

Edinburgh Festival Fringe Review – Francesca Martinez – What the ****is Normal? ****

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is known for pushing the alternative comedy envelope, for testing the boundaries of the acceptable face of comedy. While the rest of the UK club circuit and mainstream TV panel shows are still reluctant to include women comedians, what about a woman with a Cerebral Palsy? Francesca Martinez is a comedian, writer and actor, who is, as she puts it is 'a bit wobbly.' This is because she has Athetoid Cerebral Palsy with Myotonia and joint laxity. (that's a s**t name, it's really not sexy, can't we have nicer names for disabilities?" she muses.

Her Edinburgh Festival Fringe comedy show at the EICC is less stand up, more sit-down. She is charmingly frank and funny about her own physical limitations.

Is it really OK to laugh at the young disabled woman? Of course it is, she's freakin' hilarious! You would have to be made of stone not to laugh at her. She is fresh, feisty and fabulous. The fringe audience are open minded, accepting, with the best sense of humour in the world. And they love her. With her energy, sparkle and infectious smile it's impossible not to. The premise of the show is that none of us are truly 'normal', we are all unique individuals. She points out that consumerism relies on our own insecurities, exhorting us to buy a particular product to make us younger, sexier, happier.

She's challenges the media's love of celebrity. Katie Price and Lindsay Lohan come within her sights, and her acerbic wit is pin sharp, right on the money. She explains "In some ways women's rights have come on a long way, but not in the media. What a woman looks like is still her most defining quality,

its illegal for women to age in the media. You rarely see a woman over 40 on screen.”

She explains she doesn't get booked for TV panel shows. She agrees that these shows have a fairly aggressive, overwhelmingly male environment, but this is one sassy sister who could certainly handle herself in that environment. “They think I would make the audience feel uncomfortable”, but she doesn't agree. “If disabilities were a curry, I'm just a korma”

Her honesty is disarming and inspiring. “The Paralympics make me look bad, I'm really lazy.” Her description of being asked to carry the torch for the 2008 Beijing Olympics is brilliant, topped off with “Did they really think this through?”

Francesca Martinez is warm, witty and confident and delivers killer lines with perfect timing. She is leading a wobbly revolution, and I for one am right behind her.

Francesca Martinez “What the **** is Normal?” Venue 150 @EICC
9th, 11th 15th 16th August