

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2016 REVIEW: Don't Push The Button (The Techtonics) *****



Photo credit: Joe Martinez

I have a confession to make. I have seen **Don't Push the Button** two and a half times. The first time I saw the show as a fellow SpaceUK performer curious about the new group in town, and the second for The Edinburgh Reporter. The half? When my friend Pippa, and alto in my own a cappella group, saw it on my recommendation and raved so much afterwards that I felt I had seen it yet again. The girl in the selfie on **The Techtonics'** Facebook page? That's her.

And still I am glad to have seen the show more than once. This is a cappella at its most entertaining. The performance is slick, accomplished and entirely charming – but we already knew that. **The Techtonics** recently won the International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella 2016 representing the UK. This is the first time a group from the UK has won this award. More remarkable still is that **The Techtonics** is a group with only 8 years under its belt.

Don't Push The Button places a narrative frame onto a concert. This centres on the voice-over provided by the Big Red Button, the pre-recorded voice of **Farah Shair**. The button “controls” the concert and which songs are sung. The narrative device seems slightly jilting in an otherwise effortless hour. Individual set pieces such as a simulated Pokémon battle (“Nick uses tall, dark and handsome... It's not very effective”) and a mini fashion show to the tune of Right Said Fred's “I'm Too Sexy” are strong enough to support themselves without the addition of the button's narration. I suppose, however, you

have to admire the ambition behind the introduction of such a ploy. It's worth mentioning too that in the latter scene **Arun O'Sullivan** and **Christopher Witham** both did the song complete justice. Who knew one could be too sexy for a Ford Fiesta.

The heart of an a cappella group is its beat and its bass – **Theo Barfoot**, and MD **Alex Moore** respectively. No two ways about it, these guys are good at what they do. Forming a confident basis for the work of the baritones, tenors and (at a few points) countertenors, theirs is arguably the hardest job but they execute it with apparent ease. Credit is also due to some stunning solos, particularly **Nick Bradley**, **Henry Harrod** and **Edric Ramirez-Valdez** representing Jessie J, Ariana Grande and Nicki Minaj in “Bang Bang”. **Peter Noden** also does an excellent Whitney Houston. The only quibble I have is that “I Predict An Earthquake” was a better closer than The Beatles’ “I Saw Her Standing There” – but like I say, I’ve seen this show almost three times at this point.

There are three people, other than the performers themselves, without whom the show would not work – the choreographer **Roshani Abbey**, and the techies **Max Hunter** (sound) and **Kieran Gilmour** (lights). All three lend considerable verve to their craft and inject the show with the extra edge that surely helped them to victory in the ICCA.

Quite simply, I cannot urge you enough to see **Don't Push The Button**. Go more than twice if you must. The Techtonics do not have an equal for accomplishment and pure joy amongst any collegiate groups active today.

SpaceTriplex (V38)

Aug 19-20, 22-27

14:50 (50 mins)

12+ (advisory)

£10 (£8 conc.)

"Clockwork", the new CD from The Techtonics, is on sale now.

Follow the group on Facebook @techtionics, Twitter @techtionicsIC, and Instagram @techtionicsic