

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2016 REVIEW : Antonio Forcione and Sarah Jane Morris



Sarah Jane Morris and Antonio Forcione come together in a worldwide tour to promote the launch of their collaborative album *Compared to What*. This duo has each been compared to an impressive array of musical geniuses including Janice Joplin and Tom Waits (vocally) as well as Jimi Hendrix (instrumentally) – a comparison Antonio wears with pride. Django Reinhardt also comes to mind. In truth, Sarah Jane and Antonio are great artists in their own right and share audiences in Italy, Britain and all over the world.

Before Saturday, I thought I had all my Fringe shows arranged. Then a lovely man told me that [Sarah Jane Morris](#) was in Edinburgh for the third week. I was more than happy to dip into my wallet and buy tickets to go and see her, especially after last year's performance at the Assembly Rooms. [Antonio Forcione](#), an Italian-born guitarist-composer who has previously won the Best Spirit of the Fringe Award in 2001, has joined her this year at [the David Hume Tower Lecture Theatres](#).

I must admit I'd never heard of Forcione before the weekend but can confirm that the Grauniad was right to describe him as "One of the great acoustic guitarists" and he is very, very charismatic.

The performance covers the duo's forthcoming album, *Compared to What*, which is released in October.

The songs are mainly new compositions by the pair but does feature three covers. I've always held that if you are going to cover a song, especially well-known ones, then you have to make them your own. Morris obviously agrees, as her version of I Shall Be Released from last year's [Bloody Rain](#) proves, let alone her wonderful (and the best out there for my money) interpretation of [Me and Mrs Jones](#).

They take on songs we all know and probably love that were written and made famous by the Police, Stevie Wonder and Bobby Dylan, none of whom are slouches when it comes to performing. Despite the challenge they face, Forcione and Morris succeed in bringing something of themselves to their versions and making you love the songs more. The Police cover alone is worth the admission, between Morris's vocal dexterity and Forcione's use of his guitar as percussion instrument. I don't know what you call the technique but reckon it would impress Klark Kent himself.

This is not to distract from the songs that Morris and Forcione have written together. The Sea is a hugely emotional account of a refugee's journey away from their war-torn country and the danger they put themselves in, all for the hope of finding sanctuary somewhere else, far away from what they know and the country and the people they love. Morris' voice brings the tale to life and you can feel the anguish behind the events it describes. Awestruck, the tale of a woman who's fallen in love nine times this week, is hilarious and reminded me of a few friends I've had over the years.

All I Want is You is a gloriously happy, bouncy love song, while I Bare My Soul sums up how we have all felt at one time or another, especially those of us who have gone round the block a few times. As for the title track, I defy you to keep your feet still while listening to it, whether the live or studio version.

Both Forcione and Morris are talented musicians and complement

each other.

Morris has a depth in her voice and a great range and has always reminded me of the great Cleo Laine but without the scat aspect of the jazz great's style. Don't get me wrong, I'm a big fan of this vocal improvisation but know it is not for everyone. Forcione's mixture of jazz and Flamenco guitar work is a pure delight and the way he produces percussion accompaniment left me gob-smacked at times. I was also very impressed at his pedal work, using them to accentuate the music and create a depth that a lone acoustic guitar should not manage.

I know I have said this for every show I've reviewed so far this year but Sarah Jane Morris and Antonio Forcione are well-worth parting your hard-earned for and a pair you should make the time to see.