

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Review: Man of Valour (****)

It's the astonishing performance by Paul Reid that really carries this one-man show. White-faced and wide-eyed, he's Farrell, a corporate drone contending with the daily grind of commuting and irritating colleagues, but in his head he's an action hero. And in the show, we see his fantasy world acted out live in front of us, complete with vocal sound effects.

Mime comes into it, but it doesn't exactly describe the technique. There are no props and no set (only noirish video projections by Jack Phelan), and hardly any dialogue, so it falls to Reid's movement and vocal skills alone to communicate the story.

The show bears a certain resemblance to Joe Bone's *Bane* trilogy at the Pleasance Dome: if you've enjoyed one, you'll probably like the other. But whereas *Bane* is explicit in its wide-ranging movie references and is generally played for laughs, there's a more serious intent at work in *Man of Valour*.

Which is not to say it isn't funny – there are moments of great slapstick humour – but it's at the borderline between fantasy and reality that the show is most fascinating, and it's often hard to tell where one stops and the other starts.

Reid is spellbinding from start to finish, and there's as much pleasure to be gained from admiring his remarkably versatile, fluid performance as there is from following the story. But it's the twisted, nightmarish world of Farrell's imagination that really stays with you.

Man of Valour, Traverse Theatre, until 14 August, times vary