

# Endearing Nina's ventriloquism proves she's no dummy

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**Nina Conti - Complete and Utter Conti**  
Pleasance Two  
★★★

COMEDY

ACCORDING to Freud, ventriloquism will

always be creepy because the sight of an inanimate object talking and moving is an example of the uncanny. This feeling is instinctive because it sets off triggers in our deepest unconscious. A possible psychological explanation for the strong audience reaction to Nina Conti and her puppet friends? Who knows. The only thing certain is that this show is very funny.

This is Conti's first full-length Fringe gig and although she seems a little over-awed by the size of her audience, her slight nervousness is

endearing rather than off-putting. Conti has extended her usual Monkey routine to include other puppets for this show, which she brings on and interacts with while chatting away to Monkey.

She also does impressions, making use of wigs and hats to give her characters visual, as well as aural, identities.

There are many moments of three-way ventriloquism, which, despite not always being entirely successful are impressive.

Conti has attempted to cram in so much new material that the show feels a little hurried in places. Some of her ideas could do with a little more development and the show as a whole would probably benefit from some streamlining.

Overall, though, Nina Conti is an



**RAMBLING:** Phil Kay

excellent performer and seemingly ego-less comic. Who needs Freud's theories on ventriloquism when you can see an act as good as this.

■ Until August 27

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**Phil Kay - The Justice Show**  
Gilded Balloon Teviot, Bristo Square ★★★

WITH his trademark long hair and bushy beard, Phil Kay stands on stage in the Dining Room at the Gilded Balloon, armed with a plastic cup of whiskey and a half-sized acoustic guitar.

His welcoming of the audience into the theatre is followed by several minutes of rambling, which raises a few confused laughs. The first subject that he focuses on for any length of time is that of the Fringe Festival itself - sharing with the audience his experience of sleeping in a tent in his friend's back garden.

Initially, Kay's performance is delivered with energy and enthusiasm, however, the audience don't fully embrace that enthusiasm as

the laughter at times seems forced. Undoubtedly, Kay has a talent for thinking on his feet, which becomes clear from his ability to compose songs on the spot, in reference to small talk made with the audience.

However, his extended guitar playing, intended to be humorous, soon becomes tedious. His improvisational approach to the performance hits an all-time low as he tells a very morbid tale about a family member.

With no punch line and with the audience shocked into silence, two spectators leave the show only to become the inspiration for Kay's best line of the night, "How do you think I feel? I've been to every one of my gigs."

■ Until August 27

JAMIE THOMSON