LIAM RUDDEN – MUST SEE THEATRE

Edinburgh's Mr Entertainment picks his Hot Tickets to see in the Capital and beyond

Edward Scissorhands comes to the Festival Theatre

There are show-stoppers and then there are show stops - let's hope for the former this May as Elaine C Smith transforms into The Child Catcher, and Bowie, Macbeth and Edward Scissorhands vie for audiences in Edinburgh at the same time as Thief sets sail for London

Show stops can be dramatic.There are many reasons for a show stop, some more serious than others.

Over the years, I've seen Les Mis come to a halt, literally, when the revolve failed, I watched as Jason Donovan grabbed his coat to make a sharp exit with the immortal words, 'I'm off', as a smoke alarm put the brakes on Priscilla, Queen of the Desert press night, and have witnessed countless other incidents when the action ground to a halt due to a range of technical issues. It happens more than you might think.

The majority are nothing more than minor inconveniences but occasionally a show stop can be more urgent. Last month, at The Studio during the opening night of James V: Katherine, a clatter from the back of the auditorium brought the call to 'Stop'. Cast froze, house-lights brightened and stewards quickly responded. A second call for any 'doctor in the house' and the evacuation of the auditorium added to the urgency of the situation.

Twenty minutes later, with the stricken woman in the safe hands of the NHS ambulance crew, the performance continued. The cast received a huge round of applause as they appeared and took their positions, but the real appreciation must go to the front of house team who calmly and professionally handled the situation with great finesse. Good to hear the lady concerned is recovering well. And on that note, let's look ahead to this month's 'Must See' offerings, remembering that, should you experience a show stop, follow the instructions of the Front of House Staff at all times. They know what they're doing.

There's an eclectic mix of shows heading to Edinburgh in May, but let's start at The Traverse where Scot Squad's gormless Chief and a global rock icon come together (sort of) in David Bowie and Me: Parallel Lives (16-18 May).

Yes, BAFTA award-winning Jack Docherty returns home to Edinburgh to once more share his love of Bowie, who he spent time with in 1997. In the show he'll also embark on an emotional and hilarious trip through the inner workings of his mind; from families to teenage years, AI to culture wars, first love, hedonism, mortality and why you should always meet your heroes, even if just for one day.

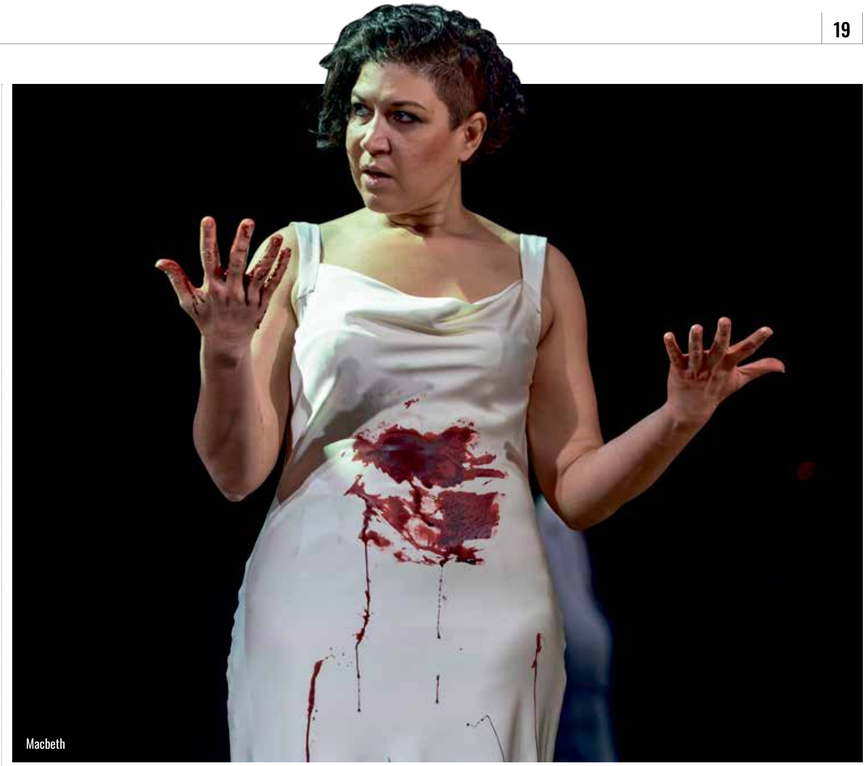
Running time 75 minutes. Tickets £17
https://www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/jack-docherty-in-david-bowie-and-me-parallel-lives-spring-24

Lee Fanning as Sailor in Thief

In the same week, the Festival Theatre welcomes Matthew Bourne's New Adventures Company back with their fast-selling production of Edward Scissorhands (14-18 May). Devised, directed and choreographed by Bourne, and based on the classic Tim Burton movie, Edward Scissorhands is the bittersweet tale of an incomplete boy left alone in a strange new world: In a castle high on a hill lives Edward, a boy created by an eccentric inventor. When his creator dies, he is left alone and unfinished with only scissors for hands until a kindly townswoman invites him to live with her suburban family. Can he find his place in a well-meaning community struggling to see past his curious appearance to the innocence within? This new touring production finds New Adventures' favourite Liam Mower sharing the title role with Stephen Murray. Edward Scissorhands premiered in 2005 and this passage of time is well reflected in the current casting with former New Adventures stars taking on the roles of the mums and dads in the piece, including Company legends Dominic North who plays father figure Bill Boggs, Associate Artistic Director Etta Murfitt, who comes back to the stage as the maternal Peg Boggs and Kerry Biggin, once Edward's love interest, who now plays her original character's mother.

Running time 1 hour 55 minutes including 20 minute interval. Tickets £29.50-£59.50,
https://www.capitaltheatres.com/whats-on/all-shows/edward-scissorhands/2250

Direct from a run in New York, Macbeth: An Undoing (14-25 May) arrives back at the Lyceum this month. A retelling of the classic Scottish play, it puts Lady Macbeth at the heart of the story. When her husband returns victorious from battle with a prophecy he is to be King, Lady M is ruthless in her pursuit of power but quickly descends into madness and despair. Which begs the question, have we heard the whole story? It should be intriguing to see how it has evolved since its World Premiere at the Grindlay Street theatre in February 2023.



Macbeth

Running time 2 hours 10 minutes plus interval. Tickets £18-£38
https://lyceum.org.uk/events/macbeth-an-undoing-2024#dates-and-times

Last of the big hitters this month is Chitty Chitty Bang Bang: The Musical, which flies back onto the Playhouse stage with some imaginative casting as Elaine C Smith follows in the creepers of Robert Helpmann, Wayne Sleep and Paul O'Grady, as the demented Child Catcher - can't wait to see her in the role.

Based on the 1968 film of the same name, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang features the unforgettable songs Toot Sweets, Truly Scrumptious and the much loved title song. Don't get caught out by the earlier start time, curtain up is 7pm.

Myles Frost as Michael Jackson

Running time 2 hours 30 minutes including interval. Tickets £22-£68
https://www.atgtickets.com/shows/chitty-chitty-bang-bang/edinburgh-playhouse/

If you're heading to London, this month's 'Theatre Break' pick is the acclaimed Broadway musical, MJ, (until 7 December) at the Prince Edward Theatre. Tony Award Best Actor Myles Frost, who originated the role of Michael Jackson in New York, leads the UK cast in this retelling of the making of Jackson's 1992 Dangerous World Tour, which gives a rare insight into the creative and collaborative spirit that catapulted him to legendary status. Expect to hear Man in the Mirror, Thriller, Smooth Criminal and more.

Running Time 2 hours 30 minutes, including interval. Tickets
£20-£227.75 https://mjthemusical.com

If you do happen to be in London and like your theatre dark, my own Broadway award-winning play, Thief (22-25 May), will play London's newest pub theatre, The Stage Door Theatre at The Prince of Wales on Drury Lane, it's a hard hitting study of abuse not for the faint of heart. It would be great to see you there.

Running time 56 minutes. Tickets £18
https://www.stagedoortheatre.co.uk/thief-by-liam-rudden-22-25-may/

Finally, www.MustSeeTheatre.com is now live with all my latest reviews, news and theatre features, do check it out, although you still find all my Edinburgh reviews accessible through the Edinburgh Reporter website too. Right, time to immerse myself in Edinburgh Fringe press releases again, you'd be surprised just how many I receive, and to think, when I first ran a Festival desk they all arrived by "snail mail" between five and ten sacks of mail a day as August neared. Can't imagine how many that would be these days.
Until next time, happy theatre-going,
Liam