



Photo Credit: Diiverse.com

The gold is cursed, and the Valkyries are vengeful. Looks like Sgurd's got them ol' dragon blues again!

The Brain from Planet X

Crosswalk Players—PTE Mainstage

Enter the 1950s, add a healthy dose of B-grade science fiction (complete with Narrator), and you've got the recipe for an entertaining evening at the Fringe.

Crosswalk's 2011 contribution is a musical poking fun at the role of the nuclear family, and the illusion of purity (as portrayed by the Bunson family). Our alien invader is The Brain, a larger-than-life maniacal genius with plans for world domination (like you would expect anything less!). His fluorescent hench-aliens, while loyal, impede his efforts, as they are easily distracted by Earth's homo erects. While not every character has a featured role, every performer has more than a few moments to shine. Hilarious lyrical content, physical humor, and awkward encounters of the alien kind—this musical will crack even the hardest Fringe cynic. Expect a special effects budget that is out of this world.

D. Penner

Stripes: The Mystery Circus

Stripes: The Mystery Circus—MTC Up the Alley

Stripes starts with an overdressed nun warning of a biblical injunction against wearing more than one colour at the same time, and lists some of the worst offenders: pirates, prisoners, and clowns. Then we proceed into an almost morality-play struggle between a half-nun, half circus performer until the main character emerges and does her audition as a circus performer. That's the superficial aspect of this production. At a higher level we have a metaphor of life as a circus, and stripes as cracks in our life that need to be healed, or at least integrated. This idea is the basis of the character's sound/crack theory, which sees music as a healing presence.

Stripes has a very strong opening, and some good

scenes throughout, such as the Halloween party in the personal care home. Other scenes do not quite reach this mark, and the songs are sometimes charming but other times prosaic. Like any circus, though, there is something for everyone.

Kevin Longfield

Spin The Rascal

Crosseyed Rascals—RRC

I love watching the Rascals work. They're more than a troupe; they're a family. For example, they acknowledged the birthday of one of their team (not because they wanted something from the audience, but just because they wanted to make it special), and they catered their scenes to another member of the troupe who is suffering from a cold, buying her time to clear her sinuses between, and even during scenes. While onstage, the Rascals go out of their way to feature other productions, inviting local artists to come up and plug their shows. They host guests from other walks of life (politicians, Dancing Gabe, etc). And in the midst of all of this, they perform zany and wildly entertaining, family-friendly shows based on audience suggestions. They've honed their craft for years, and it shows.

D. Penner

Happy Slap

Rob Gee—Planetarium

It was a good day for me. I finally got into a Rob Gee show. My gratitude goes out to the Fringe for putting his show into a larger venue that doesn't sell out quite so fast. I love Rob's writing, but what really makes his material go over is his stage presence. He creates the impression that he is speaking to you and perhaps a couple of friends around a table in a pub and sharing some perceptions that he's picked up along the way. The only dif-

ference between Rob and the average convivial person you might meet over drinks is that Rob has a keener eye and a sharper sense of just the right words to use.

Kevin Longfield

Wildwood Park

tReAdThEeDgE pRoDs.—Rachel Browne Theatre

When a house is stripped of the soul that makes it a home, there is little left but the shadows that pass between light and dark. Inside the shadowed present, there are remnants, not of the past, but of what no longer exists. This piece brings to light so much that tries to hide in the shadows. No stars here, only honest-to-goodness artistry and storytelling.

Columpa C. Bobb

The Wet Dream Catcher

Craving Space Productions—Son of Warehouse

What a wacky, and thoroughly Fringe-y show. Admittedly, it took this performer a while to catch my attention. He spends a big chunk of time at the beginning speaking to the audience in some gibberish language that resemble English closely enough that he gives you the gist of what he's saying and still remains completely nonsensical. This part really didn't do anything for me. I recognize he was setting the tone of the show to allow him to intersperse this kind of silliness throughout his story and make it acceptable. He succeeds at that, but when he started speaking almost normally I wasn't the only audience member to breathe a sigh of relief that the whole show wasn't going to go that way. What he is setting you up for is a story of unapologetic imagination. There are times when his phrases seem chosen more to sound good than to further his point, but if you can suspend the need for the things he tells you to make perfect sense, this show is a lot of fun.

Shawn Kowalke

This is a work of genius. If you have a reasonably high IQ and don't allow your own sexual/emotional hangups to get in the way, you will love this show.

Charisma, warmth, honesty, craftsmanship are all words that spring to mind when you are privileged to be in a room with this extraordinarily talented mind.

R.C. Weslowski writes truths not clichés, with more honesty than Abe Lincoln, and has better nonsense poetry than Spike Milligan.

The most-deserved standing ovation at a Fringe show to date. A pleasure to see an older man delight a crowd of young people—giving them the most innocent orgasm of their lives.

An absolute must-see. Trust me, I'm a poet.

Steve Larkin