

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2018 REVIEW – Janis Joplin Full Tilt ****

The award-winning, sell-out hit by writer Peter Arnott and director Cora Bissett returns. Angie Darcy's Joplin, backed by a live band, is electric.

I was really pleased to see that [Janis Joplin Full Tilt](#) was returning for this year's Fringe. I saw this biographical play by writing/directing team [Peter Arnott](#) and [Cora Bissett](#) in 2014 and I was immediately tempted to see it again. There's a reason the play is back and that [Angie Darcy](#)'s tour de force performance has won so much praise, they are both great. The way Joplin's life is covered is well-handled, although from what I know her last day doesn't quite match what's in the play. However, it fits the tone and content of the piece as a whole so that doesn't matter.

What does matter is how it presents how fragile and racked with confidence issues Joplin's life was, despite her being one of the greatest performers of the Sixties and a highly talented musician and singer. Joplin had troubles and, no matter how hard she tried to shake them, they followed her round throughout her life. Between Darcy's performance and the writing something miraculous happens – you feel sorry for a rock star. No doubt she was a pain in the hoop a lot of the time but what we see on stage is somebody who desperately needs a friend and somebody you want to hug and comfort.



Effectively this is a one person play. While the band give Darcy the musical backing and [Harry Ward](#) as John Till (founder of the Full Tillt Boogie Band) interacts with her in a couple of scenes, the play is mostly monologues. That doesn't mean it's self-indulgent or dull, far from it, but this is about Joplin and her devastating loneliness, which Till implies is partially self-inflicted. As the play says, there are touches of every woman's blues in Joplin's music and you can't help but feel for her. Was she a pain in the arse? Hell yes but you get the feeling from this that she was hard not to love and forgive. How true that is I don't know but as a fan I hope it's true.

There were times when you can't quite make out what Darcy is saying when the band is playing. However, that's a minor complaint as I imagine the sound engineer has their hands full coping with the change from quiet dialogue up to full on musical howls. Darcy combines being a singer working with Joplin's depth, range and screaming, an actor, an impersonator and a boogie shaker. I'm still impressed by how she manages to bring all that together in this performance but Darcy does and runs full pelt with it. You are enthralled throughout the play and, judging from the audience, that doesn't just apply to ageing male rockers. If you haven't seen this yet then get

going before the run ends.