

Edinburgh Festival Fringe REVIEW – Tim Price: I'm with the Band ****



by Rachel Fischer

Tim Price: I'm with the Band

Traverse Theatre: daily (times vary)

I'm with the Band by Tim Price, the first in what will probably be a long series of plays about the upcoming Scottish referendum, takes the form of an hour-long rock concert performed on the Traverse stage.

The four members of a band called 'The Union' find themselves in deep financial woes and the lead guitarist decides to leave. Over the next hour or so conflicts evolve, old friendships break up, madness and chaos take over the stage – all of which is the unintended result of the Scottish lead guitarist's decision to leave the previously successful band.

The remaining band members (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) suddenly find themselves facing unexpected emotional/constitutional difficulties (increasing Welsh self-confidence, Irish re-unification, loss of English pride etc). If occasionally pushing the metaphor to breaking point, this section nevertheless often wittily mirrors the debates taking place daily in the press.

Fortunately, there is a lot more to it than just the slightly one-sided and largely predictable storyline. The play is also an experiment in using music as both the means and the main aim of communication. The cast (Andy Clark, Matthew Bulgo, James Hillier and Aaron Rodgers) and director Hamish Pirie effortlessly manage to shift emphasis away from the

somewhat prosaic story and create a playful and amusing concert of ideas.

Inevitably, the strictly metaphorical form of the play rules out the chance of any serious political discussion as well as the development of any real dramatic conflict. What you get instead is an hour of true entertainment filled with great acting, surprisingly good musicianship and plenty of belly laughs.

Photo by Jeremy Abrahams