

Edinburgh Festival Fringe – 2015 – Rap Guide to Climate Chaos interview

Rap Guide To Climate Chaos. Baba Brinkman explains why building an Ark is not an option.



2014's Fringe welcomed the return of Vancouver, verse-wrangling hip-hop muse maneuverer, Baba Brinkman, reprising his highly acclaimed 2004 Canterbury Tales Fringe debut but also premiering The Rap Guide to Religion. The latter, garnering all sorts of gushing reviews, toured internationally ruffling more than a few religious fundamentalists' feathers – did dinosaurs really ever have feathers?

Perhaps there's an apposite, synchronous segue with his latest show, Rap Guide to Climate Chaos? The Pope gets Global Green after hearing about The Religion Rap? Possibly all or something will be revealed as The Edinburgh Reporter goes head to cerebral head with the troubadour of troublesome existentialism – Mr. Baba Brinkman.

TER. Is the Rap Climate Chaos show the inevitable conclusion to a trilogy of mind-provoking themes you have explored over the past years: aka Rap Evolution and Rap Religion?

BB. Well, after covering both evolution and religion I was hard pressed to find a subject blood-boiling enough to serve as a worthy sequel. After researching climate change, and getting into several heated conversations with both activists and deniers, I realized this was the perfect storm and I should go chase it.

TER. What was your take on the Pontiff's recent environment

encyclical about man-made global warming? Oh, forgive us if this is a spoiler for the show but we just could not resist teasing you with this bon mot –

“I disagree with the Pope’s philosophy on global warming,” Sen. Jim Inhofe, the leading voice of climate denial in the Senate and chairman of its Environment and Public Works Committee, said in a statement to USA TODAY. “I am concerned that his encyclical will be used by global warming alarmists to advocate for policies that will equate to the largest, most regressive tax increase in our nation’s history,” he added.

BB. I share Senator Inhofe’s concern, only I would use “hope” in place of “concern” and “progressive” in place of “regressive.” In terms of the encyclical, I was delighted and annoyed when I read it, delighted because it will help to move the conversation forward and motivate a billion Catholics to take a serious issue seriously, but annoyed by the timing of its release, since I had to tear up and rewrite half my script so I could comment on and incorporate it into the story. And yes, I do kick a capitalism-bashing battle rap in the voice of the Pope in the show. Who would have thought religion could actually be a force for good?

TER. So, acting as a proxy Alan Partridge for those who may still be in the dark – Climate Chaos – what’s that all about then?

BB. Chaos is the predicted outcome if we do nothing about global warming, and also the predicted outcome if we do something about global warming, depending on who you listen to, but in this case the Pope is Galileo and Inhofe and his cronies are the Catholic church. Climate chaos is the tragic consequence of our high-energy existence, which everyone in developed countries contributes to and enjoys. I’m no exception. Just flying to Edinburgh to perform my climate change rap show will doom several polar bear sub-species to extinction. But hey, the show must go on.



Effects of global warming
escalate

TER. So, building an Ark, and/or a guns n' sealed bunker with three years supplies is not an option?

BB. Ideally those strategies will be listed under "Plan B" and something more democratic, with shared rewards and share responsibilities, can be achieved. Guns and bunkers are looking more attractive with each failed international climate accord though. Ark-building is only likely to work for Kentucky.

TER. You explored the contentious philosophical role (or not) of Determinism last year in Rap Religion. Is there an existential conundrum in that we are bound by the inevitability of our own extinction? The parasite feeds on its self-destruction? You will be throwing in a few jokes though?

BB. Our extinction (or at least obsolescence) is indeed inevitable, the only question is timescale. I'd rather have a few more tens of thousands of years to work with. This is a classic battle of instincts vs reason, and I am pathologically optimistic that reason will prevail. And as for jokes, naturally; there's nothing more conducive to comedy than willful self-destruction.

TER. It is noticeable, and commendable that you give prominent credit to your director, Darren Lee Cole. How did that partnership come about?

BB. Darren has been in the New York theatre world for decades and really knows the scene there, and for some reason he just resonated with my rap/science/provocateur act and decided to give it a home at his Soho Playhouse. He's also become a fruitful collaborator, having directed my last three off-Broadway shows. My background is rap and poetry and

storytelling but not so much dramaturgy, so it's a real privilege to have a sharp theatre mind to work with to really develop the stagecraft side of my performances.

TER. Last year, your Off The Top (science/semi-improvised) PBH Free Fringe show with wife, Heather Berlin, drew impressive crowds and some five star reviews. And, you are back again – is it a similar format but with even more weird and clever things about our brains that our brains are not telling us so your two brains have to?

BB. It's the same show in that my neuroscientist wife is still experimenting on my brain and I'm still her humble rapping guinea pig, but this year we've got new raps, new jokes, new experiments, new guests, and new gadgets. Neuroplasticity is the name of the game, and Heather and I keep rewiring as we go.

LISTINGS

Baba Brinkman Rap Guide to Climate Chaos

Wine Bar: Gilded Balloon. 19.00-20.00 5-31 Aug.

Previews 5-7 Aug. £7.00 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 24-27, 31 Aug. £10.00 /£8.00

10, 11 Aug. £12.00/£10.00 (2-4-1). 14-16, 21-23, 28-30 Aug. £12.00/£10.00

No Show 18 Aug .013162265520 www.gildedballoon.co.uk/