

Festival news - we recreate Edinburgh fringe spirit in London

Submitted by: London Festival Fringe

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London recreates the spirit of the Fringe

The London Bridge Festival (<http://www.londonbridgefestival.com/>) embodies the true spirit of a Fringe festival (<http://www.londonbridgefestival.com/>), as it kicks off for two weeks of drama, comedy, film, music and dance today [10 July].

Organisers of the Festival have seen bookings soar to 175 performances in just a few weeks. Their mix of drama, comedy, film, music and the arts takes place at venues including the Golden Hinde (Drake's ship), the Rose Theatre (where Shakespeare and Marlowe performed) and the Old Operating Theatre (London's first operating theatre, now turned into an intimate space for readings and plays). Performers range from the established Stephen K Amos and Brendon Burns to relative unknowns.

The Festival's Director Greg Tallent fears the recession may be limiting the opportunities for some of Britain's brightest new acts as many struggle from a lack of backers or fear taking extended leave from their day jobs.

"Lack of money should not be a barrier to performing. Most of the venues on offer at our Festival are free or very cheap. It costs a lot to de-camp to another city to do your show. Our fringe is all about helping artists and performers put on shows in the heart of London, easily and within their means," he says. "Let's establish the London Fringe, once and for all, and allow new performers to thrive."

Directors like 22-year old Sarah Ruff - who combines her First from Dartington in Theatre with a job in Brick Lane's historic 24hr bagel shop - feels it's too hard to break even at established festivals when the average audience can be as low as three people and venue costs are high.

Her show "Granny Theft Auto", which explores the inner lives of grannies and premiered at the London Bridge Festival launch, last week, is unlikely to travel to the established cultural events where promoters often charge large sums to new acts.

The London Bridge Festival team – who've been swamped with requests to perform in the venues in and around the Shakespeare country of SE1 – believe their festival will have an international reach by 2010.

"Headline comics Marcus Brigstocke, Stewart Lee and Shappi Khorsandi, are performing at the London Bridge Festival this year, and this shows how important the event has become. We believe there's a real need for a Fringe Festival in the traditional cultural hub of London."

The Festival runs from the 10th to the 25th of July and includes the London Fringe Awards in Film, Photography, Short Fiction and Stand-Up Comedy.

Full details at: www.londonbridgefestival.com

To speak to performers, to obtain pictures or press passes to shows contact Victoria Silverman on 020 8653 3181 or at Victoria@londonbridgefestival.com

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