

Review: Lou Sanders - And Now For A Nice Evening With Wallan

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Emma McAlpine reviews the second solo show from the self-titled "Beyoncé of comedy" – Lou Sanders.



The show's over and the floor is covered in glitter, water, talcum powder and ripped paper. No, it isn't the Olympics closing ceremony; it's *And Now For A Nice Evening With Wallan!* – prop-loving comic Lou Sanders' new Edinburgh production. Clashing however, with the closing ceremony tonight, the audience is a little slim but Sanders clears the air with customary tongue-in-cheek arrogance: "Don't worry, the word's already out about how good the show is, so I'm not bothered."

The stage is set for hijinks, with random and intriguing props from a 'VIP' red velvet box roped off with champagne bottle to a stepladder draped in a gold scarf (oh yeah, and there's a bearded man reading a book in a paddling pool). Throughout the show, Sanders performs ridiculous stunts with these set props, which in her hands are turned from seemingly everyday objects into instruments for mirth. One in particular I am invited to help with, involving the aforementioned talcum powder, is an inspired visual gag; simple in its execution but carefully timed and constructed.

Then there's this business of 'Wallan', a benign and spiritual concept, which Sanders does her best to explain over the course of the hour with some inspirational videos and a Wallan soundtrack. It's a bit like being a fly on the wall in the bedroom of an only child who occasionally morphs into a New Age hippy.

The show's ramshackle structure, which sees her flip from stunts to a characters and videos, befits her eccentric personality. But at times, there is so much going on, that the thread of the joke is lost amongst the chaos. At others, the visual impact of her characters will have more weight than their chatter. I could barely understand what her American tour guide's character was saying half the time, but I was still giggling away at her accent and appearance.

A lot of people make the assumption that all comedians must have funny bones, when actually some have to work quite hard at being amusing. Sanders is one of the most innately funny acts I've ever come across; there is an underlying current of hysteria in the audience that starts at her entrance – which is worthy of a star in itself, I don't think I've ever laughed that hard in the first 10 seconds of a show – and doesn't let up until she leaves. She's a natural at the dreaded 'audience banter' as well, gleaning information about us in an innovative way and easily engaging with the front row when the occasion calls for it: "Please don't stifle a laugh Jenny! This isn't a play – by all means let it out!"

Audience participation isn't everyone's cup of tea (I recommended the shouty, sweaty Nick Helm to a friend the other day and she said it nearly put her off comedy gigs for good); but it's hard to imagine who wouldn't like Sanders' warm and inclusive act. Where else would you find a fishing rod being dangled over your head with a saucy compliment attached? Extraordinary, fun and the best kind of silly; her shows are the rare kind that will have you actively making a beeline for the front row.

★★★★☆



