

Edinburgh Festival Fringe REVIEW – Deborah Frances- White: Half a Can of Worms ****

A slide at the beginning of Deborah Frances-White's show at the Pleasance Dome announces that "This is a true story." And not comedy truth. Actual truth. A sly joke at the audience's expense? No, Half a Can of Worms is seventy-five minutes of performance supported by photographic evidence, the detail of remembered telephone conversation, and evident feeling.

It's the tale of Frances-White's amateur sleuthery into the circumstances of her adoption as a newborn baby; an engaging mix of comedy and story-telling in the vein of Dave Gorman's breakthrough Are You Dave Gorman? And while the one-liners may not come as quickly as Gorman's, the humour is varied and clever, and there is more at stake. Sense of self. Nature versus nurture. The tension between creation and privacy. The relative roles of friends and family. The funny sound of the word "rural".

Having founded the improv company The Spontaneity Shop in 1997, there's a sense in this show that Ms. Frances-White has been honing her skills in anticipation of doing justice to this particular story. Visual jokes, puns, observation and story-telling skills draw the audience in as her meditation on the adage that "You can choose your friends, but not your family" builds to a heartfelt conclusion. On the road from Shoreditch to Scotland via Australia, Spain and New Zealand, Frances-White shares what she has learned – not least how to hire and fire Antipodean private detectives at reasonable prices.

The comedian affects surprise that no one adopted is in the healthy crowd for this early-Festival performance, but her personal tale has the universal resonance to keep us rapt. Even though Frances-White admits that she began writing the show while her investigations continued, your reviewer was happy to depart believing Half a Can of Worms is a warm, amusing, actually true story.

Half a Can of Worms is on at the Pleasance Dome (Venue 23) at 3:45pm, Aug 5-11 and 13-25.

Submitted by [Ricky Brown](#)

