

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe REVIEW – Johnnie Walker's Guest Night \*\*\*\*.5



Actually this was only one of the Radio 2 DJ's series of guest nights, and a good one to choose as his guest on Sunday evening was the Fife-born crime author, Val McDermid. In a really good use of Twitter you only know who the guest is when it is announced on the [New Town Theatre Twitter feed](#). (Tonight it is Tony Benn!)

McDermid is a great interviewee as anyone who listened to her on Desert Island Discs recently would already know, and as a guitarist herself she is a knowledgeable music fan too. She has described her focus on writing crime as killing for fun and profit, but admitted that she does not write the gory bits with relish, although she likes to do it well and with some compassion for the victims. Walker invited her onto the stage to a musical accompaniment of Springsteen's Dancing in the Dark, and then commenced a very polished hour of what appeared to be completely effortless chat with photos, but was actually well-researched and delivered with complete professional poise.

It was a very pleasant way to spend an hour in the company of someone who had researched his subject but was able to connect with them on a very human level. This had all the appearance of being a chat by the fire. The surprise was that Walker mentioned Jimmy Savile and confessed to knowing what had been going on all those years ago, albeit apparently in common with many others at the BBC. What made this all the more interesting however was that McDermid admitted that Savile was the person she had firmly in mind when she created the

character, Jacko Vance, in *The Wire* in the Blood. McDermid had met Savile during her early career as a journalist:-“He was a deeply unpleasant man and not a person I would like to be alone with.”

Walker is the veteran DJ of Radio England and Radio Caroline, who was a huge loss to commuters when he gave up his drive time slot on Radio 2 some years back. He has had a brush with cancer which meant he had to take time off for fairly robust treatment, but returned to the delight of his huge fanbase. Since then he has conducted interviews on his Sunday afternoon show, and so has a wealth of experience to call on. Not always the best behaved of BBC employees he is nonetheless much beloved by a certain age group.



The show was accompanied by a very simple photo slideshow of his guest and they both sat on the stage set to look like a fairly comfortable old-fashioned living room.

This is a great format for Johnnie Walker, and one he is well used to, so do get along to see him with his other guests.

Johnnie Walker's Guest Night at New Town Theatre until 25 August 2013. [Tickets and more information here.](#)