

# Live wires

Live podcasts are hitting the Fringe in a big way this year. Jo Caird talks to some of the acts behind the mics

There's an intimacy about podcasting that you don't get with any other medium: that feeling of closeness to someone whose voice you have in your earbuds week in week out over months or years. It's entirely one-sided of course, but that doesn't matter – you feel like you know them and get more from the listening experience as a result.

It's unsurprising, therefore, that a growing sub-genre of live shows inspired by podcasts is proving such a hit with fans, giving eager listeners the opportunity to come face-to-face with their podcast-er besties, and nerd out with fellow acolytes at the same time. The trend is coming to Edinburgh this summer, with two titans of the comedy podcasting world—*My Dad Wrote a Porno* (MDWAP) and *The Bugle*—bringing live shows to the Fringe for the first time to play alongside established favourites such as *Richard Herring's Edinburgh Fringe Podcast*.

Audiences at previous live *Bugles* have been “very, very keen”, says Andy Zaltzman, who has been itching to do a live version of the show since he started it with John Oliver back in 2007. “Obviously you get an audience of fairly committed fans if they're coming to see a specific show being recorded. They've been great fun to do.”

The live show is pretty much the “same mixture of satire and bullshit” that Zaltzman records these days with a rotating cast of co-hosts including Nish Kumar and Wyatt Cenac, since Oliver stepped down in 2015. But the presence of a “crowd that's on side” allows him to “take it in slightly different directions”, he says.

“To have an audience that's already tuned into your wavelength makes things easier and more fun.



My Dad Wrote a Porno

You can just get straight into what you want to be doing comedically. The winning over process has been moved to people having listened to the show.”

The MDWAP team—Jamie Morton, Alice Levine and James Cooper—have noticed something similar, with fans of the trio's discussions of Morton's dad's erotic novels dressing up as their favourite characters at sold-out live shows around the world.

“The brilliant thing about our listeners is how invested they are in the whole *Belinda Blinked* universe,” they told us in an email. “We often have people get in touch to say James and Alice say exactly what they're thinking as they're listening, so opening up the book to a live audience is always fun to see how they respond.”

While *My Dad Wrote a Porno: Live* is almost a separate entity to the podcast that inspired it—Morton, Levine and Cooper have no plans to release recordings of the live show—liveness has always been an essential element of *Richard Herring's Edinburgh Fringe Podcast*. This festival-focused incarnation of the *Richard Herring Leicester Square Theatre Podcast*, in which Herring interviews fellow comedians in his inimitable irreverent style, is returning to the Fringe for the fourth time.

“Having an audience there changes the dynamic quite a lot,” says Herring. “Comedians will up their game a bit. But also you have this really welcoming and friendly environment, and the guests relax a lot more when they realise the audience are there to listen to more serious stories and longer stuff. So then they can, if they wish, talk about much more personal things as well.”

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Andy Zaltzman

› *The Bugle Live Podcast* occupies a position somewhere between these two, with Zaltzman putting out edited recordings of the show on the regular podcast feed in amongst the studio recordings. Keeping both live audiences and listeners happy can

## “To have an audience that’s already tuned into your wavelength makes things easier and more fun”

be a tricky line to walk, he explains.

“A lot of things are funny within the context of the gig they’re performed in, but if you’re not at that gig then that doesn’t necessarily work,” he says. “It’s finding the right balance and making sure that the version you put out for people to listen to at home does not have that quality of alienation that you sometimes get with recorded comedy.”

Get that balance right and you have not just a great live event but also a potential income generator that enables further investment in the podcast and other creative projects. Herring, for example, never planned for his podcasts to be money-makers per se. But a combination of selling tickets to live shows and fundraising from listeners allows him to push

the form and be more ambitious with other projects, such as his live sketch comedy podcast *As It Occurs to Me*, which returns as a video series this year.

“When I started off [podcasting] it was just for the fun of it,” he says. “It has paid off for me as a business move, but I never would have predicted that.”

You might think, therefore, that Herring would be a touch peeved about other people jumping on the live podcasting bandwagon. Not a bit of it. “It’s good for everyone if podcasts become a bigger thing because then people look for other podcasts,” he says. “The more people that can get involved with it and see it as a viable way to create stuff, the better.”

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SHOW: **Richard Herring’s Edinburgh Fringe Podcast**  
 VENUE: **New Town Theatre**  
 TIME: **1:50pm – 2:50pm, 11 Aug, 18 Aug**  
 TICKETS: **£12**

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SHOW: **My Dad Wrote a Porno: Live**  
 VENUE: **Gilded Balloon Teviot**  
 TIME: **6:00pm – 7:00pm, 10–11 Aug**  
 TICKETS: **£12**

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SHOW: **The Bugle Live Podcast**  
 VENUE: **New Town Theatre**  
 TIME: **times vary, 16 Aug, 27 Aug**  
 TICKETS: **£14**

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