

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Review: Circus of the Orient (**)

by Martin Belk

If you want a big, loud, expensive, haphazard day out of the rain and have absolutely nowhere else to go then this is the show for you. The good thing about 'circus' is that for children, there's plenty of lights and action. The rest for adults is all downhill.

While the individual performers try their darndest, they appear completely unsupported by any form of production – there is no sign of sound or lighting expertise. The music is muffled, the microphones poorly set up so that the speech is at times incomprehensible – making the entire experience a parade of missed audience cues. The stage could well have been designed by a school art class, and is a bit too bright and overpowering, leaving the actors at times indistinguishable on stage. There is also something very disenchanting about seeing the main actors in a performance put out to peddle plastic toys to the crowd before the show and during the intermission. The seating itself is set up in a way that many have no good view of the stage, and are forced to upgrade to more-expensive 'premium' seats.

Some acts are OK, some are lacklustre. There are only two short sets of actual 'Shaolin Warriors' and a couple of pole-vaulting type troupes (one from Bulgaria is very good, but for some reason is left to the end of the show), but the rest is filled with long clown skits, and audience skits. The two clown actors worked very hard and were funny in places, but perhaps a little rich for the young in the audience.

One might think the constant onslaught of American cinema

icons would save the day, or the opportunity to get your photo taken with SpongeBob would lighten the mood, but it didn't – and from a production standpoint, the show became a shambolic mess.

Take the same actors and performers, get them a real director, writer and production crew, and you might have something. As it stands, it's, well, loud, and the tent is, well, pretty dry.

[Meadows Theatre Big Top](#)

11:00, 14:00, 16:00

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