

# Bumming Around

In *Wild Bore*, **Zoe Coombs Marr**, **Ursula Martinez** and **Adrienne Truscott** have created a glorious piece of theatre that skewers lazy criticism and explores the hierarchies of performance and critical discourse. A traditional interview seemed like just another iteration of that hierarchy, so we decided to turn the tables and print the interviewees' take instead, plus some nuggets from Fest deputy editor—and reviewer—Jo Caird, to put it all in context. Here goes nothing...



Left to right: Zoe Coombs Marr, Ursula Martinez and Adrienne Truscott

## Jo Caird: Interview with *Wild Bore* Review by *Wild Bore*

Every interview, like it or not, is shaped by those that come before them. Interviewers with an agenda and caggy, tired interviewees often result in a dance of mistrust – like two cats circling each other, at least in the beginning. Jo Caird's interview starts, predictably, with a greeting: "Hello, how are you?" We've seen this before, countless times. A meeting is set, the players show up, a classic tale of interviewer and interviewees. But what next?

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We sit in an upstairs alcove of a university building and, after commenting on the strange architecture of a badly planned atrium (it is truly, bafflingly awful, like the dirty area under a grandstand, but somehow in the middle of an office block) we sit around a low coffee table, sipping beers and plastic cups of wine. The setting is slightly open, and not ideal for an interview, but when are they ever?

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The relationship between artist and critical voice is at the heart of *Wild Bore*, a show that developed, initially, Truscott recalls, from "the kind of chats you have at the artists' bar: 'Oh my god, I got the most amazing review, this person said such and such.'" Along with a "sadistic joy in recounting terrible quotes", though, says Coombs Marr, there was a deeper frustration of having their work as female artists misunderstood: "There's this thing of getting one of two responses, and sometimes both at the same time, which is either: you're too political and too boring—banging on about feminism and politics—or it's just so wild and wacky and crazy that you can't even understand it." So Truscott, Coombs Marr and Martinez made a show that allows them to occupy both those positions simultaneously, to be not just boring, but wildly so, and in the process pose all sorts of questions about whose voices are heard and whose are silenced.

I wouldn't normally bring booze to an interview but a) this is the *Fringe*; and b) I thought it might get me a more favourable review. If they didn't like my questions, at least they'd enjoy the hipster beers.

We're taken on a rambling journey through question and answer: "Where did the idea for the show come from?" and "How did you all meet" warm us up. This is somewhat well worn ground, perhaps, but Jo manages to avoid the drearier old faithfuls, such as "what does the name mean?". We have always found this question a litmus test of types. If an interviewer is resorting to name questions, chances are they've done very little research. Jo, it seems, has. Her questions are a delightful mix of planned and spontaneous. Enough space is allowed for the natural flow of conversation, but with a safety raft of preplanned questions, written on a piece of ripped out notepad.

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Eventually we delve deeper into the themes of the show, the larger implications of the work, and what we hope an audience might take away from it. By this point we are all chatty, throwing in the kind of jokes designed to make someone laugh in the moment, but also look good in print. We still have an outside agenda in our minds, but it seems to be going well. Of course years of disappointments by great interviews gone awry have left us untrusting, and afraid of misquoting. Too many times have we had those conversations that seemed to go brilliantly and then ended with a piece that seems to have been written by someone else entirely. And what artist can forget what Stacy Merkin did to Jenny Schechter when she reviewed her book in *The L Word*?

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Nonetheless, the interview with Jo Caird was enjoyable, comfortable and the time flew by, leaving us with the impression that it would come out well. But, as always, the proof is in the pudding.

Indeed. I can tell you, for instance, that Martinez, Coombs-Marr and Truscott, who hail from the UK, Australia and the US respectively, have each received critical acclaim (for what it's worth) for genre-defying solo projects exploring feminism, politics and performance. Truscott won the Edinburgh Comedy Award Panel Prize for her show *Asking For It - A One-Lady Rape About Comedy Starring Her Pussy and Little Else!* in 2013; Coombs Marr brought *Dave*, her hilarious misogynist standup alter ego, to the Fringe in 2015 and 2016; and Martinez, as well as producing a body of provocative solo shows, directed Lucy McCormick's *Triple Threat*, one of the most talked about shows of last year's festival.

"The show's not really about criticism, it's about other stuff. If it was just about critics and artists it would be a really boring show. It's mostly about bums," says Coombs Marr. "It's about expression and freedom and bodies and language and diversity and widening your vision," continues Martinez. "Widening your arsehole," rejoins Coombs Marr with a snigger. Ah, the arseholes – the trio spend the first part of the play with their bums perched on a freestable, talking out of them in the actual words of real life critics who, it's safe to say without spoiling the show, didn't particularly enjoy what they saw. Anyone familiar with their work won't be surprised by the flesh on display—all three are known for getting naked in the name of art—but the nudity here plays a different role. "It purely served a dramaturgical intention and solution initially," says Truscott. "And then we were like, it's the least gendered part of our bodies, and what happens when people known for being feminist or naked women put that on stage?"

Unfamiliar with *The L Word*, I had to look up this scene, in which Merkin "uses her gayness" to get Schechter to open up and then pans her and her book. Schechter, enraged, goes to the offices of the magazine that printed the interview and berates the receptionist. Whatever happens with this piece, I respectfully ask Truscott, Coombs Marr and Martinez not to storm the Fest office.

