

Hils Barker - Exhibitionist!

REVIEW BY CIARAN HEALY - FEST MAGAZINE - 03 AUGUST 2008

The modern age gets it in the neck from Hils Barker in this classy and irreverent stand up act. From the outset she exudes an infectious charm and sense of fun, bringing a series of comic characters to vibrant life. The humour runs the gamut from witty to profane, each character serving as a springboard for edgy observations on life, sex and political hypocrisy.

Unlike many character-based stand up sets, there's real depth here. While it is a stretch to compare her to such visceral greats as Chris Rock or Bill Hicks, it's deeply refreshing to see a comedian who actually has something to say. She doesn't preach, but takes aim with a filthy mind and a razor wit, hitting her targets hard.

There's something of the method actress about this woman, as the characters are more than just comedic foils. Melding live stand-up with short (but clever) video segments gives a flow and slickness to the production. There's also a subtle narrative arc which binds the characters together, delivering satirical sideswipes at the erosion of civil liberties and the world of online social networking.

This subtle but sustained angle gives the night a sense of unity and purpose and it is this, more than anything else, which makes the show well worth the ticket price. Humour that tickles for the sake of laughter alone is all too often like comedy popcorn - easy to digest, but of no real value. Hils Barker strikes a strong balance between intelligence and hilarity.