



An Edinburgh Festival Punter

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News Snippets - August 2010 to August 2011

2009-2010 |

2008-2009

The individual news snippets follow below. However, for those who want quick pointers to the main news since the last festival ...

- [New Fringe Society constitution](#)
- [Festivals Impact Report](#) indicates that Edinburgh's festivals are worth £245m to the local economy
- [Assembly Rooms refurbishment saga ... final attempt to prevent it ... go ahead finally given ... Assembly's move to George Sq. ... and further details of their venues for 2011 ... The Stand likely to use Assembly Rooms in 2012](#)
- [Funding highlights ... Virgin Money to sponsor fireworks concert and "Fringe on High street" ... Expo funding extended](#)
- [Venues \(excluding Assembly which is dealt with above\) ... fringe venue changes ... Underbelly venue changes ... problems at King's and Festival Theatres ... BBC venue ... C at ECA ... Zoo Roxy](#)
- [Film Festival changes ... here ... here ... here ... and here](#)
- [2011 festival launches can be found on the pre-festival stuff page](#)

Closing thoughts and 2011 statistics from the Festival Fringe Society

posted August 30th, 2011. updated August 31st, 2011.

The Festival Fringe Society issued its closing thoughts on the 2011 festival plus the usual selected set of statistics. 1.877m tickets were issued - I could be cynical and ask what "issued" means precisely. Anyway, the figure is marginally up (approximately 2.5%) on the 2010 figure. [The Scotsman quotes provisional figures from the super venues](#), including: Underbelly with a claimed 19% increase in ticket sales (this excludes the McEwan Hall which was not available this year - not sure that this makes for a valid comparison), Gilded Balloon up 10%, Pleasance up 6% while Assembly expects the figures to be "marginally up" on last year. Everybody says that the figures would have been better if it had not been for the rain, particularly in the first week.

Ideas sought to improve festival experience

posted August 29th, 2011.

The Edinburgh Festivals are seeking ideas to improve the festival experience. [Ideas can be submitted and voted upon](#) until the end of October 2011. Prizes will be awarded in late November for the best ideas. This is an initiative of the [Edinburgh Festivals Innovation Lab](#).

New Artistic Director for The Traverse

posted August 27th, 2011.

The Traverse has announced that Orla O'Loughlin, currently Artistic Director at The Pentabus Theatre, will replace Dominic Hill as its Artistic Director. Hill leaves in October to take over the reins at the Citizens in Glasgow. O'Loughlin will start in January 2012.

Forest Café looking for alternative premises

posted August 26th, 2011.

The Forest Café Arts Centre, home to The Forest Fringe in August, has given up the unequal struggle to stay in its current premises. [If you remember](#), the owners, Edinburgh University Settlement, were declared bankrupt and forced into administration in October 2010. The Forest Café has unsuccessfully tried to raise sufficient funds to allow them to stay in the building in Bristo Place. They have accepted the inevitable and are now looking for alternative premises. [Read more here](#) including their requests for

donations.

Equity survey on backstage conditions and pay at the Fringe

posted August 26th, 2011.

[The Stage reports](#) that Equity is conducting [an online survey on backstage conditions and pay](#) at this year's Fringe. It can be accessed until early September and is open to any UK-based performer.

Fringe set to commence marketing for 2012 early

posted August 24th, 2011.

The Fringe is in talks with venues about commencing marketing for 2012 as early as March or April [according to The Scotsman](#). In an attempt to compete with the attraction of the London Olympics The Fringe would promote the 2012 festival, including some shows, several months earlier than usual.

Film Festival loses funding from British Film Institute

posted August 24th, 2011.

[The Herald reports](#) that the British Film Institute, the recently appointed lead provider of funding and support to the film industry, has told the EIFF that it is unable to provide any funding although other forms of support may be possible. The Film Festival had previously received a grant of £1.8m spread over 3 years, a funding package that ended last year.

Fringe 2012 AGM

posted August 23rd, 2011. updated August 29th, 2011.

The Fringe AGM was held on Saturday August 20th, 2011. A brief summary follows. See [the article in Whatsonstage.com](#) for more information.

- concerns expressed over potential shortage of technicians next year due to the London Olympics
 - £100K set aside in last year's accounts towards debts re the disposal of the failed Pivotal software system
 - new back-office software "Fringeware" being developed - to help analyse the data that is held about participants and punters
 - Tommy Sheppard (Stand) beat Charlie Wood (Underbelly) for a place on the Fringe board. [See all Fringe election results](#).
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Warning on potential lack of availability of technicians for 2012 festival

posted August 23rd, 2011.

Venue bosses are warning that the London Olympics in 2012 will suck up many technicians, leaving a potential shortfall of these resources for events such as the Edinburgh Festival [according to The Stage](#) and other media outlets.

Possible home for Demarco's festival archive

posted August 13th, 2011.

Richard Demarco is the 81 year-old veteran festival impresario who has been responsible for bringing many International companies to the Fringe over the years. He was also one of the founders of the Traverse back in 1963. [The Herald reports](#) that he may have found a home for his festival archive which runs to around one million pieces. Discussions are ongoing to use part of the old Royal (Dick) Vet School building in Edinburgh (the Summerhall campus).

EIF 2011 ticket sales still a "challenge"

posted August 12th, 2011.

[The Herald appears to be indicating](#) that ticket sales for the International Festival are not going as well as they might, possibly due to this year's theme which is based on South East Asian culture and its links with the west.

Cheap EIF tickets for the under 26s

posted August 10th, 2011.

The International Festival will be offering £8 tickets for selected performances during the festival if you are under 26. [Further details can be found here.](#)

Edinburgh Book Festival website working again

posted August 10th, 2011.

The website appears to be working ok this morning.

Edinburgh Book Festival website unavailable

posted August 9th, 2011.

The data centre in Ireland which houses the Book Festival's website was affected by a lightning strike on Sunday evening. The website is currently unavailable although tickets can still be purchased over the phone and at the box office. The online brochure can be browsed [here](#).

Earlier date fails to boost Jazz Festival

posted August 4th, 2011.

The Jazz Festival was a week earlier than normal this year. [The Scotsman reports](#) that the festival's expectations of increased ticket sales failed to be satisfied. However, it is likely that the new date in the calendar will be retained.

Extended line-up announced for Amnesty's Stand Up for Freedom comedy night

posted August 3rd, 2011.

[Further names have been announced by Amnesty](#) for its famous Stand Up for Freedom comedy night which this year will take place on August 17th, 2011.

National Museum of Scotland opens

posted July 29th, 2011.

Punters who like to mix up their festival activities with visits to Edinburgh's other offerings may like to know that [the National Museum of Scotland fully opens today](#). It has been partially closed for three years for a major revamp. [EdinburghGuide.com provides a useful article on the subject](#).

Punter struggles to hear the music

posted July 28th, 2011.

An Edinburgh festival punter [complains in The Herald](#) about the problems of trying to listen to a jazz performance in one of the Spiegel tents in George Square above the sound emanating from another jazz performance in the adjacent Spiegel tent.

British Council Edinburgh Showcase 2011

posted July 27th, 2011.

[The British Council Edinburgh Showcase](#) brings promoters and art managers from around the world to see UK companies perform at the Fringe from August 22nd to August 27th. [Whatsonstage.com provides a comprehensive summary of the 2011 showcase](#) which will feature 27 artists and companies.

Roxy Art House venue

posted July 27th, 2011.

Despite Roxy Art House ceasing to exist last autumn the building will be used as a Fringe venue this year under the Zoo venue banner. [The Scotsman reports](#) that Zoo Roxy has just been given permission to stay open until 1.30am during the festival although alcohol will not be served after 11pm.

Amnesty International's festival programme

posted July 27th, 2011.

[Details of Amnesty International's festival programme](#) can be found on its website. The ever-popular

Stand Up For Freedom comedy night will this year take place at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre on Wednesday August 17th, 2011 at 9.30pm.

Fringe venue chiefs talk up southern "hub"

posted July 21st, 2011.

[The Scotsman's Tim Cornwell reports](#) on the work this week to convert the University area into what he calls the Fringe's southern hub. Needless to say the chiefs of the venues that will populate the area are busy talking it up. It will be the new High Street says one of them?!? It is a discussion point this year because the Assembly Rooms is unavailable due to refurbishment work and so Assembly will be significantly adding to the venue population. My own view is that this concentration of venues is not good for local businesses, nor is it likely to prove an enjoyable space for socialising / drinking between shows except possibly for the young.

Edinburgh Book Fringe 2011

posted July 18th, 2011.

The Edinburgh Book Fringe which started back in 2008 will run from Thursday August 11th, 2011 to Thursday August 25th, 2011 at Word Power Books, 43-45 West Nicholson Street. [Programme details can be found on its website.](#)

Campaign to save Stockbridge theatre

posted July 16th, 2011.

As mentioned back in March, Theatre Workshop, a Fringe venue in Stockbridge for many years, has been put up for sale after the theatre lost its public funding last year. [The Edinburgh Reporter indicates](#) that there is a now campaign to save it. See [this Facebook page](#) for further information.

Chairs announced for EIF Continental Shifts

posted July 14th, 2011.

Continental Shifts is a series of talks and debates on the 2011 Edinburgh International Festival theme of Asia and changes that are occurring in the East. It is presented in association with The British Council, The Royal Society of Scotland and the Confucius Institute for Scotland. [EdinburghGuide.com provides details](#) of the programme along with the recently announced chairpersons.

Art Festival website "launched"

posted July 14th, 2011.

As has seemingly become traditional, the content of the [Art Festival website](#) has lagged the launch of this year's festival. It was eventually published with the 2011 festival details today, some 7 weeks after the launch.

Earl of Harewood dies

posted July 14th, 2011.

The Earl of Harewood died on July 11th, 2011 at the age of 88. He was widely recognised as a giant of the opera world, fulfilling many key roles in the arts world during his life. This included his roles as managing director, and later chairman, of the English National Opera (ENO), as editor and co-author of the opera-lover's bible, Kobbés Complete Opera Book, and as chairman of The British Board of Film Classification. He is remembered here as the artistic director of the Edinburgh International Festival from 1961 to 1965. Possibly his longest lasting contribution to the festival was his decision to form the Scottish Festival Chorus in 1965, now of course known as the Edinburgh Festival Chorus. Obits abound ... here are a couple ... [The Guardian](#) and [The Telegraph](#).

Cheaper Fringe tickets for locals

posted July 13th, 2011.

[The Scotsman reports](#) on a two-for-one ticket scheme for punters who live in the EH postcode area. [Cheaper Fringe for Locals](#) alerts registered users to offers by email. The Scotsman indicates that this voluntary organisation which was in operation last year currently has 10,000 registered users.

Deadline for nominations to the Fringe Society's board

posted July 13th, 2011.

The deadline for [nominations to the Board of the Fringe Society](#) is Monday 18th July, 2011. Any member of the Society - and membership is now open to all under the new constitution - can apply. Nominations forms, signed by the person applying and his / her proposer and seconder must be received in the Fringe office by lunchtime on Monday the 18th.

Film Festival to switch back to August?

posted July 6th, 2011.

The Centre for the Moving Image, who are responsible for the Edinburgh Film Festival, have issued a statement which can be found in [this article on stv.tv](#). It includes the following "Industry views regarding the dates of the festival are being taken into consideration and a decision will be made in due course". This has been taken by the media as a sign that it will move back to August. We shall see. It also says that the Michael Powell award, which was withdrawn this year along with other awards, will be reinstated in 2012.

31st Edinburgh Comedy Awards launched

posted July 1st, 2011.

[Whatsonstage.com](#) reports the launching of this year's [Edinburgh Comedy Awards](#), the 31st year that they have been held. This year's event will be sponsored by Foster's for a second year. The shortlist will be released on Wednesday 24th August and the winners will be announced at a lunch on Saturday 27th August.

Unbound returns to late night Book Festival

posted July 1st, 2011.

[Unbound 2011 has been announced](#). Unbound, the free late night programme of performance, music and literature in the Charlotte Square Spiegel tent, was first launched in 2010. Held in association with The Skinny, it will make a welcome return this year. Details of the full programme can be found [here](#) on the Book Festival website. [The Skinny](#) also contains details of the programme as well as a number of related articles. Finally, [an Unbound supplement can be downloaded from The Skinny](#).

The Stand likely to use Assembly Rooms in 2012

posted June 30th, 2011. modified July 1st, 2011

Salt 'n' Sauce Promotions, the organisation behind The Stand venue, has been announced as the preferred bidder to use the Assembly Rooms as a Fringe venue in 2012 [according to The Stage](#). The deal, which is still to be agreed, will cover three years. The tenant for the restaurant which will replace the old Supper Room performing space will be Jamie Oliver who will open a branch of Jamie's Italian Kitchen.

Traditional first day booking fever for Book Festival

posted June 27th, 2011.

It is becoming traditional that the initial hours of the first day of public booking for the Book Festival sees a mad scramble for tickets, causing the inevitable problems as the computer system struggles to cope with the demand. [According to EdinburghGuide.com](#) it was the worst ever as booking commenced yesterday. [The Guardian claimed](#) that by 6pm almost 40 events had sold out. They included: Alasdair Gray's closing performance, AC Grayling's conversation with retired bishop Richard Holloway, readings by Sarah Brown and Simon Callow, Tam Dalyell with James Naughtie and the debate "The End of the Union".

Mullighan set to be EIFF fall guy?

posted June 24th, 2011.

[The Guardian](#) and [The Scotsman](#) both claim that a new artistic director will be sought for the Film Festival as soon as this year's event finishes at the weekend. The EIFF has had a mauling right from their abortive attempt to find an artistic director to succeed Hannah McGill last year, through the shambles of the supposed contributions from the Scottish celebrities, and on to the poorly received festival which has had very little coverage in the mainstream press. I feel quite sorry for James Mullighan who belatedly ended up organising this year's festival. He has looked nothing other than isolated from day 1 and is obviously

going to be the fall guy for the events of the last 9-10 months. In fact the blame rests largely with [The Centre for the Moving Image](#) which is responsible for the Film Festival, and [Creative Scotland's](#) hands do not look particularly clean either.

Festival City Theatre Trust head resigns

posted June 17th, 2011. modified June 18th, 2011.

John Stalker, the Chief Executive of The Festival City Theatre Trust has resigned, [reports The Scotsman](#). The troubled trust which runs the Festival and Kings theatres on behalf of the city council made a number of redundancies earlier this year and has struggled over recent years to get the council to fund necessary refurbishment at the Kings theatre. It was subsequently revealed that Darrell William, head of sales and marketing, is also to leave his post.

2011 Edinburgh Book Festival programme launched

posted June 16th, 2011.

The final launch of the major Edinburgh summer festivals for 2011 took place today when the [Edinburgh International Book Festival unveiled its programme](#). Revolution is the major theme this year. Links to details, launch articles plus early summaries of the programme in the media can be found [here](#).

Details of 2011 Forest Fringe available

posted June 16th, 2011.

Details of the Forest Fringe programme in Edinburgh this year are now available [here on their website](#). Further details and links to any relevant articles and previews will be posted [here](#).

Theatre Ninjas returns for 2011 Fringe

posted June 14th, 2011.

[Theatre Ninjas](#), the iPhone app and website, is set to return for this year's Fringe. It enables theatre companies to give away selected numbers of tickets for given performances up to 30 minutes before curtain up. [The Stage reports](#) that it plans to provide increased functionality this year on both the iPhone app and the website.

C adds ECA to its list of Fringe venues

posted June 11th, 2011.

C, the quiet man of the super venues, has added the Edinburgh College of Art in Lauriston Place to its stable of venues this year, [reports ThreeWeeks](#).

BBC at the 2011 Edinburgh Festival

posted June 11th, 2011.

[The Stage summarises the BBC's plans for this year's festival](#). The BBC will have its own venue on Potterow near Bristo Square where it will host live shows and acts. Apart from coverage on Radios 1 and 2, there will be the usual live broadcasts and recordings of Radio 4 favourites such as Loose Ends and Just a Minute. BBC TV coverage will be similar to last year with Sue Perkins presenting the three weekly Culture Show specials and Kirsty Wark fronting the debates in The Review Show on Friday nights. In addition, it will, as usual, cover the Military Tattoo.

2011 Edinburgh Fringe Festival programme launched

posted June 9th, 2011. modified June 10th, 2011.

The programme for the 2011 Edinburgh Fringe Festival was launched this morning. It currently comprises 2,542 shows. Details and links to launch articles plus early summaries of the programme in the media can be found [here](#). By default The Edge Festival was also launched at the same time, as many of its concerts appear in the Fringe programme. Early articles in the media can be found [here](#).

Edinburgh Book Festival in partnership with The Guardian

posted June 8th, 2011.

The Edinburgh Book Festival has [announced a two year partnership with The Guardian](#). Needless to say,

The Guardian makes a modest mention of this sponsorship deal.

Princes Street tramworks to be delayed

posted June 4th, 2011.

Edinburgh City Council has decided to delay the resumption of tramworks on Princes Street [according to BBC News](#). They were due to start in July but, after local businesses expressed concerns, they will not now commence until September, i.e. after the main festival season.

DF Concerts signs up with Fringe super venues

posted June 3rd, 2011.

The Scotsman reports that DF Concerts who are responsible for the Edge Festival and other music events have signed up with Assembly, Pleasance, Underbelly and Gilded Balloon. This effectively means that Edge Festival shows will appear in their joint programme. The Scotsman article also mentions various festival pre-announcements from the super venues.

Ailsa Purdie winner of 2011 Fringe Schools Poster Competition

posted June 1st, 2011.

The Fringe has announced the winner of the 31st Fringe Society School Poster Competition. She is 15 year old Ailsa Purdie from the High School of Dundee.

2011 Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival programme launched

posted May 27th, 2011.

The programme for the 2011 Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival has been announced today. It can be [viewed online here](#) or [downloaded from this page](#) where you can also order a printed brochure. There is no media feedback so far. When it arrives [it will be found here on the pre-festival stuff page](#).

Details announced of 2011 Made in Scotland productions on the Fringe

posted May 27th, 2011.

Details of the seventeen productions on the Edinburgh Fringe that will constitute this year's Made in Scotland programme were announced yesterday (Thursday May 26th, 2011) by Fiona Hyslop, the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs. Further details can be found on the [Made in Scotland 2011 website](#). The Scottish Government's Expo fund supports Scottish productions at all Edinburgh's festivals. Part of this funding is ring-fenced for the Fringe - this is called the Made in Scotland showcase. It is managed by the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society, Creative Scotland and the Federation of Scottish Theatre.

2011 Edinburgh Art Festival programme launched

posted May 27th, 2011.

The programme for the 2011 Edinburgh Art Festival appears to have been launched yesterday. I say "appears" because although it is mentioned by several media outlets there is nothing on their website so far, nor have I seen anything in email form. Initial information and links to early media feedback [can be found here on the pre-festival stuff page](#). I will update that page as more information becomes available.

Festivals worth £245m to Edinburgh

posted May 23rd, 2011. modified May 25th, 2011.

The Festivals Impact report by BOP Consulting, commissioned by the Festivals Forum and funded by agencies including the umbrella group [Festivals Edinburgh](#), [Creative Scotland](#) and [Scottish Enterprise](#), has found that they generate £245m in tourism revenue every year in Edinburgh (£261m in Scotland as a whole). It is estimated that £41m goes to hoteliers, B&Bs and residents who let out their properties while £37m goes to bars, cafes and restaurants. The report, which is based on questioning 15,000 people in 50 surveys, incorporates much more, including what people get out of the festivals and their overall cultural impact. I will comment on it when I have had a chance to read it in full. The press release and the report itself can both be downloaded from [the media & downloads page of the Festivals Edinburgh website](#).

Make-up of initial Fringe participants' council announced

posted May 19th, 2011. modified May 27th, 2011.

[The Stage reports on the make-up of the Edinburgh Fringe Society's new participants' council](#). There were only 11 nominations for the 12 available places, and so all the nominees were declared elected. Therefore, the council will initially consist of 4 members representing the venues, 4 representing the producers and 3 representing the participants. The names of the council members are given in [The Stage article](#). The purpose of this council is to promote and protect the interests of all those who participate in the Fringe. It will meet face to face twice a year, the first being in August, although they will probably be supplemented by periodic video conferencing sessions. [The Fringe announced details of the members of the council on its website](#) on May 26th, 2011.

2011 Edinburgh International Film Festival programme launched

posted May 17th, 2011.

[The 2011 EIFF programme was unveiled](#) this morning. Tickets go on sale on Friday 20th May, 2011. Initial information and links to early media feedback [can be found here](#).

2011 Magic Festival programme launch

posted May 11th, 2011.

The 2011 Edinburgh Magic Festival was launched on May 7th, 2011 at the Festival Theatre. Artistic Director and magician Kevin McMahon unveiled this year's programme. [See the pre-festival page](#) for further details.

Film Festival's pre-announcements

posted May 6th, 2011.

The Edinburgh International Film Festival has joined the growing ranks of organisations who have developed a taste for pre-announcements. [As mentioned in The Scotsman](#), information on 9 films has been released. They include David Hare's Page Eight and David MacKenzie's Perfect Sense. The complete programme launch will take place on May 17th, 2011.

King's Theatre limited refurbishment

posted May 6th, 2011.

[The Stage details information on the upcoming limited refurbishment of the King's Theatre](#). The £2.625m project will only cover emergency exterior work, front of house and the auditorium. It will exclude any work backstage. The work will be carried out between September 2011 and July 2012 with a break in the middle to allow 3 weeks of drama, the Edinburgh Gang Show and the pantomime. The Stage also reports that staffing levels have been cut from 52 to 40.

Underbelly - 2011 venue changes

posted May 5th, 2011.

As previously reported, the large McEwan Hall venue (1000+ seats) which was used by Underbelly in 2010 is not available this year due to refurbishment of the hall's historic organ. Instead, [The Stage reports](#) that Underbelly will add two venues to its traditional set - a 120 capacity room elsewhere in the McEwan Hall building and a 60 seater venue in the Reid Hall courtyard.

Assembly - details of 2011 venues

posted May 4th, 2011. modified May 5th, 2011.

[As reported in January](#) Assembly Theatre has decided to base its operations in the George Square area now that the Assembly Rooms is not available to it due to the city council's refurbishment project. Further details have been issued and can be found in [The Scotsman](#) and [Whatsonstage.com](#). The three spiegel tents in George Square gardens will be: Bosco Tent (seats 180), Danse Palais (250-275) and Teatro SpiegelTent (400). George Square Theatre (seats 520) and three other indoor venues will bring the total number of performing spaces in the area to 7. New news (at least to me) is that the Assembly Hall on the Mound will continue - it will have three performing spaces, bringing the grand total to 10. It currently appears unlikely that the Princes Street Gardens venue, used for the first time last year, will be in operation this year.

Fringe - nominations open for Participants' Council

posted April 29th, 2011.

[The Stage reports](#) that the Edinburgh Fringe Society has opened nominations for its new Participants' Council. It will consist of 12 members, four each from the following categories: performers, producers and individuals nominated by the venues. The purpose of the Council will be to "promote and protect the interests of those members who actively participate in the Festival Fringe." It will advise the board of directors. Nominations will close on May 6th, 2011.

Fringe pre-announcements

posted April 22nd, 2011.

The recent trend for the super venues to announce some of their bigger names in advance of the official Fringe launch has continued again this year - a trend which I for one do not agree with. Assembly has released details of some of its star names, [as itemised in The Scotsman](#).

Final day for Fringe show registration

posted April 18th, 2011.

Today is the last day to register a show on this year's Fringe if you want the information to appear in the programme.

Festival Cavalcade cancelled

posted April 16th, 2011.

The Festival Cavalcade, which has heralded the August festivals for over 30 years, has been cancelled after the sudden resignation of its director, David Todd. [The Scotsman understands](#) that the city council is looking at a replacement for 2012 with the possibility of a parade along the Royal Mile being organised by the Edinburgh Military Tattoo. The money that was set aside for this year's Cavalcade will be used for any replacement event in 2012.

Swinton, Cousins and Myles leave Film Festival roles

posted April 6th, 2011. modified April 8th, 2011.

It appears that Tilda Swinton, Mark Cousins and Lynda Myles [who were only appointed back in December 2010](#) to help shape the artistic vision of the Film Festival now appear to have left their roles [according to The Guardian](#) and other media outlets. James Mullighan, originally appointed as festival producer, appears to be morphing into a lot more than a producer. The constant stream of changes simply seems to be hardening the view in the media that the festival has lost its way. This is probably an overreaction although this year's festival may suffer.

Festival in the Sky to return

posted March 29th, 2011.

The idea of adding to your festival experience by dining at a table hoisted 100 feet above Princes Street Gardens was available to punters last year. However, the venture lost money, probably because the prices were far too expensive. It is being tried again this year [according to The Scotsman](#), but this time it will focus on performers and bubbly at lower prices in attempts to woo punters.

Magic Festival returns despite lack of public funding

posted March 24th, 2011.

[The Scotsman reports](#) that the Magic Festival will take place again this year despite its failure to generate any public funding. Kevin McMahon, organiser and full-time magician, reckons that this was because it is classed as an entertainment and not as an art. This year's festival will contain 80 shows, as opposed to the 50 that were staged last year, and be spread over 8 days (Jul 1-8).

2011 Edinburgh International Festival programme launched

posted March 23rd, 2011.

The 2011 EIF programme was unveiled this morning by Jonathan Mills, the artistic director. As rumoured back in the autumn this year's theme is Asia. Initial information and links to early media feedback [can be](#)

[found here.](#)

Early interest in operating refurbished Assembly Rooms from 2012

posted March 20th, 2011.

Although the 18 month Assembly Rooms refurbishment project has not long started there is already a queue of interested venue operators [according to The Scotsman](#). Underbelly, the Stand Comedy Club and Gilded Balloon are all said to be interested in operating the venue during the festival, along with Assembly Theatre who operated the venue for 30 years. An official tendering process will be held in due course.

Artistic director Hill to leave Traverse

posted March 19th, 2011.

[The Stage reports](#) that Dominic Hill, the artistic director at the Traverse, is to leave and take up a similar role at the Glasgow Citizens Theatre in October. Hill joined the Traverse in July 2007 from Dundee Rep.

Scottish Government continues with Expo funding

posted March 16th, 2011.

[The Scottish Government has announced the 2011-2012 allocations of its Expo funding](#) which began back in 2008-2009. It is primarily aimed at promoting Scottish work at the Edinburgh festivals. £2m will be distributed with Made in Scotland on the Fringe receiving the largest share with £440k. Made in Scotland is a partnership between Creative Scotland, the Federation of Scottish Theatre and the Fringe Society. Other funding includes: Arts Festival £160k, Jazz & Blues Festival £140k, Book Festival £110k, Film Festival £100k, International Festival £100k and Mela £80k.

Fringe venues - good news and bad news

posted March 9th, 2011. last modified April 29th, 2011.

[The Stage reports](#) on two new Fringe venues this year. Remarkable Arts who run the Hill Street Theatre venue have added St. George's West (Shandwick Place) to their stable. St. George's West has operated as a Fringe venue on previous occasions in the recent past, though not last year. In addition, the Edinburgh Playhouse will run the Hawke & Hunter Green Room (Picardy Place) as a venue. On the downside, [The Scotsman reports](#) that the city council plans to sell the Theatre Workshop building in Stockbridge. The Theatre Workshop was a fringe venue for many years as well as being an all year round arts organisation. They moved out of the building last year when they lost their public funding. In addition, as reported back in November the Roxy Art House has been lost and [the Forest Cafe may also go](#) - the landlord of both buildings was Edinburgh University Settlement who went bankrupt. The Forest Cafe hosted the Forest Fringe in August, an event which is actually separate from the Fringe. In addition, [The Scotsman reported](#) in late April that the McEwan Hall will be unavailable this year due to repairs to the hall's historic organ - Underbelly used the venue last year.

Virgin Money confirmed as sponsor of fireworks concert

posted March 8th, 2011.

[EdinburghGuide.com confirms](#) that Virgin Money is the new sponsor of the Edinburgh International Festival's fireworks concert, taking over from the Bank of Scotland who withdrew after sponsoring the event for 16 years. Tickets for the concert will be available for purchase in two main tranches ... on April 2nd and July 18th with a limited number being held back until September 3rd. Prices for places in Princes Street Gardens will be £12.50, a rise of £1.50.

Fringe Society and Book Festival 2010 annual reviews available

posted March 4th, 2011.

[The Fringe Society's 2010 review](#) is now available on its website. It can be downloaded as a pdf file or read online. Similarly, [the Book Festival's 2010 annual review](#) is available in pdf form on its website.

Festival & King's Theatres in cash flow crisis

posted March 1st, 2011. modified March 3rd, 2011.

[The Scotsman reports](#) that in an emergency deal the city council has handed over £400k to The Festival City Theatres Trust to help it combat a cash flow crisis. This represents a forward payment of around half

of its 2011-2012 grant from the council. The trust runs both the Festival Theatre and the King's Theatre on behalf of the council. [The trust recently announced cuts](#) in the programme at the King's Theatre and staff reductions due to a 15% fall in audience numbers. [The Evening News speculates](#) that money set aside for refurbishment may be used to combat the current cash crisis.

Virgin Money in discussions to sponsor fireworks concert

posted February 24th, 2011.

[The Scotsman speculates](#) that Virgin Money will become the new sponsor of the Edinburgh International Festival's fireworks concert, taking over from the Bank of Scotland who withdrew after sponsoring the event for 16 years. Virgin Money makes it clear that no deal has been signed so far. If it does come off then presumably the EIF will want to incorporate it in the official announcement of the 2011 festival which is due on March 23rd.

Discussions on funding Edinburgh's festivals

posted February 22nd, 2011.

The city council and local businesses are in discussions about a possible "city growth" tax which would be used to help fund Edinburgh's festivals and the marketing of the city, [reports The Scotsman](#). Current ideas centre around an additional 1% levy over and above the business rate for any firm with of rateable value of more than £50k. A "bed" tax levied on hotels and B&Bs has been previously talked about. [The idea of a "bed" tax was recently seized on by the president of Unison's Edinburgh branch](#) although he wants to use the money to offset cuts in Edinburgh city council's overall spending, not for funding festivals.

Fringe posts £300k profit for 2010

posted February 16th, 2011.

[The Scotsman reports](#) that the Fringe has posted a profit of £300k for 2010. This follows on from the box office system debacle in 2008 when a loss of nearly £900k required it to be bailed out by £250k of money from the public purse. A small profit of £132k was subsequently achieved in 2009. The 2010 figures show income of £2.86m from ticket sales, sponsorship, grants, etc against expenditure of £2.56m.

EIFF guest curators announced

posted February 15th, 2011.

[The Herald reports](#) on the latest news from the Film Festival, focusing mainly on the announcement of guest curators for the 2011 Film Festival. They include actress Isabella Rossellini, the directors Gus Van Sant and Jim Jarmusch, author Alan Warner, songwriter Mike Skinner, composer Clint Mansell, critic and writer Greil Marcus and the Thai film director Apichatpong Weerasethakul.

King's Theatre programme and staff reductions

posted February 10th, 2011.

The Festival City Theatres Trust which operates the Festival Theatre and the King's Theatre on behalf of the city council has made two announcements. Firstly, [the King's Theatre will only operate for 15 weeks in 2011-2012](#) as opposed to 24 weeks. The Festival Theatre programme is unaffected. Secondly, [it is in consultations with the union BECTU about reducing staff numbers](#) across the two theatres in an attempt to cut the wage bill by £300K. The trust cites the fact that audience numbers are down by 15% as the major reason for these moves.

First Fringe board members voted in under new constitution

posted February 9th, 2011.

[The Stage reports](#) that in the first elections under the revised Fringe constitution Peter Buckley Hill, founder of PBH's Free Fringe, has been voted onto the Fringe board. He won the vote in the category for candidates endorsed by the venues. A second board position - voted on by all members of the Fringe Society - was won by sitting board member Sally Cowling. No nominations were received in the category for performers linked with a Fringe show.

The List criticises the Film Festival

posted February 9th, 2011.

[Whatever happened to the Edinburgh International Film Festival?](#) is a brief article by Eddie Harrison in The List which outlines the recent travails of the EIFF. It is worth a read.

Contract of EIF artistic director extended to 2014

posted February 4th, 2011.

The contract of Jonathan Mills, the artistic director of the Edinburgh International Festival, has been extended to EIF 2014. This news has been reported in various media outlets, [including The Guardian](#).

Virgin Money to sponsor "Fringe on the High Street"

posted February 3rd, 2011.

[The Stage reports](#) that Virgin Money is taking over from RBS as the sponsor of the free street performances and advertising which the Fringe Society has been responsible for since 2000. The deal is said to be worth £500,000 over three years. It covers the High Street and the Mound Precinct, and includes the Half Price Hut on the Mound. It will be rebranded as "Fringe on the High Street".

Film Festival loses £70k sponsorship

posted January 24th, 2011.

Standard Life, sponsors of the Film Festival since 1997, will not be renewing the arrangement which has recently been worth £70K per annum, [according to EdinburghGuide.com](#). The EIFF is also having to come to terms with the end of their 3 year grant from the UK Film Council which was worth a total of £1.9m.

New job title at Film Festival

posted January 22nd, 2011.

James Mullighan who was recently appointed as producer of the EIFF has now been given [the title of director](#) (note not artistic director). I assume that this is part of an attempt to reduce the confusion that has surrounded the rebranding of the Film Festival.

Assembly plans to move to George Square

posted January 20th, 2011.

[The Scotsman reports](#) that the Assembly Theatre proposes to centre its operations on George Square now that the Assembly Rooms is not available in 2011. Current plans consist of two Spiegel tents in the George Square Gardens (housing 450 and 200 people respectively), use of the George Square lecture theatre (480 people) and two further 200-seater spaces. Burdett-Coutts, the artistic director, says that he sees this as a permanent move. The indication here is that he does not see a return to the Assembly Rooms in 2012 after completion of the renovation work. We shall see. The move to George Square is bad news for the New Town which will now have very few performance spaces.

Fringe News

posted January 11th, 2011.

The Fringe Society is in the process of organising [the election of three members to the board](#). The ballot will take place by post and Fringe members must return completed ballot papers by noon on Monday 7th February, 2011. Also, the Fringe has announced [the dates for registering shows for Fringe 2011 and the dates of the 2011 roadshows](#).

2011 Jazz & Blues festival a week early

posted January 8th, 2011.

The 2011 Edinburgh Jazz & Blues festival will be held a week earlier than usual, starting on Friday July 22nd and finishing on Sunday July 31st. Its failure to stage its extremely popular "Jazz on a Summer's Day" in Princes Street Gardens in 2010 due to the erection of Assembly's Spiegel tent for the Fringe may have something to do with this move.

Final go-ahead for Assembly Rooms renovation

posted January 6th, 2011.

[The Scotsman reports](#) that Historic Scotland, the national heritage watchdog, has decided against calling

in the city council's plans for the renovation of the Assembly Rooms. Work will therefore commence on January 17th and the building will be closed for 18 months. As a punter who will miss the drama productions in the Wildman Room, Edinburgh Suite, Supper Room and Drawing Room, I hope that Burdett-Coutts, artistic director of Assembly Theatre, can now dedicate his energies to finding alternative venues north of Princes Street.

Five pound Fringe disappears

posted January 3rd, 2011.

As [Chortle reports](#), the concept of the five pound Fringe ticket has ceased to exist after two years. The idea of promoters Lisa Keddie and Jon Briley was to offer significantly cheaper tickets than other comedy venues. However, the venture lost money as it struggled to compete with the two Free Fringe organisations. In addition, [as reported back in late October](#), its main venue, GRV, is currently up for sale due to the collapse of Edinburgh University Settlement, the organisation which also owns the Forest Cafe and Roxy Art House.

Potted history of the Assembly Rooms

posted December 31st, 2010.

For those who are interested in the histories of the festivals and Edinburgh the city, "[A Potted History of the Assembly Rooms](#)" in [EdinburghGuide.com](#) is well worth a read. It has been produced during the recent controversy surrounding the building's proposed renovation.

New chief for the Military Tattoo

posted December 23rd, 2010.

[BBC News reports](#) that Brigadier David Allfrey MBE will take over as producer of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

No artistic director for Film Festival

posted December 22nd, 2010. modified December 23rd, 2010

It appears that the [CMI](#) which is now responsible for the Edinburgh Film Festival has decided against appointing a new artistic director. Alongside other media outlets [BBC News reports](#) that it will operate with a string of curators who will work with a new producer, James Mullighan. Former artistic director, Mark Cousins, will be responsible for shaping the artistic vision for 2011. He will work alongside Tilda Swinton, actress and a patron of the festival, and Lynda Myles. A complete "reinvention" of the event is promised. The Guardian subsequently [covered some of the new ideas](#).

Council votes in favour of Assembly Rooms renovation

posted December 17th, 2010.

It is [reported in The Scotsman](#) that Edinburgh City Council has voted in favour of the Assembly Rooms refurbishment project. Historic Scotland has still to give its final go-ahead although it has previously indicated that it supports the proposed plans.

Another charity-owned venue to close

posted December 13th, 2010.

[The Lot, a converted church in the Grassmarket, is to close](#) after the charity that runs it has decided that it is financially unviable. The Lot has acted as a venue on various festivals, viz. Jazz, Fringe and Magic.

Council committee gives go-ahead to Assembly Rooms renovation

posted December 10th, 2010. modified 17th December 2010.

[EdinburghGuide.com reports](#) that Edinburgh City Council's Development Management Sub-Committee has given the go-ahead to the Assembly rooms refurbishment project. Meanwhile, Kath Mainland, head of the Fringe, [has called for the project to be put on hold](#) pending an amicable solution between the council and Burdett-Coutts' Assembly Theatre organisation.

Last ditch plea to stop Assembly Rooms renovation

posted December 7th, 2010.

William Burdett-Coutts, artistic director of Assembly, is making a last minute attempt to stop the imminent renovation of the Assembly Rooms. [He has an article in The Scotsman](#) and has launched a website with a petition, www.savetheassemblyrooms.com. The plan to build shops and a restaurant on the ground floor will mean the demise of a number of performing spaces, viz. the Edinburgh Suite, Supper Room, Wildman Room and West Drawing Room. This will just leave the two large spaces, the Music Hall and Ballroom. Small and medium productions, principally drama, will be the main losers. While this may be a good move for Edinburgh as a city - though I struggle to believe that George Street needs yet another restaurant - it is not good news for the Festival. I have signed the petition.

Attempts to save Forest Café

posted November 28th, 2010.

The campaign to save the Forest Café is benefiting from a fair amount of publicity. Impassioned pleas can be read in [Ericka Duffy's guest blog in The Guardian](#) and [Honour Bayes's blog in FourthWall Magazine](#). In addition, more general coverage can be found in places like [The List](#) and [The Guardian](#).

Changes to the Fringe's constitution

posted November 22nd, 2010. last modified November 25th, 2010.

At a meeting over the weekend changes were agreed to the Fringe constitution, the first in 40 years. They follow a year-long project which included a number of open consultation sessions. Initial information on the changes was available in [The Scotsman](#) and [EdinburghGuide.com](#): no limit on the number of members of the society (there have been around 200 in recent years); no restrictions on membership; a "participants' council" for artists, producers and promoters to help tackle major issues and lobby the board; reserved places on the board for performers and venue operators; and the ability to appoint individuals with specialist expertise to the board. [The Stage subsequently supplied further detail](#). "The make-up of the board will be four performer members, four members nominated by venues and four members who have "an interest in the furtherance of the charitable objectives of the society". These 12 will be able to co-opt a further four directors to take up any skills gap. The new participants council will comprise a maximum of 12 society members, with four each from members who are performers, producers of Fringe shows or are nominated by a registered fringe venue. Council and board members will be elected by all members of the Fringe."

Expensive saga of the Usher Hall project

posted November 17th, 2010.

[The Scotsman "reveals"](#) that the total cost of the second phase of the renovation of the Usher Hall was £27.5m, three times more than was originally estimated. The project was dogged by problems, including the discovery of structural problems in the building. It has seen the announcements of a series of completion openings which were often not met, the most recent being the development and pedestrianisation of the "arts quarter" which was supposed to be ready in time for the 2010 festival but has only recently been unveiled.

Debate on issues facing the festivals

posted November 16th, 2010.

The go-ahead has been given for a third debate on the issues which face the Edinburgh festivals, [according to The Scotsman](#). The first two were obviously not well advertised and I have been unable to find any reports on them. Have you? I would like to know if you have.

More on Asian Pacific theme for EIF 2011

posted November 15th, 2010.

Further information on the proposed Asian Pacific theme for the 2011 Edinburgh International Festival has appeared in [The Guardian](#) and [The Scotsman](#). Proposed productions include: the National Ballet of China's Peony Pavilion (a 500 year old love-story akin to Romeo and Juliet); an adaptation of Hamlet by the Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe; the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra; and a Vietnamese production, Drought and Rain, which looks at the human cost of war. The full programme will not be revealed until late March.

Film Festival to have earlier launch in 2011

posted November 11th, 2010.

Edinburgh Film Festival ticket sales were 10% down in 2010. [BBC News reports](#) that the very late launch of the 2010 festival - only a matter of weeks before the festival itself - is blamed for the decrease. The 2011 launch will happen earlier, probably before the programme has been finalised.

Summary of 2010 festival statistics on ticket sales

posted November 11th, 2010. modified November 12th, 2010.

[From BBC News](#): Film Festival ticket sales down 10%; Book Festival down 5%; Mela up 30%; while the Military Tattoo, International Festival and Jazz & Blues Festival were broadly similar to 2009. [The Scotsman subsequently published the actual figures](#).

New chairman for Art Festival

posted November 9th, 2010. modified November 10th, 2010.

[Art Daily reports](#) that Robert Wilson, founder of the sculpture park Jupiter Artland outside Edinburgh, is to become chairman of the Edinburgh Art Festival, taking over from Tessa Jackson. Meanwhile, the organisers estimate that there were over 500,000 visitors to the 2010 Art Festival.

New leader for Mela Festival

posted November 6th, 2010.

[The Scotsman reports](#) that Stephen Stenning has been appointed to take charge of the Edinburgh Mela Festival. He replaces Liam Sinclair who has run it for the past three years.

Three Fringe venues at risk

posted October 30th, 2010. modified November 4th, 2010.

Several media outlets, [including The Stage](#), report that the charity EUS ([Edinburgh University Settlement](#)) has gone into administration with debts of over £300K and a loss of 40 jobs. The charity owns the Roxy Art House (a Fringe and general arts venue), the Forest Cafe & Arts Centre where the [Forest Fringe](#) has taken place in recent years and The GRV in Guthrie Street. It appears that the Forest Cafe & Arts Centre and The GRV were put up for sale early last month. [The Scotsman subsequently claimed](#) that total debts may be up to £4m.

One-stop shop ticketing system put on hold

posted October 29th, 2010.

[The Scotsman "reveals"](#) that Clicket, the one-stop shop website which should allow tickets to be booked across multiple festivals, has been put on hold indefinitely. The system was due to be trialled during the summer but this never happened. The parent company of Ticketswitch, the software supplier, subsequently went into administration and Ticketswitch is currently undergoing a management shake-up. [The Audience Business](#), a development agency for the arts around Edinburgh that is project managing the system, has indicated that they are in the process of renegotiating the contract with Ticketswitch. The general view, true or false, seems to be that the system may not be rolled out for the 2011 festival, while some cynics doubt that it will ever see the light of day. We shall see.

IdeasTap - call for 2011 applications

posted October 27th, 2010.

[The Stage reports](#) that [IdeasTap](#), the independent arts charity for young people, has opened applications for its 2011 "Ideas Fund Edinburgh". Two companies will each be awarded £10K towards the cost of taking productions to next year's Fringe. The main criteria are that there must be 4 or more players on stage and that the lead applicant must be aged between 16 and 25 on the closing date for applications - November 29th, 2010.

Asian Pacific theme for EIF 2011?

posted October 21st, 2010.

[The Scotsman claims](#) that the main theme for the 2011 Edinburgh International Festival will be the culture of the Asian Pacific region. It reports that artistic director, Jonathan Mills, leaves today for a fact finding tour of India and China. One of the attractions of this region must be its wealth and the potential for

governments in the region to fund performances in Edinburgh, which would obviously help to offset reductions in the EIF's UK subsidies.

EIFF chairman steps down

posted October 15th, 2010.

Iain Smith, the chairman of the Edinburgh International Film Festival, [has stood down](#) after two years in the role. This follows on from the recent resignation of artistic director, Hannah McGill. The Edinburgh Film Festival, Edinburgh Filmhouse and Edinburgh Film Guild all now come under the control of the newly formed parent body, The Centre for the Moving Image.

Latest on Assembly Rooms refurbishment

posted October 12th, 2010.

The on-off saga of the refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms appears to be back on [according to an article in The Scotsman](#). After the previous failure to obtain a £2.7m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a proposed £12m project it now seems that HLF will back a reduced £9.3m project and is prepared to provide £471K towards the total cost. If the project does go ahead it is likely to start in early 2011. The major changes will include: new seating in The Music Hall, retail units on the ground floor, a restaurant and additional bars throughout the building.

Made in Scotland 2011 - Call for applications

posted September 27th, 2010.

Made in Scotland is a showcase of Scottish theatre and dance at the Edinburgh Fringe. It is a joint initiative between Creative Scotland, the Edinburgh Fringe and the Federation of Scottish Theatre, and it is supported through the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund. Applications are now being requested for 2011. Surgeries are being held in Edinburgh on 5th October 2010 and in Glasgow on the 15th October. The closing date for applications is 22nd November 2010. [Full details can be found on the Creative Scotland website](#).

New seating for the King's Theatre

posted September 23rd, 2010.

[The Scotsman reports](#) that the King's Theatre is looking for a contractor to replace the aged and very uncomfortable seats in the stalls and grand circle. This will form the first phase of a limited £2m project; the original plans spoke of a £12m renovation project. It is expected that the theatre will be closed for 12 weeks, starting in April 2011. The King's currently acts as one of the main venues for drama and opera during the International Festival.

EIF ticket revenue 3% up

posted September 6th, 2010. modified September 8th, 2010.

As [the firework display](#) brought the 2010 Edinburgh International Festival to a close, a very limited set of statistics were released: ticket revenue was £2.67m, 3% up on last year; and almost 50% of tickets were purchased by people with EH post codes. [The Herald subsequently revealed](#) that net ticket sales (omitting guest tickets, special offers etc) stood at 135,793, a very marginal increase over the 2009 figure of 134,444. [The Stage followed a day later](#) with the most comprehensive item on this topic.

"Lies, damned lies and Fringe statistics"

posted September 3rd, 2010; [previous August 31st, 2010](#).

As alluded to in an article in [The Stage](#) on the recently announced Fringe statistics, [The Scotsman has revealed](#) that ticket sales for 2009 and 2010 have included an estimate of people who attended free non-ticketed shows that come under the auspices of the promoter Laughing Horse. The revised sales figures excluding these elements are 1.74m in 2009 and 1.83m in 2010 - the 2010 figure is 120,000 less than previously announced. While on the subject of playing games with numbers, there are not 259 venues as the Fringe likes to trumpet ... 259 performing spaces perhaps (though I doubt even that) but certainly not 259 venues.

Festival in the Sky fails to attract

posted September 1st, 2010; [previous June 1st, 2010](#).

Festival in the Sky, the opportunity to dine at a table perched high above West Princes Street Gardens suspended from a crane, failed to take off [according to The Scotsman](#). Organisers were disappointed with the response despite slashing prices in an attempt to attract punters.

Book festival 2010 visitors down marginally

posted August 31st, 2010; modified September 2nd, 2010

The Bookseller [reports](#) that the ticket sales for the 2010 Edinburgh International Book festival are down by 3% on the 2009 figures. Visitor figures, at around 200,000, are on a par with 2008.

Fringe 2010 ticket sales and statistics

posted August 31st, 2010. modified September 1st, 2010.

Initial statistics have been put out by the Fringe Society for the 2010 festival. The headline figure is a new record of 1.95m tickets sold. This beats the previous record of 1.85m in 2009 by 5%. Other stats include: 40,254 performances of 2,453 shows in 259 performing spaces; comedy made up 35% of the overall programme, theatre 29% and music 16%. Articles on this topic can be found in [The Scotsman](#), [Guardian](#) and [Herald](#), although I found the one in [The Stage](#) slightly more objective.

As reported yesterday, some venue chiefs have expressed concerns about low attendances in the last week of the festival. As this coincided with the start of the school year, there are views in some quarters that this points to fewer tourists visiting the Scottish capital for the festival. There are also concerns that ticket sales have reached a natural limit, coupled with a certain degree of apprehension that 2011 will be tougher due to the recession.

Fringe venue chiefs report mixed success

posted August 30th, 2010.

While we wait for the Fringe statistics, The Scotsman fills the void by [gauging reaction among the venue chiefs](#). While some are (unsurprisingly) eternally optimistic, others express concerns about low attendances in the final week and signs of the recession having a greater effect this year.

RBS Fringe sponsorship in doubt

posted August 27th, 2010.

RBS sponsorship of free entertainment on the Royal Mile and the Mound expires next week and [according to The Scotsman](#) it is in danger of not being renewed. The backing for the Fringe, including the provision of bins, poster towers and stages, is reputedly worth £100K.

Film Festival artistic director to step down

posted August 25th, 2010.

[EdinburghGuide.com reports](#) that Hannah McGill has decided to step down from her role as artistic director of the Edinburgh International Film Festival. She has been in the role since 2006.

Fringe Society 2010 AGM

posted August 24th, 2010.

[The Stage summarises the Fringe Society's 2010 AGM](#) which was held on Saturday August 21st, 2010: a profit of £125,905 was recorded for the year ended November 30th, 2009; a final consultation meeting on proposed changes to the constitution will be held on October 14th, 2010; followed by an extraordinary general meeting on the subject on November 21st, 2010 - both meetings will be held in Edinburgh.

Half-hearted cries of "dont reduce our subsidies"

posted August 16th, 2010.

There are several articles floating around at the moment - for example [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) - which complain that grants and subsidies to the festivals should not be reduced. While I understand the thinking which says that the media and the punters are here in Edinburgh now and therefore we should shout our case from the rooftops, it is in fact neither the time nor the place. Everybody - administrators, the majority of the media, performers and punters - are far too concerned with the arts themselves at the

moment. The cries are in fact relatively weak and lack conviction. I am not sure when would be the best time to go on the offensive, possibly after the festivals have finished but when the subject is still fresh in peoples' minds? Of course, it could be that the lack of conviction simply reflects the probable and inevitable futility of any lobbying.

Some angry performers at the Fringe Society's open meeting

posted August 11th, 2010.

Both [The Herald](#) and [The Scotsman](#) report on anger expressed by performers at the Fringe Society's open meeting yesterday to discuss potential changes to its constitution. The topic which caused the trouble is the subject of who should be allowed to become a member of the society. The Fringe's decision earlier in the year to suspend membership pending decisions on the constitution appears to have upset many people at the meeting although a Fringe spokesperson said that they only had records of 14 individuals being affected. The performers - it is estimated that around 100 were present - voted overwhelmingly against the scrapping of The Fringe's current "open door" policy. The Fringe was at pains to indicate that this is not a final vote but just part of its general consultation process. The board is currently due to decide on a date to decide the way forward later this month - it will probably be in the autumn. [The Stage](#) subsequently provided a [slightly more measured account of proceedings](#), indicating a more constructive debate on the subject of board membership.

Edinburgh bed tax plans?

posted August 9th, 2010.

[The Herald writes](#) that Edinburgh may be planning to impose a hotel bed tax (possibly 2%) to provide funds to market the city and its festivals. This idea was first mooted in the [Thundering Hooves Report](#) (2006) and has been discussed several times since. It is not clear if any definite moves are afoot or if this is simply a newspaper filling space during festival time. See [Future Threats](#) for my thoughts on some of the issues that Edinburgh faces.

Initial roll out of one-stop festival ticket outlet delayed

posted August 6th, 2010.

[The Scotsman reports](#) that the long awaited one-stop festival ticket facility that was due to be introduced by Festivals Edinburgh, the overall umbrella organisation for marketing all the city's festivals, has been delayed. It is now hoped that it will be introduced later in the year.

Number of official festival flyposting sites to be doubled

posted August 2nd, 2010.

Illegal flyposting during the festival has always a huge problem for the city council. Last year's trial of legal sites was considered successful enough that this year [the number of sites will be doubled to 900](#). There is a fee. One deal provides space for 10 A3 posters for £50.



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

Pre-Festival Stuff for 2011

2008

[2010](#) | [2009](#) |

This page is split into two halves. The top section covers the launch of each festival programme when they take place plus any early critical feedback:

[Edinburgh International Festival](#)
[Edinburgh Fringe](#)
[Edinburgh International Book Festival](#)

Edinburgh International Film Festival
Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival
Edinburgh Art Festival
Forest Fringe
The Edge Festival
Edinburgh Mela Festival
Edinburgh Magic Festival

The second half of this page is called [Picks and Previews](#). It contains links to media views on the individual programme launches plus, from June to early August, a digest of links to the critics' recommendations and useful preview articles.

Edinburgh International Festival

The current spring-like weather reminds us - if festival punters really need reminding - that this is the time of year when the EIF programme is launched. The 2011 programme was dutifully unveiled this morning (Wednesday March 23rd, 2011) by Jonathan Mills, the artistic director, heralding the dawn of another festival year. As pre-announced back in the autumn, this year's theme is Asia although Mills was keen to point out ... "It was very important for me not only to find Asian influences on Europe but European influences on Asia, so there is a reciprocity at the core of this festival." This idea of reciprocity is picked up by [Mark Fisher in his blog in The Guardian](#).

The brochure for this year's festival can be viewed online, downloaded as a pdf file or you can order a printed version. [See this page for details](#). EIF Friends can book tickets now. Tickets will be on sale to the general public from April 2nd, 2011.

Initial media feedback

Initial media feedback was available almost instantly ([links below](#)) although these pieces are seldom much more than a regurgitation of [the EIF's press release](#), occasionally spiced with a quote or two from Mills. The Scotsman was first out of the blocks, closely followed by The Stage and The List.

The early headlines have focused on: Dance - The Peony Pavilion by the National Ballet of China and Scottish Ballet with Song of the Earth and a new piece by Jorma Elo; Drama - a new six hour, two part, production of One Thousand and One Nights using actors from the Arab-speaking world and The Tempest by the Mokwha Repertory Company from Korea; Opera - The Revenge of Prince Zi Dan by the Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe and Die Frau ohne Schatten; Music - the opening concert this year will be given by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, performing Das Paradies und die Peri; and the Visual Arts with work by Hiroshi Sugimoto. More considered comment from the critics should appear over the next week or two.

Go to [Picks and Previews](#) at the bottom of this page where you will find links to media views on the individual programme launches plus, from June to early August, a digest of links to the critics' recommendations and useful preview articles.

Susan's initial thoughts

My friend Susan, from the US, has been kind enough to give me her initial thoughts. She has been coming to the Edinburgh Festival for close on 30 years and is a particular aficionado of music and opera. She also likes dance and theatre and spends ever more time at the Book Festival.

"I was very disappointed that there is no Greyfriar's early music this year, as that definitely had become the highlight of recent festivals. The Sixteen will be performing for one night at Usher Hall but I am not sure how they will sound in that venue---designed to sell lots of tickets. I will greatly miss the Greyfriar performances!!!

As I have said before, I think the Edinburgh Festival can only claim International in its name by the countries being represented in performances, many of them paid for by tourism and cultural promotion offices. The audience is mostly from Scotland and I regret greatly the loss of an international audience, as I thought the original purpose was to bring peoples together and increase international understanding through culture.

It seems to me at first glance that the tickets have become more expensive, which is sure to keep more adults, especially visitors, away. To make up for any losses in audience numbers because of ticket prices, the Festival is offering half-price tickets to students. That is great for the students and attracting young people who might not otherwise attend but I'm sure traditional audiences will not be able to attend as many performances as they might have in the past.

In fairness, I think we have to be grateful there is still someone like Jonathan Mills willing to work to make the Edinburgh International Festival possible in spite of the substantial funding issues. As performances depend on money from foreign governments and so many individual donors to replace the loss in government funding, it is a miracle that the Festival is still happening. Individual funding has guaranteed a degree of classical singers and musicians and greatly reduced opera. And, as we are always open to new experiences, we are looking forward to the Peking Opera and the Chinese ballet. It would have been nice that since the purpose of the Festival is to introduce us to Eastern cultures, there could have simultaneously have been some Eastern focused art exhibits such as ceramics etc. And since the focus is on Asia, I would have liked more from Japan and the Pacific Rim nations---maybe another year. We visited a wonderful museum in Wellington recently that had a lot on Maori and micronesian culture after seeing some wonderful music and dance performances so it would be wonderful to introduce the world to the richness of this part of the world. Of course, the problem would be funding!

We, with great deliberation, did reduce the number of performances we plan to attend because of the cost as well as our commitment to saving enough time to attend more theatre and book events. That being said, I would be happy seeing most of the classical offerings at Queens Hall and Usher Hall---I just wouldn't take a trip to Edinburgh to attend this Festival if it weren't for the theatre and book festivals as well."

This punter's early thoughts

Like Susan my immediate reaction was one of disappointment at the loss of the Greyfriars concerts.

Dance comes out well this year with six productions. The National Ballet of China's production of The Peony Pavilion is arguably the highlight, while the locals will be rooting for the Scottish Ballet's Song of the Earth along with their world premiere of a new piece from Jorma Elo. In addition, Shen Wei's Re-Trilogy and Ea Sola's Drought and Rain are strong possibilities.

The highlight in drama is probably the six hour (two part) production of One Thousand and One Nights. The problem here for visiting punters is that such a lengthy production is difficult to fit into a tight schedule - the locals may find it easier to accommodate it. Meanwhile, The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle sounds appealing.

At the risk of sounding extremely boring I will trot out once again my view that, given the general funding issues, the EIF should leave the visual arts to the Art Festival. However, having said that, it is highly likely that we will go to Hiroshi Sugimoto's photography exhibition, while Heirlooms is a possibility.

Finally, Ravi Shankar makes his first appearance at the EIF in over twenty years.

Edinburgh Fringe Festival

The programme for the 2011 Edinburgh Fringe Festival was launched on Thursday June 9th, 2011. A pdf version can be downloaded or the programme can be viewed online [at this page](#). If you are not a superman (or woman) - and I definitely am not - then you probably need a printed copy it is 350+ pages after all! The Fringe website tells you [where you can pick up a copy in Edinburgh and elsewhere around the UK](#). Alternatively, you can order one [here](#) if you have not done so already.

The headlines include ... 2,542 shows in the programme brochure (up 89 on last year); 607 shows will be free (typically under the banners of PBH's Free Fringe and Laughing Horse's Free Festival); the distribution of shows across art forms - comedy 37%, theatre 30%, music 14%, children's shows 4%, dance & physical theatre 3.5%, musicals & opera 3.5%, events 3.5% and exhibitions 2%.

For theatre addicts Dominic Hill, the artistic director of the Traverse, introduces his farewell festival [here](#) - he is moving to the Citizen's Theatre in Glasgow in October. The Traverse programme brochure can be

downloaded from [the same page](#).

An early article on the launch was available in [Watsonstage.com](#). This was quickly followed by similar articles in [The Stage](#), [The Scotsman](#) and [The Guardian](#).

Better articles - in the sense that they contain a reasonable amount of information on the shows - can be found in the same [Watsonstage.com](#) article (under Theatre Highlights) and in [The Scotsman](#). More may follow in the next couple of days.

Meanwhile, The Guardian appears to be the first out of the traps with [a set of Fringe picks from its critics](#). The link to this set of picks, along with links to all useful preview articles and picks across the festivals from now until early August can be found in [the picks and previews section at the bottom of this page](#).

My early thoughts, after an initial browsing of the programme brochure, are that I have not so far been greatly excited by what is on offer. The Traverse programme has too many Scottish productions for my taste. Now I fully understand the reasons - the Scottish Government is currently ploughing money (its Expo funding) into Scottish artists and productions - and I have nothing at all against Scottish productions per se but I would just prefer to see a more balanced international programme at the home of festival drama. The drama programme at Assembly also seems somewhat thin when compared with previous years; the lack of 3 or 4 reliable shows under the Guy Masterson production banner does not help. On the upside, a number of drama successes from previous years are making brief returns, including Lockerbie: Unfinished Business and Roadkill. If you did not see them last year then now is your opportunity although they may well be sold out already.

I like a mixture of well established comedians to complement the long list of wannabes but they seem to be in relatively short supply this year. Jerry Sadowitz is on for a week and he is always good value, particularly if there is a reasonable amount of magic in his show ... although his insistence on flashing his member the last time that we saw him adds absolutely nothing to the proceedings. Doctor Phil Hammond makes a welcome return to the festival and he can no doubt bank on a loyal NHS following. We really enjoyed Tim Vine's Jokeamotive show last year. He is doing a chat show this year (with members of the audience). Not sure that I am convinced about this ... but I may be wrong (as usual!?!).

On the dance front I am still grieving over the loss of the Aurora Nova venue, and the absence this year of any of the major companies who graced its stage in the past makes me wonder about the attractiveness of the programme.

Hopefully, I will get over this early reticence and eventually look forward to the programme.

International Book Festival

The programme launch for the 2011 Edinburgh International Book Festival took place on Thursday 16th June 2011. [An overview can be found here](#), while the full programme can be [browsed online here](#). Note that public booking does not commence until Sunday 26th June 2011.

The Guardian, new sponsors of the festival, [produced a "heads up"](#) on the morning of the announcement. This was followed by [a useful summary of this year's programme](#).

Launch articles soon appeared elsewhere, including [The List](#), [stv.tv](#), [The Scotsman](#) and [ThreeWeeks](#). [EdinburghGuide.com](#) arguably has the most comprehensive.

Revolution is the major theme this year. Libyan writer Hisham Matar, shortlisted for the 2006 Man Booker Prize In the Country of Men, Pakistani writer Kamila Shamsie, Gao Xingjian, China's Nobel laureate of literature, and the Egyptian author and political commentator, Ahdaf Soueif will be scrutinising revolution in the 21st century through a series of events which are being curated by the BBC's Allan Little.

Other writers and celebrities include Michael Ondaatje (launching his latest novel The Cat's Table), AS Byatt, Melvyn Bragg on the King James Bible, Alasdair Gray, the author of Lanark, Julia Donaldson, the new children's laureate and Sarah Brown on life in 10 Downing Street.

Links to useful preview articles will be posted in [Picks and Previews](#) at the bottom of this page as they

become available up to the time when the festival commences.

International Film Festival

The 2011 Edinburgh International Film Festival programme was launched on May 17th, 2011. The festival will include 47 film premieres and 22 documentary premieres. The opening night film will be *The Guard*, an Irish comedy-thriller. Other highlights include David Hare's *Page Eight*, Keith Bearden's *Meet Monica Velour* and David MacKenzie's Glasgow-set sci-fi thriller *Perfect Sense*. Tickets will be on sale to the general public from midday on May 20th, 2011. Early media feedback on the launch can be found in [The List](#), [stv.tv](#) and [Screen Daily](#).

Go to [Picks and Previews](#) at the bottom of this page where you will find links to media views on the individual programme launches plus a digest of links to the critics' recommendations and useful preview articles.

Edinburgh Art Festival

The 2011 programme was announced on Thursday 26th May, 2011. At least, it was announced to the media. At the time of writing there is nothing on their website (it eventually appeared on 14th July, 2011). Initial articles on the programme can be found in [The Skinny](#) and in [The Scotsman](#). The 2011 festival will be spread across 42 arts spaces in Edinburgh. The highlights include an Anish Kapoor exhibition at Edinburgh College of Art's Sculpture Court, David Mach exploring the themes and legacy of the King James Bible which is 400 years old at the City Art Centre and pop-artist Robert Rauschenberg at Inverleith House. Martin Creed's *Work 1059* - the cladding of the 104 Scotsman Steps in marble - is due to be unveiled in August. This work was commissioned by the Fruitmarket Gallery. I will add further information as it becomes available. Links to articles relating to the Art Festival will be added to the [Picks and Previews section](#) at the bottom of this page.

Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival

The programme for the 2011 Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival was announced on Friday 27th May, 2011. It can be [viewed online here](#) or [downloaded from this page](#) where you can also order a printed brochure. The only mentions in the media so far have been in [Jazzwisemagazine.com](#) and [BBC News](#). Further links will be added here when any more media feedback becomes available. Links to preview articles relating to the Jazz & Blues Festival will be added to the [Picks and Previews section](#) at the bottom of this page.

Please note that the Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival will be held a week earlier than usual this year, running from Friday, July 22nd 2011 until Sunday, July 31st.

Forest Fringe

Details of the Forest Fringe programme in Edinburgh this year are now available [here on their website](#). It is taking a slightly different approach this year by choosing a relatively small set of artists to work with. There are no articles in the media so far.

[Picks and Previews](#) at the bottom of this page will contain links to any relevant articles or previews as they appear.

Edge Festival

The programme for the 2011 Edge Festival was launched on Thursday, June 9th 2011. Further details can be found shortly on [the Edge website](#). It is a joint member of the "[Comedy Festival](#)" - a bit of a misnomer really. It is really a vehicle for marketing the productions at Assembly, Pleasance, Underbelly, Gilded Balloon, Just the Tonic ... and now the Edge Festival.

Early media feedback on the launch can be found in [stv.tv](#) and [ThreeWeeks](#).

Edinburgh Mela Festival

Programme launch due at the end of June 2011.

Edinburgh Magic Festival

The 2011 Edinburgh Magic Festival programme was launched on May 7th, 2011 at the Festival Theatre. Artistic Director and magician Kevin McMahon compered the launch. The second magic festival will be bigger than last year's inaugural event, running from July 1st to July 8th, 2011. [The programme brochure can downloaded from here](#). Tickets are now on sale. See the [Magicfest website](#) for details.

Go to [Picks and Previews](#) at the bottom of this page where you will find links to media views on the individual programme launches plus a digest of links to the critics' recommendations and useful preview articles.

Picks and Previews for 2011

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

Date posted	Item Details
23rd March 2011	Initial tranche of EIF 2011 launch articles - The Stage , Scotsman , List , stv , Guardian and BBC News
24th March 2011	More EIF 2011 launch articles - The Herald and EdinburghGuide.com
11th May 2011	Overview of Magic Festival launch in the Edinburgh Spotlight
17th May 2011	Initial tranche of Film Festival launch articles - The List , stv.tv , Screen Daily , BBC News and The Scotsman
19th May 2011	Sensible blog on Film Festival programme launch by Dylan Matthew in EdinburghGuide.com
24th May 2011	Reaction to EIFF launch from Mark Davidson , a local film fanatic
27th May 2011	Initial articles on details of the 2011 Art Festival programme in The Skinny and The Scotsman .
28th May 2011	5 picks from the List among the Film Festival's outsider strands
28th May 2011	Less than enthusiastic response to EIFF launch from the Sunday Herald
1st June 2011	Interview with EIFF director James Mullighan in The Skinny
9th June 2011	Comedians to watch out for at the Fringe in The List
9th June 2011	The Guardian is first out of the traps with an early set of picks for The Fringe from its critics
30th June 2011	Kate Copstick's 20 comedians to catch in The Scotsman
30th June 2011	Preview of Magic Festival in The Scotsman
1st July 2011	Unbound 2011 - free late night programme at the Book Festival - download supplement in The Skinny
4th July 2011	Interview with photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto in The Herald
8th July 2011	Art Festival picks in The List
8th July 2011	Book Festival picks in The List
8th July 2011	Music highlights at the International Festival in The List
8th July 2011	Theatre, music and dance highlights at the International Festival in The List
8th July 2011	Controversial comedy shows on the Fringe in The List
8th July 2011	Preview of dance Re-Triptych at the International Festival in The List
8th July 2011	Preview of One Thousand and One Nights at the International Festival in The List
9th July 2011	Highlights at the Jazz Festival in The List
9th July 2011	Profile of Trombone Shorty in The List
9th July 2011	Highlights of Kids' shows at the Fringe in The List
9th July 2011	Highlights of the Military Tattoo in The List
9th July 2011	First Fringe picks from View from the Stalls
9th July 2011	Preview of Mirazozo, a coloured inflatable structure, which is on the Fringe - in The List
13th July 2011	Top 5 acts to see at the Edge Festival in The Scotsman
14th July 2011	Top 5 free Fringe shows to see according to The Scotsman
15th July 2011	Article on Remarkable Arts venues by Joyce McMillan in The Scotsman

18th July 2011	Festival picks in The Guardian
18th July 2011	Festival picks from some performers in The Guardian
21st July 2011	Preview article on Free Run in The List
21st July 2011	Dance highlights at the Fringe in The List
21st July 2011	Music highlights at the Fringe in The List
21st July 2011	Brazilian dance highlights at the Fringe in The List
23rd July 2011	Preview of The Qatsi Trilogy at the International Festival - music meets film - in The FT
27th July 2011	"Punter is part of the action" shows in The List
27th July 2011	Shows using digital media in The List
27th July 2011	British Council Edinburgh Showcase on digital media in artdaily.org
28th July 2011	Article on the Made in Scotland showcase in The Herald
29th July 2011	Festival picks from The Independent
29th July 2011	Festival picks from The New Statesman
29th July 2011	Article on The Greyfriars Beethoven Concert Series in The Scotsman
29th July 2011	Preview of music on the Fringe in The Scotsman
29th July 2011	Preview of classical music on the Fringe in The Scotsman
29th July 2011	Festival picks in Scotland on Sunday
29th July 2011	Cabaret shows on the Fringe in The Telegraph
29th July 2011	Critics' choice: International Festival choice in The Telegraph
29th July 2011	Critics' choice: Magic shows on the Fringe in The Telegraph
29th July 2011	Critics' choice: Comedy shows on the Fringe in The Telegraph
29th July 2011	Critics' choice: Drama on the Fringe in The Telegraph
31st July 2011	"The best of the fest and how to find it" in The Independent on Sunday
2nd August 2011	Brief preview of the Edinburgh Art Festival in The Skinny
2nd August 2011	10 Fringe theatre picks from Whatsonstage.com
2nd August 2011	Preview of the Edge Festival in Edinburghguide.com
2nd August 2011	Local musicians appearing on the Fringe in The Scotsman
2nd August 2011	25 reasons to go to the Edinburgh Festival in The London Evening Standard
3rd August 2011	Preview of Edinburgh Art Festival in Culture24
3rd August 2011	Classical Music in the Fringe 2011 in EdinburghGuide.com
4th August 2011	Slideshow of 10 selected exhibits from the Edinburgh Art Festival on the BBC website
4th August 2011	Pics of 11 selected exhibits from the Edinburgh Art Festival in The Guardian
6th August 2011	Joyce McMillan - "Great Scottish-made shows on the Fringe"
8th August 2011	Preview article on National Ballet of China in The Scotsman



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Info on Reviews of Shows at the 2011 Festival

2010 | [2009](#) | [2008](#)

The main objectives of this page are to:

- provide links to selected Visual Arts, Jazz & Blues and Film festival reviews
- tell you where you can find reviews of EIF and Fringe performances on the web. There are simply too many shows to provide links to specific reviews
- provide a list of those shows on the EIF and Fringe which have scored most marks with the critics
- summarise our own thoughts on the shows that we managed to see
- detail some of this year's awards

- provide links to selected postmortems of the summer festivals by the critics.

Where to Find 2011 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. Beware the wide range of criteria for giving star ratings among the critics. For example, The Guardian may give a very occasional 5 star rating whereas some sites spray them around like confetti. FringeReview gave around 50 in 2010. [There was a spat last year on this very subject](#) if you are interested that ultimately centred on how the critics reported on the National Theatre of Scotland's production of *Caledonia*.

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

I had a minor rant last year about [the layout of review lists](#) on some of the websites. Overall, they are gradually improving but I mention it again in the hope that the remaining sites may follow suit one day.

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 version. Instead, I focus on producing periodic lists of those shows that the critics liked best. In 2011 they will be based on reviews from 11 sources, varying from mainstream media outlets to established festival websites.

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" or "the ubiquitous tweet" and perhaps try something different – you might be pleasantly surprised.

This is **the nineteenth and final iteration of the list** and it was posted here on **Tuesday 6th September, 2011 at 8.00am.**

Drama. *Ten Plagues, The Tempest, The Games, One Thousand and One Nights, The Rape of Lucrece, Jus' Like That, Allotment, Swamp Juice, Casablanca: The Gin Joint Cut, I Hope My Heart Goes First, Belarus Free Theatre, My Fithy Hunt, A Dish of Tea with Doctor Johnson, Qatsi Trilogy, Mission Drift, The Monster in the Hall, Somewhere Beneath It All A Small Fire Burns Still, Bane 1, 2 and 3, The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart, Shylock, Dust, Beowulf a Thousand Years of Baggage, John Peel's Shed, Little Matter, Almer Mater, Scary Gorgeous, An Instinct for Kindness, Oedipus, I, Malvolio, One Thousand and One Nights, A Slow Air, Your Last Breath, Anton's Uncles, The Wheel, Coffin Up, Translunar Paradise, Gogol's The Portrait, The Girl with the Iron Claws, Cutting the Chord, Bones, Hotel Medea, Release, The Dark Philosophers, The Whistle, Thirsty, Street Dreams and Alchemystorium.*

Comedy. *Bring Me the Head of Adam Riches, Luke Wright's Cynical Ballads, Brandreth Papers, My Name is*

Hannibal, Mark Thomas, Sheeps, Humphrey Ker is Dymock Watson, Tim Key, The Boy With Tape On His Face, Bashir Lazhar, Idiots of Ants, Paul Merton's Impro Chums, Andrew Maxwell, Fiona O'Loughlin, Nick Helm, Richard Herring, Max and Ivan, Carey Marx, Chris Martin, David Sedaris, DeAnne Smith, Paul Sinha, Russell Kane, Toby, Neil Delamere and Thom Tuck.

Dance & Physical Theatre. *The Peony Festival, Korean Drum - Journey of a Soul, Forgetting Natasha, The Seagull Effect, Scottish Ballet, Flawless and Dance Marathon.*

Music, Cabaret, Musicals and Opera. *Thais, Ravi Shankar, Die Frau ohne Schatten, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Re-Triptych, Orlando Paladino, Camille O'Sullivan, Evelyn Evelyn, Eastend Cabaret and Le Gateau Chocolat.*

Children. *The Incredible Book Eating Boy.*

Several notes ...

- the minimum criterion for a show to be considered for the list is that it must have had at least three reviews ... which is not easy.
- the drama section tends to be dominated by shows at the Traverse for the first couple of iterations simply because this is where a lot of critics tend to start - things will settle down after that with some of the Traverse shows dropping off the list;
- shows can drop off the list when later reviews are less flattering than the earlier ones;
- established comedians tend not to get many reviews and so may well not appear in the list - presumably it is assumed that they will get full houses whatever;
- successful shows returning for a second year also tend to get few reviews;
- music on the Fringe and performances on the International Festival often struggle to get three reviews and so may not appear on the list;
- and finally, I use the categories that shows appear in the programme brochures - which can sometimes seem a bit strange, e.g. the occasional comedian in the drama section, poet in the comedy section *et cetera*.

2011 Awards

There are a growing number of awards which will be mentioned in this section as they are announced. The Scotsman Fringe Firsts and The Bank of Scotland Herald Angels, are handed out weekly. The other awards are given towards the end of the festival. The most prestigious of these later awards are arguably [The Stage Awards for Acting Excellence at The Fringe](#) and [The Foster's Comedy Awards](#).

The Scotsman Fringe First awards for new writing. The week 1 awards have been announced: Analogue Theatre's *2401 Objects, Somewhere Beneath It All A Small Fire Burns Still* written by Dave Florez, Fishamble's *Silent, The Wheel* by Zinnie Harris, The TEAM's *Mission Drift*, Blind Summit's *The Table* and *Futureproof* written by Lynda Radley. Further details can be found [here](#).

The Bank of Scotland Herald Angel awards. The week 1 awards have been announced. The Herald Archangel is the poet and playwright Heathcote Williams. *Zanzibar Cats* at the Gilded Balloon is the result of his partnership with performer Roy Hutchins. The Herald Angels are: Zecora Ura for *Hotel Medea*; the National Theatre of Scotland for *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*; Junction 25 for *I Hope My Heart Goes First*; The TEAM for *Mission Drift*; Pat Kinevane for *Silent*; and Mat Ricardo for *Three Balls and A New Suit*. The Little Devil award goes to Lorne Campbell (*Tonight Sandy Greirson Will Lecture, Dance, and Box*) for soldiering on with a black eye and bruises after coming off his bicycle after the front wheel got stuck in a tramline.

The Scotsman Fringe First awards for new writing. The week 2 awards have been announced: Mark Ravenhill and Conor Mitchell's *Ten Plagues*, Icon Theatre's *Release*, Emmanuel Darley's *Tuesdays at Tesco's*, Curious Directive's *Your Last Breath, Allotment*, Hannah Jane Walker and Chris Thorpe's *The Oh F**k Moment*, RashDash's *Scary Gorgeous* and *An Instinct for Kindness* written by Chris Lerner. Further details can be found [here](#).

The Bank of Scotland Herald Angel awards. The week 2 awards have been announced. The Herald Archangel is the actor Simon Callow who is appearing in *Tuesdays at Tesco's*. The Herald Angels are: Mokwhat Repertory Company of Korea for their staging of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; NeTTTheatre and

Grupa Coincidental for [Turandot](#); Banana Bag and Bodice for [Beowulf a Thousand Years of Baggage](#); Shock N Awe for [Muscle](#); The Louis Dorra Trio; and literature talks and discussions under the the banner of [These Silences](#). The Little Devil award goes to Jim Haynes, one of the co-founders of the Traverse, who fell ill after arriving at this year's festival.

The Scotsman Fringe First awards for new writing. The final week 3 awards have been announced: Look Left Look Right's [You Once Said Yes](#), Tobias Wegner's [Leo](#), Ross Dungan's [Minute after Midday](#), Belarus Free Theatre's [A Reply to Kathy Acker: Minsk 2011](#) and Gbolahan Obisesan's [Mad About The Boy](#). Further details can be found [here](#).

The Bank of Scotland Herald Angel awards. The week 3 awards have been announced. The Herald Archangel is the theatre director Max Stafford-Clarke, artistic director of the Traverse back in the 1960s, who is directing [A Dish of Tea with Doctor Johnson](#). The Herald Angels are: veteran sitarist Ravi Shankar; Amjad Ali Khan (Indian lute player); Wu Wei (sheng player - Chinese mouth organ); Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe for [The Revenge of Prince Zi Dan](#); Forest Fringe; Summerhall venue; and Fuel for [The Simple Things in Life](#). The Little Devil award goes to the Zoo Southside venue who have struggled with power supply problems this week.

The Stage Awards for Acting Excellence at the Fringe: best actor - Billy Mack for [The Overcoat](#); **best actress** - Alessija Lause for [Danny and The Deep Blue Sea](#); **best ensemble** - Glasgow Citizens Theatre for [The Monster in The Hall](#); and **best solo performer** - Gerard Logan for [The Rape of Lucrece](#).

Foster's Edinburgh Comedy Awards: best comedy show - Adam Riches; best newcomer - Humphrey Ker; panel prize - The Wrestling.

Edinburgh International Festival Fringe Prize 2011: The TEAM for [Mission Drift](#).

Amnesty International's Freedom of Expression award: joint winners were [Sold](#) and Zinnie Harris's [The Wheel](#).

The Carol Tambor Edinburgh to New York award: [Leo](#) performed by Tobias Wegner of Circle of Eleven and directed by Daniel Briere.

Jack Tinker Spirit of the Fringe award: Remarkable Arts.

Holden Street Theatres award: Theatre Ad Infinitum's [Translunar Paradise](#).

Scottish Arts Club in conjunction with EdinburghGuide.com - Best Scottish Contribution to Drama on the Fringe. Catherine Wheel's [One Thousand Paper Cranes](#).

Total Theatre awards: work by emerging artist / company - [Sailing On](#) performed by ShadyJane; **physical / visual and devised performance** - the joint winners were Jeff Achtem's [Swamp Juice](#), produced by Canadian company Bunk Puppets and the UK's Scamp Theatre and [Turandot](#) which was produced by NeTTTheatre and Grupa Coincidentia; **innovation and experimentation** - the joint winners were [Maybe if you choreograph me, you will feel better](#) presented by Tania el Khoury at the Forest Fringe, [You Once Said Yes](#) by Look Left Look Right at the Underbelly and Adrian Howells' [May I Have the Pleasure?](#) which was produced by The Arches and staged by the Traverse.

Arches Brick award for emerging talent: Tania el Khoury for [Maybe if you choreograph me, you will feel better](#) at Forest Fringe.

Malcolm Hardee comedy awards: Johnny Sorrow (comic originality), Benet Brandreth (act most likely to make a million quid) and Kunt and The Gang with their promoter Bob Slayer (best publicity stunt).

FringeReview awards. Outstanding theatre shows: Theatre Movement Bazaar's [Anton's Uncles](#); Theatre Ad Infinitum for [Translunar Paradise](#); and Nigel Barrett and Louise Mari from SHUNT for [The One Man Show](#).

Dave Funniest Joke of the Fringe 2011. Nick Helm ... "I needed a password eight characters long so I

picked Snow White and the Seven Dwarves."

Other awards include [Threeweeks Editors' Awards](#), [MTM:UK Musical Theatre Awards](#), [Mervyn Stutter's Spirit of the Fringe Awards](#), [So You Think You're Funny](#) and the [Allen Wright Awards for Journalists](#).

Punters' 2011 Visit

We took in 23 shows (it would have been 24 but the performance of *The Wheel* was cancelled on our first day) and 4 art exhibitions during our one week visit to Edinburgh.

As I feared, the drama programmes at the Traverse and Assembly were below par overall and the National Galleries of Scotland were having a low key year. We did not see anything on the International Festival - the few shows that were appealing were not on during our stay. Comedy as a whole was also somewhat below the standard of recent years ... or is it me - am I just getting older?

On the positive side, poetry appeared in our schedule for the first time in a number of years. In fact, on balance I would vote *Luke Wright's Cynical Ballads* and Gerard Logan's excellent performance of *The Rape of Lucrece* as the two highlights of our visit.

If I was to give one single recommendation then it must be for Gerard Logan's *The Rape of Lucrece*. With its very minimal set (the use of a white scarf) and powerful performance of Shakespeare's narrative poem it stands alongside the very best Edinburgh Festival Fringe one-man shows down the years.

Added on August 29th, 2011. Gerard Logan has just won best solo performer in The Stage's Awards for Acting Excellence at The Fringe. Judge Gerald Berkowitz explained: "Making poetry come alive is a challenge to any actor, as is making Shakespeare come alive. For a single actor on a bare stage to do both, absorbing us in the psychological drama of one of Shakespeare's few non-dramatic works, is a true accomplishment. We all commented on how engrossed we were in Gerard Logan's performance and what a surprise it was to find that the hour was over."

Here is a brief summary of our thoughts on what we saw:

- overall an average year
- best drama production - *Oedipus* - particularly enjoyed The Chorus
- best one man show - *The Rape of Lucrece* closely followed by *I, Malvolio*
- most powerful drama - *Roadkill*
- most enjoyable drama - *The Monster in The Hall*
- best poetry show - *Luke Wright's Cynical Ballads*
- best comedy - *Dr. Phil's Rude Health Show*
- best dance / physical theatre - *Swimming with my Mother*. Unfortunately, we missed out on several other very good dance shows
- best visual arts - David Mach's *Precious Light* which celebrates the 400th anniversary of the King James' Bible. *The Northern Renaissance: Durer to Holbein* at the Queen's Gallery was also enjoyable
- this year's "turkeys" were *Last Orders* and *What Remains* which to put it mildly were both far from audience friendly - the word impenetrable springs to mind.

As usual there were many shows that we would have liked to have seen but were unable to fit into our schedule. They include: *Flawless*, *The Seagull Effect*, *The Peony Pavilion*, *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart*, *Release* and *Bring Me the Head of Adam Riches*.

Post-Mortem on the 2011 Festival

Views on the 2011 festival by the critics have largely been limited to summaries - [this offering in The Guardian](#) is an enjoyable read - or pointing out what was different this year. However, there is virtually no discussion on whether the festival as a whole has been a good one or not. Of course, I am quietly ignoring those sections of the media which loudly insist that every festival is absolutely wonderful.

Let us start with **The International Festival**. Here the punters tend to drive the debate with the critics often left in no man's land. The ongoing discussion concerns the use of themes in recent festivals. To

generalise, the majority of punters appear to dislike the use of themes; they would prefer a balanced international programme. The absence of the choral concerts at Greyfriars this year also occasioned much criticism. What many punters struggle to accept is that with each passing year it is becoming ever more prohibitively expensive to mount a programme of genuine quality. Who has the money to allow such programmes to be mounted? In the first 15 years or so of the festival's existence First World governments were prepared to subsidise appearances by the major companies from their countries as a means of marketing their countries. We have recently seen a return of such subsidies but only from those countries with the necessary money, i.e. those in Eastern Asia. I do not for one moment envy Jonathan Mills' task of squaring this particular circle ... punters' predilections versus economic reality. However, as I have mentioned several times before he could help himself by biting the pragmatic bullet and omitting the visual arts and drama. The former should be left to the Edinburgh Arts Festival and the latter to the Fringe, particularly to the Traverse Theatre.

There are the perennial claims that **the Fringe** is gloriously vibrant while the International Festival is sadly dull and jaded. The Fringe, as ever, is in fact a mixture. As usual it contained a modest amount of innovative work along with some really excellent productions. It also contains much that, while it can be entertaining, is run of the mill and some productions that are frankly very poor. Here are some of my thoughts this year:

- there was no "must see" show
- there was a noticeably greater use of technology this year, [as illustrated in this Scotsman article](#). For the first time I thought that the use of video was generally thoughtful and germane to the pieces concerned, as opposed to coming across as simply the (over)use of a new toy
- there was more audience participation, as illustrated in [this piece in The Telegraph](#). This is a topic that seems to divide punters, possibly along generation lines? I have no problem with it if it is relevant. I do have a problem however if the piece is principally built around audience participation. I particularly have a problem with it when punters are bullied. Perhaps it is just my age
- cabaret seemed to be back in favour this year with a lot more shows than usual
- similarly, poetry appeared to enjoy a mini-renaissance with the likes of Tim Key, Luke Wright, Tim Clare, John Osborne and veteran John Hegley. Once upon a time it used to have its own section in the Fringe programme. I saw and enjoyed [Luke Wright's Cynical Ballads](#). In fact, the highlight of my festival visit this year was Gerard Logan's really excellent performance of Shakespeare's narrative poem [The Rape of Lucrece](#)
- dance had probably its strongest year since the late, much loved Aurora Nova venue was going strong
- puppetry also had a good year
- notwithstanding a number of very good productions I felt that it was a disappointing year for drama. Overall the Traverse programme lacked balance and was not up to the standard of recent years, plus the disappearance of the small venues in the Assembly Rooms adversely affected the quality of Assembly Theatre's drama programme
- for an old trooper like me who generally prefers his humour dry and topical the seemingly inexorable shift towards silly humour leaves me cold I am afraid.
- music suffered from a lack of media coverage
- in the media [Lyn Gardner of The Guardian continued the debate](#) which [started last year](#) on the inflated use of stars in reviews of Fringe shows

The Film Festival has had, to use that well-hackneyed phrase, an *annus horribilis*. Internal politics - I feel particularly sorry for Martin Mullighan, the producer or was he the director?!? who is the fall guy in all of this - funding issues and the struggle for a credible identity in the current film industry all contributed to a bad year. The post-mortem on the festival had but one theme - the media putting the proverbial boot in. The most comprehensive piece can be found in [The FT](#), followed by [The Guardian](#), [The Scotsman](#) and [The List](#) among others.

It is currently a case of wait and see. The search for an artistic director and the question of whether it should return to an August date in the calendar may determine if the 2011 experience was merely a temporary dip in the Film Festival's fortunes or if it is part of an inexorable decline.

The Art Festival has had a relatively low key year from a marketing perspective, i.e. there was no - what I would call - major exhibition in 2011. The highlight for me was David Mach's [Precious Light](#) exhibition which celebrated the 400th anniversary of the King James' Bible.

The Jazz and Blues Festival has struggled in recent years to gain sufficient media attention. It may be

my imagination but this seems to have coincided with the disappearance in the last two years of the free [All On A Summer's Day](#) concert in Princes Street Gardens. Hopefully, better times may be around the corner.

It is difficult to comment on either **The Book Festival** or **The Military Tattoo**. Both can be considered to be niche areas which have their own reliable audiences but tend to do nothing particularly earth-shattering. There is nothing wrong with that ... no criticism is implied ... long may they thrive and prosper.

Edinburgh Art Festival

Links to selected reviews:

Date Posted	Review
14th July 2011	The Northern Renaissance: Dürer to Holbein in The Scotsman
27th July 2011	Elizabeth Blackadder in The Scotsman
2nd August 2011	Robert Rauschenberg: Botanical Vaudeville in The Herald
3rd August 2011	"Review of Edinburgh Art Festival" in The Guardian
5th August 2011	Robert Rauschenberg: Botanical Vaudeville in The List
5th August 2011	Elizabeth Blackadder in The List
5th August 2011	The Northern Renaissance: Dürer to Holbein in The Wall St Journal
6th August 2011	Ingrid Calame in The List
6th August 2011	David Mach: Precious Light in The List
6th August 2011	"Edinburgh Untamed" in the FT

Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival

Links to selected reviews:

Date Posted	Review
26th July 2011	Soul Rebels Brass Band in The Scotsman
26th July 2011	Leroy Jones Quintet in The Scotsman
26th July 2011	Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue in The Scotsman
26th July 2011	Ken Peplowski and Alan Barnes in The Herald
26th July 2011	Lollo Meier & Tcha Limberger Quartet in The Herald
26th July 2011	We Love Louis in The Scotsman
26th July 2011	Dom James and the Dixie Ticklers in The Scotsman
27th July 2011	Ken Mathieson's Classic Jazz Orchestra & Cecile McLorin Salvant in The Scotsman
27th July 2011	Edinburgh Jazz Festival Orchestra: Miles Ahead in The Herald
27th July 2011	Courtney Pine - Europa in The Scotsman
27th July 2011	Trio AAB with Ganesh Kumaresh in The Scotsman
28th July 2011	Hypnotic Brass Ensemble in The Scotsman
28th July 2011	Ken Peplowski plays West Side Story in The Scotsman
28th July 2011	Tommy Smith's Karma in The Scotsman
28th July 2011	Hidden Orchestra, Red Snapper in EdinburghGuide.com
29th July 2011	Haftor Medbøe Group in The Herald
29th July 2011	Martin Taylor in The Scotsman
29th July 2011	Django à la Créole with Evan Christopher in The Scotsman
29th July 2011	Rob Hall and Chick Lyall with Susheila Jamieson in The Scotsman
1st August 2011	Edinburgh Jazz Festival Orchestra plays Woody Herman in The Herald
1st August 2011	Brian Kellock Trio / Carol Kidd and Brian Kellock in The Herald
3rd August 2011	Curtis Stigers in The Scotsman

Edinburgh Film Festival

Links to selected reviews:

Date Posted	Review
16th June 2011	The Guard in Twitch .
16th June 2011	Fast Romance in heyuguy s.
16th June 2011	Shut up Little Man! an Audio Misadventure in Blogcritics.org
16th June 2011	Our Day Will Come in Blogcritics.org
16th June 2011	Turin House in EdinburghGuide.com
16th June 2011	The Guard and Jack Goes Boating in The Scotsman
16th June 2011	Elite Squad 2 in Blogcritics.org
16th June 2011	Project Nim in Blogcritics.org
17th June 2011	Jitters (Oroi) , Ghosted and Tomboy - all in heyuguy s
17th June 2011	Alistair Harkness' EIFF Roundup in The Scotsman
18th June 2011	Albatross and The Last Circus - both in Blogcritics.org
19th June 2011	Perfect Sense in EdinburghGuide.com
20th June 2011	Troll Hunter and The Caller - both in Blogcritics.org
20th June 2011	Rabies (Kalevet) in heyuguy s
20th June 2011	Arrietty in heyuguy s
21st June 2011	Page Eight in The Guardian
21st June 2011	Polyester - in Odorama in The Skinny
22nd June 2011	Jitters in Blogcritics.org
22nd June 2011	Bleak Night in Blogcritics.org
24th June 2011	Alistair Harkness' 3rd EIFF Roundup in The Scotsman
25th June 2011	Jack Goes Boating and Stormhouse - both in Blogcritics.org
25th June 2011	Hell and Back Again in EdinburghGuide.com
26th June 2011	Round up of documentaries in EdinburghGuide.com
