

Edinburgh Festival Fringe

REVIEW – Feral ****



Angle-poise lamps dangle above a peculiar holed table-cum-writing desk, with a video mixing console and sound desk crammed in to the left and right of the stage. There's no hiding the show's mechanics in Leith-based theatre company Tortoise in a Nutshell's exquisite *Feral*.

And Summerhall's evocative Demonstration Room puts you right up next to the performers as they lovingly assemble a miniature seaside down, complete with pier, helter-skelter, church and rows of shops, all made from intricately drawn white cardboard, and populated by wide-eyed everypeople. It's clear that the 'how' is as important as the 'what' in this slow-burning but powerful show.

That 'how' continues in the live film, projected on a screen above the performers' heads, and made by them tracing tiny video cameras through the town's alleyways and observing the miniature characters' movements. Dogs steal sausages from the butcher's, teenagers eat candyfloss, and siblings Joe and Dawn dream of something more – well, exciting.

It's all brilliantly realised, but a bit too idyllic – which makes the longed-for arrival of the mysterious Supercade and the town's swift descent into mayhem and rioting all the more shocking. A dialogue-free puppetry show is perhaps not the best vehicle for delving into the subtle and conflicting causes of a community breakdown, but there's no denying the emotional power of the show's dark conclusion – brilliant realised through the tiny sets and puppets in some strikingly memorable images. You leave the show both pondering its themes and marvelling at its astonishing invention and imagination.

[Feral, Summerhall, until 25 Aug \(not 13, 20\), 8-8.50pm](#)

