edition 11.08.05 latest reviews it's free!

ThreeWeeks

here we go again, even more threeweeks reviews...

welcome...

Well, here we go again, with another daily helping of top quality reviews from ThreeWeeks - you're easy-to-use guide to what's good and bad at the Edinburgh Festival. Our weekly edition is now out and about all around town - it's the one with Omid Djalili on the cover - and there's even more reviews in there, including a round up of most of the reviews that have appeared here in the Daily Edition so far.

Don't forget you can access every single review we've published so far online at www.threeweeks.co.uk - and while you're there you can win free tickets, download these here Daily Editions as PDFs, and access the ThreeWeeks podcasts (the first audio interviews of the Festival will appear later today). All good stuff - so go online.

And see you same time tomorrow for more reviews.

caro@threeweeks.co.uk

win win win

Every day on the ThreeWeeks website there's a stack of free tickets to win (well, five pairs). To win all you have to do is surf on over to www.threeweeks.co.uk and tell us which of these fine shows you'd like to win tickets for. You've got until 5pm Thursday to enter, all tickets are for Friday shows.

Meat

Underbelly, 9.15pm Fri 12th

Mikey the Pikey

Pleasance Dome, 3.40pm Fri 12th

Chris Neill

Pleasance Courtyard, 3.25pm Fri 12th

Bubonic Play

Pleasance Courtyard, 6.40pm Fri 12th

Toulson & Harvey

Pleasance Courtyard, 7.15pm Fri 12th

reviews

CHILDREN'S SHOWS

A Birthday Party Adventure with Hans Christian Andersen and his Fairytale Friends

Frantic Redhead Productions

If you're looking for something to cunningly get the little ones outside for a while this summer, join Hans Christian ("we call him HC") Andersen for a lovely outdoor adventure celebrating his 200th birthday. Along the way we meet beautifully costumed characters and hear parts of some of his famous stories (including The Red Shoes, The Emperor's New Clothes, The Little Mermaid and Thumbelina). For those already familiar with the fairytale,

it's a real treat, and for those not it's a good performance of some brilliant yarns. Take care to notice the weather on your planned day, but if it's sunny and you don't want to be cooped up in a hot theatre, this could be the perfect excursion. [el]

Danish Cultural Institute, 4-15 Aug, 2.00pm (3.05pm), £6.50 (£5.00), fpp 8. *tw rating* 4/5

Pirates!

Grapple

Yaarr! I was hoping to see some pirate action on the Fringe and I'm glad to say this didn't disappoint. From the moment we enter the venue the cast are playing up for the crowd, offering to draw beards on the young ladies and gents in the seats (I declined). The story isn't very complex which makes it easy for the kids to follow, but the actors have enough yo-ho-ho to keep adults from getting bored too. It's colourful, inventive and most of all great fun. Grab your peg legs, your parrots, and your skull'n'crossbone flags and head off to see it. [el]

Rocket, 8-13 Aug, 11.50am (12.50am), £7.00 (£4.00), fpp 13. *tw rating* 4/5

COMEDY SHOWS

The Boy Who Cried Whale

Los Albatross

Sketch shows are, by their very nature, generally hit and miss and not troubled by anything too cumbersome like a story. But this is a sketch show with a plot! If that sounds remarkable, then seeing this show is even more so. The quick fire sketches are acted by a troupe of young comics who quickly have you rolling in the aisles, and it gets even funnier when you work out where the story is going. As a little hint, the main protagonist is called 'Steve Hitler'.

The possibility that this might offend your sensibilities is the only reason you should not see this. And if it does you probably shouldn't be in Edinburgh in August. [rj]

Underbelly, 7-28 Aug (not 16), 5:30pm (8:25pm), prices vary, fpp 23. *tw rating* 5/5

Ava Vidal - Misfit

People pouring out their problems can often be annoying and embarrassing, but Ava Vidal makes it a comedy art form. After all, few people can make a joke about domestic violence and get away with it. Don't be misled however, this isn't therapy and tear jerkers, this misfit is full of punchy, risqué humour and is certainly no pushover. Although not always traversing new comic terrain, with conversational humour focusing on her being black, a stint as a prison officer and her time at public school, her strong personality encourages originality. Talking to you like she's known you for years, Ava, in an anti-heckling move, actually got the audience to hurl compliments at her. Funny, witty and engaging, this is a comedian worth watching. [aa]

Underbelly, 4 - 28 Aug (not 17), 8:10pm (9:05pm), prices vary, fpp 21. *tw rating* 4/5

David Benson's Conspiracy

Cabaret Festival Highlights

Imagine my confusion in a scenario, where having taken my seat expecting stand-up comedy; I witness something very different. Without warning, a man in a blue tracksuit with a tin foil hat leaps onto stage and starts singing cabaret. I was confused. This confusion and my anxiousness quickly melted away though as Benson's eclectic concoction of conspiracy themed stand-up and cabaret show tunes suddenly became very appealing. With critiques on liberalism, 9/11, Christianity and David Ike, this has to be one of the smartest comedies at the Fringe this year. Although I occasionally got the feeling David runs out of topics as the show reaches its conclusion, his

persuasive, argumentative and informative comedy is refreshing. Sit back, listen, and then laugh. [ds]

Assembly @ George Street, 5 - 29 Aug (not 17), 3:05pm (4:15pm), prices vary, fpp 30. *tw rating* 3/5

An Audience with Jack Frost

Z Theatre Company

Jack Frost invites the audience on a journey of upside-down, fairy tale adventure. Now, in my childhood perverse fairy stories had a clear moral message, even if it meant kicking the shit out of a bumptious Cinderella. Here however we have none. Instead we get bedtime stories gone bad, really bad at times, sinking so low as to use obvious sexual innuendo for cheap effect. Use of the stage and props was also largely unimaginative, which is a pity as this is the area in which this supposedly magical adventure could have got its hands dirty with some off-beat visual effects. All in all this audience remained unimpressed as a jumpy Jack Frost failed to weave a spell of any sort... [lw]

Venue 45, 9 - 19 Aug (not 14), 7:00pm (7:45pm), fpp 20. *tw rating* 2/5

John Shuttleworth - Fawn Again

John Shuttleworth

The transcendence into a senile, second-childhood provides popular pickings for character comedians, and having given up the cappuccino for the Mellow Birds and the pastilles of middle-age for the now fashionable hues of late autumn, John's feeling a bit light-headed. The bulk of his efforts are concentrated into his songs, and with a hilarious stock of material the Sheffield pensioner lampoons the phoenix nights-esque cabaret world of industrial England. The songs are interspersed with stand up however, which is stuttering, pedestrian and overstretched. It would seem overall that John's a bit of a one trick pony, and a forgetful one at that. [mm]

Pleasance Courtyard, 7-12 Aug, 3:30pm (4:30pm), prices vary, fpp 41. *tw rating* 3/5

Eugene Mirman Presents Himself

Olivia Wingate Productions Ltd in association with Neil Masters

It's Eugene's first visit to the UK and with his love of Scotch it looks like he's come to the right place. Through his refreshing, relaxed set we are treated to some hilarious treasures like the teen bible and the homophobic phone company. Eugene's show is wonderfully crafted, mixing recorded phone conversations and video clips in with his live material to make for a lively set full of laughs. One of the best things about the show is that you get a feeling of what Eugene is like in real life, a genuinely funny man who can find humour anywhere. Eugene's advice on how to treat a woman should not be missed. [op]

Underbelly, 4 - 28 Aug (not 16), 9:00pm (9:50pm), prices vary, fpp 32. *tw rating* 4/5

MUSICALS AND OPERA

Hats

American High School Theatre Festival

This sentimental pastiche follows the life, loves and inspirations of Scottish painter John Duncan Ferguson. An original work, it is the brainchild of Molly Hoffman Aiken who has combined song and narration to tell Ferguson's story, based on his sketches. Visits to magical Paris, the particular love of a pretty girl in a hat, and the important of colour in his work all come across well through song and commentary. The ensemble numbers are strong, with impressive harmonies from the relatively young cast and title song 'Hats' and sweet duet 'We're One' are enjoyable. However, the lacklustre performances from some of the cast were evidence of nerves which did hamper a potentially great musical. [sm]

Demarco Racy Art House, 10, 12 Aug, times vary, £6.00 (£4.00), fpp 120. *tw rating* 3/5

Rise Up

HW's Rambiko Project

Loud, brash and garish, this rock musical about heaven, hell and soul-mates might appeal to some, but definitely not me. The story is prosaic and the songs are cumbersome. Even though this was only the second performance and it's not really fair to complain about technical matters, but the sound was dreadful, when the songs are being drowned out by the band it makes a nonsensical plot even harder to comprehend. On the plus side, Andrew Pattison who played 'Lucifer' gave an amazing performance; confident, suave and cocky, a very talented guy who deserves better material than this. [hks]

Demarco Racy Art House, 6, 9, 12, 14, 18, 19 Aug, 7:00pm (8:00pm), prices vary, fpp 124. *tw rating* 2/5

MUSIC

Sandy Brechin, Ewan Wilkinson & Ronan Martin

Stoneport Agency

There's much to love about Sandy: his sly, knowing chat; the wee march as he harmonises and, of course, his accordion. He is joined on stage by fresh-faced folkies Euan and Ronan (fac Peebles and Skye, on guitar and fiddle), both of whom stake a claim to be the star of the show. The highlight of the set is Ewan's 'Far From the Sea', ten minutes in, but the quality stays high all the way through. As well as originals, they play exquisitely through centuries-old songs, Richard Thompson songs and songs that still have working titles, all of which are liable to be hummed on the way home from the friendly Acoustic Music Centre. [tt]

Acoustic Music Centre @ St Brides, 9 Aug, 8:30pm (10:00pm), £8.00 (£6.00), fpp 111. *tw rating* 4/5

Luminescent Orchestrïi

Luminescent Orchestrïi perform an infectious blend of ska, punk, Romanian gypsy and Balkan folk, which is going to light up your life! Discover this totally original group and let them turn you on to a unique blend of sound you never knew existed. The show is a relentless toe tapping furious frenzy of fun, in fact I absolutely defy anyone to sit still. Within minutes the twanging bass sound of the guitar on and the drunken fiddles will have worked their way in and then resistance is useless; your toes will tap and your hands will clap! These guys play with such natural flair and a real sense of fun in what they do. Drink and be merry to their sophisticated, crazy sound. [ljh]

The Spiegel Garden, 8 - 16 Aug (not 12, 13), 6:00pm (7:10pm), £8.00, fpp 105. *tw rating* 5/5

THEATRE

Macbeth Killing Time

Heart Productions

Tormented and haunted by murderous deeds, Macbeth has been in limbo for 400 years awaiting his fate. Completely alone after the slaughter of those dearest to him, he is visited by spirits Delos and Kramm who put him on trial for murder. Billed as the sequel to Shakespeare's Scottish play, this is a strong piece of theatre from Heart Productions. The mix of the Bard's script and Frank Bramwell's words works well here and is helped by the enthusiastic actors. This is an accomplished and interesting performance of a play, which, at 90 minutes, challenges the three actors to the height of their ability. But they tackle it with passion and Macbeth's remorse verges on the endearing. [sm]

Rocket, dates vary, 7:00pm (8:30pm), £7.00 (£5.00), fpp 162. *tw rating* 4/5

Silly Cow *Crumpet Theatre Company*

"Just because we're special and talented, it doesn't mean we don't bleed." A satire of the backstabbing world of journalism with a twist, Silly Cow is a gleefully dark play. It revolves around a bitchy tabloid journalist and her libel court case after slating a classically trained actress for her lack of acting skills and her surplus of love handles. Ben Elton's script is the highlight, full of vicious but hilarious digs at agents, actors, writers and journalists, but the cast don't quite manage to deliver them with the vitriol required to achieve their full effect. They settle into their parts as the play progresses, but never fully become the nasty characters needed to complement script. [avs]

Greyfriars Kirk House, 8-14 Aug, 8:05pm (9:15pm), £5.00 (£4.00), fpp 179. *tw rating* 3/5

The Odd Couple

Assembly Theatre and Marshall Cordell

Stepping into the shoes of characters in an old classic is difficult, but Alan Davies and Bill Bailey fit their roles like a glove.

Played with excellent comedy timing, the titular pair move in with each other to cope with divorce. They fill the stage with the chemistry of friendship, an explosive one at that. Supported by an energetic, capable cast, this is a strong production that manages to make the "odd couple" extreme in their neuroses without sacrificing their humanity. This has lost nothing of its charm, and as the run continues, the domestic debacle will only get better. Some accents wavered and there was more shouting than speaking at times, but that's a moot point. Definitely one to watch. [aa]

Assembly@Assembly Hall, 5 - 29 Aug (not 15), 3:15pm (5:00pm), prices vary, fpp 168. *tw rating* 5/5

Katie and Hugo Are Magic *CFKA*

Katie and Hugo have been "performing" together for six years, but after their first review Hugo decides their act must change if they are ever going to be awarded the much-coveted five stars. This is a wickedly satirical and brilliantly conceived idea; Katie and Hugo believe that their relationship is a happy one until their sexual performances are seen from the perspective of scrupulous critics. Agents, publicity stunts, physical theatre, over zealous fans and pretentious reviews are all subjected to an equal dose of good-humoured mockery. Even though the play is predominately a comedy and has some fantastically surreal moments, it also offers a serious and intelligent look at relationships. Very clever, frequently funny, poignant and refreshingly original. [hks]

Greyfriars Kirk House, 8 - 13 Aug, 1:20pm (2:20pm), £5.00 (£4.00), fpp 157. *tw rating* 5/5

A History of Ham *Gresham's*

I have my suspicions about any show that requires my presence before noon, but I was glad to find this ten o'clock show filled with a brilliantly contemporary montage of the times and trials of the theatre. From Bart 'Oedipus' Simpson, to Oscar 'Wilde Boy', through to Romeo 'Beckham' Montague, Gresham's School brings you a comical performance by an astoundingly professional group of youngsters that haven't been simply placed by an older force, but know exactly what they're talking about. Although a little difficult to follow in places, each actor gives it their all so that I found not a single dull moment in this play. The history of theatre has never looked this good in the morning! [nj]

C 100, 8 - 13 Aug, 10:00am (10:50am), £6.50 (£5.50) (£4.50 C), fpp 153. *tw rating* 4/5

The Spectacular Fall and Rise of the Piejus Sisters

Imprint Theatre Company

The end of this performance did nothing to abate my confusion throughout the show. A convoluted and not altogether clear storyline involved a psychic gorilla, a sex mad clown, a gypsy fortune-teller, and

cont >>

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Set in the 80s, Salford Stuffers is Coronation Street meets Shameless;
you'll laugh, you'll cry...
Venue 45, 12.15pm 8th - 13th August

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cont>> a buxom, gin-addicted circus performer. Dark secrets have been buried deep by the clown, but with the arrival of our gypsy friend and mascot gorilla, his carefully preserved reality begins to fall apart - with drastic consequences. The murder and mystery, coupled with talented acting could have made an exciting piece but ultimately they were let down by a weak script. [jam]
Southside, Aug 5 - 21 (not 9,16), 6:00pm (7:05pm), £6.00 (£4.00), fpp 181. tw rating 2/5

Watermelon Barbie
American High School Theatre Company
This touching, sentimental production, written and performed by an American High School Theatre group is typically clichéd whilst still being high quality. The show deals with numerous landmark stages of the teenage transition into adulthood as experienced by two best friends. Boyfriends, bereavement, pregnancy, depression and bullying all threaten the girls' friendship, but an ingenious twist revealed in the concluding scenes reaffirms the unique bond they hold and illustrates how friendship can triumph in the most touching and shocking ways. Overlooking the cheesiness, the impressive acting and beautifully surprising plot makes this show a great high school production. [jmb]
Rocket, 7 - 13 Aug (not 8, 11, 12 Aug), times vary, £6.00 (£4.00), fpp 189. tw rating 3/5

Whodidit?
Bigrillage Theatre Company
Apparently this show was a hit in 1993. Well so were fluorescent, shiny hotpants, but you don't see those being resurrected any time soon. This spoof murder mystery, set in a country house, didn't have much substance to start with. The dialogue was devoid of wit, the jokes were as amusing as a slap in the face, and the acting was overdone. To their credit, some people were genuinely laughing, but they must have been either family members or the sort of folk who enjoy a terrible pantomime in their local community hall once a year. Not so much Cluedo, as clueless. Who did it? Who cares! [aa]
Augustine's, 8 - 13 Aug, 7:00pm (7:50pm), £7.00 (£6.00), fpp 190. tw rating 1/5

A Remarkable Story
Syracuse University Drama Dept.
In 1988, a bomb exploded on Pan Am flight 103, killing 270 people. Thirty-five of them were students from Syracuse University returning home from a semester abroad in London. Drawing on letters, journals and poems of the victims, this play is a dramatic tribute to the students who lost their lives in the crash and the empathy of the people of Lockerbie where the debris landed. The acting is passionate and emotional, effectively invoking the grief and loss felt by those left behind. However, by focusing too much on personal grief and the aftermath, it chooses to miss an opportunity to engage with the social and political background as a way to gain insight into similar challenges today. [avs]
Quaker Meeting House, 8-13 Aug, 4:15pm (5:45pm), £8.00 (£6.00), fpp 174. tw rating 3/5

Faust
Theatr Nowy, Assembly Theatre and Marshall Cordell
Many productions bill themselves as being an "adult fairy tale", but in most cases that means nothing more than lots of screaming and swearing over traditional childhood motifs. But Theatr Nowy recreate a truly sublime morality play with this production of Faust. The set and art direction are stunning and the players are uniformly magnificent. A terrifying Mephisto, who summons ghosts with every turn, torments Faust's lumbering pathos and there were many points at which his magic seemed truly supernatural. Although it obviously has not been written for non-Polish speakers, as there are frequent lengthy monologues, the play is easy enough to follow and the language gives an extra element to the dreamlike hell conjured. [am]
Assembly@George Street, 5 - 29 Aug (not 9, 16), 5:40pm (6:50pm), prices vary, fpp 147. tw rating 4/5

The Jew of Malta
Teatro Della Contraddizione (Milan)
Perhaps more relevant now than it ever has been; Marlowe's controversial play is here given an interesting spin. The Jews, Christians and Muslims are marked by their distinctive masks and movements, raising interesting issues of identity. Well, that's how this should have been, instead of the grotesque mess of thespian excess that it actually is. The contrived choreography and intricate masks seem to be at the expense of any kind of comprehensibility. Those wearing masks are muffled, and those who aren't speak in heavy, possibly laboured accents that are entirely impenetrable. This would be fine if the play were not entirely dialogue driven, but it is. A wasted opportunity, but do pick up a flyer to check out the masks. [am]
Southside, 6-28 Aug (not 16), 7:50pm (9:35pm), £9.00 (£7.50), fpp 157. tw rating 1/5

Dylan Thomas In America
Amulet
If you love, like, or have ever even heard of Dylan Thomas, you absolutely must see this play. Peter Read brings Thomas so completely to life in his one-man show that he sparkles. After the performance you feel you have actually spent an evening with the self-proclaimed "son of a sloth and a turnip". Arriving in the US, we follow the "voice on wheels" as he tours the lecture theatres of America, both offending and charming everyone in sight. The poets' legendary alcoholism and promiscuity are illustrated with tact and hilarity respectively. Catch this while you can, it's only running for a couple more days and you really will be missing out if you don't see it. Brilliant. [lc]
Venue 13, 5 - 13 Aug, 9:00pm (10.10pm), £7.00 (£5.00), fpp 144. tw rating 5/5

Religion Cabaret: with 'Divinityland' & Rainbow Swastika Alien Encounter *Anthony Padgett*
It's another one of those shows that even with such a long title needs much explanation. Anthony Padgett is a religious artist and the show follows his trek to spread his brand of multi-faithism to the world, through the bizarre combination of micro-documentaries and visual slides. Though humorous in places - especially when he launches into a stand up routine - generally the performance is tired attempt to convert the Edinburgh public to his way of thinking. Like most pushy religions, Anthony Padgett fails and no amount of singing, dancing and self-belief can stop this from being anything but a Dave Gorman wannabe. Religious zealots and atheist extremists alike will want Religion Cabaret sending to hell. [ckn]
ClubWEST, 8 - 14 Aug, 12:00pm (1:00pm), £8.00 (36.00), fpp 174. tw rating 2/5

Mini - Break *Bess Productions*
Joe is "king of the call centre" - a children's clown desperate for bookings, but who doesn't do balloons and exists in a continuous loop of disappointment, chasing the unobtainable 'mini - break' bonus, whilst coming to terms with being a failure in love, life and pretty much everything else. We get to spend a day in Joe's life and suffer the stress and despair he is put through daily. Beautifully played, in a style similar to 'The Office', by a personable and appealing cast, I found this hugely entertaining and strangely traumatic! [hks]
Underbelly, 4 - 28 Aug (not 14), 3:50pm (4:40pm), prices vary, fpp 165. tw rating 4/5

Kafkaesque *Z Theatre Company*
This is an ambitious play that attempts to explore the influences behind Franz Kafka's literary works. Against an excellent Klezmer-inspired soundtrack, skilfully choreographed physical theatre and inventive shadow puppetry contribute to the sinister atmosphere and for the most part, the performances are strong. Although poignant attention was given to the tempestuous relationship with his father and religion, at only 45 minutes long, a little more time could have been afforded to other factors in his life that may have encouraged his writing. It struggled slightly to find the balance between the real life scenes and the dramatisation of Kafka's

work, but overall this was a dramatic production that strove to create intelligent theatre - and that's no bad thing. [aa]
Venue 45, 8 - 19 Aug (not 14), 5:00pm (5:45pm), £5.00 (£3.00), fpp 157. tw rating 3/5

The Lady of the House *doomsgloom productions*
If you can make a half an hour show drag, you seriously need more material. A lady and her maid discuss the meaning of life; given that theatre is a largely a media for middle-class intellectuals, and that every middle class intellectual in the world has had this discussion a hundred times, probably long into the night and getting incredibly heated, it seems both pointless and impossible to make this so boring. I was waiting for the dramatic ending, and I don't think I'm ruining it for anybody by saying, it never came. Whoever named this theatre company knew what they were talking about. [ep]
Underbelly, 4 - 20 Aug, 11:30am (12:00pm), £6.50 (£5.50), fpp 158. tw rating 1/5

The Story of the Panda Bears told by a Saxophonist who has a Girlfriend in Frankfurt *Rouge28 Theatre*
Waking up beside a strange girl with no memory of the night before, Michel plans to spend nine nights with her, getting to know her. What follows is a bizarrely intense sexual relationship, controlled entirely by the mysterious girl. The coupling is highly charged, and cuts out any sense of a reality that may be going on around them; in fact it seems unlikely that the woman actually exists in reality. Fascinating in its oddness, the show leaves open many questions about both the characters and their situation that seems to span the gap between the real world and the world of dreams. An interesting and surreal study of an intimate and alien relationship. [ep]
Greyfriars Kirk House, 8 - 14 Aug, 2:45pm (3:45pm), £5.00 (£4.00), fpp 182. tw rating 4/5

Abigail's Party *33 Company*
My idea of true hell is an awkward, forced conversation with a stranger. Abigail's Party is an hour and a half's worth of strained smiles that gradually gives way to drunken chaos. Yes, this is uncomfortable humour at its best, with the kind of subtle touches that make Mike Leigh's strange play so well known. The timing is at times brilliant, with Ollie Bennett mastering Tony's dry humour much to the audience's glee. The audience giggle throughout, mostly to break the cringe-worthy silences that creep up time and time again. The pace could have generally been snappier and a scrappy finale took the tarnish off what was otherwise a fine production. [nc]
PendVringle, 9 - 14 Aug, 7:30pm (8:40pm), £8.00 (£6.00), fpp 128. t/w rating 4/5

Lunch in Venice *Demarco Rocket Productions*
Fine art, culture and good food provide the conversational stimulation in this Nick Dear play, performed by the increasingly impressive Arnold School theatre group. Never ending pizza is on the menu as five English school children enjoy lunch in Venice, casually mulling over art galleries, the finer points of caramelising brown sugar and world affairs, in a performance that benefits from both a quick, witty script and a cast far surpassing their secondary school age. The show is at times slightly static but this does little to detract from the fine characterisation of the cast, each with a definite role to play within the proceedings. Many professional shows gracing Fringe stages this August will do well to recreate a performance of this calibre. [jh]
Demarco Rascy Art House, 8 - 13 Aug, 2:35pm (3:15pm), £5.00 (£3.50), fpp 161. tw rating 4/5

An Inspector Calls - J.B.Priestley *Moving Parts & Whale*
Long, excitabile queues are usually reserved for top name comedians or word-of-mouth successes later in the month, not a local theatre production on its opening night. The good people of Edinburgh obviously knew something - and they were right.

Moving Parts & Whale put on a rich and captivating performance of Priestley's play about social conscience in which a mysterious visit from an inspector reveals that an entire family's separate and selfish actions led a young girl to commit suicide. Is anyone blameless? With its themes of rich and poor, ignorance, betrayal and drunken philandering, 'An Inspector Calls' is a fundamentally brilliant play and this production reminds everyone of that. Its short run is a crying shame. Don't miss it! [js]
Diverse Attractions, 9 - 13 Aug, 7:30pm (8:45pm), £8.00 (£6.00), fpp 156. tw rating 4/5

Amerwrecka *The Actor's Lab*
The 'anti-war, anti-America, get Bush out of the White House' yarn is hardly original and I'll admit to resigning myself to an hour and a quarter of 'nice point, but it's been done before'. What awaited me however, was a skilfully scripted, thought provoking and at times shocking play. Given a highly and surprisingly original slant - Heaven as a boot camp and Elvis as God - provides the shows comical edge, whilst f-words aplenty and swipes at religion remind us of the shows purpose. At the core of this performance were the onstage techniques, utilising direct address, spotlighting and freeze frame montage to devastating effect, and the powerful, heart rendering character development by a very talented cast. This is real theatre. [jh]
Sweet Ego, 7 - 20 Aug, 8:50pm (10:05pm), £8.00 (£7.00), fpp 130. tw rating 5/5

Binkie Beaumont and the Body Backstage *Equinox Theatre*
Welcome to the world of theatre, sweetie! Binkie lets the audience in on a little secret... there has been a murder backstage and it is up to him to figure out who is the culprit behind it. Chris Morgan is perfect in the role of Binkie, adopting that stereotypically theatrical personality and air with such ease. Alastair Sill takes on the role of the four murder suspects, and adapts to each role perfectly. The double-act seem to have a very strong bond, presenting a mix of excitement, tragedy and farce, as well as bursting into the occasional song! In theatre, excitement is mixed with tragedy. So who did commit the murder? [jtb]
Venue 13, 5 - 20 Aug, times vary, £7.00 (£5.00), fpp 134. tw rating 4/5

Moriarty is Crying *Emergency Productions*
in association with Theatre in Action
Raymond Friel and Derek Boyle have had film credits and awards for their writing, and judging by this masterful script, these accolades are well deserved. When a group of pals, defeated by their dead-end jobs and desperate for the cash to escape the doldrums of debt, devise a cack-handed robbery plan, it is invariably doomed to failure. The strong cast draw empathy for the predicament of the would-be criminals, and wonderment as to how on earth they managed to cast a villain with an even greater physical presence than lovable gentle giant, Kenny. This production never truly transcends its origins as a film script into pure theatre, but the heist theme and no-nonsense appeal beckons to a wider, pleasingly atypical Fringe audience. [jb]
Hillside Street, Aug 5-20 (not 17), 8:00pm (8:50pm), £8.00 (£5.00), fpp 166. tw 4/5

Two by Jim Cartwright *Crackerjack Theatre Company*
I'm unsure how to take this. I mean, taking the mick out of Yorkshire folk is a worthy and national pastime. At the same time, the issues covered in this play are valid and due some critical exploration. Having worked in a North Yorkshire pub, I've seen many people that could be the basis of these characters. But this show warped them into terrible stereotypes. There is some prime young talent on display here, but in a play written for two actors and performed by nearly a dozen, they are left floundering. The choice of this script for a large ensemble seems very indulgent and in the end lets the company down. [eb]
Venue 45, 8 - 20 Aug (not 14), 2:30pm (3:30pm), £6.00 (£5.00), fpp 187. tw rating 2/5

The Maun's A Balloon *Thistle Sifters*
James Tyler is the sort of character made for a one-man show: a writer, apothecary, radical and balloonist. This play follows three of his visits to a debtors' sanctuary near Holyrood Abbey at the end of the 18th century. It is carefully crafted and suits the close church space well. Robert Stuart, who devised the piece, plays with flair his characterization ranging from a chuntering lonely artist to the intensely animated individual. The music, audio and lighting are atmospheric and take you up and away, possibly slightly abruptly for some, in the final scene. This is a strong production from the tongue-twisting new Scottish writing company Thistle Sifters. It's an unusual evening, which opens the door to some eccentric Edinburgh history. [cs2]
Rascy Art House, 7 - 20 Aug, times vary, £9.00 (£7.50), fpp 163. tw rating 3/5

The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady *Aradia*
A girl sits, sipping wine. She rises from her bed to answer a knock on her door, but it is not the man she's expecting. All is not as it seems, and the stranger is drawn into her grim world and her desire to escape it and 'Charlie,' the man she shares it with. Very little is revealed about the characters' lives and motives; the script relies instead on the interaction between the three actors, and this is not a bad thing. The two main characters' tentative attraction to one another and Charlie's anguish as he becomes the stranger are effortlessly achieved. It could benefit from developing the characters more, but it is nonetheless rewarding to watch. [avs]
Sweet on the Grassmarket, 7 - 29 Aug, 8:30pm (9:20pm), £6.50, fpp 134. tw rating 3/5

Duck *About Turn Theatre Company*
As the lights went up and two very loud drunken girls stumbled onto the stage I wasn't too sure what I'd let myself in for. But over the next hour and a bit, I was let into the lives of 2 teenage girls caught up in drinking, relationships and brushes with the law. The main character 'Duck' forms the core of the play and she grips the audience with her stunning performance, although the rest of the cast deliver equally praiseworthy performances. This powerful portrayal of love, and just how far it makes you go, should be a must see for every festival-goer. [ssm]
Demarco Rascy Art House, 9 - 20 Aug (odd days), 1:10pm (2:25pm), £7.50 (£5.50), fpp 144. tw rating - 4/5

Missing Persons - Four Tragedies and Roy Keane *Eleanor Loyal/Critical Mass*
This show, consisting of five monologues expertly performed by Greg Hicks, is perfect for those who love intense theatre. The first four monologues give Hicks the chance to show off his acting talents as he exudes a brooding and magnetic presence. He has a face that seems made for tragedy, and he brings the full force of this quality to the stage. The monologues are dark and fierce, presenting Irish terrorists, a yearning lover, and perhaps the most shocking one, a desperate father. The final monologue is a delightful change as Hicks plays an Irish football fan ranting about Roy Keane's betrayal of the national team at the world cup in 2002. A chance to see a fantastic actor perform strong and stimulating material. [owp]
Assembly @ George Street, 5 - 29 Aug (not 15), 12:30pm (1:30pm), prices vary, fpp 165. tw rating 4/5

Catrin Glyndwr *Theatr Bwco*
For anyone with a strong interest in Welsh history this one-woman show telling the story of Catrin Glyndwr, and how she was locked in the Tower of London would undoubtedly be a delight. However, anyone who does not have such a strong interest would probably find it a bit of a chore. While Heledd Bianchi unquestionably performs with a lot of passion and emotion, and wears her Welsh heart on her sleeve, I craved for her to not be so earnest all the time. Despite the Welsh language poetry, monologues, and strange traditional dancing I found myself a little bored by the end. [owp]

ClubWEST, 8 - 20 Aug, 2:30pm (3:30pm), £8.00 (£6.00), fpp 138. tw rating 2/5

Our Diaries Through The Wall *Stars of Bethlehem*
This show is performed by a group of 15 and 16 year old Palestinian schoolgirls, who bring to life the experiences and emotions they recorded in diaries while at school. It is refreshing that amongst all the very theatrical shows about war and conflict at the fringe, this play presents people who have actually experienced what they talk about. While the girls explore this intense conflict there is a childlike innocence that shines through as they wish to be able to play their games with freedom and without curfews. Using their physicality they describe how various aspects of their lives have been affected by the presence of soldiers and the constant threat of violence, in a way that is often touching and very personal. [owp]
Quaker Meeting House, 8 - 20 Aug (not 14), 6:30pm (7:30pm), £6.00 (£4.00), fpp 169. tw rating 3/5

Beastly Beauties *Kindle Theatre*
Those of a nervous disposition may want to avoid the dramatic new show 'Beastly Beauties', where the audience find themselves plunged into pitch black, twitching at beastly noises, chilling screams and the knowledge that eight tree hugging lunatics and a sharp axe lie in the darkness surrounding them. The all female Kindle Theatre group invite you to join the 'British Tree Society', where nothing is quite as it seems. This innovative, dark and deeply moving comedy blurs the boundaries between performers and spectators. With powerfully emotive acting, moving song and beautiful dance this show is a unique spectacle. [jmb]
Underbelly, 6 - 20 Aug (not 10), 12:05pm (1.05pm), prices vary, fpp 132. tw rating 4/5

Funny Shorts *American High School Theatre Festival*
Another impressive offering from the American High School Theatre Festival, 'Funny Shorts' is a collection of famous sketches, performed skilfully by students. While some of the comedy was quite American in humour and style, others appealed to a wider audience: the work of Graham 'Monty Python' Chapman is even used. Anna Raff and Dwight Dunsten were particularly impressive in David Ives' fast-paced sketch 'Sure Thing.' If sketch shows are your thing, then don't be put off by the student status of the theatre company, these are an impressive group of young actors who work the material their advantage. I didn't laugh as much as the American audience, but definitely appreciated some of the humour. [lc]
Greenside, 9 - 13 Aug (not 12), times vary, £6.00 (£4.00), fpp 148. tw rating 3/5

Tone Clusters *Wesleyan University Second Stage*
Fascinating, beautiful, heartbreaking. A couple defend their son's innocence, confronted by a tannoy talk-show host more interested in the science of murder than a family's grief. The trouble is memories get jumbled up the more they are repeated, as the father protests: "The first time we just lived it". This touching story about denial, perspective and parenthood engulfs you in the trauma of the pair, using simple but effective screen images that both enhance the speech and undermine the memories of the beautifully drawn and acted parents. How wonderful to see a performance which has no need for the obligatory twist to undermine all that went before. This is wonderful, please, please go and see it. [sg]
Bedlam Theatre, 8 - 13 Aug, 9:25pm (10:10pm), £6.00 (£4.00), fpp 185. tw rating 5/5

ratings
1/5: A really bad show - don't go and see it
2/5: A poor example of this show's genre
3/5: A good example of this show's genre
4/5: A very good example of this show's genre
5/5: A brilliant show - go and see it

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