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Review > Music and theatre reviews: Pink Noise by FORK | VOICES

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By Fiona Shepherd

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IT'S ALL gone a cappella in Edinburgh. FORK, a Finnish four-piece with definite Eurovision appeal, are already big stars throughout Scandinavia, where they are used to performing their fancy-pants Pink Noise show in arenas.

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They take the stage for their Edinburgh debut with Kasper on drums, Jonte on bass, Mia on keyboards and Anna on vocals. There are no instruments on stage, however. Every sound is generated using their vocal cords, sampled and looped to build up a backing track, with a little additional technical manipulation from their sound engineer, who is rightfully credited as their fifth member.

It's undeniably audacious stuff, but their slick presentation of pop hits, both recent and retro, complete with flamboyant stage costumes and megawatt light show, doesn't translate particularly well to the comparatively Presbyterian ambience of the George Square Theatre at teatime.

Their stilted banter falls flat until Jonte takes a turn about the crowd and the performance goes into camp overdrive with the boys taking lead on Britney and Lady Gaga numbers. It feels like they are only finally getting comfortable and shaking off the sterility by the time they sign off with their most impressive party piece - a barn-storming Bohemian Rhapsody, complete with "guitar" solo.

Across town at the New Town Theatre, there is a contrasting a cappella experience, employing none of the stagecraft of the FORK show and a very different repertoire.

Although Voices is listed in the theatre section of the Fringe brochure, this is very much a music show, celebrating singing traditions "from around the corner and around the world". The eight-strong ensemble already have many global bases covered, hailing collectively from Iran, Israel, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Portugal, India, Madagascar and Puerto Rico. Together, they turn their voices to jazz, Congolese folk singing and West African harmonies. Then they move on to the next song.

The contrasting styles don't always blend that well, certain modes only working as featured solos within a larger whole and, while the singers' technical gifts are not in dispute, the results can feel more like a self-satisfied academic exercise than a soulful expression of the sounds that connect us. However, a solo spot from the hardest-working beatboxer in show business, during which he creates his own banging club track, is dazzling.

MUSIC

Pink Noise by FORK ***

Assembly George Square (Venue 3)

THEATRE

VOICES ***

New Town Theatre (Venue 7)