

Edinburgh Festival Fringe REVIEW – Dandy Darkly's Myth Mouth *****



Dandy Darkly's Myth Mouth

CC Blooms seems darker than for Dandy Darkly's last visit to the Fringe in 2015. Maybe it's the interior redesign, or maybe it's just, well, 2016.

Whatever it is, when the Dandy begins to gather his audience to go down to the cellar once again, it feels necessary to take a deep breath.

During three previous years in Edinburgh, Manhattan's master of the macabre has explored homophobia, misogyny, and America's culture of gun violence in acts of storytelling that have racked up a terrifying body count. What on earth is he going to do with the material offered by this year?

This year, Dandy is encountering audiences that are coming back for more after one, two, three exposures to the Southern Gothic sissy. What can shock and surprise them this year?

Wait, what? He's opening with a short recital from Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*?!

It's a sign. After last year's *Trigger Happy*, Dandy Darkly and his team are raising their sights and upping their game again. Though camp horror retains its central place in Dandy's stories, *Myth Mouth* is as much lore as gore. The stories span the whole saga of storytelling from Cha-Cha the Caveman and first storyteller, through a wasted spin on the tale of Persephone, the Greek queen of the underworld, to an even more strung out cosmonaut dog defending the world from the evils of

alien cats.

For long-time fans, America's Sweetheart returns from prior years' horrors and gets a name check as the star of the *Final Girl* franchise that offers and thwarts an academic's hope of escape from an immersive virtual internet.

Against Dandy's evening- and era-straddling storytelling, his new, retro sci-fi costume is all the more striking, and his musical partners' palette extends through throbbing basslines and spacey sounds. In the end, the most explicit reference to 2016 is a closing nod to David Bowie, and it's pleasing to see a fabulous spaceman communing with new members of his tribe at the end of another thoughtful and fun outing.

Dandy Darkly's Myth Mouth is part of PBH's Free Fringe at CC Blooms (Venue 171) | Aug 18-28 | 18:45-19:40