

# Edinburgh Fringe Festival Review – The Curse of the Devil's Verse (\*\*\*\*\*)

☒ The Curse of the Devil's Verse.

Sheep Soup (in association with The Television Workshop)

[Soco Venue 348, Chambers Street.](#)

Beer monster Rob's immature, ego-centric cod-philosophy on life is in near terminal conflict with his very attractive and increasingly frustrated partner Lucy's, aspirations to be a novelist. Rob sees himself in the primal role as hunter-gatherer, alpha-male where literary pretensions are hardly going to bring mammoth-meat home to the cave are they? No New-Age male confusion here then. Lucy takes the alternative perspective that he's in emotional denial, a suitable paraphrase for this family broadsheet!

Later, in the pub, Rob expounds on his blokey philosophy made evermore eloquent after several pints. He's yet to notice a somewhat weird red beardy chap studying him with resigned dismay. This mysterious muse-maker invites Rob to join his bi-monthly poetry evening, but is met with withering disdain: still he buys Rob a drink. It's a pint he'll never forget. Because by morning time Rob has literally become Mr. UniVerse, speaking only in rhyming couplets.

And it's one of the many achievements of this, a Fringe Debut, thoroughly engaging secular, modern fantasy homage to Medieval Mystery pageants that the playwright can scan Rob's expletive 'f\*\*ks' seamlessly in to Iambic pentameter. The essential conceit is that Rob must bear his curse like some Ancient Mariner, doomed to atone for his Philistine arrogance.

There's much to engage in this concise, cleverly scripted show. It develops from naturalistic idiomatic dialogue where we're often as much laughing with Rob, as at him, to where the narrative shift sees perceptive and high-level poetic dexterity. Lucy's role is well-crafted and her novel-writing ambitions come to fruition with a deliciously ironic twist. Though she doesn't help Rob's predicament by bonking his best mate Ted just after he's just been ostracised by his work mates for being a posey poofta. Nic Harvey's intelligent, witty and tightly-reined script eschews any affectations or moral proselytizing.

The denouement is credible and rounded. A pithy, insightful show with a wry sense of its own defined boundaries. And whilst certain philosophical themes of socio-gender identity may be taken as allegorical; digs at the likes of 'Top Gear': losers grasping for motor-crotch machismo whilst still struggling to get one foot on the bottom rung of the evolutionary ladder, may be purely co-incidental. Discuss after the show. Fifty minutes of thought-provoking fun. Go and enjoy.