

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2017 – Clean Sheets \*\*\*

What do a soon-to-be disgraced politician and a troubled bellhop have in common? They are both trapped in a hotel elevator, between the fourteenth floor and the basement, forcing them to face up to their darkest secrets, in this debut play from Billy Liar & Freddy Fudd Pucker.

The Free Fringe is a mixed bag. Sometimes you get exactly what you've paid for, sometimes you get much more than you expected.



[Clean Sheets](#), a debut play by two singer/songwriters, falls more towards the latter and has a lot to praise. I'm not saying it's perfect but I'm glad I saw it and put money in the hat at the end. Aye, they could improve it but the play has a good heart and packs an emotional punch and I would recommend you see it. I also hope that Billy and Freddy have another go at writing a play because they have an ear for dialogue that can only improve with time and experience. As the first step in a writing career they only stumble because they are trying to go faster.

[Billy Liar](#) is not a natural to play an ageing politician but then he has the lesser weight to carry. That's not to say he does it badly but the focus is more on [Freddy Fudd Pucker](#)'s bellhop. I would change that dynamic; the politician is deliberately unsympathetic but too much, so that he ends up more of a rule to measure the bell hop by. Both are flawed but only the latter has managed to do his best to act with the best intentions rather than selfish ones. For the audience to root for the bell hop he has to have more than a caricature to challenge him. The politician shows the inexperience of the

writers; having dealt with this ilk I found the character's dialogue simplistic and naive at times. He was too much of a cardboard cut-out to be a villain and too shallow for me to care about his fate or story.

Having said that, when the play deals with the bell hop's background and how he reached this point in his life, the play resonates. His narration feels frighteningly familiar and the choice the character makes is one some of us will sadly know too well. Both players act well and their friendship serves them well in how they bounce off each other.

My biggest complaint is that they need to project their voices more; for two people who are performers I was surprised at how they didn't make themselves heard enough at times.

They weren't helped by the other performance in the venue, which I am very glad not to have sat through judging from what I could hear. I know that shows involved in both [the Free Festival](#) and [PBH's Free Fringe](#) have to make do with what is on offer but when one showing is drowning out another either the venue is wrong or the scheduling is. That's not these two's fault though and I hope they have better luck during the rest of their run.