

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2017 Review – Ruby Redfort\*\*

“The first ever stage adaptation of Lauren Child’s bestselling mystery series, ‘one of the best things to happen to British fiction’ (Sunday Times). When the world’s greatest criminal masterminds target a supernatural statue, it’s up to Ruby – code-breaker, special agent and 13-year-old girl – to crack the case. This quirky, hilarious spy thriller takes us into a world of terrifying villains, cutting-edge gadgets and death-defying escapes, in a race to prove that being a spy is actually child’s play”

As you can probably tell from this show’s description, I’m not their target audience. In fact, until about two months ago I hadn’t heard about [Ruby Redfort](#) but I know she is popular with my daughter. I also know that she wears glasses and has a side parting across her right eye which is always secured with a hair slide. The person playing her definitely didn’t have glasses on and I don’t remember her hair matching that description. Picky? Maybe, but to a nine-year-old the details do matter and could lead some to leave disappointed.

☒ Another complaint, albeit an overheard one, was how much was missing from the story, which is based on the first book in the series, *Look Into My Eyes*. I think that depends on what you’re expecting, especially from an hour-long show that’s covering a 432-page book. Personally, I think wanting it to cover everything is to take your seat with high expectations but then fans and children have those. If you’re going to present a first-ever adaptation of a much-loved series then you are measured by that standard.

The five cast members do well covering multiple characters although some of the US accents are more successful than others. Of all the cast I found the lad (he barely looked old enough to buy a pint) who played Ruby’s best friend Clancy the best performer. As for the actor playing Hitch, the smooth

butler/secret agent, he would do better if he knew his lines as fluently as the rest of the cast.

Admittedly I saw the opening performance so he will no doubt improve during the run, but I did wonder if he was cast for his looks rather than his acting.

The production does make good use of the very limited stage space and the cast and director have thought how best to use it.

You have to suspend your disbelief at times but then this is a theatrical production, not a film. I particularly liked how Ruby cycling was dealt with and thought it a nice touch.

There were some technical problems with the production; one of the lighting props kept glitching and the incidental music drowned out the dialogue to start with. However, as I said before, this was their opening night.

I found the fight scene near the end was overlong and felt like it was designed to ensure the production reached an hour. I wasn't the only one judging from the seat shuffling during it.

Lastly, if the likes of the Assembly are going to use a container as a venue then they should ensure it doesn't have a leaky roof, especially for a children's' show.

This is Edinburgh in August, rain is not unexpected and I expect better from such a large company.