

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2018 REVIEW – Ashley Blaker: Observant Jew***

Ashley Blaker went the other way from Ari Shaffir. A secular Jewish TV producer, he became Britain's self-styled only strictly Orthodox Jewish comedian, a father of six, who for religious reason cannot shake hands with women other than his "much-hassled wife", Gemma.



Ashley Blaker

He went to the private Haberdashers' Aske's school in Hertfordshire where he was a former classmate of Sacha Baron Cohen and to Keble College, Oxford, appearing on the BBC programme University Challenge looking like "a Jewish Jesus". Then he got married in 2002 and the transition from an obsessive Liverpool supporter to the skullcapped figure in a black suit and white shirt with ringlets tucked around his ears began. He's also a friend and frequent collaborator with Matt Lucas and lives in a world where big-bearded men are pin-ups (relatively speaking) and where chicken soup comes out of your ears.

I know all this because his gently humorous hour on stage is a compendium of his "obsessive-compulsive" life, complete with still photos of said school, programme, wife (with Liverpool trophies), bearded rabbis and the pages of Orthodox Jewish

newspapers entirely free of photos of women for whom, he notes in passing, the increase in political female leaders must have been “an absolute nightmare”.

Blaker, 43, from Edgware, in north London (a tad sligher than Mr Shaffir at 5ft 7in) has some cute observations. “Religion like football can give you a community and a sense of identity with others – and God is never going to let you down by bu**ering off to Barcelona” for umpteen millions.

He also has a nice line in self-deprecation and a wry wit. “I am married, sorry ladies, this ship has sailed. Or in my case, more of a pedalo ... and in case you’re wondering, no we don’t have sex through a sheet; that’s a myth. Though if you saw some of the women in my synagogue you’d think it was true.”

At the end of his Edinburgh debut show, and I don’t think this is giving anything away, you have to hand it to him.

Underbelly (Daisy), until Aug 26

[Tickets here](#)