

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2018 REVIEW – Ari Shaffir : Jew****

The show starts. In darkness. “The lighting system is f***ed. I suspect Jews for Jesus had something to do with the lights,” says Ari Shaffir, the gravelly voiced Orthodox Jewish-raised non-believer from New York, taking a wild, self-mocking swing at one of the “enemies of the Jews”.



It could not have been a more inauspicious start for the co-creator of “This is not Happening”, the storytelling series on the American TV channel Comedy Central.

For most of the fast-paced multi-layered opening-night performance, Shaffir’s 6ft 3in frame is barely visible beneath a few dim red, blue and green ceiling lights in the Big Cave. Yet his fearless, no-holds-barred approach, whimsical arrogance and total command of his often red-raw material – his “weird” Orthodox-Jewish upbringing in which chicken-swinging to atone for sins was an unquestioned rite of passage – brilliantly illuminates the 44-year-old religious renegade behind it all.

Shaffir artfully plays around with stereotypes and is unafraid to puncture hypocrisy, whether it’s in his family or in the non-Jewish world of most of his audience. “You’ve all got your weird shit. I’m just looking at my own,” he says.

He’s even confident enough to elicit humour from the Holocaust – the ultimate taboo. “You guys remember that?” he asks, only half in jest, to his youngish audience. It’s often what’s unsaid – Holocaust denial, forgetfulness, lack of education – that gives many of his comments an added resonance.

At times, it's highly graphic and joyfully scatological and is not for the squeamish or the PCish brigade – but if you want to witness an imagined argument between God and Adam over sex it's out there on its own.

Heroes @ The Hive, until Aug 26

[Tickets here](#)