

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2016 REVIEW – McCleary and Blair Panda to the Audience *****



Ross McCleary and Andrew Blair

Ross McCleary and Andrew Blair seem to have hit upon the secret of putting on a successful PBH Free Fringe show. People may not care much about poetry, but Edinburgh loves a panda.

Or as Andrew notes, maybe it's just being able to pick up the overspill from Richard Gadd's show also on at The Banshee Labyrinth. Either way, the crowd certainly included fans of these stalwarts of the Edinburgh spoken word scene and their often absurd and sometimes twisted sensibility.

So notwithstanding the lackadaisical panda costumes that the duo wear for the duration of the show, they quickly admit the night isn't really about pandas at all. No. It's going to be about that poetic staple, death.

Ross's lonely death at the hands of a postman who rings twice. Andrew's depiction of the lifelong journey of an alternative reality Robert Pattinson to a similarly lonely death with his distant, distrusting wife at his side. The heat death of the universe.

Yet it's this sleight of hand that keeps the audience on side, and still thinking about McCleary and Blair's show the next day.

Ross's piece about a dying grandfather's involved plan to live on through an apple tree and the light in his the eyes of his

grandchildren points this up. Furthermore, this is the piece which involves the most to-and-fro between the performers. Whether it's Robert Pattinson's decision about a possible affair at a security shutters conference or the alternate universes suggested by the shadowy figure ascending the stairs to Ross's flat, McCleary and Blair's poetry and black humour aren't so much about death as they are about life, human interaction, and the choices we make along the way.

McCleary and Blair Panda to the Audience continues through 28 August – it's well worth making the choice to head along to The Banshee Labyrinth to see what unfolds.

McCleary and Blair Panda to the Audience is part of PBH's Free Fringe at The Banshee Labyrinth | Aug 26-28 | 21:50-22:50