MERCEDES BENZ...AWKWARDLY

Hannah Williams
Tuxedo Cat – Red Room
Until 6 March 2012

Review by Brian Godfrey

"Mercedes Benz...Awkwardly” – but brilliantly in this wonderful piece of theatre. Billed in the Fringe brochure as cabaret, it is more a one woman play – that one woman being Hannah Williams.

Williams portrays Mercedes, a long time stripper/pole dancer who takes time out from her lap dancing to regale the audience with her experiences and some lessons in and background on the art of the stripper. One learns all about ‘dancing’ ("later in the back"), lesbian displays and, most importantly, the types of girls who take up the profession and why.

Shadowing Mercedes’ emotions, the show starts out bubbly, funny and enticingly sexy but soon shows the frustrations, monotonous routine and eventual acceptance of this perhaps less-than-glamorous type of employment. Mercedes enters the room as an entertainer but leaves it as a person accepting – with reluctance and slightly battered – her lot in life.

Ms. Williams is stunning and superb giving a bravura performance as not only Mercedes, but as some of the other dancers (the not terribly bright one; the Asian one; the experienced one; and the ‘never-let-your-guard-down’ one) as well as ‘typical’ clientele (male and female). She knows her stuff (and ‘struts’ it pretty well too), manages to make the dirtiest of words sound inoffensive and normal, and handles her audience (of both sexes) with ease while flirting up close and personal with them - not that easy late at night.

We reviewers tend to knock some of the venues used for Fringe shows and their inappropriateness for the productions that they are handling – not so Tuxedo Cat’s Red Room. It’s almost as if it was built for this show – it’s one hundred percent perfect!

This production is fantastic Fringe fare and excellent theatre to boot (the patent black leather, high-heeled kinky kind).

Rating: 5 stars (out of 5)