

festival 07 reviews

Captivating actor earns his five stars and stripes

**Basic Training,
Assembly Rooms**
★★★★★

THEATRE YOU'LL probably read a few reviews this August that carry the line: "If you only see one show this August, make sure it's this one." Some of them are justified, others not. So how do you justify giving a show five stars?

For a start, if it's a solo show like this one, then the actor has to give, what you believe, to be their quintessential performance: flawless, dynamic, utterly captivating, life-affirming; the ability to leave you hanging on the edge of your seat, emotional, and with sympathy for their character.

Fringe First-winning actor Kahlil Ashanti does all that. And more. So, what's it all about, then, you ask? In short, *Basic Training* is about a young (black) man who suffers severe physical and mental abuse at the hands of a man he

believes to be his father. As he is about to leave to join the American Air Force, his long-suffering mother unlocks a secret that forces Ashanti's character to question his very existence.

Now while this tale might resemble the sort of story-line that belongs in a hundred other shows, what makes it stand apart from the rest is not just Ashanti's truly magnificent performance, but his ability to perform all the other 23 characters condensed into this 60-minute show.

Never confusing, never distracting, always entertaining and powerful. So powerful, in fact, that 20th Century Fox are developing *Basic Training* into a feature film.

The biggest surprise, the real crux of this story, though, doesn't fully reveal itself until the very end, by which time you'll probably be on your feet giving Ashanti a standing ovation.

A must see.

■ *Until August 27*

BARRY GORDON

Still fascinates, 378 years later

**'Tis Pity She's A Whore
Bedlam Theatre, Bristo
Place**

★★★★

JOHN FORD'S play is as fascinating today as it would have been originally in 1629. The test is to gain and maintain sympathy for an incestuous sibling relationship.

The young, but extremely talented, cast deliver the piece delicately with subtle charm as they give an insight into the lesser spoken of afflictions of the heart. A blend of stylised devices and brutal realism, this quick paced production is a delight.

■ *Until Saturday*

ALISON FRASER

Warring couple fail to convince

Edinburgh Evening News
Sex for Shampoo,
Sweet, Grassmarket 9/8/07
★★★★

SEX For Shampoo is a play about three British tourists on holiday in Cuba.

Retired policeman George (Keith Flood) finds companionship in the shape of Emily (Julia Burchell), a woman feeling abandoned by her journalist husband Jeremy (Guy Unsworth) as he spends day after day doing research.

A major problem is the lack of chemistry between the characters, but the play's real downfall is its script.

■ *Until August 18*

JO CAIRD