

Murray Bramwell's Reviews

Appeared in - The Adelaide Review

Adelaide Fringe

Before television re-discovered Australian humour and FM breakfast executives began strip-mining the stand-up industry, comedy at the Adelaide Fringe was all one big lucky dip where Funny Stories, LosTrios Ringbarkus, the Doug Anthony Allstars, Flacco, the Jet Black Cowboy and the Castanet Club could all be found.

Now we know our comics through Rove and ABC vehicles like *The Glass House* so many comedians already have a profile and a pedigree.

Looking through the list for 2004 there are quite a few household names and they will be rewarded for their familiarity with queues around the block and standing room only signs. Fringe comedy is always the most popular and, one would hope, the most commercially successful category in the festival. But maybe it's starting to get a little tired. I have to say there are notable absences this year and the diversity, as in many parts of our cultural ecosystem, is starting to dwindle just a little.

Lets start with the good news. Some legends are listed here. With *Gud*, Paul McDermott presents his patented line in vehement wit, mixed with music from his own fine pipes and the talents of Cameron Bruce and Mick Moriarty. Dave Hughes comes out of the glass house and back to his true calling in the colosseum of stand-up and Rod Quantock, the most reasonable, funny and politically corrosive commentator in the country will provide therapeutic counsel back at the Nova. Also, Lano and Woodley, are back with the *The Island* a new show undoubtedly garnished with all the pratfalls, regressed physicality and social incompetence which has made them hilarious and irresistible in the past.

The Tokyo Shock Boys are back, proving, like Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, that there is a new generation born every four years. Also at Her Majesty's, carrying on from the High Eighties (or is that hiatus ?) is Natural Born Mincer, Julian Clary. Song and joke specialists Scared Little Weird Guys and Tripod are in the listings as is Wil Anderson - the execrable pun this time is *Licence to Wil*.

Leading the women's march is Fiona McLoughlin at the Nova, Kim Hope from the Glass House and Christine Davey with the Catchlove Sisters. Joanne Brookfield's *Dog's Breakfast* looks like a starter also. We note the absence of Judith Lucy, Sue-Ann Post and lament the passing of Linda Gibson whose past glories at the Fringe are indelibly recalled.

The UK invasion has again been well packaged by Mary Tobin - the Best of the Fest, Brit Com, Cream of the Irish - and in a few weeks we will know all about Neil Delamere, Karl Spain, Rhod Gilbert and the rest. Ross Noble is a definite again this time and Daniel Kitson is also a must. Arj Barker where are you? - surely, all is forgiven? The Comedy Gala featuring the cast of comics from the Festival play *Twelve Angry Men* will be a special bonus.

Adam Hills gains momentum each Fringe and we welcome him back after extended seasons in Edinburgh and London. Bryan Lynagh's *Culturally Unfit* is on my list, as is Hung Le and local comics Pete Monaghan, Trenwith and Fitch and the Baudrillard Brothers. Many will be intrigued to meet the real Larry Kramer and Matt Byrne's Media are having a high altitude look at Virgins.

There are other fascinating listings - Uber Alice- the Adventures of a New Zealand Manicurist and penis puppeteer, Anthony Jucha are only two of them. I am sorry that this is the first Fringe in years without either Rich Hall or Otis Lee Crenshaw, and it feels quiet without Greg Fleet. My favourite in 2002 was Bill Bailey - I wonder who we will be heralding by this time next month?