

The Midnight Show

Till Aug 27, Midnight, Gilded Balloon - Backstage 1, 233 Cowgate, Edinburgh, Venue 38

£8/£7 (£9/£8 Weekends)

www.gildedballoon.com

5 stars

Pity the poor comic who has to share the same stage as the brilliant Des Clarke. A finalist in the BBC New Comedy and Daily Telegraph Open Mic Awards, the man is so genuinely funny it's almost painful to watch him perform. Slotted in-between three nondescript standups, this highly original young Glaswegian's muddled mindscape prevents him finishing sentences. His stream of consciousness comedy with inventive associative twists has the audience initially shell shocked, then helpless with laughter. Imagine the bastard offspring of Frankie Howerd and Harry Hill playing with Eddie Izzard and you might come close to his stylishly crafted delivery.

Instead of taking ecstasy, he says, he took agony, the complete opposite - causing not a bad trip but a nasty fall on the way home. He asks if giraffes make balloons in the shape of clowns and explodes stock comedy material. 'My wife's doctor's not in this joke,' he explains. Such is the volume spilling from his head, it's impossible to catch everything and, like a good film, you're left wanting to see it over again because you've missed so much.

As for the others, well, Geoff Whiting was an amiable and competent compere, confidently working the audience, while Eddie Brimson trotted out a predictable set containing juggler references and dwarf jokes. Meryl O'Rourke was also incredibly average, talking pants and even attempting to squeeze more humour from tampon gags. No, the night belonged to Clarke and it's worth sitting through the rest to see his genius in action.

Tommy Mackay