



Top 10 2006 - If You Held A Gun To My Head... (excerpt)

Monday, July 24, 2006 by Matthew A Everett

Full review at: <http://www.matthewaeveryett.com/columns/detail.php?articleID=898>

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If you held a gun to my head and told me I could only see ten Fringe shows, what would they be, and why...

And if you removed the gun from my head and let me see 10 more, what would those be, and why...

Since I know most Fringers aren't obsessive theatergoers like myself, I imagine a scenario in which I'm forced to boil it down to the essentials.

I've done my homework, so you don't have to, and these are my best guesses (not for what may be most popular, but for the things I'm looking forward to because they seem like they're going to be a lot of fun)

And it looks to be a pretty varied list anyway, even without my being deliberate - there's new plays created in a variety of ways, there's spoken word and storytelling, there's dance, there's singing, there's improv comedy, there's drama, there's martial arts, there's regular venues and site specific theater, there's stand-up, there's locals and out of town acts, there's the spiritual and the secular and the sexy - sometimes all rolled up in the same show - heck, I even think I might hit just about every venue while checking off the top 20 list - not quite all, but darn close.

The show - African Roads, American Streets

The location - Southern Theater

The artists - Universal Dance Destiny

The hook - High energy music and dance from performers that are a mix of ages, genders and ethnicities

High brow reasons to go - The show explores the traditional African roots of today's urban dance movement and blends the two, with music and spoken word layered in for good measure

Lowest common denominator reason to go - If you're down, it'll pick you up. If you're nodding, it'll wake you up. Quite possibly the most exuberant and joyful production in this year's Fringe.

Anyone who saw Universal Dance Destiny's three minute presentation as part of Fringe-For-All knows what I'm talking about.

If you happened to miss it then, you can get a little taste of their eclectic style in a video clip on YouTube from their appearance on Cue to Cue - which you can reach handily from the links on the front page of my website.

(Right now UDD is by far the most viewed of the nine Fringe clips that are posted - seven being performances by Fringe artists, two being conversation about the Fringe itself. I can see why - they are

an awful lot of fun to watch)

I thought they were the Best Dance Moment at the recent Fringe-For-All showcase

The group, led by Edna Stevens Talton - coming to us via her home country of Liberia and adopted home of New York City, now settled in the Twin Cities with her new dance company - was a jolt of electricity into the evening's festivities that powered us into intermission and back for the second half.

Dancers tall and small, adult and teen and child.

Dress both African and urban

Dancers jerking, splitting, bouncing, spinning on their feet, their heads, their backs.

The human body in their hands seems to have very few, if any, limits.

The pounding rhythm of the drums, the human accompaniment of the beat box, side by side.

I unfortunately don't have the proper background or vocabulary to do it full justice.

I only know I sat, captivated, wondering what a full 50 minutes of this kind of presentation might hold.

And now we all get a chance to find out.

If there's any justice, they'll fill all the seats in the Southern for each of their five performances.

If you just want to have fun, and recharge your batteries at any point in the festival, this is a group you should check out. Their energy and enthusiasm for what they do is infectious, and definitely a Fringe bug you want to catch.