

Pleasance boss calls for more from the city

Director of Pleasance venues, Anthony Alderson, wants Edinburgh to do more to welcome the Fringe.

He feels the city is not doing enough to offer a collective welcome to reflect the money it makes from all the Fringe events which Pleasance of course is only one part of.

Alderson said: “We started here in 1985 and London came along 10 years later as a way to keep the staff together and develop work, and as a way of keeping that energy going throughout the year. I think you can go to a theatre anywhere in the world and find someone who has worn a Pleasance t-shirt.

“What we need from the city is an infrastructure that we can build this festival around. I think that it’s sad in a way you come into Edinburgh and there’s no street infrastructure for things like banners, and there seems to be little welcome for people coming.

“The organised postering, which was a response to fly postering. Again it’s been given to one company who have now formed a monopoly. So that has become incredibly expensive. Can we cap the prices of of the costs that go back to these artists? That’s what’s going to kill it ultimately – we’re going to price them out.

“So my ask it’s money for the art, it’s infrastructure for the venues and it’s a welcome from the city. The city benefits so hugely, and you can see the love for it around the city, those huge numbers of people who, after the pandemic, were desperate

for it to come back again. And now that it's back, we've got to make sure that it that it survives."

He is adamant that ticket prices remain affordable, although admits it is expensive for anyone to bring a show to the Fringe, and for it to work properly ticket prices would have to double – something which he says cannot happen as people want to see four or five shows a day.

He said: "I think the challenge with Edinburgh is the city has become so expensive for people to be here. Each show, each venue has to make their investment into this. And it is getting harder and harder to to get that money back. The venues have only got 27 days in which to make that back. The companies hope that their shows will go on and their investment is returned in a different way.

"But what is becoming very, very clear is that the city is earning a huge amount of money from this festival. And it would be nice to see more of it come back the other way to support the very artists who bring the energy and who bring the excitement to it.

"I think the cost of the artists coming is probably somewhere in the region of £50 million. That's roughly what the collective spend is, it may even be more than that. The ticket revenue that comes back from this festival is only £30 million, I think that was the last figure I saw in 2019, and in 2022, it came down. So there's a gap and and that's before you've even paid for your accommodation, before you have paid for your food, paid all of those other extras on top."

The Edinburgh Partnership

Pleasance Theatre Trust is a charity which does a lot to help themselves and help artists. In the last couple of years they have set up a collaboration with nine theatre companies from all over the UK called The Edinburgh Partnership bringing

theatre to the Fringe in the hope that the plays will tour afterwards. This is a funding model with help from trusts and foundations in the past two years, but which the Pleasance Theatre Trust funded themselves for the first year.

This includes shows such as Buff from Plymouth, Bitter Lemons from Bristol Old Vic as well as work from the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff, and Pitlochry Theatre.

Alderson said: "It is a proper national partnership.

"Because the touring for theatre companies was very difficult, we decided that with the help of a couple of trusts and foundations, they helped fund it. We put together something called the Edinburgh National Partnership scheme. And the idea is to give them some support to each of the theatres that are part of this scheme, as a way of bringing that work to Edinburgh."

Pleasance operates at three sites Pleasance Courtyard, Pleasance Dome and Pleasance at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC).

[Tickets and information here.](#)



Anthony Alderson in the cap with some of the performers appearing at The Pleasance



Day one of the Fringe 2023 Pleasance and Assembly



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