

PREVIEWS:

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REVIEWS:

Unbridled Futurism: Travel between dimensions in the science-fiction show you didn't know you needed — #OttFringe 2017

Captain Nick Di Gaetano of the Echolalea is an astronaut aboard Earth's first spacecraft capable of reaching light speed. Not this, Earth, mind you. He's just stopping by to visit. After a two year journey out to where the first test of the light speed drive is to happen, he runs into an anomaly that leaves Captain Nick unstuck and bouncing between parallel Earths, trying to find a way home to his wife and cat.

It's science fiction, obviously. It's part rock concert, part story-telling, part TV show. There's sentient raccoons, wizard cats, and inter-dimensional war. Oh, and it's weird as fuck. I didn't know I needed this in my Fringe experience. But I did. And if you have a science fiction bone in your body, you do too.

Unbridled Futurism was created by Nick Di Gaetano (who plays Captain Nick Di Gaetano, voices Ambassador Nick Di Gaetano, dons a mask as the Raccoon King, among other roles) and Teddy Ivanova (who voices Mission Control-the AI in Captain Nick's head). It also features an appearance by Jordan Moffat as Garbage Earth Nick Di Gaetano. All do marvellous jobs with well written, well-presented material. The show is exceedingly entertaining and among the most original concepts and presentations I've ever seen. (Which is what I was hoping for and why I was looking forward to it.)

The cool tunes and reason for singing them is all directly tied into the story and there's a fun singalong component towards the end of the show. There are a couple of video sketches scattered throughout the show, which aside from allowing visuals you can't put on stage (like space battles), give Nick the chance to get off stage and get ready for the next scene. The only one of these that I didn't feel served the story enough for its length, leaving it feeling more like a distraction, was the presentation of Google/Alphabet Earth.

If there was one thing that could have made Unbridled Futurism even better, it would have been to see more direct stakes for Captain Nick. We know he's trying to get home to his wife and cat and we understand his plight, but he isn't doing much to pursue it actively and it's never presented as a real possibility. Don't get me wrong, the down-and-out, nearly given up all hope, Captain Nick carries charm enough for this to already be a fantastic presentation, but being able to feel an emotional connection with him would, at least for me, push it over the top.

Whether you're a sci-fi guy or gal, or just a theatre goer looking for a truly original theatrical experience (that doesn't require any involvement on your part), buy your tickets to Unbridled Futurism right away. The raccoon wars might start tomorrow and you'll be sorry you missed

out.

My only question is how soon until we can we get an Unbridled Futurism 2? I'd also accept a full two-act version.

But that's just my opinion and I'd love to know what you thought. What was your favourite part of Unbridled Futurism? Are we ready for the Great Raccoon Wars?

- Allan Mackey, On Stage Ottawa

“Unbridled Futurism”: Weirdly Satisfying - The New Ottawa Critics

I'm going to be honest: Unbridled Futurism is probably the weirdest show at this year's Fringe, but its balls-to-the-wall approach to its unusual subject material leads to a satisfying conclusion à la pulpy science fiction.

Unbridled Futurism combines original rock music (and one more hip-hop-inspired musical number) with video projections and a surreal plotline in a show that tosses absurdity at you like it's going out of style. In an alternative reality to our own, Captain Nick Di Gaetano prepares to become the first human to travel at light speed, only to vanish from his own reality in the attempt, becoming doomed to phase in and out of all possible realities as he tries to find the Earth that he left behind. Soon however, he realizes that he has created a monster in Rrasher, the Raccoon King of Great Garbage Land (formerly Garbage Earth), who will hunt him across space and time in order to secure for himself the secret of light speed travel, and conquer the multiverse.

So yeah, it's a bit out there (how many plays have you seen with opening credits?) in terms of what it's about, but under closer scrutiny the plot is actually pretty classically constructed. The Captain's motivation is clear, and the stakes rise to a crisis that is resolved using the logic of the fictional world. You can't argue that this show makes no sense, because under the surface the plotline is just as complete (if simplistic) as anything Ibsen wrote. Out of nonsense comes logic (go figure).

There is also generous usage of both projection screens, and live musical interludes to break up the action. Original rock songs that are half-comedic, half-serious, and relate space travel to lonely experiences like bad acid trips occur largely in the first half – and Di Gaetano really brings it on guitar and vocals, with an intensity to rival Bright Eyes (but not as depressing). Sound levels are occasionally an issue with having to balance a live mic, guitar and amp, but the energy isn't lost, even if the words sometimes are. Projections include the opening credits sequence, a dream sequence, and an ad for the new and improved city of Toronto, with a fever-dream-inspired skyline with way too many CN Tower knockoffs. These songs and projections (including a visit from a cat wizard) are tangentially related to the action of the plot at best, but they do help to explore the strange universe created in this show, not unlike the many digressions in the works of Douglas Adams. Di Gaetano never loses his words or energy, delivering a performance that must leave him exhausted at the end of every show. A special pleasure is Jordan Moffat as the Garbage Earth version of Captain Nick with his overly phallic slang (not vulgar exactly, but hardly family-friendly either) and absurd enthusiasm even in the face of losing the battle to the evil

raccoons.

While I can't really say that this show imparts pearls of wisdom for your day-to-day life, it sure is a lot of fun. If you're a fan of surreal or absurd theatre, you're going to have a good time with this one.

- Ian Huffam

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Nick Di Gaetano, who co-wrote and acts in this show, is no stranger to unusual creations. Many remember him in particular as one-half of the charmingly odd 2009 Ottawa Fringe sensation Countries Shaped Like Stars. However, with Unbridled Futurism, Di Gaetano plunges into new dimensions of strangeness and the unexpected. The multi-media, mostly solo show finds him hurtling around the multiverse – which is way more complex than the universe – as an astronaut-cum-rock-musician who just wants to get back home to his wife and cat. That's easier said than done, what with multiple versions of Earth and even of Nick floating about the multiverse. Plus there's the self-satisfied Puff, a cat wizard from another earth; a cellphone-wielding gang of interstellar racoons intent on turning everything everywhere into a gigantic pile of garbage; and the huckster CEO of Alphabet, a company which promises to build shiny, beautiful cities everywhere. Funny and fleet, the show is also a dark warning to bridle our foolish ways or we'll unleash an ugly future.

- Patrick Langston

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Unbridled Futurism is a new work by Nick Di Gaetano that mixes live music and video elements to tell the story of an astronaut, the first man to break the light speed barrier. Now stuck shifting through parallel earths with the A.I. voice of Mission Control in his brain, he just wants to get home to his wife and cat.

With only a projector screen and guitar onstage Nick tells his strange and surreal story. The show's strengths really shine when Di Gaetano picks up his guitar – a requirement for all astronauts since Col. Hadfield – and starts playing. The original music is what makes this performance stand out. I wouldn't be surprised if the songs all make their way onto a Bowie-esque

concept album one day soon. There's title screen and opening credits the performance plays like a 3am basic cable show that you only half-remember the next day. The video segments allow Nick time to change costumes between himself, Puff Puff the omnipotent wizard cat, and a planet-conquering raccoon king. Alone on stage for almost the entire show, Di Gaetano is joined briefly by Jordan Moffatt as Garbage-World Nick towards the end.

The show makes for a fun, weird mixture of TV's Sliders, David Bowie's Space Odyssey, and Mystery Science Theatre 3000 special effects.

- Nicholas McBurney