

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2016 REVIEW: Melbourne Ska Orchestra \*\*\*\*

✘ As an aficionado of ska music, when I saw the Melbourne Ska Orchestra were coming to the Edinburgh Fringe I put them near the top of my must-see list. The 20-piece line-up are performing for six nights at the Gilded Balloon and the large queue to see them in the showery rain on Tuesday evening was a testament to their popularity.

Their all-too short week in Scotland's capital city is part of a UK tour during which they will be promoting their latest album, Sierra-Kilo-Alpha (SKA – geddit?)

They have been labelled Australia's biggest ska sensation and if Tuesday evening's powerful performance was anything to go by, this is a pretty accurate description. Formed by some of the finest musicians in Australia, their passion for two-tone music is obvious. But don't get the impression the Melbourne Ska Orchestra are just a ska band (not that there could be such a thing as *just* a ska band) The sounds of the steel drum adds to the multi-cultural feel and the Orchestra's music is clearly influenced by nations from all over the globe.

Fronted by the charismatic Nicky Bamba, whose boundless energy is infectious, the Orchestra were formed back in 2003, initially as a one-off act to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of ska music which has its roots in Jamaica. However, the success of the Orchestra was rapid and, thirteen years later, their popularity is not only high in their native Australia but they are rapidly becoming a global phenomenon.

This week, as well as appearing at the Gilded Balloon, the Orchestra will be out on the streets of Edinburgh performing

impromptu sessions and doubtless initiating ska-style congas.

Certainly the audience at the Gilded Balloon on Tuesday evening lapped up every minute of a superb show. If their rendition of Get Smart doesn't get your hands clapping and feet stomping then nothing will.

My only very minor criticism – and this is not of the band itself as they were superb – was the choice of venue. The claustrophobic nature of the Gilded Balloon Teviot doesn't lend itself well for fans who wish to skank away. Perhaps a larger venue – with a dance floor – might have been more appropriate.

The Melbourne Ska Orchestra are only appearing until this Friday so don't miss the chance to see this wonderfully talented and energetic band.

Tickets [here](#)

Edinburgh Reporter Review: \*\*\*\*