

### **Andy Zaltzman versus the Dog of Doom**

Until 27<sup>th</sup> August (except 21st)

Pleasance Below, 60 The Pleasance, Edinburgh, Venue 33, 8.00pm

£9.00 to £10.00, £8.00 to £9.00 concs.

Tel:0131 556 6650

#### **4 stars**

Now here's a tricky one. World peace or wanton destruction? The choice is yours in this hilarious topical romp through the complex choices we face in everyday life. Audience members are handed a glossy card a la Ready Steady Cook and asked to exercise their vote throughout the act as the comic pitches his ideas against a delightfully opinionated dog in a box. Zaltzman leaves no political hot potato untouched as he racks up the scores in his challenge with the Dog of Doom.

This is perceptive, intelligent humour with neither preaching nor lazy cynicism, where John Ruskin meets Animal Hospital and Francis Bacon shoves snow up a hen's arse. Queen Victoria in a bar with a long face is a particularly outstanding tour de force. In another argument, Zaltzman proffers an inspired resolution to the genetic engineering and foot and mouth crisis by suggesting farm animals have their feet and mouths removed.

His acute historical perspective and incisive awareness of life's absurdities make Zaltzman's act both endearing and challenging. Punchlines are not his thing and he can be too defensive about this while his occasional automaton delivery can ruin any spontaneity. His stand up tragedy routine, however, is a sublime comedic invention as is his appeal on behalf of International Slapstick Awareness.

The score at the end of this performance was a draw, resulting in a sudden death joke off where unfortunately the world ended on a bad pun.

Tommy Mackay