

The Hothouse Project

Charles Shaar Murray's Journalism as Craft and Art writing course

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Autumn 2013 coursework

DANICA PRIEST: Women of an Uncertain Age

If you have nothing better to do with the £10.50 you'd spend to see this show, please donate it to the poor venue technician at the Gilded Balloon in Edinburgh. There's no way they are paying him enough to endure this putrid turd of a show every day for a month. That man's face was one that had seen war.

Women of an Uncertain Age is the cringeworthy debut from sketch duo Maggie and Flip. Fair warning about this atrocity has not yet been given, presumably because no-one wants to be the asshole who picks on two old ladies. I will be that asshole. It is my duty as a reviewer to expose the Emperor's nakedness.

Here is the show in a nutshell: 'Oh look, we are silly grannies talking about sex and other naughty things we shouldn't do because rich old ladies are supposed to be polite ... but not us! This makes us innovative comedy geniuses! If you don't agree you are ageist and sexist. Now we are going to dance to hip hop... how clever are we? '

Maggie and Flip are comfortable onstage but if they weren't, they'd at least be endearing since you could feel sorry for them. Instead they strut around with a self-congratulatory presence that shows their privilege has tarnished reality. Clearly no-one has had the heart to tell them they aren't funny.

What the pair are trying to achieve is to demonstrate that comedy is not exclusive to whippersnappers and penises. However, this stale collection of overacted clichés does just the opposite.

The girls even manage to contradict themselves on their posters. 'Middle Aged Women: an endangered species.' They say. 'See them in their unnatural habitats and marvel at their ingenious use of camouflage.' Groan. Even worse, instead of a press quote they added: 'Appreciated by all audiences, including us males!' Wow! Are they saying their show is so good even men like it? That must mean it's really good since men have superior tastes in comedy, right? This is just a taste of why 'avoid' is too kind a word for this god-awful production.

It may sound cruel, but bad shows can be more dangerous than a mere waste of time, especially when the offender belongs to a minority that is already under unfair scrutiny. It's infuriating when acts set out to challenge a negative stereotype and end up proving it completely right with their incontestable lack of talent. A performance as appalling as this can deter potential audience members from ever attending another show by a women or even steer them away from live comedy in general.

While leaving the venue I tried to give the tech a sympathetic glance. It's nearing the end of the festival; he won't have to suffer much longer.

Danica Priest: Musician, writer and artist from Virginia, now living in London using her MA in popular music studies to work in comedy production.