

Paul Foot: Dissolve
Underbelly, Cowgate - Belly Dancer

5 Stars

Rosa Georgiou

Paul Foot's rave status as long-time veteran of Edinburgh Fringe, as well as a great of the comedy circuit, was evident long before he took to the stage for this year's performance, as the packed-out audience was clearly abuzz with members of his rapturous cult following; the self-proclaimed "connoisseurs" of his comedy. But, for those most accustomed to Foot's typically maverick performance style, this year's show is sure to have produced the biggest revelation, as *Dissolve* sees him dive deeper into his emotional psyche than ever before. His most personal show to date, *Dissolve* merges Foot's abstract wit, endearing idiosyncrasies, and unbridled goofiness with a more serious exploration of the realities of twenty-nine years of mental illness and the split-second shift that left him genuinely happy (nay, dare he argue, enlightened).

This pivotal moment of change, which Foot dates clearly as having happened at 4.49pm on the 20th of March 2022 whilst driving in the outskirts of Lancaster, acts as the structural anchorage of the show. For a while, his mysterious, almost ominous, allusions to such specifics had me wracking my brain for a worldly, meme worthy event that could be neatly traced back to having such an altering effect on his mental state. Instead, via a series of anecdotes, admissions, and hypotheticals, Foot crafts a moving, and deeply funny, exploration of an event he himself is at odds to explain.

Opening with a somewhat baffling, though no doubt intentionally so, metaphor his mother told him, Foot weaves personal storytelling with titbits of social and political commentary. The distressing revelation of his childhood assault, is slotted next to his irrational anger at Chuka Umunna - the former Labour, then Change UK - politician, who refused to pay for Foot's meal in a dream. Likewise, his exposition of his years spent suffering with significant mental illness is given as much space for humour, as a bit about the trials and tribulations of teenage-hood faced by the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamun.

Luckily, peace, contentment, and genuine happiness, has not taken from Foot a gleefully scathing sarcasm, which has him taking sure-footed aim at the world of the right and some of its most treacherous institutions. From what he'd keep in a revolution - the house of lords, duh - to the trouble with the often sanctimonious older generations, Foot exposes the hypocrisies of modern society with rueful accuracy.

What's wonderful about Foot's show, is that at the very surface of his deeply absurdist humour, simmering at the top of his meandering metaphors and high pitched squealings, is a very simple admission: that somehow, after years of medications and therapies, he'd found contentment in that one moment via the outskirts of Lancaster. And with it, the show offers a genuinely affecting hour of comedy, that is unlike any other show you've seen before.

Aug 23-27th, @ 19:20

<https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/paul-foot-dissolve>

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