

Susan Calman at the Underbelly



My one and only previous Fringe show was going to Tynecastle to watch a Hibs / Hearts select play Bayern Munich in the eighties, and before anyone argues, the game was advertised as a Festival event. I can't recollect the score, but I do remember the fans booing the Edinburgh players who happened to play for the wrong team.

All that changed a few years ago, when I decided that I should make the effort and check out a few shows during the Festival. On the whole, most have been good, including my favourite, Moira's Monologues with the excellent Alan Bennett which ran in the National Library of Scotland last year.

On the other hand, I would only go back to certain shows if they allowed animals into the venue as it would take wild horses to drag me there.

When the envelope from the ticket office dropped through the letterbox, I had hoped that my better half had discovered Moira's Monologues 2, but instead they were for Susan Calman at the Underbelly.

To be honest, I had no idea who Susan Calman was, although when I Googled her, I did recognise her face from 'Have I got News for You', where she had been funny alongside Ian Hislop. Call me a cynic however; I wouldn't have been surprised to learn that, in the words of Rod Stewart, some of 'her adlib lines were well rehearsed.'

After my brief "You do realise that Chris Hoy is on at the same time?" it became clear that subtle attempt to get out of going to the show was countered, (Damn You Sky Plus), and we

headed off to the show. Surprisingly, parking nearby was easy to find so this allowed for refreshments beforehand.

The Dairy Room was smaller than I had anticipated, given Susan's new found fame, and was full to bursting. Thankfully, I wasn't the only man in the audience although we would have had problems forming a five-a-side football team.

When Susan appeared from behind the curtain, I was surprised to discover how small she was. I initially thought that Jimmy Krankie was doing the warm up but I quickly realised my mistake as Jimmy would not have cracked some of the jokes that the former Glasgow lawyer did.

I did not know that Susan was a lesbian until she announced it within the first couple of minutes before her hilarious routine about coming out in Glasgow twenty years ago. Her relationship with her mother was another discussion point which seemed to register with a few of the women in the hall.

Susan explained to the audience that she had recently married or 'civil partnered', as marriage in church remains outlawed at present.

She then read out a list of reasons why she believed that no-one would want to marry her, which included a guest appearance from Dame Helen Mirren, some cats dressed as policemen during Prime Suspect Day and what she wants on her gravestone.

The show ended with a thought-provoking monologue from Susan on how she would like to marry in a church like her brother and sister, and there was not a dry eye in the house.

The show lasted one hour, in common with most Fringe shows, and was thoroughly enjoyable, even if a few of the jokes went over my head... Now where's the remote?