

Edinburgh Festival Fringe

Review : Spectacappella! ****

There are some things in life that are horrifically tricky to master, yet impressive to behold once mastered: poaching an egg, juggling, speaking foreign languages, writing a decent review... *A cappella* singing is right at the top of this list.

The release of teen comedy *Pitch Perfect* in 2012 and the continued success of US drama *Glee* have brought a *cappella* back into the spotlight and updated its image from one of tired barbershop quartets to a modern, edgy medium, one that young people are excited to be involved in. **All The King's Men** are at the forefront of this revolution. Named in 2012 as the **best university a cappella group in the UK**, they celebrate their sixth birthday this year and are stronger than ever, counting amongst their patrons Paul Phoenix of The King's Singers and Michelle Carlin of Sydney University.

Opening with a lively mix of Prince's "*I Wanna Be Your Lover*" and Clean Bandit's "*Rather Be*", from the very beginning the group showcased where their strengths lie. Whilst the treble of **Ben Taylor-Davies** was clear and well-controlled in their first number, it was sometimes obscured by the power of the group as a whole.

There is a tremendous sense of fun within ATKM, one that sometimes leads the group a little out of the control of musical director **Jonny Stewart**, yet the audience has no objections. Sharp choreography (often a challenge for a *cappella* groups) and intelligent arrangements abound: Cee Lo Green's "*Forget You*" is standard fare for most a *cappella* groups, yet it was given new life by the seemingly impromptu arrival of **Thana'a Mohajer** with Kanye West's "*Gold Digger*"- Mohajer, one of the strongest voices in the group, also bends

over backwards (quite literally) to display the strongest thighs.

Another highlight included **Rufus Talks'** rendition of Paolo Nutini's "*Last Request*"- a quieter moment that provided a welcome respite from the quick pace of ATKM's set.



The surge in popularity of *a cappella* singing is surely a positive phenomenon. Soundtracks recorded in a booth with a sound engineer can hide a multitude of sins, and television shows and films sometimes lead young singers to believe that perfection can be achieved within minutes. ATKM is tribute to the hard work that goes into the mastery of what is in fact a very tricky medium, and they are a credit to their MD.

Spectacappella! is showing at 15:10 at The Space @ Symposium Hall, until August 23rd 2014. **All The King's Men** can be found on Facebook ([facebook.com/ATKMLondon](https://www.facebook.com/ATKMLondon)) and on their website (www.all-the-kings-men.com). Their latest release, **Royal Flush**, can be purchased for £10 from allthekingsmenlondon.-bigcartel.com.

