

## A One-Woman Review Mission

Eliza Hunton on her experience of solo Edinburgh fringe shows as a solo reviewer

By [Lara Medlam](#), Arts Editor (2016/17)

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Image: Matito

August in Scotland's capital means one thing: the Fringe. Each year since 1947, Edinburgh has been engulfed with thousands of shows across hundreds of venues and over four million visitors in 2017 – there's not much you can't see. Along the Royal Mile and dotted about on street corners, enough flyers to demolish a small forest were thrust in faces and hands. Among the variety, what stood out was the number of one-man performances. No more does theatre require a cast.

One of the best things about the Fringe is the DIY aspect, the sense anybody can be anything they make themselves. One-man performances encapsulate this hopeful and eccentric festival; relying on only yourself lends itself to creativity. The term 'one-man show' has an air of excitement that triggers an audience's curiosity. But how could they pull off a one man performance of *Pride and Prejudice*, you wonder? *Take The Rise And Fall Of Marcus Monroe*, in which the American juggler attempts to make juggling famous, and was an hour of acting, filming a Netflix documentary, stand-up, and juggling fire. Seemingly, it was too much for one person to pull off, but that's the beauty of one-man performances at the Fringe – you don't quite know what they're going to do.

Those weirder moments aside, many of these performances take the form of stand-up comedy, tucked away in coffee shops and back rooms. Sat a few feet away from the stage, by the end of the hour you feel like you're hearing anecdotes from your best friend rather than watching a performance. Ellyn Daniels, in her show *Emotional Terrorism*, might have kicked things off with her legs in the air as she pretended to be her Romanian ex, but after the autobiographical show you just want to give her a hug and take her out for coffee. Having one performer is a positive; you don't have to remember character names and get invested in a winding, complicated story. There's a rare intimacy you can't get in any other type of performance; it might take you near three hours to get to know the entire cast of *Les Miserables*, but you're sorted within 20 minutes with a single performer.

As a reviewer at a one-man show, there's a sense of kindred spirit with the performer. Both of you are there alone and trying to do something creative. At the end of his performance, Marcus Monroe saw I had a notebook and bounded up to me to ask if I was going to the party later that night. He presumed I too was part of the gang of performers, artists and writers who dominate the Fringe. I hadn't been invited, but the encounter showed what the Fringe is all about: people. Not just the shows themselves but the people who create them, who watch them and who write about them. You might go to the Fringe alone as a reviewer or alone as a one-man performer, but at the world's largest arts festival, you're never by yourself.



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