

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2013 – REVIEW – The Bloody Ballad ****.5



The Bloody Ballad, Assembly Roxy 7:45pm, until 25 Aug (except 12, 19), £12 (£10 concessions)

The audience had barely sat down before [The Bloody Ballad](#) began with the jovial shouts of 4 of the 5 cast members, who made the most of the inventive start by remaining in character while entering the stage from behind the audience. The entire cast, including the fifth and final to appear (protagonist Mary) convincingly remained in character in a production that was not easy to predict, particularly as it is described as 'part gig, part slasher movie and part murder ballad'. Fortunately for the audience, an inviting story unfolded, immaculately performed from start to finish.

The Bloody Ballad is, quite bluntly, a bloody good show. This thrilling journey of romance and murder is exceptionally well-told by the talented cast who gel incredibly well and are evidently confident with the script and each other. It was refreshing to witness such raw talent perform a piece of theatre that dealt with the serious ramifications of murder with a generous mix of toe-tapping music and humorous dialogue.

The lighting and set design suited the show in the sense that it aided in the creation of the atmosphere, with the shadow-effect backdrop, reminiscent of the style of Britain's Got Talent 2013 winners 'Attraction', being an effective addition. The gory elements of the show were not unbearably grotesque but were in fact realistic.

Produced by live music theatre company [Gagglebabble](#), the cast includes a sensational Lucy Rivers as Mary and the enthusiastic Hannah McPake and Oliver Wood as Elizabeth and Connor respectfully. The versatile actors work in sync with Dan Messore on Guitar and Tom Cottle on drums, both of whom are accomplished musicians and a valuable addition to the production, but the dynamics of the performance proved that all of them can act and all are musically gifted, making them suitably casted to this show.

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe has the ability to act as a platform for lesser-known performers and their works to be shared to a wider audience and thankfully many more 'usual' theatre-goers will get to experience 'The Bloody Ballad' this year. It could also attract those who prefer 'just a gig' or 'just a drama performance' as this cleverly combines the two, hence a 4.5/5 rating. The chemistry of the cast, combined with the catalogue of excellent songs, made it an enjoyable hour and a quarter that transforms the audience to 1950s America and into the lives of the memorable characters.