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News Snippets - August 2008 to August 2009

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Fringe 2009 ticket sales and other statistics

posted September 1st, 2009.

Initial statistics have been put out by the Fringe Society for the 2009 festival. They are summarised in [The Guardian](#) and [The Scotsman](#). The headline figure is a new record of 1.85m tickets sold. This beats the previous record of 1.7m in 2007 by 9%. Other stats include: 18,901 performers in 34,265 performances of 2,098 shows; comedy made up 35% of the overall programme, theatre 28% and music 16%. While there is no breakdown of audience figures so far the feedback from some venues appears to indicate that increases in attendances at comedy shows may well be attributable to the Scots.

As previously stated, despite apprehension in various quarters buoyant ticket sales are not totally unexpected this year. 2010 and 2011 will be more problematic years as the effects of the recession impact on employment numbers. Comedy is least likely to be affected as its audience tends to be younger and is more likely to have the necessary disposable income.

Fringe venues complain about costs

posted August 30th, 2009.

The Scotsman [reported](#) that Fringe chief, Kath Mainland, is to meet venue chiefs who are concerned about rising costs and the future viability of medium-sized venues.

More on the expense of putting on shows at the festival

posted August 30th, 2009.

This time it is Tommy Sheppard, director of The Stand Comedy Club, [writing in The Scotsman](#) on the difficulties faced by comedians.

Free Fringe venues concerned about cost increases

posted August 28th, 2009.

The Scotsman [reports](#) that the Free Fringe chiefs are concerned that tougher licensing restrictions may be imposed on them in future years by the city council after reports of overcrowding at some venues (which are pubs), leading to increases in their costs.

News from Fringe Society AGM

posted August 23rd, 2009.

The Fringe Society's AGM took place yesterday - August 22nd, 2009. [The Observer](#) was first out of the blocks with the news that the box office debacle in 2008 led to an overall loss of £882K in the last financial year. On its balance sheet the Society currently has liabilities of £672K against net assets of £48K, and it estimates that it will take three years to build up adequate reserves. [As stated earlier](#), the Society is consulting artists, venues and audiences to work out performance costs, needs and a modern constitution.

Fringe Society to review its constitution

posted August 13th, 2009.

The Scotsman [reports](#) that the Fringe Society is to start a consultation process in September as part of a project to investigate and possibly revise its constitution (which dates back to 1969). Last year's box office fiasco has obviously made the Society consider that its constitution may no longer be fit for

purpose.

Call for a single Edinburgh Festival

posted August 12th, 2009.

[Martin Hannan](#) calls for a single festival rather than the current set of individual festivals.

Complaints over increases in theatre licences

posted August 12th, 2009. modified August 23rd, 2009

Julian Caddy, co-director of Sweet Entertainments complains in [The Stage](#) and in [The Scotsman](#) about increases in theatre licence fees that Edinburgh City Council charges. Other venue chiefs wade in, stating that Edinburgh's costs are the largest in the UK. [BBC News](#) weighs into the debate several days later.

Binmen industrial action to continue

posted August 11th, 2009. previous post [August 4th, 2009](#).

The Times [reports](#) that the industrial action of the binmen is to continue. The Scotsman seems strangely quiet on this subject.

Festivals: a call to arms

posted August 9th, 2009.

[Doctor Tiffany Jenkins](#), Director of the Arts and Society programme at the Institute of Ideas, [wants the various festivals to get their acts together and talk to one another](#). Well, best of luck in your endeavours Tiffany! Perhaps you should talk to us punters and perennial performers to see how it is done. We are multi-national, have quite eclectic tastes, are prepared to talk to almost anyone about multiple art forms on multiple festivals and will still find time to put the world (and Edinburgh) to rights over a meal / drink before dashing off to the next show. We are the true lovers of the festival and the city in which it resides. Of course, we have no financial interests in the festival and our egos tend to be subverted - well at least for the duration of our stay.

Festival optimism

posted August 8th, 2009.

This is the week when festival optimism is traditionally at its height. Articles include: [Charlotte Higgins](#) in The Guardian and the [Culture Minister, Michael Russell](#) in the BBC News .. but there are plenty of others.

Fringe advance ticket sales up

posted August 7th, 2009.

Advance ticket sales for the Fringe are just under 400,000 - a 20%+ increase when compared with 2007. [BBC News](#) has one of the less hyped up versions of the articles on this topic. Some of them include quotes that this is 1947 all over again ... post-war austerity and all that ... dear oh dear.

New arena proposal for The Esplanade

posted August 5th, 2009.

The Scotsman [reveals](#) plans for a new arena on The Esplanade where the Tattoo takes place. The proposed 8,600 seater arena will be able to host other events in addition to the Tattoo.

iPhone application to browse festival

posted August 4th, 2009.

The Stage [reports](#) that The Fringe and Festivals Edinburgh have launched an iPhone app which will allow users to browse shows, check ticket offers, read reviews and navigate their way round the city - trust it will have details of the Princes Street crossings!?!

Latest on Edinburgh's rubbish problem

posted August 4th, 2009. previous post [August 2nd, 2009](#)

It looks as though the threatened binmen strike will be called off, although we will not know definitely

until Friday. As reported in [The Scotsman](#) and elsewhere the Unite union is to recommend to the binmen that the dispute is called off pending further negotiations.

BBC plans for festival coverage criticised

posted August 2nd, 2009. previous post [June 29th, 2009](#)

After Sean Connery (re The Film Festival) others are wading in to this debate, including William Burdett-Coutts, artistic director of Assembly, in [Scotland on Sunday](#). The primary stick that the BBC are being beaten with is the larger numbers of staff who have covered Glastonbury and T in the Park. As I have said (several times before) the BBC coverage of the festival has been poor - both in terms of the content and the number of programmes aired - for the last 10 years or so.

News media focus on Edinburgh's rubbish

posted August 2nd, 2009. previous post [July 9th, 2009](#)

After several days of concentrating on Princes Street and the tram works the news outlets have turned their attentions to the rubbish problem - Edinburgh's binmen are working to rule and are still threatening an all-out strike. [The Observer](#) sent a team to investigate. [Scotland on Sunday](#) meanwhile outlines the City Council's contingency plans which involve the use of contractor(s).

Info on Princes Street works for visitors

posted July 28th, 2009. post modified July 30th, 2009. previous post [July 9th, 2009](#)

Princes Street is closed to traffic due to the tram works. Pedestrians are also affected. Here is [some useful info for visitors](#) - whether on foot or in a car - on the City Council's website. The Scotsman subsequently [reported](#) that there will be 5 pedestrian crossing points and that the City Council will be issuing maps to visitors to aid their journeys from venue to venue where they need to cross Princes Street.

This year's "quirkiest venues"

posted July 25th, 2009.

The Scotsman covers one of the standard talking points about the Edinburgh festival in any year - the quirky venues - [by highlighting this year's crop](#).

Festival cavalcade route changed

posted July 22nd, 2009. previous post

The traditional cavalcade which heralds the start of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival is to be rerouted this year due to the tram works on Princes Street. [EdinburghGuide.com](#) [outlines](#) the revised route which will start at the gates to Holyrood Park. It will take place on Sunday 9th August, 2009 at 2pm.

"Ticket sales fired up for 2009 but fears of future chill winds ..."

posted July 21st, 2009.

is [the headline in The Scotsman](#). It is a slightly lukewarm article on the pressures which the Edinburgh festival may face in the coming years ... lukewarm in the sense that it quotes too many individuals who have job descriptions which say that they must talk up the festival. You do not need to be a rocket scientist to realise that while 2009 may be relatively OK (with figures somewhere in the range of -15%/+5% over 2008) the recession will really hit people's pockets in 2010 and 2011 when the effects of unemployment and moderate or even non-existent pay settlements will really take hold. However, the credit crunch is but one of [the threats that Edinburgh faces](#) in the coming years.

Fringe box office update

posted July 15th, 2009. previous post [July 10th, 2009](#).

Following on from the previous posts relating to early problems with the new Fringe box office system I am glad to report that our Fringe tickets arrived in the post today - 22 days after I booked them online. While they failed to meet their "within 14 days" target I am fairly relaxed about it as we are still 3 weeks+ away from the start of the Fringe. I saw a post on their message board to the effect that the sending out of tickets via post did not commence until July 2nd 2009 although no reason was given why it should have been delayed.

Miller wins 2009 Punter prize

posted July 15th, 2009.

In the good old days July was traditionally the month when journalists did their bit to publicise the festival by stoking up some piece of controversy. They were helped by feisty councillors such as Moira Knox and John Kidd or churchman Rev. Stewart MacPherson who all invariably wanted to run some show or other out of town. Unfortunately pickings have been somewhat thin in recent years and therefore Jonathan Miller, artistic director of EIF, must be given a huge vote of thanks for singlehandedly producing not one but two pieces of controversy so far this year. The first was back in April when the good folk of Edinburgh were [outraged by the cover of the 2009 EIF programme brochure](#) which might lead visitors to think that the city was full of drunks and tramps and displays of public urination. Imagine the horror now in July that the still shocked populace have [discovered](#) that Miller's 2009 International Festival will begin with a performance of Handel's Judas Maccabeus which was composed in honour of Butcher Cumberland after the English victory over the Jacobites at [Culloden](#) in 1746 ... just imagine it.

Anyway, recovering my composure I hereby award Jonathan Miller the 2009 Punter's prize for publicising the festival. The prize is a pint (or two) Jonathan ... though none of your Australian muck mind. A nice Scottish beer I thought.

Lockerbie, Book Festival director, to step down

posted July 14th, 2009. modified July 19th, 2009. previous post [March 16th, 2009](#).

[It has been announced](#) that Catherine Lockerbie, Director of the Book Festival, is to step down. She has been on sick leave since March 2009 and plans to move into consultancy work in the areas of culture and literature. [Ian Bell writes in The Sunday Herald](#) to thank her for what she has done.

Fringe box office update

posted July 10th, 2009. previous post [June 24th, 2009](#).

No major problems seem to have surfaced so far with the new Fringe box office system, although there are punters (myself included) who have experienced various problems, particularly with the Fringe website. Some of the problems have been posted by punters on [the Fringe message board](#). The current concern among some of us is the wait for our tickets to arrive in the post. I ordered some tickets 17 days ago and am waiting apprehensively for them to arrive.

Beware tram works and binmen

posted July 9th, 2009. modified July 20th, 2009

I have avoided mentioning the subject of Edinburgh's tram works so far but I guess that I ought to now. Princes Street is currently closed to traffic and [will remain so during the festival](#). This may obviously cause traffic congestion - so beware. Also, the City Council and the binmen are currently [squaring up for a confrontation](#) with union leaders threatening industrial action over the summer. The Scotsman subsequently published [some background to the binmen dispute](#).

2009 will be make or break for the Fringe claims Free Fringe promoter

posted July 8th, 2009.

Peter Buckley Hill [launched his Free Fringe programme for 2009](#) and [took the opportunity in The Scotsman](#) to say that 2009 will be a make or break year for the Fringe. I do not agree with him. Although attendances may be down I consider that 2010 and 2011 are more likely to be the critical years as the effects of the credit crunch start to take their toll on employment figures and pay settlements.

Connery criticises BBC coverage of the Film Festival

posted June 29th, 2009.

Sean Connery took the opportunity at the Film Festival's awards ceremony to criticise the BBC's coverage of the festival - reported by [The Scotsman](#) and [Reuters USA](#). In this punter's opinion the BBC's coverage of all Edinburgh's summer festivals went downhill 10 years ago. It smacks very much of going through the motions.

Personal experience of booking tickets on the Fringe website

posted June 24th, 2009. previous posting [June 16th, 2009](#).

I booked some tickets online yesterday. While it seemed to go through OK - I obviously need to wait until the tickets arrive to be sure - I had some problems with passwords. So as not to bore you with the full saga, briefly I now seem to have two passwords: my original password which allows me to log onto the site; and a new password which is required when booking. In addition, I cannot see my user details - it just comes up with "error" ... "error" on the page. I do not know if this is just me or a more general problem, one of those that generated talk from the Fringe of an overhaul of the web site?

Amnesty International announce involvement at 2009 festival

posted June 23rd, 2009.

Amnesty International [details its involvement](#) in the 2009 Fringe and Book festivals.

Usher Hall refurbishment will not be completed in time for the festival

posted June 19th, 2009.

... according to the [Edinburgh Evening News](#). It is the glass-covered extension that will not be ready in time. It will eventually house a cafe/bar, box office area, hospitality spaces and extended office accommodation.

Traverse Gripe

posted June 18th, 2009. modified June 23rd, 2009.

Although it was not an official date, I was led to believe that the Traverse programme would be available today. It was not. This is delaying our scheduling - the pitiful two lines of text against any Traverse show in the Fringe programme is no help whatsoever. This late availability of the Traverse programme is something of an annual event. Do they not realise that punters visit the festival not the Traverse, even if the Traverse is a major part of the visit for some people? And is it really beyond the wit of man to arrange for the programme production to coincide with the Fringe's? End of gripe.

Update on June 20th, 2009 - Details of shows now online (under [What's On](#)) - they can also be booked online. No sign of a downloadable version of the programme brochure yet.

Further update on June 23rd, 2009 - Traverse programme now available for downloading from [here](#).

Early Fringe box office problems

posted June 16th, 2009. modified June 19th, 2009

While hopefully the Fringe box office will not be the disaster that it was last year (he said crossing his fingers) it is experiencing some problems dealing with the initial peak demand. They started on Friday when [Friends of the Fringe tried to book](#) and [yesterday](#) on the first day of public booking. Watch this space. To minimise the likelihood of getting caught by any problems punters can always: (a) wait until the initial peak dies down or (b) book through the individual venues where possible.

Update on 19th June 2009 - It appears that the initial problems have gone away. However, there is talk of an overhaul of the web site which caused problems to online browsers and buyers albeit no dates have been mentioned.

"Why 'free' means 'worthless'"

posted June 15th, 2009. Modified June 16th, 2009.

Denis Krasnov is not impressed with free shows on the Fringe, as he makes clear in [Chortle](#).

On the following day Free festival organiser, Alex Petty, and performer Danny Worthington [respond](#).

McCall Smith donation for Book Festival

posted June 12th, 2009.

Edinburgh author, Alexander McCall Smith, has donated a sizeable - but undisclosed sum - to the Book Festival under its Benefactor scheme. Details can be found in [The Herald](#).

£55K from Scottish Expo Fund for Book Festival

posted June 12th, 2009.

The Scottish Government has [announced](#) that the Edinburgh Book Festival has been allocated £55K from its Expo fund which supports Scottish artists and authors across all Edinburgh's festivals.

No sponsor for Edinburgh Comedy Awards

posted June 3rd, 2009.

It has been reported in [the Stage](#) and other media outlets that no sponsor has been found for the Edinburgh Comedy Awards. It will simply be known by that name and it will be funded this year by Nica Burns who has been involved with the awards since their inception in 1984 although she is hoping to recoup expenditure.

Competitions to find panellists for Edinburgh Comedy Awards

posted June 1st, 2009.

Both the [Fringe](#) and [The Times](#) newspaper are running competitions to find a panellist for this year's Edinburgh Comedy Awards. The Fringe competition is limited to Scots (or individuals who have been resident for 5 years). Closing dates for entry are 9th June 2009 for the Fringe and 15th June 2009 for the Times.

Interview with new Fringe chief

posted May 31st, 2009. previous posting [February 20th, 2009](#)

Kath Mainland, who was appointed as the Fringe's first chief executive back in February, took up her post last week. Scotland on Sunday contains [an initial interview](#) with her.

Jazz Festival receives £100K from Scottish Government Expo fund

posted May 29th, 2009.

The Scottish Government has [announced](#) that the Jazz Festival is to receive £100K out of its Expo fund. The press notice also reveals the launch of The Edinburgh Jazz Festival Orchestra and those elements of this year's programme which tie in with the government's [Homecoming Scotland 2009](#) initiative. The full Jazz festival programme is due to be launched in early June 2009.

Exchange to send Melbourne artists to the International Festival

posted May 27th, 2009.

Australian newspaper, The Herald Sun, [reports](#) that the State government in Victoria is supporting local artists to take their work onto the world stage to the tune of \$A500K. Central to this support is a "3 year exchange worth \$A300K with the Edinburgh International Festival".

More on Fringe Scottish Expo funding

posted May 15th, 2009. previous posting [March 11th, 2009](#)

The Scottish Executive has provided [some further detail](#) on its Expo funding of various Edinburgh festivals. It has announced that the Fringe will receive £1m over two years (2009-2010 and 2010-2011) to help Scottish artists to perform at the Fringe. This programme comes under the banner of "Made in Scotland" and is a partnership consisting of the Fringe, The Federation of Scottish Theatre and the Scottish Arts Council.

Fringe Sunday axed

posted May 5th, 2009. previous posting [January 6th, 2009](#)

The Scotsman [reveals](#) that, as rumoured back in January, Fringe Sunday has been axed after the failure to find a backer for the event which costs in the region of £70K to stage. [Fringe Sunday](#) was first held in 1981 when it attracted over 40,000 people.

Assembly Rooms - Ballroom repairs to cost £300K

posted April 30th, 2009. previous posting [April 16th, 2009](#)

The repairs to the ceiling of the Ballroom in the Assembly Rooms which has dry rot will cost an estimated £300K [according to The Scotsman](#).

Report on Edinburgh venues published

posted April 30th, 2009. amended May 5th, 2009

The Scotsman [summarises](#) the results of a study on Edinburgh venues by PMP Consultants which was commissioned by the City Council and Scottish Enterprise. The main recommendation is for the building of a new 6,000 seater venue, possibly to be sited on the city's Waterfront. In terms of refurbishing existing venues, the study favours priority being given to the Queen's Hall (£10m) ahead of The King's Theatre (£20m) and The Assembly Rooms (£12m). Of course, what actually transpires - and more importantly when - is in the lap of the gods (or do I mean the politicians!).

The Stage [covered this story](#) on May 5th, 2009.

Seamus McGarvey to become Film Festival Patron

posted April 29th, 2009.

Edinburghguide.com [informs us](#) that Seamus McGarvey, the Oscar-nominated cinematographer, is to become a patron of the Film Festival. He joins actors Sean Connery, Tilda Swinton and Robert Carlyle.

Hullabaloo replaces Spiegeltent

posted April 21st, 2009.

The Scotsman [reports](#) that Underbelly have signed a deal to take over the George Square site that has previously been occupied by the Spiegeltent. It will have an Indian garden theme with pagoda tents and a new name - Hullabaloo. The site will support up to 700 punters, as opposed to the Spiegeltent's 2000. The indoor venue - the Bosco Theatre - will house 200.

Plans for one-stop shop ticketing system for festivals

posted April 18th, 2009.

Festivals Edinburgh have spoken to The Stage about their [plans for a portal](#) which will allow a punter to buy tickets online across all the Edinburgh festivals. Software has been purchased and the plans are to implement it gradually from 2010.

Performing spaces on the Mound to make up for the loss of the Ballroom

posted April 16th, 2009. previous posting [March 13th, 2009](#)

The Scotsman [reports](#) that super venue Assembly has finally accepted that it will not be able to use the Ballroom this year due to the previously reported dry rot problem. It is understood that they plan to set up two additional performing spaces at Assembly on the Mound to make up for this loss.

Financial hiccups for super venues

posted April 12th, 2009.

According to the [Sunday Herald](#), Assembly has lost its sponsorship deal with Belhaven, reputedly worth £60K pa, while the Gilded Balloon lost money after heavily investing in a comedy festival in Leicester in February. Meanwhile, the Comedy Festival - a marketing invention of Assembly, Pleasance, Gilded Balloon and the Underbelly - still has no sponsor.

No Spiegeltent at 2009 Fringe

posted April 3rd, 2009.

The Scotsman [reports](#) that the Famous Spiegeltent which has been present at the Fringe for over a decade will be missing this year. The reason being given is that the mirrored tent is being taken off the road for 6 months for essential maintenance. The Spiegel Garden has faced protests in recent years from residents around George Square.

"Package tourists to jump festival queues ..."

posted March 24th, 2009.

... says the headline in the [Scotsman](#). Festivals Edinburgh proposes a plan whereby tranches of tickets for prime shows would be reserved for travel firms, the idea being to create travel, accommodation and

ticket packages to lure "festival fans" who have never been to Edinburgh. If successful this could be bad news for those punters who like to decide on part (or all) of their itinerary late in the day, usually after they have seen reviews and heard the "word on the street" ... which is most of us!

Fringe loses comedy awards sponsor

posted March 21st, 2009.

The first publicly announced loss of sponsorship due to the current economic situation has been revealed in [The Stage](#). Intelligent Finance, the sponsors of the if.comedy awards, previously known as the Perrier awards, have withdrawn. It is estimated that the sponsorship was worth £150K.

Guest Director for 2009 Book Festival

posted March 16th, 2009.

The [Scotsman](#) reports that Richard Holloway, former bishop of Edinburgh and chairman of the Scottish Arts Council, will be the guest director at this year's Edinburgh Book Festival. He will be filling in for Catherine Lockerbie who is on medical leave.

Ballroom venue at the Assembly Rooms not available for Fringe 2009

posted March 13th, 2009. Previous posting [February 18th, 2009](#).

The [Scotsman](#) brings the bad news that the Ballroom venue at the Assembly Rooms will be out of action until at least September, thus it will not be available for this year's Fringe. Other venues at the Assembly Rooms are not affected.

Comedy Festival extended

posted March 13th, 2009.

The [Edinburgh Evening News](#) reports that the Comedy Festival, the controversial marketing concoction of the Big 4 venues, plans to extend to include any comedy event on the Fringe in its programme on payment of £500.

Festivals to receive £2m from Expo fund

posted March 11th, 2009.

The Scottish Executive's Expo fund is a three year, £6m funding programme for all Edinburgh's festivals, not just the August Feast. [It has been announced](#) that the funding for the 2009/2010 financial year will be £2m. The Edinburgh Art Festival will receive £250K over two years to commission new work by Scottish-based artists. The Fringe's allocation will be used to work in partnership with the Federation of Scottish Theatre and Scottish Arts Council to encourage and support Scottish-based artists and performing groups as part of the Made in Scotland initiative.

Fringe Chief Executive appointed

posted February 20th, 2009. modified February 21st 2009.

The [Scotsman](#) reports that Kath Mainland, currently administrative director at the Edinburgh Book Festival, is to be named as the first chief executive of the Fringe. After the announcement was officially made [The Stage](#) provided a bit more detail: she will start in late May and Tim Hawkins, who has been in temporary charge, will continue to act as general manager, overseeing the implementation of the new box office system.

Question mark over the Ballroom at the Assembly Rooms

posted February 18th, 2009. Also see [March 13th, 2009](#)

According to the [Scotsman](#) a survey has found some dry rot in the ceiling of the Ballroom, one of the main performing spaces at the Assembly Rooms. It is currently questionable if remedial work can be completed in time for the 2009 festival.

Festival Jobs web site

posted February 15th, 2009.

[EdinburghFestivalJobs.com](#) is a new web site which does what it says on the tin. Currently available jobs

can be found by clicking on blog ... presumably until it gets into full swing. Good luck with the web site.

Public funding for International Festival to top £5m

posted February 13th, 2009.

The Scotsman reports that the latest funding increases will bring the total amount that the International Festival receives from the public purse(s) to just over £5m. What it does not say is whether sponsorship money will be unaffected this year.

Usher Hall funding to complete renovation

posted February 13th, 2009.

It is rumoured in the Scotman that the city council will find an extra £5m to cover the current overrun on the long running project to refurbish the Usher Hall.

Festival directors to be appointed visiting professors

posted February 13th, 2009.

Allmediascotland has a [press release](#) which indicates that 13 festival directors / related individuals are to be given visiting professorships by Napier University.

PR firm brought in to market festivals

posted February 8th, 2009.

According to the Scotsman, Festivals Edinburgh have brought in the Glasgow-based PR firm Burt Greener to market the festivals in an attempt to minimise the expected downturn in ticket sales and sponsorship over the next couple of years.

Results of review into Fringe 2008 box office debacle published

posted February 4th, 2009.

The study into the Fringe's 2008 box office disaster by the Scottish accountancy firm Scott-Montcrieff has eventually been published. According to The Times (this piece is well worth reading) damning criticisms in the 48 page report include: Fringe Society management was weak; its procurement process was fundamentally flawed; and it lacked strategic direction and transparency in decision-making. Some of the detailed observations ... minutes not taken at some important meetings ... unsatisfactory project management (virtually non-existent during the implementation stage) ... poor risk assessment ... increasingly poor communication as the project progressed ... no authorised business case. The make-up of the board was questioned, including as it does some venue chiefs, with its potential to affect decision-making at the highest level due to conflicts of interest. Recommendations include: a strengthening of management procedures to reflect ultimate responsibility and accountability plus wholesale changes to procurement and project management procedures.

The Scotsman also carried a report on the publishing of the findings. Later in the day The Guardian, The Stage and Chortle each followed with their own articles on the findings.

And the Fringe reaction ... the content of the report was not unexpected, it was a significant blip but we are already in the process of recruiting new staff, and that there is already significant interest in the 2009 festival. So everything is ok then - phew I was worried for a second there!?! The Scotsman produced a "we have learnt our lesson" article on the following day

The findings can be downloaded from the Fringe web site.

As a gnarled old IT person myself I would say in one sentence, having read the report, that it shows all the signs of the classically flawed computer project (of which there are many), but grossly compounded in this instance by amazingly inept judgement during the procurement stage.

Rumours on review into venues

posted February 3rd, 2009.

A study into Edinburgh's venues is in progress, as recommended in the Thundering Hooves report of 2006. It was due to report to councillors in December 2008 but is now expected in April 2009. The

Scotsman [has heard](#) that three main options are being considered, ranging from £50m to £250m to be spent over 15 to 20 years. It is understood that the Assembly Rooms features heavily, and that the general emphasis is likely to be on investing in existing venues rather than on building any new venue.

Festival Theatre extension

posted January 28th, 2009.

The Festival Theatre plans to build an extension round the rear of the building [according to the Scotsman](#). It will provide additional rehearsal space. It is understood that it will be paid for by building student flats on a piece of land between the extension and South College Street.

New awards at Film Festival

posted January 28th, 2009.

Screendaily.com [reports](#) that the EIFF will have two new awards this year, Best New International Feature and Best International Short Film.

"...Burns is Bard from the Festival"

posted January 22nd, 2009.

is the amusing headline in [the Scotsman](#). It appears that Jonathan Mills, artistic director of the EIF, has had a meeting with the Scottish parliament's cross-party group on culture and media, at which he told the MSPs that there would be no Burns-related items in this year's programme. The MSPs are apparently not best pleased, not least as the Scottish Executive is giving the EIF a £100K grant to celebrate Homecoming Scotland (2009 is the 250th anniversary of Burns' birth).

Fringe advertises for Chief Executive and other senior staff

posted January 13th, 2009.

The Fringe [advertised in The Guardian](#) today for a Chief Executive, a Head of External Affairs, a Head of Marketing & Sponsorship and a Head of Participant Services. Applications have to be in by January 30th, 2009.

International Festival gets £100k grant for Homecoming Scotland

posted January 11th, 2009.

The EIF is to be a beneficiary of the grants that are being made available by the Scottish Executive (SE) for [Homecoming Scotland 2009](#), an SE initiative to celebrate 250 years since the birth of Robert Burns. The EIF will receive £100k according to [the Scotsman](#).

Fringe Sunday faces the axe

posted January 6th, 2009.

[The Scotsman reports](#) that the perilous state of the Fringe Society's financial affairs, coupled with the current credit crunch, means that it is likely that [Fringe Sunday](#), the Society's biggest single event, will be axed after 27 years unless a rescue package can be put together in the near term.

Fringe changes

posted December 17th, 2008.

[The Stage confirms](#) several items that the Scotsman mentioned a couple of weeks ago: the Fringe is on the verge of procuring the VIA box office system (the same system that is used by the major venues); the Fringe will advertise for a chief executive in early January rather than for a replacement artistic director - an indication that the role is perceived to be administrative and not artistic; and finally the organisational and board review of the festival is currently in draft form and is expected to be made public in January.

Fringe cash-flow requirements may hit £500-600k

posted December 16th, 2008 and updated January 11th, 2009. [See previous post](#)

With reference to the Fringe Society's financial problems that were reported last week [The Scotsman](#) says

that it has learned that the Fringe may in fact require almost double the previously quoted £250,000 by next April to avoid cash-flow problems while preparing the programme for 2009. [The Guardian](#) upped this figure to £600k in early January.

Fringe hits cash-flow problems

posted December 13th, 2008. [See next post](#)

[The Herald](#) and others report that the Fringe has cash-flow problems, brought on by the box office problems in the summer. £250,000 of emergency funding has been arranged, consisting of: £125,000 loan from Edinburgh City Council; £65,000 one-off grant from the Scottish Arts Council; and a £60,000 advance out of future funding from the Scottish Government.

Producers may boycott Fringe

posted December 12th, 2008

A [Stage exclusive](#) indicates discontent among producers, some of which have still to be paid for shows at the 2008 Fringe back in August. Venue chiefs are blaming the majority of delays on the problems with the Fringe box office system this year.

Cheaper Fringe comedy shows

posted December 10th, 2008

According to Chortle under the headline "[Funnies for a fiver](#)" the comedy agents and promoters Good Sense of Humour who will be programming shows at the Tron pub and GRV in 2009 propose that all shows at these venues will be £5. This is obviously an attempt to pitch it in the middle ground between the free shows and the high prices at the large venues.

Scottish arts benefactor receives Prince's arts medal

posted November 28th, 2008

Carol Hogel, through her Dunard Fund, is a major benefactor of Scottish orchestras and art galleries. [The Scotsman](#) reports that she has recently become one of the initial recipients of the Prince of Wales's medal for arts philanthropy. Hogel, an American who has lived in Scotland for many years, [threatened to return to the US](#) earlier in 2008 over the proposed government plans to tax non-domiciles.

Reviews into Fringe 2008 problems delayed

posted October 25th, 2008

The reviews that were commissioned in the light of the Fringe fiasco in 2008 are running behind schedule [according to the Scotsman](#). Meanwhile, the search for a new director has been put off until January 2009 at the earliest.

New Chairman for Film Festival

posted October 8th, 2008

The Edinburgh International Film Festival has [announced](#) that Scottish producer Iain Smith is taking on the role of chairman with effect from October 10th, 2008.

£450k for joint marketing drive

posted October 3rd, 2008

The Scotsman [reports](#) that Edinburgh's festivals are to receive £450k to promote their first joint marketing drive: £250K from the Scottish Government, £100k from Edinburgh City Council, and £50k each from EventScotland and Scottish Enterprise.

Cost to Fringe of box office problems

posted September 11th, 2008

The Scotsman [reckons](#) that it cost the Fringe £100K to combat the box office problems this year. This is before it has to pay for the investigations into the fiasco, which will include the use of external consultants.

Marketing push for festivals?

posted September 8th, 2008

The Scotsman [speculates](#) that Festivals Edinburgh, the organisation which was set up in 2006 to heighten the profile of all of Edinburgh's festivals, is in the process of looking for a marketing / PR company to help them; the first task will be to create a "brand" by the end of 2008. It is also rumoured that two marketing / PR gurus are to be recruited.

Fringe director resigns

posted August 28th, 2008

Jon Morgan, the director of the Fringe, has dutifully fallen on his sword after this year's box office fiasco, according to early reports in the [Stage](#) and the [Scotsman](#). The Herald subsequently [puts its twopenneth in on the resignation](#) and [discusses the proposed investigations](#) into the debacle.

2008 Festival ticket sales

posted August 25th, 2008

The [Guardian](#) and [Scotsman](#) both report that provisional figures show that Fringe 2008 ticket sales are down by approximately 10% on 2007. Book festival figures are reported to be up and International festival sales are said to be buoyant. Other 2008 Fringe statistics include 18792 performers giving 31320 performances of 2088 shows at 247 venues.

The BBC [reports](#) that the 2008 International Festival took £2.6m in ticket sales, a 7% rise over the previous year. Matthew Bourne's Dorian Gray was the festival's most successful dance show ever at the box office. A full summary can be found [here](#) on the EIF web site. Ticket sales at the Book Festival were up 3% with more than 300 out of the 750 events being sold out before the festival started - Sean Connery's was sold out in under an hour. While the Tattoo sold out as usual, the process took longer this year and there were many more returns than in previous years, reportedly attributable to the reduction in the numbers of American visitors.

Tattoo shows outside Edinburgh in 2009

posted August 20th, 2008

The Scotsman [reports](#) that 4 Tattoo performances will be put on outside Edinburgh in 2009 as part of the Scottish Government's [Homecoming Scotland 2009](#) initiative, which encourages people with an affinity to Scotland to visit.

Heated Fringe AGM

posted August 19th, 2008

Unsurprisingly given the problems this year, the Stage reports that [the Fringe AGM](#) (16th August 2008) was a heated affair with calls for apologies and the resignation of the board. As some punters suspected, the software supplier, Pivotal Engineering, has gone into administration. Three investigations will be commissioned into the box office fiasco: one IT specific into possible future options will be conducted by an external company (report due by the end of October); the Scottish Government, the Scottish Arts Council, the city council and Scottish Enterprise will all be invited to look at the overall problem, including the procurement, installation and operation of the system (report due in November); and finally a review of the role of the Fringe Society itself will be carried out. Meanwhile, the Scotsman reports that [the Fringe is considering legal action](#) over the fiasco.



This page is in two sections: the first is organised by individual festival and covers the launch of each festival programme plus early views from the critics - click on the appropriate link below; the second is a digest of links to preview articles and media recommendations across all the festivals in the lead up to August plus this particular punter's thoughts (plus those of friend Susan) - it can be found [here](#).

[International Festival](#)

[Fringe](#)

[International Film Festival](#)

[Book Festival](#)

[Art Festival](#)

[Jazz & Blues Festival](#)

[The Edge Festival \(formerly T on the Fringe\)](#).

Edinburgh International Festival

The first sign of the festival always comes with the launch of the EIF programme which was announced this morning (25th March 2009).

The programme can be viewed online (which I personally struggled with) or now two days after the launch it can be downloaded as a pdf (10MB in size). In either case start from [this page](#). The schedule of performances, dates and venues - called the calendar - can also be downloaded, also via [this page](#).

The theme this year is the Enlightenment. Presumably based in large part on the 14 page press release which can be downloaded via [this page](#), very early feedback can be found in [The Scotsman](#) and [The Stage](#). [The Guardian](#) and [WhatsOnStage](#) followed several hours later with [The Times](#), [The Herald](#) and [EdinburghGuide.com](#) adding their pieces the following morning. Also in [The Times](#), [Richard Morrison](#) weighs in with his initial thoughts.

Meanwhile, the cover of the brochure has caused some early controversy in Edinburgh. It seems quite a few years since we have had a Edinburgh "firestorm", although I am quietly ignoring the other issue of the moment, viz whether the tram works will continue on Princes Street during the festival. The locals - well actually mainly the tourist industry stoked by the media - are upset because the cover includes: a man urinating next to the statue of Greyfriars Bobby, beggars huddled at the statue of David Hume and neds drinking lager outside the Scottish Parliament. It seems that the Glasgow design firm Timorous Beasties was asked to come up a humorous twist on the theme of enlightenment. Our tourist industry friends are concerned that the use of such negative images will put arts lovers off visiting Edinburgh. One wonders if they would recognise an arts lover if they fell over one?

Back to the programme, [The Scotsman](#) was the first out of the blocks with a more detailed view from the critics. Links to any other views will be found here as they become available.

While we were still ploughing through the programme our friend and fellow festival enthusiast Susan had already starting booking tickets and she gave me her initial thoughts within a couple of days of the programme launch, with special emphasis on the opera and music sections.

"We feel this is the best Festival programme that the new director has launched and are hoping he has finally found his path. Sadly, it is not of the calibre of artists and productions we so loved at previous Festivals, but as it is so much improved over last year we are overjoyed and much more hopeful about the Festival's future. Many of the Festival highlights are early music operas, lots of Handel, Purcell, and even Bach. The programme says this is in honour of the Enlightenment but most of the composers and music predate that period so it is a bit of a stretch. But who cares as the music is fantastic and we are immensely thankful to have the opportunity to hear so many in so brief a time. The conductors are the masters of this period so in that, he was able to get the best. We'll see about the singers but I am betting, they will be fine (I hope.) One of the problems always with the Festivals is they quickly put together a group of artists who have never worked with each other, are of uneven quality, and have under-rehearsed, which can be very frustrating. However, this is a universal problem for Festivals, not just Edinburgh. In any case, early music is too rarely performed despite its very loyal audiences, so specializing in this area is certainly a way

the Festival can regain some of its lost importance and stature."

Drama does well this year in terms of the number of shows, but there is nothing that particularly stands out for me. The Traverse Theatre Company makes a welcome return to the EIF with Rona Munro's new play, *The Last Witch*. Susan is keen on this while I am slightly ambivalent despite the fact I am a Traverse enthusiast and I enjoyed the last Rona Munro play that I saw at the 2007 Fringe, Paines Plough's production of *Long Time Dead*. Brian Friel's *The Faith Healer* would definitely appeal but we still have the Almeida's production with Ken Stott and Geraldine McEwan fresh in our memories. We will probably take a punt on *Optimism*, an Australian production after Voltaire's *Candide*.

Dance suffers this year with only four shows. Indeed, I am beginning to wonder if Mills is particularly enamoured with this art form. Michael Clark's *New Work* is appealing (in terms of taking a punt) although it does not premiere until June while Susan's vote goes to the Royal Ballet of Flanders' *Return of Ulysses*.

Once again Mills has demonstrated his desire for a Visual Arts strand with 9 installations this year. Although I have said before that he should leave the Visual Arts to the Art Festival we will no doubt be visiting some, if not all, of them.

Previews and critics' recommendations from mid-June onwards can be found [here](#) at the bottom of this page.

Edinburgh Fringe

The Scotsman leaked [some programme information](#) on May 30th, 2009. mainly for artists appearing at the Pleasance and the Assembly Rooms.

The 2009 Fringe programme was officially announced today (Wednesday June 10th, 2009). The stats, so loved by the Fringe Society, include 2098 shows with 34,265 performances in 265 performing spaces - a new world record! The number of free shows has also increased this year - they are mainly comedy and music. Comedy - which overtook Drama last year as the largest element of the Fringe - accounts for 35% of this year's programme with Drama on 28%.

The programme can be viewed online from Monday 15th June 2009 at [the Fringe web site](#) although the sheer size makes it preferable to get hold of a printed copy - look [here](#) to see how to get hold of one. Individual venues either already have details of their own shows on their web sites or will have them shortly. [This facility](#) on The Stage web site can be useful to find the link to a venue's web site, as well as other useful information.

Early thoughts on this year's programme were quickly available through various media outlets within an hour or so, including: [WhatsOnStage.com](#) (the most comprehensive), [EdinburghGuide.com](#), [The Scotsman](#), [The Guardian](#), [The Stage](#) and [The Times](#). They were subsequently followed by [Scotland on Sunday](#).

Previews and critics' recommendations from mid-June onwards can be found [here](#) at the bottom of this page.

International Film Festival

It was [pre-announced](#) in April that the Sam Mendes film *Away We Go* will open the 2009 Edinburgh Film Festival.

The full programme was launched on May 6th, 2009. It can be downloaded from [here](#) on the Edinburgh Film Festival's website. Brief summaries of the programme were available on the same day in various publications - click [here](#) for The Guardian, [here](#) for The List or [here](#) for The Scotsman.

[Peter Bradshaw's top 10](#) appears in The Guardian (10th June 2009).

Previews and critics' recommendations from mid-June onwards can be found [here](#) at the bottom of this page.

Edinburgh International Book Festival

A busy 7 days ended today (11th June 2009) with the announcement of the 2009 Book Festival, the last of the 2009 summer festival programmes to be launched.

A brief summary can be found on the [home page](#) of the festival's website, while the programme can be browsed now and tickets bought from 22nd June 2009 [here](#).

The highlights include Margaret Atwood with her new novel *The Year of the Flood*, Shirley Williams delivering the National Library of Scotland Donald Dewar Lecture, a celebration of Robert Burns (as part of Homecoming Scotland), along with celebrities Cherie Blair and Sebastian Coe.

[The Scotsman](#) was first to produce an article on the launch, followed by [The Guardian](#) and [EdinburghGuide.com](#).

Previews and critics' recommendations from mid-June onwards can be found [here](#) at the bottom of this page.

Edinburgh Art Festival

The 2009 Edinburgh Art Festival programme was announced on May 27th, 2009. A list of shows by venue can be found [here](#) on their [website](#).

Early publicity surrounds [Rough Cut Nation](#), a multimedia project with young Scottish artists "remixing a version of Scottish history, as informed by street art and graffiti culture, painted, pasted and projected onto the walls of the Portrait Gallery". Apart from this free exhibition The Scottish National Portrait Gallery will be closed until autumn 2011 for refurbishment - a project called [Portrait of the Nation](#).

It appears that the 2009 festival will otherwise be a relatively quiet year in the sense that there are no "blockbuster" exhibitions. The Scotsman [provides a summary of the programme](#) announcement. A more detailed article can be found at [ArtDaily.org](#).

Further details on the exhibitions will be announced in late June.

Previews and critics' recommendations from mid-June onwards can be found [here](#) at the bottom of this page.

Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival

It has been [pre-announced](#) in the Scotsman that Jools Holland and his Rhythm and Blues Orchestra will be performing at the closing concert of the 2009 festival at the Edinburgh Playhouse on Sunday 9th August 2009.

The full festival programme was launched on Friday 5th June 2009. Details can be found on the [Jazz & Blues Festival web site](#).

[Jazzwise](#) and [The Scotsman](#) were first out of the blocks with brief summaries of the programme.

Previews and critics' recommendations from mid-June onwards can be found [here](#) at the bottom of this page.

The Edge Festival

[The Edge Festival](#), formerly T on the Fringe, announced its initial lineup of gigs today (Wednesday 10th June 2009).

[The List](#) and [The Skinny](#) both contain summaries of the festival programme.

Further additions to the Edge programme are detailed in [efestivals.co.uk](#).

Picks and Previews

Links to preview articles, critics' recommendations and any other relevant info will be posted below until early August.

Date posted	Item Details
12th June 2009	preview info on Raphael to Renoir art exhibition in Artdaily.org
13th June 2009	Alistair Harkness's top 20 for the Film Festival in the Scotsman.
13th June 2009	Brief preview of the Film Festival in The Guardian.
14th June 2009	preview of Raphael to Renoir art exhibition in the Herald .
18th June 2009	preview & recommendations for theatre, music (classical and pop), comedy, dance and visual art in the Guardian
21st June 2009	more Fringe picks from Lyn Gardner in The Guardian
26th June 2009	preview of the Book Festival in The Skinny
27th June 2009	Top 100 Fringe shows - recommendations in The Scotsman
7th July 2009	National Galleries' press release for The Discovery of Spain art exhibition
8th July 2009	Preview of The Discovery of Spain art exhibition in The Scotsman
9th July 2009	The Forest Fringe's provisional programme is available
10th July 2009	National Galleries' press release for Rough Cut Nation art exhibition
10th July 2009	First theatre picks from viewfromthestalls blog
13th July 2009	"best 50 shows" - recommendations in The Times
13th July 2009	info on The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life art exhibition at the Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse
13th July 2009	info on Fringe Music Festival Homecoming 2009 - free lunchtime performances of Scottish classical and traditional music at Hawthornden Court, National Museum of Scotland
13th July 2009	article in The List on European Jazz at this year's Jazz & Blues festival
14th July 2009	preview articles can be found in The List's Edinburgh Festival Guide
14th July 2009	brief preview of the Traverse programme in the Herald
14th July 2009	revised set of top picks from WhatsOnStage.com
19th July 2009	preview of Rough Cut Nation art exhibition in The Sunday Herald
19th July 2009	preview of the Book Festival in The Sunday Herald
19th July 2009	brief preview of The Edge Festival in The Skinny
23rd July 2009	preview of Jazz & Blues Festival in EdinburghGuide.com
24th July 2009	The List picks 50 shows where tickets cost only a fiver
25th July 2009	Theatre recommendations in The Telegraph
25th July 2009	Preview of the dance programme at Dance Base in The Skinny
27th July 2009	Interesting article on comedy and offensiveness by Brian Logan in The Guardian
27th July 2009	article on Brian Friel in The List - 3 of his plays are being performed at the EIF
27th July 2009	re EIF music and dance programmes, articles on Bach and Handel in The Herald
27th July 2009	Comedy picks in The Telegraph .
29th July 2009	Orphans at the Traverse is generating quite a few previews - best in The Herald and The List
29th July 2009	Theatre picks from the SocialistWorkerOnline
29th July 2009	Interview with the Grid Iron team behind Barflies in The List
30th July 2009	Joyce McMillan in The Scotsman on the pressures and challenges facing the Fringe (and arts in general) to attract 21st century audiences
30th July 2009	Picks for art, theatre, music, comedy and dance in the New Statesman
30th July 2009	Comedy, theatre, dance and music picks from the Sunday Times
30th July 2009	Telegraph choices for book festival, opera, theatre, dance, theatre, comedy and music
31st July 2009	EdinburghGuide.com Interview with Michael Kantor, director of Optimism (after Voltaire's Candide)
1st Aug 2009	Visual Art picks in The List
1st Aug 2009	Article in the List on sculpture themes in this year's Art Festival

1st Aug 2009	Preview in The Skinny of Eva Hesse exhibition at the Fruitmarket Gallery
1st Aug 2009	Preview in The List of visual art exhibitions that are part of the EIF
1st Aug 2009	Comedy picks from The Guardian
1st Aug 2009	Sunday Herald article about Kate V Robertson's "invisible graffiti"
1st Aug 2009	FT's (very) shortlist
2nd Aug 2009	Art Festival picks in the Sunday Times
2nd Aug 2009	Preview of EIF theatre programme in The Sunday Herald
3rd Aug 2009	The Skinny previews Diaspora and The Return of Ulysses in the EIF
3rd Aug 2009	Preview of EIF programme in The Sunday Herald
4th Aug 2009	Article on Amnesty International and its relationship to comedy in The Skinny
4th Aug 2009	Interview with Harry Christophers, founder and conductor of The Sixteen, in The Skinny - The Sixteen are appearing at the EIF
5th Aug 2009	BBC News' brief overview of the Art Festival
5th Aug 2009	Additions to Book Festival programme
5th Aug 2009	Preview of folk and jazz at The Fringe in The Scotsman
5th Aug 2009	The Edinburgh Mela Festival takes place from 7th to 9th August 2009
6th Aug 2009	Update to Amnesty International's Stand Up For Freedom shows
7th Aug 2009	As seems traditional The Independent brings up the rear with its preview
8th Aug 2009	Article on The Enlightenments - EIF 2009 visual art programme - in The Scotsman
9th Aug 2009	The Skinny on the Edinburgh Book Fringe and West Port Book Festival
11th Aug 2009	Interesting feature article in The Independent - all the Perrier winners and what happened to them
23rd Aug 2009	"Inside Forest Fringe" in The Guardian

If you are looking for feature articles the following sites are well worth a browse (list last updated on August 5th, 2009):

[The Scotsman's Edinburgh-Festivals.com](#) - new look to it this year

[WhatsOnStage.com/edinburgh2009](#) is making more of an effort this year

[The List's EdinburghFestivalGuide](#)

[The Telegraph](#)

[The Guardian's Edinburgh Festival section](#)

[BBC website](#) - the Beeb seems to making more of an effort this year ... on the website at least

[The Stage's Edinburgh Festival site](#) no significant content so far

[EdinburghGuide.com's Edinburgh Festival section](#) - slow start

[Fest Magazine](#) in association with [The Skinny](#)

Punters' Thoughts

A selection of my picks follow - they include last minute additions:

Drama - The Last Witch (EIF), Faith Healer (EIF), Midsummer, Morecambe, Barflies, Palace of the End, Orphans and The Doubtful Guest ... possibles include Certain Dark Things, Sylvia Plath - 3 Women, Austen's Women, If That's All There Is, The Sociable Plover, David Leddy's 'White Tea' and Francis The Holy Jester. Late additions ... The Event, The Sound of My Voice, Beachy Head, Precious Little Talent and Little Gem

Dance - The Red Room ... possibles Spaceman and The Overcoat. Late additions .. Something about Others,

Comedy - The Interminable Suicide of Gregory Church (Daniel Kitson), Alistair McGowan and Hardeep Singh Kohli ... possibles include Reginald D. Hunter and Simon Amstell

Visual Arts - Raphael to Renoir and Rough Cut Nation ... possibles include The Discovery of Spain and EIF installations at various galleries. Late addition ... Eva Hesse

Other - Lewis Barlow Close Up Magician.

My friend Susan has kindly given me her recommendations for the the music and opera programmes at the EIF, the length of her list indicating that she is pleased with the overall programme this year:

Opera - Macbeth, Rinaldo, Acis & Galatea, Der Fliegende Hollander, The Fairy Queen, Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria and Actus Tragicus

Choral Music - She would love to see all the performances but singles out Dunedin Consort, Bach Collegium Japan , Rivercar Consort, Cantus Colln, Retrospect Ensemble - Carolyn Sampson and The Sixteen

Music - Willard White, Orchestre des Champs-Elysees- conductor Phillippe Herrewewe, Elias by Felix Mendelssohn- again the Orchestre des Champs Elysees and Phillippe Herrewewe with Christianne Stotjin singing, Philharmonia Orchestre with Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting and Yefim Bronfman on piano, Le Concert des Nations with Jordi Savall playing Handel, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment with Sir Roger Norrington conducting and Joyce DiDonato singing Haydn, Bryn Terfel, Scottish Chamber Orchestra with Sir Charles Mackerras conducting Haydn etc, Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich with David Zinman and Dawn Upshaw - Brahms and Mahler's 4th, The Monteverdi Choir with Sir John Gardiner conducting Bach and Handel, and The Dream of Gerontius with Sir Mark Elder conducting the Halle

Queen's Hall Music - Collegium Vocale Gent with Kristian Bezuidenhout on piano -The Haydn Songbook, Lisa Milne soprano, Hebrides Ensemble - Christopher Maltman baritone, Hesperion XXI with Jordi Savall playing early music on the Gamba, Elisabeth Leonskaja playing Chopin, Quatuor Mosaiques, Andreas Staier fortepiano, Bernarda Fink mezzo soprano, Christian Zacharias piano and Emerson String Quartet.

Finally, I will take a view on the [Forest Fringe](#) programme closer to festival time. Last year we had decided up front on a particular show only to find out that it had disappeared from the programme a couple of days before our arrival in Edinburgh.



[Home](#) [Festival History](#) [News](#) [Pre-Festival Stuff](#) [Festival Time](#) [Newbie?](#) [Witterings](#)
[Links](#) [Site Map](#)

Info on Reviews of Shows at the 2009 Festival

[2008](#) | [2007](#)

The main objectives of this page are to:

- tell you where you can find reviews on the web
- provide a summary of those shows which have scored most marks with the critics
- detail some of this year's awards
- provide links to selected summaries of the festival by the critics
- summarise our own thoughts on the shows that we managed to see
- provide links to selected Visual Arts, Jazz & Blues and Film festival reviews.

Where to Find 2009 Reviews

There are a plethora of sources to satisfy even the most voracious consumer of reviews. Of course the critics vary from the professional to the semi-pro, the student, the enthusiastic theatregoer ... and all shades in between.

The following list will be updated as it becomes clear precisely where reviews can be found on any given site.

Scotsman
The Guardian
The Stage
Chortle (comedy)
Fest
OnstageScotland
BritishTheatreGuide
The List
FringeReview
Viewfromthestalls
Whatsonstage.com
The Herald
The Times
The Telegraph
EdinburghGuide.com
The Independent
Edinburgh Festivals Magazine
ThreeWeeks
BroadwayBaby

List last updated on August 13th, 2009.

Most Critically Acclaimed Shows (Fringe and EIF)

There are simply too many shows and too many reviews to attempt a list of links to them, even an abbreviated one. Instead, I focus on producing periodic lists of those shows that the critics liked best.

Let me start off by stating the obvious: there are many enjoyable shows which never make these lists. We have seen many "minor classics" in Edinburgh over the years that went largely unnoticed by the critics. Indeed, we have a number of shows in our planned schedule for this year that have had little publicity during the "preview season". So, do not be a complete slave to reviews: listen to the "word on the street" and perhaps try something different – you might be pleasantly surprised.

The minimum criterion for a show to be considered for the following list is that it must have had at least three reviews ... which is not easy.

This is the fifth and final iteration of the list of most critically acclaimed shows. It was published at 6:00pm on Wednesday August 26th, 2009.

Drama. *Morecambe, Private Peaceful, The Sound of My Voice, The Event, F**ked, The Trial, Heroin(e) for Breakfast, Internal, Precious Little Talent, Midsummer, Beachy Head, Chronicles of Long Kesh, Faith Healer, Sea Wall, Orphans, Little Gem, If That's All There Is, King of the Gypsies, The Palace of The End, Gagarin Way, The Origin of Species ... , Ophelia (Drowning), The Rap Guide to Evolution, The Devoured, David Leddy's White Tea, The Last Witch, The Sound of My Voice, Normality, Bane, The Sociable Plover, Nun the Wiser, Forgotten Things, Metamorphosis, Lilly Through The Dark and A Grave Situation.*

Comedy. *The Interminable Suicide of Gregory Church, Adam Hills, Idiots of Ants, Rhod Gilbert, Phil Nichol, Richard Herring, Tom Wrigglesworth, Andrew Lawrence, Simon Amstell, Laura Solon, Celia Paquola, Hugh Hughes, Andrew Lawrence, Zoe Lyons, John Bishop, Penny Dreadfuls, Glenn Wool, Rich Hall, Andrew O'Neil, Kevin Bridges, Russell Kane, Colin Hault, Phil Kay, Pajama Men and Paul Sinha.*

Opera. *Faust, Il Ritorno D'Ulisse in Patria and St.Kilda. Accidental Nostalgia* (operetta).

Music. *Camille O'Sullivan, Barbershopera II and Jerry Springer The Opera.*

Dance & Physical Theatre. *Gelabert Azzopardi Companyia de Dansa, The Return of Ulysses, Something about Others, Controlled Falling Project, Flhip Flhop, Cocorico, Circa, The Overcoat and The Red Room.*

Others. *Power Plant*

2009 Awards

There are a growing number of awards which will all be mentioned in this section when they are announced. The Scotsman Fringe Firsts and The Glasgow Herald Angels, the major awards, are handed out weekly while the remainder are given towards the end of the festival.

The Scotsman Fringe First awards for new writing. Week 1 Scotsman Fringe Firsts awards have been announced: Dennis Kelly's *Orphans*, Ontroerend Goed's *Internal*, *Found*, John Clancy's *The Event*, Edgar Oliver's *East 10th Street*, Paul Charlton's *Crush* and *The Unravelling*. Week 2 Fringe First awards are: Daniel Kitson's *The Interminable Suicide of Gregory Church*; Mark Watson's *The Hotel*; Baba Brinkman with *The Rap Guide to Evolution*; Tim Whitnall's *Morecambe*, performed by Bob Golding; and *The World is Too Much* (breakfast slot at the Traverse - 6 short dramas by different playwrights). Week 3 awards go to: Grid Iron's *Barflies*; Mark Ravenhill and Bette Bourne's *A Life in Three Acts*; Inua Ellam's *The 14th Tale*; David Leddy's *White Tea*; and Dot performing Tom Basden's *Party*.

The Glasgow Herald Angel awards. Week 1 Bank of Scotland Herald Archangel is Universal Arts. The Herald Angels are Grid Iron Theatre (*Barflies*), Ontroerend Goed (*Internal*), Dennis Kelly (*Orphans*), Nic Green (*Trilogy*), DOT 504 (*100 Wounded Tears*) and Jack Bruce (Jazz & Blues Festival). Week 2 Herald Archangel is Christopher Bell (chorus master of the Edinburgh Festival Chorus). The Herald Angel awards go to Frank Woodley (*Optimism*), Ofelia Popii (*Faust*), Cynthia Hopkins (*Accidental Nostalgia*), Claire Cunningham (*ME*), Patrice Thibaud and Phillipe Leygnac (*Cocorico*) and Barbara Morrison (Jazz at The Outhouse). Week 3 Archangel is Bette Bourne (*A Life in Three Acts*) while the Herald Angel awards go to Kathryn Howden (*The Last Witch*), Fuel Theatre, Dialogos (*Tondal's Vision*), Zic Zizou (*Brocante Sonore*), David Leddy (*White Tea*) and Shadwell Opera (*The Magic Flute*). Week 4 Herald Archangel goes to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Herald Angels are: Juliana Engberg (curator of *The Enlightenments*), Doris Dorrie (director of *Admeto*), Karen Kandel (*Peter and Wendy*) and Giorgio Battistelli (*Experimentum Mundi*).

Edinburgh Comedy awards (The "Eddie's"): Tim Key (main award), Jonny Sweet (best newcomer) and Peter Buckley Hill's Free Fringe (panel prize).

The Stage Awards for Acting Excellence at the Fringe: Billy Mack for *The Sound of My Voice* (best actor); Cora Bissett for *Midsummer* (best actress); Green Shoot Productions for *Chronicles of Long Kesh* (best ensemble); and George Mann for *Odyssey* (best solo performer).

The Carol Tambor Edinburgh to New York award: Elaine Murphy's play *Little Gem* performed by Guna Nua & Civic Theatre

Amnesty International's Freedom of Expression award: *Palace of The End* by Judith Thompson

Edinburgh International Festival Fringe Prize 2009: The River People's *Lilly Through The Dark*; David Leddy's *White Tea*; and Inspector Sands' Theatre's *Is That All There Is*.

Total Theatre awards: The River People for *Lilly Through The Dark* (emerging artists / company); Beady Eye for *Everything Must Go (Or The Voluntary Attempt To Overcome Unnecessary Obstacles)* (devised performance); *Adrian Howell's: Foot-Washing for The Sole* presented by The Arches (innovation / interaction / immersion); Daffyd James and Ben Lewis for *My Name is Sue* (music & theatre); and Clod Ensemble for *Under Glass* (physical and visual theatre); and Improbable Theatre (significant contribution to theatre).

Arches Brick award for emerging talent: Beady Eye for *Everything Must Go (Or The Voluntary Attempt To Overcome Unnecessary Obstacles)* and Dancing Brick for *6:0: How Heap And Pebble Took On The World And Won*.

Jack Tinker Spirit of the Fringe award. Morag Deyes and Dancebase.

Holden Street Theatres award: Horizon Arts for *Heroin(e) for Breakfast*.

FringeReview awards. Outstanding theatre shows: Horizon Arts for *Heroin(e) for Breakfast* plus Louise Hill and Martin Aukland (Bristol Shakespeare Festival Company) for *Iago*. **Hidden Gems:** *Normality*

from Wordsmith's Theatre Factory.

Malcolm Hardee comedy awards: Lewis Schaffer (cunning stunt) and Otto Kuhnle (comic originality)

Allen Wright awards for young journalists: Matt Trueman of Culture Wars in the Review Category and Sam Friedman of Fest Magazine in the Features, Interviews and Previews Category.

Other awards include: [Edinburgh Evening News Drama Awards](#) and [ThreeWeeks Editors' Awards](#).

Critics' Postmortem

The Herald is first in with a [reasonably balanced and coherent article](#) by [Iain Macwhirter](#). It is followed by The Guardian who [describe 2009 as a vintage year](#). Meanwhile, Dominic Cavendish in The Telegraph talks about [the trend towards the theatre of intimacy](#) (audience participation to me) in drama.

WhatsOnStage.com provides [links to various blogs](#) written during the last week of the Fringe.

Punters' Visit

We took in 24 shows and 4 art exhibitions during our one week visit to Edinburgh. A brief summary of our thoughts on what we saw:

- an average year overall with no unmissable show
- best drama show - [Orphans](#) (by some distance)
- best "Edinburgh" plays (tight, well-written and well-acted shows for a small cast in a small space) - [The Fall of Man](#) and [The Sociable Plover](#)
- best use of technology (multi-media) - [Beachy Head](#) which was an impressive production generally. Its use of technology was apt and quite seamless in contrast to [Accidental Nostalgia](#) where it was in your face and often superfluous
- best comedy (or should we say storytelling?) - Daniel Kitson's [The Interminable Suicide of Gregory Church](#)
- best physical theatre - [Circa](#)
- best visual arts - [Raphael to Renoir](#) which I felt was a more coherent exhibition (in the sense that it was a single private collection) than [The Discovery of Spain](#) although I particularly enjoyed the Goya drawings in the latter (if "enjoyed" is the right word for such gruesome works). I tend to agree with [Adrian Searle in The Guardian](#) who described [The Discovery of Spain](#) as an uneven show
- this year's "turkey" - [Optimism](#). We fail to understand why the critics praised it at all
- what we would like to have seen but were unable to fit in - [Precious Little Talent](#), [Private Peaceful](#), [Chronicles of Long Kesh](#), [The Sound of My Voice](#), [If That's All There Is](#), [Something about Others](#), [The Overcoat](#) and [Power Plant](#).

Edinburgh Art Festival

Links to selected reviews:

Date Posted	Review
7th July 2009	Raphael to Renoir in The Scotsman
17th July 2009	The Discovery of Spain in The Herald (short review)
21st July 2009	The Discovery of Spain in The Scotsman (short review)
27th July 2009	The Discovery of Spain in the FT
30th July 2009	The Discovery of Spain in The Guardian
30th July 2009	Raphael to Renoir in The FT

Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival

Links to selected reviews:

Date Posted	Review
3rd Aug 2009	Roy Hargrove Quintet in The Herald

3rd Aug 2009	Summary of the opening weekend in The Scotsman
4th Aug 2009	Courtney Pine, The Thing, The Lot and Dick Hyman in The Herald
5th Aug 2009	Joe Temperley Quartet in The Scotsman
5th Aug 2009	Les Doigts de l'homme in the Edinburgh Evening News
6th Aug 2009	Phil Bancroft in The Scotsman
6th Aug 2009	Dick Hyman / Ken Mathieson's Classic Jazz Orchestra in The Scotsman
7th Aug 2009	Martin Taylor and Sylvain Luc in The Herald
8th Aug 2009	Niki King sings Billie Holiday in The Scotsman
10th Aug 2009	Edinburgh Jazz Orchestra: Sylvander & Clarinda in The Herald

Edinburgh Film Festival

Links to selected reviews:

Date Posted	Review
17th June 2009	The Hurt Locker, Van Diemen's Land and Long Weekend by Alistair Harkness in the Scotsman
17th June 2009	Pippa Lee and The Hurt Locker in Den of Geek
17th June 2009	Pippa Lee and The Hurt Locker in blogcritics.org
18th June 2009	Mary and Max, White Lightnin' and A Boy Called Dad in Den of Geek
18th June 2009	Away We Go in the Scotsman , The Times , Independent and blogcritics.org
18th June 2009	Pippa Lee and Easier With Practice in The Scotsman
19th June 2009	Moon plus Away We Go , Mesrine and Last Heroes of the Peninsula in Den of Geek
19th June 2009	Moon in blogcritics.org
20th June 2009	Black Dynamite in blogcritics.org
21st June 2009	Summary in The Observer
22nd June 2009	Outrage and Members of the Funeral in blogcritics.org
22nd June 2009	Van Diemen's Land, Outrage , Humpday and Sin Nombre in Den of Geek
22nd June 2009	Summary of documentaries in The Guardian
23rd June 2009	The September Issue in The Independent , Times and Telegraph
23rd June 2009	Antichrist in Den of Geek and EdinburghGuide.com
24th June 2009	The Missing Person in blogcritics.org
24th June 2009	Le Donk & Scorz-ayz-ee in The Independent
24th June 2009	The Girlfriend Experience in The Guardian
25th June 2009	Pontypool in blogcritics.org
26th June 2009	Boogie Woogie and Surrogate in Den of Geek
26th June 2009	Adventureland, Boogie Woogie and Romeo and Juliet vs the Living Dead in the Scotsman
27th June 2009	The Girlfriend Experience in blogcritics.org
27th June 2009	For The Love Of Movies: The Story Of American Film Criticism in Den of Geek
29th June 2009	Adam in EdinburghGuide.com

Some places to look for reviews:

[Den of Geek](#)
[Blogcritics.org](#)
[Scotsman](#)
[Times](#)

Reviews of the overall festival can be found in [blogcritics.org](https://www.blogcritics.org), [The Independent on Sunday](#) and [TimeOut](#).

Film Festival awards included: the Michael Powell award for best British feature film to director Duncan Jones for *Moon*; PPG award for best performance in a British feature film to Katie Jarvis for *Fish Tank*; best new international feature to Kyle Patrick Alvarez for *Easier With Practice*; best documentary award to Aliona Van Der Horst for *Boris Ryzhy*; and the Standard Life Audience award to *The Secret of the Kells* (director Tomm Moore).
