IT'S THE WEEK THREE/WEEK FOUR ISSUE: Featuring interviews with Hardeep Singh Kohli, Tara Flynn, Karen Koren, Jarred Christmas, Robert Inston, Bliss composer Brett Dean and the team from Pants On Fire, tips galore from Ivan Brackenbury, Tom Allen, Nat Luurtsema, Pete Johansson and John Robins, plus exclusive columns by Mrs Moneypenny, Laura Mugridge and Fringe medium Ian D Montfort
Brett Vincent for getcomedy.com presents

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FRINGE DAYS

final fringe weekend planned

With so much to do, and so little Festival left, it can be hard working out how to spend your final Fringe days. But fear not. To give you a head start this weekend ThreeWeeks asked three Fringe acts to plan some festival shenanigans for you, each taking a day. So, here’s your itinerary, starting with Friday.

FRIDAY 27 AUGUST
by Nat Luurtsema
Come to my show ‘In My Head I’m A Hero’, which is about living your life excitedly poised for disaster, as I do. If you are anything like me, you will be admiring the two exits (no stampeding mob trouble in a power cut/monster attack), sturdy pillar (do your worst roof, you can try the survival skills you’ve been mulling over since my show). I expect to hear that several of you have commandeered The Caves as an unfloaty Noah’s Ark in which to wait out the recession. With so much to do, and cockle-warming. And also just try and collapse!) and air vent (no stampeding mob trouble in a cave! Safety seventh. Here you can try the survival skills you’ve been mulling over since my show. I expect to hear that several of you have commandeered The Caves as an unfloaty Noah’s Ark in which to wait out the recession.

SATURDAY 28 AUGUST
by Pete Johansson
Hit the snooze button. Realise you can’t hit snooze on seagulls screaming. Wander through the meadows avoiding all the far too loud musicians. Hit the Victor Hugo for Coffee and a sublime sandwich, off to Pleasance for the 1.10pm ‘Edcom Showcase’ and catch five acts. Squeeze out of the chaos, get a grilled shwarma on a sturdy pillar (do your worst roof, you can try the survival skills you’ve been mulling over since my show). I expect to hear that several of you have commandeered The Caves as an unfloaty Noah’s Ark in which to wait out the recession.

SUNDAY 29 AUGUST
by John Robins
Start by having a cup of tea, but wait for it… throw in an Earl Grey bag as well! To be honest you’ll need to spend the rest of the day having your mind professionally ‘un-blown’. If you’re up to it, go and see ‘The Golden Lizard’ at 4.45pm at the Pleasance Courtyard with Henry Paker and Mike Wozniak. They’ll then re-blow your mind before you come to my show at The Tron at 6.20pm. It’s my last one, so maybe I’ll let everyone bring in games like at the end of school.

P16 Another little helping of dance and physical theatre reviews, look out for loads more of these online.

PHOTO PAGE
P18-19 We chat to Denise Black, plus Ivan Brackenbury chooses the tunes on Spotify.

Upcoming guests include: Brazil Brazil, Shazia Mirza, Boy With Tape On His Face, Ali Cook, Dave Hill, Busting Out, Broad Comedy, The Roaring Boys, Michael Zegarski, ‘Truly Madly Deeply’ actor Michael Maloney, Jason Cook, Terry Alderton, plus Kate Copstick (The Scotsman) gives her reviews and views. The Space at Symposium Hall, Royal College of Surgeons (Venue 53), Hill Place (behind Nicolson Street) Daily at 5pm until 28th August, Tickets £9.
IT'S JANEY

I love the Edinburgh fringe, I almost hug the grand arched doorway at The McEwan Hall, and I stand in the rain frowning the crowds going in and coming out, hoping that even if folk like the boys all the tell they might... just might... take a chance on seeing a Scottish funny woman who hasn't been on the tell. That's what the fringe has become: a place to see people off the tell, not a place to catch a really interesting, unusual/daring play in a basement or a real dull piece of overblown musical theatre that made you so angry you buttoned your duff coat up and walked sideways down a cobbled street in rage. So if you are creating this, take your last chance to see something awesome like Tara Flynn at the Gilded Balloon, where she performs her amazing cock off with funny songs and great comedy, or go check out Hardeep Singh Kohli's 'Chat Masala', if it's got smashing guests everyday, so the show is as fresh as the food he cooks (and he has been on the tell, so be bases covered people).

And that, of course, is not all you'll find in this final instalment. We've got interviews with the mighty Karen Koren, cover star Alex Horne, the festively named Jared Christmas, the delightful Nina Conti, the regal Robert Ristom, "Bliss" composer Brett Dean, former Conchord Chris Gillingham, and some of the team from 'Ovid Metamorphoses'. Added to this we've got columns from Tom Allen, Ian D Montfort, Terry Saunders, Laura Mugridge and Mrs Moneypenny. And if you'd like more, you'll find everything on our website.

IT'S CARO

Hello all... Are you fed up? I know I am. I'm so tired, I feel as though I could sleep for about seven years, and still not be untired ed. But that's what the fringe does to you, one way or another, only of course, if you do it properly. Don't go acting all tired and win when you haven't really put the graft in. Yes, bank holiday-weekenders, I'm looking at you. Anyway, here we are, in the last week. Well, except that it's not the last week, is it? In actual fact, it's really the fourth week of five. Because after Sunday the international Festival continues on for another seven days. That's right. This Edinburgh Festival newspaper should really be called "FiveWeeks", in our defence, when ThreeWeeks was born, the Fringe and the international Festival ran concurrently, and there were a lot less previews in Week Zero.

Back then, in 1996, it really was a three week festival. I often wish it still was, not least because I wish the international Festival's Fireworks Concert would take place on the bank holiday weekend, because I can't justify staying the extra week just to see it. But also, there is loads of good stuff in their programme. If you veritably lick the ancient architecture with adoring glee when I arrive, yet by the end of the long four weeks, I'll lick up two angry fingers and shout, "Screw you Edinburgh and your big smug castle!" and scurry home full of doughnuts, back to Glasgow.

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C the Festival

CW Productions
Mission of Flowers
5–30 Aug at 2.30pm

SEEDOS
The Tragedy of the Prince of Denmark
22–28 Aug at 12.10pm

ETS Theatre Company
Face
4–30 Aug at 7.50pm

C Theatre
The Stag King
4–30 Aug at 3.40pm

Bearplate with C Theatre
The Track of the Cat
4–30 Aug at 8.10pm

Inside Intelligence
Teddy and Topsy
4–30 Aug at 4.15pm

Rachel Sage and the Sequins
Stop Me If I'm Kretching...
15–30 Aug at 10.45pm

Firefly Productions and Scallabouche
Moment House
18–30 Aug at 1.00pm

Sell A Door Theatre Company with TNA Productions
Miss Minnelli and the Daring De: Tims Last Stand
4–30 Aug at 12.05am

C theatre
Twelfth Night
4–30 Aug at 2.15pm

Bordello Theatre Company and Bluestreak Arts
Tales from the Blackjack
5–30 Aug at 8.30pm

C Theatre
The Princess the Pea—and the Pigman
4–30 Aug at 12.15pm

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Comedy Awards

Broad Comedy
Fringe Management/Broadhouse Productions

These broads are superlatively talented, but are let down by their plot material. Many of the songs feel like they could have come from a well-thumbed book of ‘Genorius Themes For Women In Comedy’, though they are tackled with gusto. The vagina one-liners, and sperm and egg sketches were endearing, but hardly daring. The battle ‘Time To Say Goodbye’, a farewell to Bush, encapsulates the problem: its flawless performance and production does not make up for its outdated content, a sad comment on the state of statisic satire (Bush is gone!) Let him go! Write something new! Perhaps in America, two years ago this show would have had more of an impact; now, here, it is broadly speaking a disappointment.

Assemble @ George Street, 5-29 Aug (not 17), 9.45pm (-10.45pm) £11.00-£14.00, fpp 37. [gr] t/w rating 5/5

Addy Van Der Borgh: Advanced Mumbo Jumbo
Addy Van Der Borgh/The Stand Comedy Club

‘Themes’ in stand-up comedy are often arbitrary; lazily thrown together to save the task of deciding on the overall winner, but we strongly believe that Rob has the potential to rise to comedy stardom and be a great ambassador for these very successful awards. We’re already eagerly anticipating watching his ‘rise to fame and fortune’. Rob and Laugh Off runners-up Liam Williams and Romesh Ranganathan have already been invited to appear at the Cockatoo Island Comedy Festival in Sydney Harbour next year.

Addy Van Der Borgh @ The Stand Comedy Club, 2-29 Aug (not 3-16), 8pm-10.30pm £11.00-£14.00, fpp 37. [gr]

genesidselly@r|u.fr, 5-30 Aug (not 16, 23, 30), 5.30pm (6.30pm), £8.00-£14.00, fpp 45. [kw]
t/w rating 3/5

Brothers
 Unexpected Comedy

The Banks brothers’ relationship warmed my heart by the end of this play, not because it’s one of those ‘makes you think’ tragicomedies, but because the tender simplicity of their silly adventures was actually vaguely touching. More importantly, there were moments in ‘Brothers’ when I thought I was going to die from laughing. One or two of the projector images spring to mind, and a long discussion about quiche-dishes. The acting’s pretty okay and the pianist whose singing voice, incidentally, is unbelievable, played a few walk-on roles and was so funny in each one that the two actors themselves were cracking up. It’s nowhere near perfect, and I can’t really believe they’re getting four stars, but it’s happening, so there.

Joe Riley, 6-30 Aug (not 8, 17, 24), 9.35pm (10.30pm), £5.00-£7.00, fpp 38, (kit)
t/w rating 4/5

Circus Trick Tease

It may not be immediately obvious why ‘Circus Trick Tease’ has the name it does, but this becomes evident fairly rapidly.

The ‘trick’ elements of the act mean that unfortunately the performance isn’t really for kids, as rather graphic acts are simulated through shadows projected onto screens. However, the ‘circus’ elements are superb: astonishing balancing acts from the three-person cast are genuinely applause-worthy while old-school ‘strongman’ tricks (in which he lifts four members of the audience) are impressive, though not so much as the mini-circus and the cast are impressive. It can’t compare to a larger circus, of course, and the trick’s premise limits it somewhat.

Adderbury’s Fortune, 5-30 Aug (not 16, 23, 30), 5.30pm (6.30pm), £8.00-£14.00, fpp 45. [kw]
t/w rating 3/5

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Rapconteur

Baba Brinkman is some kind of lyrical wizard, retelling the ancient stories of the world through his spell-binding rhymes. As he breathed ‘Bigasala into the microphone, it sounded like an incantation with the power to transport us back to a time of kings and conquerors, and the poets who immortalised them. The Canterbury Tales, ‘Beowulf and the Finnish ‘Kalevala’ are similarly re-imagined and set to beautiful, original music. Brinkman is witty and well-read, and his passion for his subject matter is infectious; I left simultaneously wanting to learn Sumerian and find out about IDAs rapper Sleaf. This is storytelling at its best, epic in the true sense of the world. His show feels like a gift – with impressive napping.

Cabinet Voltaire, 7-29 Aug (not 9, 16, 23), 8.45pm, fpp 282, (bbp)
t/w rating 5/5

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FOR SIMPLY THE MOST EDINBURGH FESTIVAL REVIEWS, PUBLISHED DAILY: WWW.MORETHREETHREEWEEKS.CO.UK

FOR SIMPLY THE MOST EDINBURGH FESTIVAL REVIEWS, PUBLISHED DAILY: WWW.THREETHREEWEEKS.CO.UK
With three shows on at this year’s festival, and books and magazine articles under his belt, how much more information can one man disseminate? Tom Campion finds out.

Alex Horne is a thinking man’s comedian. I don’t mean that he is in any way inaccessible, it’s just that I can’t think of another comedian who would have attended a Laughter Conference in Hong Kong, with numerous respected psychologists, to discuss the ultimate nature of humour, as Horne did recently.

Was it a hoot from start to finish? “Not really, no.”

But this is where Horne’s skills lie – finding areas that might seem impenetrable (most recently golf and quantum mechanics; prior to that birdwatching and Latin) and dissecting the subject to amuse and intrigue his audience. “I just follow things that interest me, and some shows start with someone else’s interest – my father liked birdwatching, for example, and for this latest show, my father-in-law was into golf so I thought I’d try and do a show about golf. But golf isn’t very interesting, so the show ended up being about a lot more than that.”

This is something of an understatement – his show, ‘Odds’, takes a simple story about golf and ingeniously wraps it in gambling, the big bang and the nature of the universe to create a tale of epic proportions. I suggest that each of Horne’s shows features an epic quest; to meet people of every nationality in London, to get a word into the dictionary, or in this case to sink a hole-in-one. “I suppose so. I don’t really see them like that,” says Horne.

Ok, but if this was the case, which mythic hero would he be in this show? “Definitely Odysseus. He had a great beard too.”

Since his beginnings in cracker joke comedy, (he won a competition to write a Christmas cracker joke), Horne is recognised as something of a polymath; as well as his (three) Edinburgh shows, he has written books and magazine articles, and his documentary, ‘The Games That Time Forgot’, has just finished screening on BBC4. “The documentary came from [2008’s] ‘Wordwatching’. I found lots of old slang relating to forgotten sports, and I followed the trail back. It was great for a documentary, I could try out all sorts of things that wouldn’t fit on an Edinburgh stage.”

BBC4 viewers will be familiar with Horne from his series ‘We Need Answers’ with Mark Watson and Tim Key, whom he met when auditioning for a panto he’d written at college. “We were doing Treasure Island and I cast Tim as Toby, a swashbuckling pirate who ends up battling Bluebeard.”

The Watson/Horne/Key collective is, he informs me mysteriously, “working on something new for next year. Very exciting. All under wraps.” which will please audiences who have missed seeing them together.

Key is collaborating with him on his late-night show ‘The Home Section’, an anarchic fusion of jazz and comedy which Horne has been waiting years to put on. “Two of the guys in the band are friends from primary school, we’ve just been waiting for the opportunity. It’s a great way of seeing people at the festival – I’m just inviting along people I like.”

This festival has been a little different for Horne – it’s the first one with his new son. “It changes the festival. We see kids shows, we meet up with other parents – most comedians seem to have had kids recently – it’s been great.” And young Horne is helping his father out already. “I’ve been experimenting on him. I’m thinking about a show on what makes babies laugh. There are these ten stimuli, set out by a psychologist, and I’m hoping to test enough other babies to present it at a conference. It’s mainly just surprising him – a lot.” And when fatherhood beckons a second time? “It’ll be great. I’ll have a control.” A thinking man’s comedian indeed.

Alex Horne: Odds, Pleasance Courtyard, 4 – 30 Aug (not 16), 8.30pm (9.30pm), £8.00 - £10.50, fpp 23
Alex Horne: Taskmaster, Pleasance Dome, 27 Aug, 12.20am (1.35am), £7.00, fpp 23
The Home Section, Pleasance Dome, 9 –12, 23 – 28 Aug (not 13), 12.20am (1.35am), £7.00, fpp 70.

Find out more about Alex and his current projects at www.alexhorne.com.
FRINGE EMERGENCIES: RELAXATION

“Help! I’m experiencing Fringe overload, I can’t do any more shows / see any more shows / tech any more shows / sell any more shows / falsely promise to buy tickets for any more shows without a moment to chill”.

Fear not, Tom Allen is on hand with some tips on how to relax in the Festival City.

1. Take tea at the Balmoral Hotel. There’s something so soothing about nibbling scones underneath a potted palm while some old cow plays ancient songs on a harp (Catherine, Cole Porter, The Prodigy), and the Balmoral does all those strange things which are so more fun to say than to drink – Lapsang Souchong is my favourite. And it’s not just about what you’re consuming, it’s about the message you’re sending to yourself: “I am worth taking time over, I am worth a break.” Because my loves at Cheryl has taught us: “you are worth it” – isn’t that wonderful? As soon as you walk in you’re immediately whisked away from the hustle bustle of the fest and the people playing panpipes outside the hotel and sent back in time – it feels like stepping into an Agatha Christie novel (hopefully without the murder).

2. Go round the John Lewis towel department. Colour co-ordinated pastel shaded fluffy towels! What could be more calming? Go on, lay your face against them when no one’s looking, I won’t tell. Don’t it feel nice hmm? And the staff are so knowledgeable and nice (you must’ve seen the documentary, it’s a co-op after all). I think that sometimes, in the midst of the mania of coming from show to show – from chip shop to gin palace – it’s nice to be reminded of the real world – and what an ordered world it is with John Lewis in it. Kitchen appliances can be very calming too, the very pinnacle of human achievement that is so no longer now to chop herbs. Oh and the lighting department – such a rare thing to see electricity celebrated in tastefully simple lamp shades. The store’s also useful if it rains, apart from providing shelter, you’ll need those towels just to dry your barnet fair!

3. Buy a hospital bed. It feels like swimming, but in the air! And you can keep your clothes on. It’s the nicest, most jubilant thing ever (unless near the edge of a cliff). It’s a great way to let off steam and great exercise too for burning off all those chips you’ve been stuffing in your gob. It’s just bouncing! In an ideal world I’d do it somewhere very scenic, like the shore at Portobello. The sea air will put the colour back into your cheeks (facial cheeks) and you’ll feel all refreshed. The sea at Portobello will put the colour back into your cheeks (facial cheeks) and you’ll feel all refreshed. And you’d be surprised at how strangely peaceful it can be, flying through the air being further ahead than anyone else. You’ll be able to reflect on everything you’ve seen and how it’s made you feel before you plunge yourself back into the fest and the emotional bounce and how it’s made you feel, before you plunge yourself back into the fest and the emotional bounce

What inspired you for this show? There is a through-line based around the point at which I had to write ‘Stand-up comedian’ as my profession on my daughter’s birth certificate. But overall it’s going back to what I love doing: jokes and storytelling.

What are the main differences between Kiwi and Edinburgh audiences? In New Zealand stand-up is relatively new, and occasionally it seems like they treat it with the same passivity as they do theatre. Sometimes you can do an entire show where you think you’re dying and then you finish to whooping and cheering, and you think, ‘I really could have done with that earlier!’ Edinburgh audiences are a different kettle of fish, but it’s up to the comedian to be in control. That’s why I walk out and strip to the Blackpool pantie, because I want people to know it’s not a serious piece.

Kiwi comedy is undergoing a boom period. Is it long overdue or is this a new awakening?

We’ve just been under the radar. ‘Flight Of The Concorde’ lifted us above the parapet, and now there is a collection of us waving the flag, and doing really well. I think New Zealand’s isolation is finally paying off. Our influences are limited, so we look elsewhere for stand-up material. I think that succession gives us originality.

How have you ever had a ‘good’ heckle? The best I’ve ever had was during my first headliner, five minutes in, a guy shouts out from the silence, ‘You have ruined my birthday!’ There’s nowhere you can really go after that, so I said that I was sorry, but I still had fifteen minutes left. So then some other guy shouts out, ‘Great, you’ve ruined my birthday and it’s not until next week’. That was pretty grim.

What do you spend your free time doing in Edinburgh? The great thing about Edinburgh is that there are lots of comics in one place, which doesn’t happen often. A couple of other comics and I have got a dinner club going, we take ourselves out of the festival, have a bit of a giggle and some nice wine. I also had my wife and baby up this year, which was fun.

Your wife is English; are there any culture clashes in your marriage? Yes, but on minor things like pronunciation. Also, although I’ve been here for ten years I still ask things like, “Do you guys have pop tarts over here?” But I went back to New Zealand earlier in the year for the comedy festival, and I found myself asking my Kiwi mates “Do you have Bovril over here?”

How are you handling your new role as father Christmas? I’m enjoying it, although you suddenly become aware that it’s not all about you, which is odd as most comedians have to be self-centred performers. I go out, I rock a gig, then I get out and read a text asking me to buy nappies on my way home. It’s a world of extremes, but I love it.

Jarred Christmas Stands Up, Gilded Balloon Teviot. 4 – 30 Aug (not 12,13,14), 8.00pm (£8.50 - £10.50, fpp 75).

2facedbook

18:45 (1hr)
7-28 August (not 12,23)
Venue 339
sin club and lounge 207 Commercial, EH3 9JT

Photo: Jame Robertson
COMEDY REVIEWS

Chris Addison
Avalon Promotions Ltd
Chris Addison laughs at you, laughs at himself and goes from Q to BQ in 0.0302 seconds without slipping up once. Well, he did slip up once (fierce the crucibles), but fear not, he delivers with childish energy and comic wit. This show is irritatingly intelligent, but you know he’s right about many things. He is in-tune with human nature and culture, and has some cutting truths to say about the general world. Unsurprisingly privileged populace, yet somehow manages to make his middle-class superiority work for rather than against him. His material ranges from chuckleworthy to wry and wistful, displaying a talent for switching between venomous sarcasm and comic impressions with seamless and relentless force. Killer wit, killer kermode, killer show.
Assembly @ George Street, 16 – 30 Aug, 8.25pm. £14.00 (£12.50), fpp 55. [con]
tw rating 5/5

Jason Byrne
Phil Jackson Entertainments & Management
With Lisa Thomas Management
From entry to exit Jason Byrne was a crowd pleaser: first off, he proved his brilliance at audience interaction, comparing the grim attitudes of the Scots and Irish to the more upbeat English and Australian audience members. Moving on, he explored a theme of family life, with material ranging from a slide show displaying shots of Byrne as a child to a discussion of his own child, of marriage and of relationships in general. Byrne took these popular topics and put a fresh slant on them, finding new material in old themes, plus, he was clearly enjoying himself during the course of his energetic set, which of course added a certain something to the already hilarious of his show Assembly. @ Assembly Hall, 5 – 30 Aug (not 16 & 23), times vary. £9.50 - £12.50, fpp 74. [db]
tw rating 3/5

Jason Byrne 2010
Phil Jackson Entertainments & Management
With Lisa Thomas Management
Laughing Horse @ The Three Sisters, 20 – 29 Aug, 12.00pm (1.00pm). fpp, fpp 138. [db]
tw rating 2/5

Pig With The Face Of A Boy Presents:
Dan Wood's Oral History
Musical Comedy Lab/Laughing Horse Festival
This charming clutch of comic songs, professed by an amiable man with an accordion, is loosely strung together to form an oral history. There is a touch of Victorian music hall about Dan Wood, with his gentle satire (towards to him for rhyming ‘Berlusconi’, ‘hadostomery’ and ‘pony’) and his mainly creating instrument. He has excellent comic timing and is master of the wide-eyed key change, while the songs are lyrically and musically well-crafted - a historical ballad about the Soviet Union set to the Tetris theme is especially pleasing. Future generations might not learn too much about our civilisation from listening to these on their ipod jet-packs, but they are certainly enjoyable now.
Laughing Horse @ The Three Sisters, 19 – 29 Aug, 5.03pm (5.45pm). fpp, fpp 110. [pg]
tw rating 4/5

The Uninvincibles
Uninvincibles/Laughing Horse Festival
The highlight of this show is a moderately funny sketch about a man named Sir Arthur Conan-the-Barbarian and his search for a missing testicle, and without that sketch this show would have been irretrievably dire. I would normally discount superficial faults like lost lines, missed entrances, tedious costume changes and technical malfunction, but the frequency here with which they occurred ensured that they quickly became dreary and invasive. I would also have ignored the little slipp-ups had they observed some kernel of decent comedy, but the sketches had very little value and even though one or two sound performances were put in among the oversized, under-rehearsed cast, there was never a great deal for them to work with.
Laughing Horse @ The Three Sisters, 20 – 29 Aug, 12.00pm (1.00pm). fpp, fpp 138. [db]
tw rating 2/5

Nick Mohammed Is Mr Swallow
CIP By Arrangement With United Agents
Nick Mohammed is brilliantly irritating in creating a character you both love and loathe, whose annoying personality leaves a little to be desired, but Coolidge both comments on, and is completely representative of, the bizarre insanity that is Hollywood. Don’t expect a slick stand up act, but do expect dirt to be dished on a host of personalities – including Coolidge herself.
Assembly @ George Street, 5 – 29 Aug (not 16, 24), 8.10pm (9.15am). £11.00 - £14.00, fpp 77. [te]
tw rating 3/5

Paul Zenon – Lounge Wizard
A mullet and some magic anyone? The cheeky yet charming Paul Zenon combines comedy and magic in this forty-five minute act. However, the comedian/magician put in a somewhat lacklustre performance (perhaps the frenzy of the Fringe is getting the better of him) the jokes were easy providing uncomplicated laughs, but Zenon’s comic streak seemed to be running out of battery and his delivery left the audience groaning (similar to when your father retails a joke rather than chuckling. Nonetheless, nothing can be said against his magic portion of the act, which is imaginative, clever and well executed. Zenon has all the aspects that make a great magic show fire, a card deck and lemons? Definitely worth a look.
Laughing Horse @ The Three Sisters, 19 – 29 Aug. 9.15pm (10.30pm). £13.00, fpp 108. [a]
tw rating 4/5

Jennifer Coolidge - Yours for the Night
CKP By Arrangement With United Agents
Every now and then I found myself lost, but Imperious 9.15pm (10pm), £ 5.00, ffp 108. [sk]
tw rating 3/5

Jennifer Coolidge creates is remarkable multi-faceted nature of the characters for recounting memory is justified with that reveals a method to his madness, and her adventures as a ‘character’ actress (apart from by the byword for ‘delvering’ in LA terms) she is not afraid of pulling a face and letting herself appear less than perfect. As a stand-up comedian she leaves a little to be desired, but Coolidge both comments on, and is completely representative of, the bizarre insanity that is Hollywood. Don’t expect a slick stand up act, but do expect dirt to be dished on a host of personalities – including Coolidge herself.
Assembly @ George Street, 5 – 29 Aug (not 16), 9.15pm (10pm). £13.00 - £17.50, fpp 44. [con]
tw rating 5/5

Jennifer Coolidge
More Parking Tickets Later
Conscious Theatre
Since Gemski was unfairly given a parking ticket, she has won a quote on my car insurance...” and a bit of a temper once. This man did make, I don’t mind saying, one or two mistakes when he was on the flesh plane, but was very popular when he was alive, especially between around 1939 and 1940 particularly in the area of Germany. What I will say before I bring this gentleman forward, is that over on the side of spirit there’s a very different attitude towards death. It’s more like a rebirth or ‘new start’. Death is not seen as such a negative thing here, if anything it’s seen as the start of a fantastic life on the etheral – whatever – and with that in mind can I please kindly introduce this kindred spirit to you – Adolf Hitler”.

I'm joined very gravously now by a kindly gentleman – short in stature and maybe if you don’t mind me saying, somebody who had a bit of a temper once. This man did make, I don’t mind saying, one or two mistakes when he was on the flesh plane, but was very popular when he was alive, especially between around 1939 and 1940 particularly in the area of Germany. What I will say before I bring this gentleman forward, is that over on the side of spirit...
**WHAT’S THAT NOISE?**

Don’t worry, it’s just **Guest Editor** Janey Godley giving Tara Flynn the third degree. The one time Nuala is back at the Fringe with her show ‘Big Noise’. Janey’s impressed – so much so she fired some random Fringe questions off in Ms Flynn’s general direction.

Janey: What do you wish you had brought with you to Edinburgh this year?

Tara: I wish I’d brought gold bullion for bribery purposes. You never know who you’ll need on side. Or just to be able to eat in The Witchery every night.

J: Getting around the Fringe – Segway or scooter… choose and why?

T: Segway. I can’t use them so I’d constantly be falling over. It’s a comedy festival: I take the laughs where I can get ‘em.

J: Have you ever stolen stuff from the house you rented at the Festival? Tell me what it was (if you took a sofa).

T: No, but that’s a top idea. The flat I’m in this year has surround sound in the bathroom. I wonder if I could take that?

J: Have you ever kicked someone off a bike in Edinburgh who ran a red light and nearly hit you? (I have).

T: I haven’t. Sorry, Janey, but I’m sympathetic to cyclists because I am one and back in London. Tourists weaving about and leaping into the cycle-path, maps flapping, is them just asking for it.

J: Have you ever dreamed of sliding down the upside down cow in the middle of the night, if so what are you wearing whilst doing that?

T: I’ve not dreamed that, but I do think I might have tried to climb up the inside of it once. I was wearing something casual which I’d made cheasy with just the simple addition of a belt and some earrings, like they suggest in magazines.

J: Namedrop the biggest celeb who came to your show (you can make it up, Johnny Dopp came to mine).

T: Stewart Lee came along the other night. And I’m not sure but I think Santa was in the third row last Tuesday. The dude certainly had some hot beard action going on.

J: Can you give me a good reason NOT to come back to the Fringe?

T: Lotta people. Lotta germs. Convinced?

J: What is your venue number multiplied by 3 add on 6 and divided by 2 (as that equals how long your liver has got before it caves in).

T: That question hurts my brain. Can I just say “0”? I think my liver caved in on Day 3.

J: Do you have a secret Fringe crush?

T: Well of course it’s you. But I also love Tom Allen – a proper Festival gent. He’d never have me, though.

J: Give us your porn star name (your headmistress/master surname and the street you lived on as a child).

T: Sr Mary Riverstick.

J: What is your venue number? Dated it. No, I didn’t think so. See you next year.

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her master’s voice

Nina Conti and friends – whether it’s Monkey (endearingly naughty), Owl (delightfully pretentious) or Granny (loving, immobile and slightly embarrassing) – are firm Fringe favourites. ThreeWeeks’ Hope Whitmore asks Nina who’s really pulling the strings.

“The puppets represent different bits of me,” explains Nina, across a table in the Pleasance Courtyard. “Owl is the voice of my temperamental artistic side – my pretentiousness, Monkey is the voice of my self-doubt and total impatience, and Granny, well, Granny is the heart, she’s an amalgamation of my grandparents, and she’s the first character I’ve really loved.”

I ask Nina about another character, an added alcoholic who forces the performer to down vodka on stage, each time making her demands in a new voice and in a new accent. “Ooh!” exclaims Nina, “I can’t really find out who she is. The most obvious was a New York Jewish thing, but it just seemed too much of a cliché. I spans ages working with her, trying to figure out what suited her, and then I thought, I know what, I’ll make it a part of the act.”

Nina’s career as a ventriloquist started nine years ago, while she was playing the role of Audrey the goatherd in ‘As You Like it’ with the RSC. She worked closely with director, writer and actor, Ken Campbell, whom she describes as: “My hero; he was a very interesting man, I sort of followed him round, got involved in everything he did, and eventually he bought me a teach-yourself ventriloquist kit. I don’t know if it was a joke – actually I don’t think it was a joke, it was deadly serious.”

Talking about ventriloquism as an art, Conti says: “It’s something you can learn the basic principles of in an hour, but you have to practice a lot so that it becomes convincing – fluid. I ended up bringing acting to it to give more credibility and I spent ages fiddling round with my voice.”

Nina has a six-year-old son, Arthur, who is currently staying in Edinburgh with her: “He came to see a show once, so he was delighted when I brought the puppets home - he wanted to meet them all and interview them individually”. Nina also lets other puppets talk to Arthur, including Lamb Chop, a character popularised by 50s ventriloquist Shari Lewis. “I can’t use Lamb Chop, a character popularised by 50s ventriloquist Shari Lewis. “I can’t use her, her kit. I don’t know if it was a joke – actually I don’t think it was a joke, it was deadly serious.”

Conti hopes that, on completion, the film will be shown at all the major film festivals. As to the immediate future, after Edinburgh this year’s show then has a London run and Conti is also going to pitch a puppet chat show for television - sounds wonderful to me!

Nina Conti: Talk To The Hand, Pleasance Dome, 4-30 Aug (not 16, 23), 8.30pm (9.30pm), £10.50-£13.00, fpp 104.
crossing the boundary

Consider this part of ThreeWeeks a part-comedy part-theatre section. Terry Saunders can't decide which part of the Fringe he's in.

For something that is a fringe/arts festival it seems odd that there is such a boundary between theatre and comedy. My last three Edinburgh shows have been narrative stories with a bit of stand-up mixed in. When it came to the decision of whether to place them in the theatre or comedy half of the programme I wanted initially to put them in both.

The shows are theatrical but also funny. If the guide was printed in the shape of a ven diagram then I’d plink it right in the middle of the two. But the printing costs and logistics of this really isn’t worth the middle of the two. But the printing costs and logistics of this really isn’t worth the middle of the two. But the printing costs and logistics of this really isn’t worth it. I almost hope no one notices.

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I was almost choked by an over-enthusiastic smoke machine whilst entering the interior of the new Hill Street Theatre. This combined with sinister lighting and a startling soundtrack immediately set the mood for this gripping retelling of H.P. Lovecraft’s classic short story. Working alone, Michael Sabbaton recreated the strange tale of a mysterious horror that is Cthulhu, a squid-like giant slumbering in an oozing green city. Sabbaton masterfully jumped through the narrative of layered monologues and one-sided conversations that was at once movingly poetic and quietly terrifying. If anything, the piece was a little too dense and warrants either a second viewing or an interactive section, which, though funny at first, goes on too long. However, Elaine Pardington’s performance does much to compensate for the play’s flaws, bringing a lovely presence and a deft comic touch to the stage.

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Q&A: ROBERT INSTON

Actor Robert Inston on playing not one but two queens at the Edinburgh Fringe

Tell us about the premise of ‘Two Bloody Queens’.

Essentially it’s the story of Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stuart. Both were equal in status at birth, although there was a question over Elizabeth’s legitimacy. Mary knew her mother and had a pampered childhood; Elizabeth’s mother was killed by her father and her youth was uncertain and dangerous. The piece questions if these factors and their different temperaments influenced their destinies and thus world events.

How does it work, do you play both characters?

Yes, I play both queens, and my ‘fool’ transforms Elizabeth into Mary in the second half of the show. It’s very difficult to say. At the moment it’s Mary. Elizabeth is just too bloody perfect!

Do you think your Scottish audience are automatically more sympathetic to Mary and English audience members to Elizabeth?

A lot of Scottish people I’ve spoken to on my various ‘progresses’ actually prefer Elizabeth. Certainly they point me out more often than Mary. “Look, there’s Queen Elizabeth!”

Why do you think the story of Queens Elizabeth and Mary still resonates so strongly today?

Here was the story of Diane Princess of Wales and, of all people, Madonna! Opposites always emerge and resonate, be it in show business or politics.

How has your Fringe been going?

Very well, despite the usual hitches. No one has a costume as arresting as mine and if I had a pound for every photograph that had been taken! It’s knackering though. I need a maid!

You’re performing theatre as part of the Free Festival, does that work well?

I can’t really complain – I didn’t really research the venues enough, but audiences seemed to embrace the idea of theatre in the Free Festival, though that just makes my show feel more special!

What are your plans for after Edinburgh?

It’s time for a change but I’m keeping the momentum. ‘Wilting wallflower’ Eve decides to embrace Indian culture and arranged marriage after numerous failed attempts to find a man. The idea has merit, but Eve’s voyage of discovery feels a bit rushed and sudden and could do with being more thoroughly woven into the flashbacks. The pace also suffers towards the end due to an interactive section, which, though funny at first, goes on too long. However, Elaine Pardington’s performance does much to compensate for the play’s flaws, bringing a lovely presence and a deft comic touch to the stage.

What attracts you to playing former queens?

Opposites always emerge and resonate, be it in show business or politics. How much is fact and how much fiction?

I did a lot of research, both in reading and on playing not one but two queens at the Edinburgh Fringe. It’s very difficult to say. At the moment it’s Mary. Elizabeth is just too bloody perfect!

How much research do you do? How much is fact and how much fiction?

I did a lot of research, both in reading and on playing not one but two queens at the Edinburgh Fringe. It’s very difficult to say. At the moment it’s Mary. Elizabeth is just too bloody perfect!

How do you think the story of Queens Elizabeth and Mary still resonates so strongly today?

Here was the story of Diane Princess of Wales and, of all people, Madonna! Opposites always emerge and resonate, be it in show business or politics. How has your Fringe been going?

Very well, despite the usual hitches. No one has a costume as arresting as mine and if I had a pound for every photograph that had been taken! It’s knackering though. I need a maid!

You’re performing theatre as part of the Free Festival, does that work well?

I can’t really complain – I didn’t really research the venues enough, but audiences have been good. And I couldn’t afford to hire a performance space outside one of the free shows strands. People are still surprised that there is theatre in the Free Festival, though that just makes my show feel more special!

What are your plans for after Edinburgh?

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Twice Blooded Queens

Laughing Horse @ The Argyle, 5 – 29 Aug, 7.30pm (8.30pm), free, fpp 299. Robert Inston is pictured with his director and ‘fool jester’ Vincent March.
Two of our favourite theatre-focused awards now, Amnesty's Freedom Of Expression gong and the Total Theatre Awards.

Amnesty have announced the shortlist for their annual award which goes to an "outstanding" Fringe show that carries a human rights message. And on the shortlist are David Benson's 'Lockeroom: Unfinished Business', Cora Bissett's 'Roadkill', Traverse show 'Speechless' and Assembly production 'No Child'.

The overall winner will be announced on Thursday morning, so has probably already been revealed by the time you read this. Details of the overall winner will be posted on the ThreeWeeks website.

Commenting on the shortlist, John Watson, Amnesty International's Scottish Programme Director and one of the award's judges, told ThreeWeeks: "We're delighted to have another very strong shortlist for the Freedom Of Expression Award this year, selected from our biggest-ever field of entrants. It shows that performers are still willing to tackle difficult issues at the Fringe and that the arts haven't lost their power to engage people with controversial subject matter. For Amnesty it's important to be part of the festivals in Edinburgh. We're here to celebrate free speech but also to defend the right to freedom of expression, wherever it is under threat".

The festivals in Edinburgh. We're here to celebrate free speech but also to defend the right to freedom of expression, wherever it is under threat. And on the Fringe, and their shortlist is out too.

Onto the Total Theatre Awards, which celebrate total theatre experiences at the Fringe, and their shortlist is out too.

There are three awards here, and the overall winners will be announced on Friday. In the meantime, the shortlists are as follows:

**AMNESTY & TOTAL THEATRE AWARDS**

- **Chemical Poets: Twenty Tentacle**
  - MBF's Free Fringe
  - Ginsberg's famous line 'Whole intellects disregarded in total recall' springs to mind when you hear these literary outsiders in full flow. Less performance poets, and more an apocalyptic, cacophonous hip-hop act, you could accuse them of cultural schizophrenia, of lacking maturity or of overloading their lyrics with so much sci-fi gash-speak that it sometimes sounds like high speed 'Star Trek' dialogue. Strangely though, it makes a sort of sense, and you quickly find yourself absorbed in the collision of reflective word-play and information-age angst, drawn in by their complex verbal rhythms and emphatic chants. Channelling the fractured energy of 'Generation Y', they're a definite work in progress, but this exceptionally inventive trio seems comfortably incomplete. The Barrowsey Labyrinth, 16 - 28 Aug, 9.30pm (£10.50), free, fpp 238, [df]
  - tw rating 4/5

- **Les Peters – After Dinner Stints**
  - Eating a meal in a conference room with six other people, all facing the same way, listening to two hours of 'after dinner speaking' is a truly weird experience. A self-styled 'gagman,' Les Peters is a genial chap with a slow and measured delivery, some of his jokes are quite near-knicknuckle, but most revolve around inoffensive workplace, and he eventually starts performing as different public speakers (priests, bast men and so on). It's all mildly amusing. Listing this show in the 'Theatre' section of the Fringe programme is perhaps a little misleading, but I imagine it will find a certain audience regardless – personally, I think that a large man watching me eat is a little too disconcerting. A very peculiar evening. Rammado Edinburgh Mount Royal Hotel, 9 – 26 Aug (not 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22), 7.30pm (£9.00, fpp 246, [hm])
  - tw rating 2/5

- **Double Booked**
  - Ginny Davis Productions and Richard Jordan Productions
  - Ginny Davis returns to the Fringe in a sharp-eyed comedy featuring cantankerous teenagers, a baby grumpy and the oh-so perfect mother from next door. If it hadn't introduced me to a reproduction of my own family, I doubt this show would have had such an effect, but that, of course, is precisely the winning formula. Davis’s observant and sharp comedy succeeds because everybody can relate to it, even the false teeth, collagen and school concerts. There are no belly laughs (perhaps because I'm on the wrong side of the generational valley), but there is something for everybody in this very comedy, the whole family will enjoy it. It might be a bit clichéd in parts and varying on the twee, but it just works. Pleasance Courtyard, 6 – 29 Aug, 12.55pm (1.55pm), £7.00 – £9.00, fpp 246, [hm]
  - tw rating 4/5

**THEATRE REVIEWS**

**The Meeting**
- Pleasance/Fiddy West Productions
- Writing, directing and starring in a show is a difficult thing to pull off. Good thing Reuben Johnson does it very well. Then the titular meeting is between Jake, whose bright future is shattered when he accidentally kills a man, and his victim’s widow. Johnson combines skilful writing and performance to capture Jake’s hopeful, innocent energy in flashbacks and his nervous anger in the present. The play shows a strong sense of the complexity of the situation, creating conflicting sympathies and deeply human characters. The staging is sparse yet the sense of place is never lost, created by sound and the cost’s energy. The whole company shines, but, Johnson steals the show with his delicately nuanced, quietly devastating performance.
- Pleasance Courtyard, 4 – 30 Aug (even dates only), 3.20pm (4.25pm), £7.50 – £9.50, fpp 271, [jm]
  - tw rating 5/5

**ThreeWeeks Editor's Awards 2010**
- Sunday 29 August

**POETRY FOR MORONS: OR INDIRECT PREPARATIONS IN MASTERY**
- Arielle George and Friends
- Billed as some kind of comedy game show in the Fringe programme, the performance really consists of Arielle George reading a long and presumably autobiographical poem about a fulfilling and distressing love affair. It’s a strange hour, filled with veiled references to Buddhism and Zen philosophy, and at times it’s quite baffling; I imagine that even with a strong frame of reference to the subject matter it would be hard to follow. Although the ending was performed with emotion, and was actually quite moving, it all came far too late to allay the confusion. The producer’s really need to prepare their audience better, as it was totally irked by what I experienced.
  - C central, 15 – 30 Aug, 10.00pm (1.00pm), £6.50 – £9.50, fpp 280, [jm]
  - tw rating 2/5
time for a change

5/5 shows

Freefall
Corn Exchange Theatre Company Dublin

So fine and truthful were the performances, so imaginatively was it staged, that Michael West’s deeply affecting play had me enthralled from entrance to last exit. The starting point is the breakdown of a marriage, from there the story rhythmically weaves its way between the past and present lives of the characters. While there is a sense of urgency in the narrative, the memories of the central character tumble on him in stream-of-consciousness, free-associative waves, bringing with them humanity and pathos. Aided by brilliant incorporation of film, Freefall has great intimacy, one can practically taste the slice of life it gives us. It is no overstatement to say that to spend time with this company was a privilege.

Traverse Theatre, 4 – 29 Aug (not 9, 23), Times vary: £11.00 – £14.00, fpp 260. [jm]  

I, Claudia

Guy Masterson/TVT in Association with Cow’s Theatre and Brian Robertson

In the depths of her school’s boiler room, Claudia seeks both refuge from her parents’ divorce and a place to express her life. As a result, her performances are equally stunning as the school janitor. Claudia’s grandmother, and her stepmother-to-be. Commedia-style masks are brilliantly used to switch between characters, and their blank, puppet-like faces are brilliantly used to switch between the teenager’s life; her performances by Kristen Thomas. Thomas also plays herself in this beautiful, affecting script of the central character tumble on him in stream-of-consciousness, free-associative waves, bringing with them humanity and pathos. Aided by brilliant incorporation of film, Freefall has great intimacy, one can practically taste the slice of life it gives us. It is no overstatement to say that to spend time with this company was a privilege.

Traverse Theatre, 4 – 29 Aug (not 9, 23), Times vary: £11.00 – £14.00, fpp 254. [jm]  

tw rating 4/5

Describing adulterous gods and venefical goddesses, the romantic tragedies of Ovid’s ‘Metamorphoses’ are seamlessly transposed to the 1940s by theatre company Pants on Fire.

A raucous mixture of live music, dance, puppetry, film and knockabout physical comedy, the show is garnering rave reviews. Katie Conaglen met with two of the company’s bright young stars, Mabel Jones and Hannah Pierce, to discuss the show.

War-torn Britain in the 40s may seem like an unlikely fit for Ovid’s stories, but Jones and Pierce are quick to point out parallels: “The 40s were a time of great heroism and strength,” Hannah notes, “men and women both at war and on screen were godlike, and the monsters in Ovid’s stories correlate well with the monsters of our plot. Also, the legendary stories from that 40s period now seem like fairy tales.”

This doesn’t mean that the show is lost on modern audiences: “The 1940s are fashionable now, and the show has an element of burlesque; it’s retro and it’s fun. Beyond that, the subject matter is relevant to now. With issues of climate change and deforestation, the message in Ovid’s work about respecting nature is still current; he was imploring people not to ignore an issue that we continue to gloss over today.”

If that makes the show sound at all preachy, it isn’t. “It is midday, so we were conscious of needing to allow the show to have a lightness, and to be fun – it’s also a nice opportunity to use Lecoq techniques on stage,” remarks Mabel, citing the legendary French actor instructor, at whose school Pants on Fire Artistic Director Peter Bramley trained. Lecoq’s approach to physical theatre informs the movement and action of the production. The eclectic talents of the cast also shape the show: Mabel is co-artistic director of the Woodenfingers puppetry company, while Hannah is co-artistic director of the Made from Scratch theatre company. Most of the cast are recent graduates of the Rose Bruford College. “We designed the show during the weekends over the course of a year,” Mabel explains. “Hannah continued. “It was massively collaborative. The scenes and stories were all devised by the group, everybody bringing individual ideas, then it was refined and refined.”

“We had to kill our babies,” Mabel adds, “so many ideas were thrown away, and the show went through so many different manifestations.” This process of constant streamlining and fine-tuning means, that at 75 minutes, the show is jam-packed with invention and creativity. To the audience, the show seems to operate flawlessly – with dance, slight of hand, a cavalcade of novel props and an ever moving stage combining to cultivate a sense of magic.

“I think audiences would be shocked if they saw the camera footage of what happens backstage,” Hannah admits. “It is a backstage heavy show. It takes half an hour to set up each performance, to make sure everything is in the right place.”

Mabel nods, “everything works so manically well, if they saw the camera footage of what happens backstage, they would be shocked.”

“We know each other so well now, we’re a family,” Hannah grins. Mabel conurs, “I think as a company we have an exciting, strong future.” Judging by their current, spell-binding production, there’s every reason to believe her.

Ovid’s Metamorphoses, Pleasance Dome, 4 – 29 Aug, 11.00pm – 11.15pm, £7.50 – 10.00, fpp 377. [mg]  

Diary of a Sentimental Killer

This is Katie Conaglen’s second year reviewing for ThreeWeeks. She studied Script Writing at Victoria University, Wellington.

MORE ONLINE: Don’t forget the Edinburgh International Festival runs until 5 Sep, turn over to find out about one of next week’s shows, and log on to www.ThreeWeeks.co.uk for EIF reviews throughout
New to the Fringe this year? So are lots of the visitors coming and going to and from our flat (originally rented as a family home but long since turned into a general dogs-house as more and more friends and relations have descended on Edinburgh as the month has gone on). Last night we slept 12 – a handy reminder to me that we would need more loo paper on the next supermarket run.

We have tried to guide our visitors through the maze of comedy at the Fringe, and as many of them have been Australian (as is Mr M), we started with that. Jim Jeffries left us wondering how often he might need to go to the shrinks, but despite that (and multiple uses of the C word) he manages to be funny, tragic and provocative, all at the same time. Moneypenny verdict? The best swearing I have heard for years, and his performance will leave you feeling hugely moved.

Dave Thornton is another Australian comic who flewed us personally outside the Gilded Balloon, and was so engaging that we bought tickets to the spot. Moneypenny verdict? A version of Jim Carrey, possessing a hugely expressive face and rapier quick wit, and adept at audience interaction. The only man I have met who can make a series of running gags out of postcards.

Male visitors of any age have been taken along to see Jennifer Coolidge. Like me, she is not really a stand up. She just tells funny stories and anecdotes, in her case about life in Hollywood. The difference is that she does all this while displaying what Mr M calls ‘cleavage city’ (I already believe things that are not there). He is an illusionist, but his reality had his body, and his voice, inspires in the audience an ability to see and to believe things that are not there. In Cottereau’s masterful hands, unsuspecting audience members are taken on stage and transformed into premier football players, fairy-tale ogres, damsels, and marksmen. Cottereau’s talent is such that the vivid world he creates allows participants to become part of it. He is an illusionist, but his reality had his body, and his voice, inspires in the audience an ability to see and to believe things that are not there. He is an illusionist, but his reality had us on our feet.

Moneypenny verdict? A much better actor than he was a sports journalist; excellent viewing for cricketers (who will appreciate his mastery of statistics) and non-cricketers alike.

Our continental visitors have been amazed at the number of comedians on the Fringe for whom English is not a first language. We have been taking them to see Harving Wahn – that most unlikely of things – a German comedian, the salt-styled ‘German Comedy Ambassador to the UK’ in fact. His show is entitled ‘My Struggle’ which as he says, won’t make it easy to get a book deal in Germany. No subject that might have caused friction between Germany and the UK is sacred, including football and the Second World War. Moneypenny verdict? You will laugh and laugh and then be amazed that Germans can be so funny.

Our final stop on the comedy tour for visitors has been Paul Foot’s show at the Underbelly, not because it’s on late (it isn’t), it’s on at 7.40pm but because it is so alternative. Foot doesn’t need to use crude language to make you laugh, he is just so wacky (the result, I suspect, of an overeducated mind) that anything from shrine horses to golliwogs (yes, a golliwog appears, apparently a sneak preview of next year’s show) is funny. Moneypenny verdict? The final set is a set to Rechmannott’s ‘The Dead’, complete with an explanation (for those without a classical education) of the River Styx, will remind everyone why they came to Edinburgh – to see things that they will never see elsewhere.

At Home With Mrs Moneypenny. Assembly. 5/5 review. £12.00 - £20.00, fpp 228.

Financial Times columnist Mrs Moneypenny is in Edinburgh this August performing at the Fringe. This week she and her many, many guests navigate the comedy Fringe.
One of the standout shows at the Edinburgh Festival this year opens right at the end of the city’s festival month – the EIF’s operatic adaptation of Peter Carey’s award winning novel ‘Bliss’. We spoke to Brett Dean, the composer of this very contemporary opera.

Where did the idea of transforming Peter Carey’s book into an opera come from?
The idea first emerged quite some time ago, in the late nineties, around the time I was first approached by [conductor] Simone Young, who was then working for Opera Australia.

Does the story lend itself to opera?
Wonderfully well. Carey’s book is a story of strong themes and emotions, both personal and societal, with a compelling sense of dramatic shape that ebbs and flows, with climax points and moments of repose. I felt from the outset that it had a musical “shape”.

Did you look at the film adaptation at all for inspiration?
Not really. I had seen the film once when it first came out and read the screenplay as early research, but [librettist] Amanda Holden chose not to see either till after opening night.

Other than the obvious, for people familiar with the book or film, how will the show differ?
The most obvious difference comes in the lack of flashbacks (Harry’s father’s stories, for example) and an abridged final scene (in the book the final chapter in the rainforest embraces over 20 years of time passing).

For people familiar with more traditional opera, how will this compare?
I think of ‘Bliss’ as being genuinely “operatic” in feel, however with contemporary language, some of it typically “Australian” in flavour, a sound design and electronic instruments in the orchestra. However it’s a three act work that features arias, vocal ensembles and chorus moments as found in works from Handel through to Alban Berg.

How did the creative team behind the show come together?
The late Richard Hickox assembled a wonderful team for this production, under the inspired direction of Neil Armfield. Richard also had made most of the casting decisions before his untimely death [in 2008]. The ingenious stage design, with its magic box of lights, came about through previous collaborations of Armfield, stage designer Brian Thompson and lighting designer Nigel Levings.

There are some shocking elements in the book, are these kept in the show?
Amanda and I were pretty clear from the outset that we had no intention of sanitising Carey’s story; at the same time we didn’t want to wallow in its excesses.

The book leaves some questions unanswered about what’s going on - does this production try to answer those questions, or leave the ambiguities? Central to this uncertainty is the question as to whether any of Harry’s experience of hell is in fact real or imagined. Both our score and Neil’s direction play with this dichotomy.

At the end of the book the main character is in a forest – does that remain in your show? How have you gone about staging that?
It does, but to fully appreciate it you should come along and see the show for yourself!

Do you think the Edinburgh Festival is a good place for staging new opera productions?
I am thrilled that my first opera is to be presented at this most extraordinary international meeting point of the arts and its makers. I couldn’t think of a better place for a new opera to be seen.

Bliss, Festival Theatre, 2, 4 Sep, 7.15pm, (9.55pm), £14.00 - £64.00.

the festival’s finale will be bliss
Best known for her role as temptress Denise Osbourne in ‘Coronation Street’, singer and actress Denise Black comes to Edinburgh to unleash her musical talents with her band ‘The Loose Screw’. Georgia Sharp met up with Denise to talk about life, work and the show.

What’s your first love – music or acting?
Both really. I’d be lost without either. Making music is perhaps a more joyful experience as acting is an odd discipline, but you learn a lot about other people by pretending to be someone else.

How did you form ‘The Loose Screw’?
The idea came about in 2006, but I didn’t meet my guitarist Graeme Taylor until 2008. Playing with him reminded me of my early days busking with another guitarist, called Max Moonlight. We wondered what he was up to, so we tracked him down – and now we’re altogether! It’s wonderful, like two different times in my life have conjoined to produce something heartfelt.

You’re in ‘Calendar Girls’ in Glasgow at the moment too – how are you coping?
By burning the candle at both ends! I’ve been working seven days a week since April. It’s intense, but I’ve known for a long time that it would be. I have a lot of love and support from people, my husband’s been so encouraging, and the ‘Calendar Girls’ cast came to see my first show!

Most people probably know you best from your television roles – have you been recognised a lot in Edinburgh?
Yes – we busked on the Royal Mile stage the other day, and we attracted the biggest crowd there’s ever been! People literally did a double take when they saw me – they don’t realise I was a singer for eight years before I became an actress. I’ve come here to say I want to be both!

Who are your musical influences?
It’s taken me a long time to find my feet musically. I was a very musical kid and growing up I was probably most influenced by New Orleans jazz, people like Ella Fitzgerald. For me, music is chemistry – putting great musicians together and seeing what happens.

How would you describe your style of music, and your show?
Well, according to my London soundman, it’s ‘Tarantino Chic’! I’d probably describe it as ‘heart-pumping’, but I still don’t know what genre it is. ‘Gypsy Pop’ perhaps? We’re just gaining an identity now – that’s what Edinburgh is all about; the show is a ‘music party’ really. I’m passionate about making original music, but we do covers too. We also have surprise guests on the show: well-known artists and young people just starting out. And because we’re on so late, it’s not polished – it’s raw, spontaneous excitement!

What’s your audience demographic?
It’s a funny mixture, last night we had a beshy of beautiful girls in, much to the band’s delight! And they were all drinking champagne – much to my delight! Another evening we had two twenty-first birthday parties in – and their parents too. So it’s roughly a twenty to sixty age range, which is incredibly broad.

Is music your main focus now, or will you continue to juggle it alongside acting?
I’ll juggle both – life is a juggling act! And now my children are grown up I can manage it.

Finally, what’s your biggest achievement to date?
Having my kids. The most exciting thing you can do is make babies! I used to be a workaholic and thought my career was the most important thing, then I realised I had it the wrong way round. They’ve just left home so now ‘The Loose Screw’ is my cure for an empty nest!

Denise Black: Denise Black’s Loose Screw, Pleasance at Ghillie Dhu, 15 – 29 Aug, 12.15am (1.15am), £10.00, fpp. 182.

Georgia Sharp currently studies English Literature and Theatre Studies at the University of Leeds, and produces for the Leeds University Theatre Group.
ivan brackenbury chooses the tunes

ThreeWeeks is teaming up with its sister media CMU – the UK music business’s biggest news service – to provide Edinburgh Fringe-goers with a weekly Spotify playlist, compiled by a different Fringe performer each week, to tune into during any Festival down-time.

Our third and final Fringe playlist is compiled by a certain Ivan Brackenbury. The hapless hospital radio DJ has become something of a regular fixture at the Edinburgh Fringe in recent years, and received an Edinburgh Comedy Award nomination in 2007. The live show sees Brackenbury bumble through a radio broadcast with inappropriate records and fluffed cues and was adapted into a programme for Radio 2 last year.

Ivan is the creation of comedian and presenter Tom Binns, who has appeared on shows like ‘Knowing Me Knowing You with Alan Partridge’, ‘Friday Night Armistice’, ‘Fist Of Fun’, ‘The IT Crowd’ and BBC One spy drama ‘Spooks’ and wrote sketches for ‘Trigger Happy TV’.

As a radio presenter himself, he managed to score a record-breaking fine for Xfm when he discussed bestiality on his breakfast show, and was sacked from Birmingham station BRMB after he cut off the Queen’s Christmas Day speech, which had been played into his show by mistake, saying “Two words - bore ring”. These are just two more reasons why we love Binns.

You can catch Ivan and fellow Binns creation, psychic Ian D Montfort, at the Pleasance Courtyard in Edinburgh daily until 30 Aug. The latter, of course, has written an exclusive column for ThreeWeeks, the latest of which you can read on page 9.

For this week’s Powers Of Ten playlist, Ivan Brackenbury pulled out all his hospital radio DJing skills to select some fine pop records, each one dedicated to one of the patients or staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Read about his selection here, then surf on over to www.theCMUwebsite.com/playlists to get the all important Spotify link to play these tunes.

IVAN’S POWERS OF TEN PLAYLIST

01 Simply Red - Holding Back The Years
That’s a request for Dave on Ward 3 who’s got massive ears and is having them pinned back.

02 Ellie Brooks - Pearl’s A Singer
Playing this for a musical lady on Ward B who’s got very bad piles.

03 Take That - Patience
For Doctor Crew, whose department specialises in dwarves.

04 Phil Collins - Two Hearts
This song’s for Siamese twins that are joined at the head.

05 Labi Siffre - Something Inside So Strong
A chap coming to A&E with a He-Man action figure stuck up his bum.

06 Primal Scream - Rocks
This is for Robert who is now Roberta, after having a painful gender re-alignment operation.

07 Queen - We Will Rock You
This track is for Aisha, who is a single mum from Saudi Arabia.

08 La-Mour - Torn Between Two Lovers
For Sandra, who was last seen going into a hotel with two footballers. She was admitted to A&E a few hours later with what was described as painful spit roasting injuries. Fancy cooking at that time of night in a hotel room.

09 Level 42 - Running In The Family
This is for John - he’s very short sighted. It’s genetic, it’s passed down to him on his father’s side, and it also affects his sister Emily and his brother Joe.

10 George Backer Selection - Little Green Bag
To John and his new colostomy.
Hardeep Singh Kohli is back at the Fringe cooking up both food and chat with his show Chat Masala. Between servings, he found time to answer some questions posed by Guest Editor Janey Godley.

Janey: What do you wish you had brought with you to Edinburgh this year?

Janey: Have you ever stolen stuff from the house you rented at the Festival? Tell me what it was (I took a sofa).
Hardeep: I'm clever. I have nicked Morningside. All of it. Go see. It isn’t there. That, and all the animals in the zoo which I have freed in Wester Hailes.

Janey: Have you ever kicked someone off a bike in Edinburgh who ran a red light and nearly hit you? (I have).
Hardeep: I didn't see her crossing the road and those lights outside Teviot are not as straightforward as you might think...

Janey: Have you ever dreamed of sliding down the upside down cow in the middle of the night, if so what are you wearing whilst doing that?
Hardeep: I have had that dream. I was wearing a big purple cow outfit. The first night I slid down the cow. The next night it slid down me. I have cut back on my carbs since.

Janey: Namedrop the biggest celeb who came to your show (you can make it up, Johnny Depp came to mine).
Hardeep: Janey Godley was meant to come to my gig but she was out partying with Johnny Depp.

Janey: Can you give me a good reason NOT to come back to the Fringe?
Hardeep: Edinburgh realises Morningside is missing and there are no animals in the Zoo.

J: Do you have a secret Fringe crush? Who is it? (and it can be me!)
H: I've always had a thing for Janey Godley's husband, Ian.

J: Give us your porn star name (your headmistress/master surname and the street you lived on as a child).
H: Meadowburn McCabe. Or Budgie Bhangoo if you go for the first pet/mum’s maiden name option.

J: What is your venue number multiplied by 3 add on 6 and divided by 2 (as that equals how long your liver has got before it caves in)?
Hardeep: I only deal in prime numbers so cannot fuil this answer. I’d like it to be 43, the most beautiful of all prime numbers (closely followed by 37).
Laura Mugridge has a show set in her campervan, parked in the Pleasance Courtyard. Each issue she recalls her ten favourite moments of the week.

And so, here we are, almost at the end of the festival, and both myself and Joni the campervan are struggling to remember what it’s like not to spend every day in the Pleasance Courtyard. Week three has been another busy week of shows, adventures and interesting people. Here are the highlights:

1. It can get very noisy in the Courtyard and it’s been helpful to have someone sitting outside the van letting people know there’s a show happening. I was told by my helper at the end of one show, that two toddlers had been having a ‘who can roar the loudest’ competition next to the van, but that they were just too wonderful to stop.

2. After 43 shows in three weeks, my voice is starting to get a bit tired. Before my first show on Wednesday, I had a Vocalzone to stop me sounding like an exhausted lizard. I realised far too late that these smelled horrible and I would be breathing a tar-like aroma all over my audience (apologies to anyone in that show, I am usually very fragrant).

3. My parents came up from Preston to see the show this weekend. It was extremely lovely to see them and they really enjoyed the show. My dad found the bit where I pretend to drive quite a challenge and kept inadvertently shouting out instructions, it was like passenger tourettes. This was why my dad didn’t teach me to drive.

4. I came out of one show to find a small child kissing the flower on the van’s wheel cover. It’s nice to know that Joni is attracting affectionate fans.

5. It’s up to the Front of House team to close the door of the van once the audience are all in, and we had a tense experience when we were nearly closed in there with a very active wasp. Luckily, we spotted the little scamp and order was resumed, but that could have resulted in the least relaxing way EVER to spend 45 minutes.

6. A man called Phil did some quite vigorous dancing in the front during a highlight from the show’s soundtrack. We all loved it, but I did have to ask him to rein it in a bit when the van started to shake.

7. This week I got the rather super news that I had won a Fringe First. On Friday evening we popped back to the van with some cava and sat inside, raising a glass to Joni the wonderful campervan. This was the best bit of the festival and an evening I will never forget.

8. On Sunday I met a lovely lady called Dorothy. Any doubts I had that she’d be able to deal with the step into the van were quashed when she leapt in informed me she used to be a great salsa dancer, and then proceeded to play the maracas with some dried chillis and a pot of basil.

9. I have been waiting for it to rain during a show as the noise it makes on the roof is so lovely. Despite it being Edinburgh, this didn’t happen until last Friday, when it started to pour down in the last few minutes of the show. Result! I had to shout the conclusion but it all added to the drama.

10. By the end of the festival, I will have done 59 shows. This works out at 295 people and everyone has been ace. I am hoping to see many of them again on the road, so we can wave excitedly at each other. We are heading to the Highlands after the festival for a week of camping and beautiful Scottish peace but I will be updating the adventures of Joni in my blog: http://adventuresinwellingtons.blogspot.com

Laura Mugridge: Running On Air, Pleasance Courtyard, 4-29 Aug (not 9, 16, 23), 1pm (1.45pm) and 3pm (3.45pm) Fri, Sat, Sun, 11am (11.45am) and 1pm (1.45pm) Tue, Wed, Thur, £8.50-£10.00, fpp 285
MORE THREEWEEKS IN EDINBURGH

The ThreeWeeks review team see more shows at the Edinburgh Festival than anyone else, while the ThreeWeeks news team keeps its ear to the ground for all the latest developments, and the feature and podcast teams talk to some of our favourite artists, directors, comedians and performers. You can check out their coverage in all the following places:

ThreeWeeks Weekly Edition: That’s this! You can check out past editions of our weekly edition online, as a PDF or digital magazine, at www.threeweeks.co.uk/edinburgh

ThreeWeeks Daily Edition: All the latest reviews packed onto one A3 sheet, published every evening of the Fringe until Thursday 26 Aug and available from 25 sites across Central Edinburgh.

ThreeWeeks eDailies: This is the best place to keep up to date with the whole Edinburgh Festival during August, our daily e-bulletin delivered directly to your inbox with all the latest news, reviews and interviews. To sign up for free send an email to edinburghsubscribe@threeweeks.co.uk, or sign up at www.threeweeks.co.uk/subscribe.

ThreeWeeks iDailies: Every weekday of the festival Co-Editor Chris Cooke will be presenting the Daily podcast that includes news, performances and interviews about, with and from Fringe people. You can subscribe to the iDailies podcast and listen to and download full interviews at www.threeweeks.co.uk/i-daily.html.

ThreeWeeks Radio Show: Guests, chat and music, live on Fresh Air at 8.30pm each Tuesday and Saturday evening and available on demand from www.threeweeks.co.uk

ThreeWeeks on iFringe: If you have an iPhone, then the best way to navigate the Edinburgh Fringe is using the iFringe app, in which you will find every single ThreeWeeks review, and lots more besides. Check out www.fringe.co.uk for more information.

www.threeweeks.co.uk: To access all of the above and more point your browser of choice in the direction of www.threeweeks.co.uk, the year round home of all things ThreeWeeks.

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Here is just a little bit more information about us, ThreeWeeks – what we do, why we do it, how we do it

1. ThreeWeeks was set up at the Edinburgh Festival by three then Edinburgh University students in 1996 with the double aim of providing a unique training opportunity for aspiring journalists while giving exposure to those Edinburgh Fringe shows the mainstream media didn’t cover. Fourteen years later the aims remain the same, but ThreeWeeks has much bigger; involving over 150 students from all over the UK each year and seeing hundreds more shows than any other media at the Edinburgh Festival, over 1800 in 25 days in 2009.

2. Since 2006 ThreeWeeks has also covered the Brighton Festival and Fringe each May. Having covered fourteen Edinburgh and four Brighton festivals and fringes, the ThreeWeeks editors are among the most experienced arts festival journalists in the world, with unrivalled knowledge of the festivals they cover, and the theatre, comedy, dance, music and art communities they showcase, feature and feed.

3. ThreeWeeks remains committed to discovering, writing about and interviewing talented companies and performers who are new, or alternative, and who are otherwise ignored by the mainstream media. We do this by seeing more shows than anyone else at both the Brighton and Edinburgh festivals. Because of this commitment, many other journalists and media keep an eye on ThreeWeeks for news on the ‘next big thing’. This is a role ThreeWeeks is proud to play.

4. Ever since 1996, sitting behind ThreeWeeks has been a unique media-skills programmes offering aspiring journalists a combination of formal and on-the-ground media training. Hundreds of young people have now been through this acclaimed media-skills programme, most of which have gone onto pursue careers in the arts, media and creative industries, and many of which describe their time with ThreeWeeks as a life and career defining moment.

5. ThreeWeeks is owned and run by Chris Cooke, Cara Moses and their company UnLimited Publishing. The project is run on a not-for-profit basis, all advertising and sponsorship revenues are invested into making the media-skills programme better, into covering more shows and performers faster, and into getting ThreeWeeks coverage out to more people in more places. If you would like to support the ThreeWeeks project in any way send an email to chris@unlimitedmedia.co.uk.

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