



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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ASHES: A COMEDY SHOWDOWN

Best of British Productions

Belgian Beer Café

Until 8th March 2021

Review by Lance Jones

Imagine the scene. A small bar upstairs at The Belgian Beer Café filled with an audience looking for some early entertainment and a few laughs, thinking they're going to see a show about "Cricket". Yes, there are a couple of dudes wearing World Series Cricket "pyjama tops" and the familiar tones of 10cc's seventies cricketing hit greets you as you walk in. "I don't like cricket, oh no, I love it!". Then on comes "The Twelfth Man" and you reckon you have this gig sussed. "Marvellous!", says Richie and Greggie.

Yet, while this show is very much run like a cricket match, it, in fact, doesn't have much to do with cricket at all. Welcome to "The Comedy Ashes", a five-match series of comedy slogging between the traditional arch-rivals Australia and England.

Going upstairs at "The Belgian" offers some relief from the bar staff downstairs who are definitely protecting their wickets. Waiting for a drink there is almost like enduring a night-watch at the crease at The Oval. All that blocking and avoiding doing anything until the real action starts. Heck, just like the night-watch, they're only there to keep the wicket occupied until later anyway. Avoid the frustration and make sure you get your drink upstairs, where the bar staff are swift and at the ready, and you get to your seat with the beverage of your choice in your hand in good time.

The rules are very simple. There are two captains who head up two teams of Australian and English comedians, each one set with the task to add a score to their "innings". The audience actually awards the "runs" by way of a decibel metre recording the amount of laughter. A poor joke may record one single run at best, while a scorcher can get slogged over the fence for a six. Laugh, don't laugh, it's your call. The metre will catch the mood, with the "neutral" Irish umpire tallying the scores. Stay longer than the allotted time and the other comedians chuck cherries at the stumps trying for a run-out. That's cricket lingo, by the way.

This show is really excellent value. It goes for a full 90 minutes, with a "drinks break" in the middle. You get to see the two captains, their four "batters", and the Irish Umpire having a crack at it. That's eleven different comedians working their guts out to "leave it all at the crease" and get that decibel metre thumping. And thump indeed it did. Some of the jokes hit the grandstand roof and bounced out of the park. That's cricket lingo again...

Due to COVID travel difficulties, the "English" team are all local ex-pats. In fact, some of them aren't even English. The night this reviewer went through the turnstiles, Japanese comedian Takashi Wakasugi (or "WACA", as he was known that night) wagged the tail for the Poms. I'd go and see his act on his own, yet there were ten other acts to laugh at as well.

As in the "real" ashes, this is a best of five "tests" series, so, the season is severely limited. Make sure you don't miss it. It's the best value for money at The Fringe. HOWZAT!

Rating: 4 stars (out of 5)