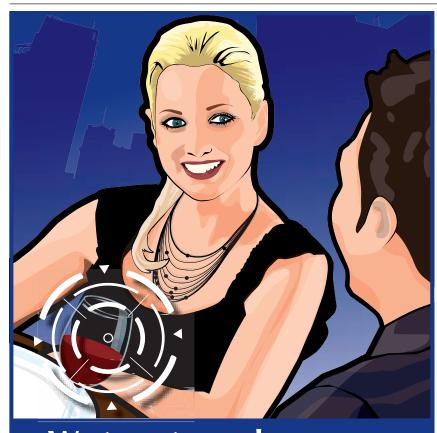
metro life **FESTIVAL** 2011

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The Big Review



Plane sailing for brave duo

Those Magnificent Men ★★★★

t's tally ho and chocks away as Scamp Theatre and New Perspectives Theatre Company pay tribute to Captain John Alcock and Lieutenant

Arthur Whitten Brown, two of the heroes of early 20thcentury aviation whose daring exploits have been largely

forgotten in the annals of history. Those Magnificent Men aims to redress the balance, recreating the duo's incredible story from June 1919 in the style of a musical hall comedy, replete with the two actors, Ian Shaw and Richard Earl, doling out lovingly stylised programmes in the auditorium. As we file in, they usher us to our seats and remark on the marvellous turn-out in such frightful conditions. We like the cut of their jibs! It's difficult in the modern age to

fully appreciate the magnitude of Alcock and Brown's endeavour. Millions of us criss-cross the globe every year on commercial flights. New York is seven or eight hours way and at the height of its popularity, the supersonic passenger airliner Concorde covered the same route in half that time. In the next couple of years, Richard Branson's much vaunted Virgin Galactic hopes to make the next giant leap for mankind, offering sub-orbital space flights including around six minutes of weightlessness. So the 16 hours and 27 minutes it took Alcock and

Brown to fly from Newfoundland to Clifden in Ireland seems rather sluggish, but they accomplished this journey in a modified Vickers Vimy bomber without the benefit of new-fangled technology. It was a triumph of mental fortitude and British engineering. In the aftermath of the World War

I, Europe continues to rebuild its shattered infrastructure and Alfred Harmsworth, proprietor of the Daily Mail, offers his latest cash prize. Having already paid out £1,000 to Louis Blériot for completing the first cross-channel flight, Harmsworth tempts aviators back into the skies with a cash prize of £10,000 for the first transatlantic flight within 72 consecutive hours. Several teams had tried their luck before the war, including Harry Hawker who ditched his plane in the sea after radiator problems. So the newspaper magnate reinstates the challenge and Alcock (Shaw) and Brown (Earl) answer the call.

Alcock would fly the plane and Brown would be his navigator. setting off from Newfoundland for the western coast of Ireland. Having made their preparations, Alcock and Brown construct their bomber from boxes and other props on the stage and in one of director Daniel Buckroyd's terrific set pieces, Brown has to clamber across the rickety wings of the plane in mid-air to remove icicles from the propellers, the entire craft

shaking violently at high altitude. Writers Brian Mitchell and Joseph Nixon build up the relationship between the two men with gentle humour and they exploit the musical hall theme, allowing the two actors to come out of character and take issue with each other's performances, most notably when Alcock criticises Brown's accent and wearily demands, 'Just do it RP,' referring to the received pronunciation that was adopted by the acting community of the era. Towards the end of the play, as Brown suggests embellishing the truth to create a more thrilling denouement, Alcock shakes his head and sighs, 'You should have your poetic licence revoked.' Shaw and Earl rise to the challenge

with vim, playing not only the two pioneers but also any supporting characters who happen to cross paths with the plucky Brits on their adventure. In a lovely piece of interaction, Alcock and Brown look into the audience, squint and both say, 'A little boy's coming up!' Sure enough, a young man trots up to the stage on cue, his parents beaming with pride, and hands the actors a prop integral to the poignant coda. Inside, we feel a similar swell of patriotic pride for Alcock and Brown, who risked life and limb simply because 'it had to Damon Smith Until Aug 29, Udderbelly's Pasture

(V300), 1.15pm, £11 and £12, £10

and £11 concs. Tel: 0844 545 8252.

www.underbelly.co.uk

towards the end of the show, he calls after her, 'Have a nice poo!' – a sentence

Martin Lindinger. Like newborns lacking the physical strength to support their own weight, the dancers flail, flop and twitch in time to Guy Veale's bombastic soundtrack, slithering over each other and entwining until their lithe bodies form

a single mass of shaking, twisted limbs. From here, we move to a nightclub where two mirrored panels, encircled with coloured lights, beckon patrons to shed their inhibitions. As the music builds to a deafening crescendo, strangers dressed in a gimp mask and devil horns, gyrate and frotter against each other in increasingly grotesque poses. And on it goes, beckoning the Three Billy Goats Gruff into this hedonistic nightmare where nothing is certain, apart from Hughes's genius.

Until Aug 28, Traverse Theatre (V15), times vary, £17 and £19, £6 to £13 concs. Tel: 0131 228 1404. www.traverse.co.uk

Comedy Review Bring The Thunder: Imran Yusuf ★★

Dance Review Last Orders ★★★★

Two years ago, for the first time in its

history, the Traverse programmed a

dance company as part of its eclectic

arresting The Red Room, inspired by

Masque Of The Red Death, electrified

Edgar Allan Poe's classic tale The

audiences with its raw physicality.

The company returns to the stage

under the aegis of the mercurial Hughes

for another exploration of decadence

and twisted human desire. The bloody

Sawney Bean provides a starting point

journey into a world of shocking excess.

The performance begins with ominous

myth of the 16th-century cannibal

for this hallucinatory and riveting

calm before a giant sack, resting on

stage as the audience files in, begins to

pulsate and slowly spews out the five

Matthew Foster, Lina Limosani and

performers: Alex Rigg, Stuart Bowden,

Fringe programme. It was a bold move and David Hughes Dance's visually

Buoyed by his nomination for the Foster's Edinburgh Comedy Best Newcomer last year, Imran Yusuf hopes lightning will strike twice with this introspection about embracing his shortcomings.

Unfortunately, there seem to be rather a lot of shortcomings, including an inability to fully engage an audience and a poor selection of material. He rubs salt into his wounds with lacklustre, off-thecuff banter. When a woman dashes out



that surely took its last breath in nursery Yusuf proudly informs us that he is the 'original size zero' and struggles to gain weight no matter what he eats. 'I have the spirit of Malcolm X and the body of Mahatma Gandhi, he continues, taking inspiration from those iconic figures to hammer home his underlying messages of self-belief and following your dreams.

Whilst all of that is admirable, Yusuf doesn't give us much to laugh about in a set that takes potshots at some obvious targets. Topical material about uprisings in the Middle East fails to draw blood, but he crafts a couple of good one-liners about men's athletics and superheroes that justify last year's acclaim. Towards the end of the hour, he refers to a 'shy, naïvely optimistic little boy trying to make you laugh.' Trying, alas, is the operative word. Damon Smith Until Aug 29, Pleasance Courtyard (V33), Edinburgh, 7pm, £11 and £12, £9.50 and £11 concs; Aug 27, Pleasance Dome (V23), 11pm, £12, £11. Tel: 0131 556 6550. www.pleasance.co.uk

David's charm breaks the ice

The Fringe can be a gruelling experience for performers, plying their trade in some of the city's mustiest nooks and crannies. Irish stand-up David O'Doherty's voice is certainly feeling the strain this afternoon.

Dressed in a rather fetching thermal one-piece and snow shoes, the 2008 Edinburgh Comedy Award winner overcomes the occasional rasp and wheeze to deliver a consummate performance as a bumbling Irish explorer in his firstever venture into character comedy.

David O'Doherty Presents Rory Sheridan's Tale Of The Antarctica ★★★★

Out of the cold: David O'Doherty takes on the role of a failed explorer

The year is 1917 and The Royal Antarctic Society has invited Rory

an illustrated lecture about his 26 months at sea with the HMS Pelmet. Rory doesn't want to be here to discuss his ill-fated expedition to the South Pole, but he owes a large amount of money so the tour is essential to recoup some of the losses.

Resolved to his fate, Rory transports us to the southernmost continent which he describes as an endless wedding dress concealing some rather unwelcome surprises.

The local wildlife, represented on stage by a single stuffed bird, doesn't excite Rory. 'A penguin has the intelligence of a bottle of sausages,' he educates us, sharing fascinating details of the team's dietary needs such as the 500 tins of cabbage to stave off scurvy.

A romantic subplot involving the daughter of a thermal underwear magnate leads to increasingly surreal and hilarious facts about the

animals used to pull the expedition over the ice and how climbing the mast of the HMS Pelmet became a euphemism for the lonely crew. O'Doherty charms and delights as the lecture takes increasingly bizarre twists and turns. Brrrrilliant.

Damon Smith Until Aug 28, Underbelly, Cowgate (V61a), 3.20pm, £9.50 and £10, £8.50 and £9 concs. Tel: 0844 545 8252, www.underbellv.co.uk











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