

# Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2016 REVIEW : La Clique Encore\*\*\*



La Clique Encore has been a firm favorite amongst Fringe goers for over a decade now. Housed in The Famous Spiegel tent at St Andrew Square, the show has long drawn in punters with its impressive variety acts, live band and raunchy repertoire.

For the most part, it delivers on its promise of delivering a fun night out; at times though, its age is beginning to show.

Let's start with the positives.

The Famous Spiegel tent is the perfect venue with its circular stage and cabaret-style seating,. It's small enough that you can't help but feel immersed in the action, but spacious enough that you don't feel as though you're breathing down each other's necks.

The house band are great, and their combination of sultry jazz numbers and rock hits create the perfect atmosphere for a party.

There are some truly talented performers, from trapeze artists whose acts will leave you sitting perched on the end of your seat to Craig Reid, whose hula-hooping skills defy all logical explanation. And then of course there's burlesque star, Sophie Zucchini, whose red handkerchief trick is sure to bring a blush or two to the audiences' faces...

La Clique has all the makings of a brilliant show, with style and pzazz to boot, and yet it's not without its flaws.

From the offset the audience are promised a raucous, high-

energy night, and while it's true that the acts do slide seamlessly from one to the next, the quality of some causes the pace to slow.

Take, for example, Gerry Connolly's appearance as Her Majesty, The Queen of England. Connolly delivers the Queen's speech with a great deal of wit and skill, and yet the joke wears thin too quickly. By the time old Liz delivers her final number (a song about eating breakfast, with not-so-subtle hints to the current Brexit controversy), the crowd were beginning to look a little restless. It was funny enough to warrant a polite smile, but it all felt a little predictable and...well...stale.

Similarly flat were the jokes made by compère, Paul Zenon. Zenon is a veteran of circus performance, and although he has all the likeability of someone you'd quite enjoy having a pint with down at the local pub, even he seems tired of his acts.

His party trick (which involved spinning a pint of beer around while balanced on a snooker triangle without spilling a drop) was impressive, but you got the impression he had performed it so many times that he almost wished it would go wrong, just to bring a little excitement to the room.

Fortunately, the only calamity to befall Zenon was an ill-fated routine involving some rogue fruit...Without going into too much detail, I'd say that this is one piece La Clique could do with crossing off the schedule.

Throw in these wobbles, along with some slightly bizarre puppet numbers and a toe-curlingly drawn out rendition of Bowie's Heroes, and what the audience were left with was were a bundle of mixed emotions. Certainly the calibre of many of the performers were enough to make La Clique worth seeing, but £22 seems an awful lot to pay for such a disproportionate amount of 'filler'.