

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2017 – The Giant Jam Sandwich

✖ Given that this is a sell-out, err hem, jam-packed audience with highly energised kids eager for a yell out rammy the cast really need (knead? Even have to fill in their puns for them) to use their imaginative loaves a tad more. It is well in to the performance before there is any call and response engagement. Crusty or what? They call in wasp expert, the stereotypical nutty Professor Vugaris, but she is given short shrift and told to buzz off.

Based on John Vernon Lord's 1972 illustrated book, many of the audience are already cosily familiar with the plot. The wasps are getting on peoples' wick and spoiling their picnics. Something has to be done!

That they are planning to make a giant loaf is excuse enough to butter the kids and parents up with some 'Bake Off' groan gags. The 'Kneading the Dough' routine is jolly good fun though and wisely reprised during the encore. The village of Itching Down is plagued by wasps. Their nemesis, yes, a giant jam sandwich. In itself pretty impressive. However, the ambiguous eco-conscience issues of mass insect elimination is skimmed over. There is the occasional odd waspish reference to 'Not wanting their sort in our nice village.' Whether a token stab at rural Brexit sensibilities or end of Fringe run cynicism is open to conjecture.

The self-referencing irony of the cast lamenting 'Oh no! Not another song from Mr Bap The Baker' is as instructive as it is ignored. The kids' involvement raised its game much more towards the demi-climax as the baddie wasps meet their sticky end in Farmer Seed's field. But once more, there are corny (there we go again) opportunities to milk (doh!) the jeopardy angle and get the little monsters (and the wasps) screaming

sugar-rush blue murder. The hour passes rapidly and its charms have the innocent gauche of an annual village hall bun-fight with lashing of ginger beer and fluttering bunting. Perhaps they need to up-Panto banter the ante silliness, lose several songs and give the wasps a PR makeover. Even perhaps a song by Sting – ‘Don’t Stand So Closzzzz’?

They are an utter picnic pain to be sure but you are sort of inviting the ‘spectre’ to the feast – and they play an integral part in the life cycle. So big it up massive for the wasps...look out, there is one behind you! Oh no there isn’t! Fulsome fun for all the family. The ‘Toast-it note’ feed-back form earns a free kazoo. They will be really popular with parents during the English Bank Holiday homeward bound traffic-jams. Deliciously inventive nevertheless. But crumbs! Are there no limits to cynical merchandising? ☐

<https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/giant-jam-sandwich>