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Dispatches from the Fringe: unfulfilled promise in a clever 'Jellyfish'

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Jellyfish

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Jellyfish by Alice Malseed and Sarah Baxter

Rating: ★★★★★

Reality bites hard in post student London for Belfast born Alice. Here the promise of a better life has given way to surviving a recession, working four jobs and living in a dingy building with dingy people. But this is not the only promise broken in "Jellyfish" by Alice Malseed and Sarah Baxter. Promising a mix of music, movement and contemporary performance style, "Jellyfish" falls short of its own aspirations. Instead it delivers a clever, confessional, one-woman monologue, but one with little music, little imaginative movement and too little of the inventive, performative moments it tantalizingly offered at times.

In "Jellyfish," Alice recounts her litanies of misery, observed, remembered and imagined, interspersed with random anecdotes of drugs, parties and people throughout the years of

Generation Y. Jumping back and forth across the years, shifting from list to list, Alice is bored, angry and frustrated with everything. She clearly knows what she doesn't want, and the list is endless, but has no real sense of what she does want. In "Jellyfish," Generation Y comes in for just as much a slating as the world it finds itself inhabiting, appearing as self-absorbed and self-obsessed with its own sense of entitlement and of being hard done by.

Performed by Alice Malseed, "Jellyfish" opens promisingly enough. Sitting on a small wooden bench, tapping out the rhythm to a song with her feet and hands, Malseed initially draws you in. But vocally and thematically there's little variation and the whole begins to feel like a rant after a while. Theatrically, movement was less imaginative than it could have been and was interspersed with long periods of standing as lists repeating phrases such as "here is," or "when I was" where delivered in quick succession. Sarah Baxter's direction showed moments of flair, and performative moments with paper cups, sparkles and matches hinted at a freshness that might have been. But these were too infrequent and, for the most part, Baxter appeared content to let the words rather than the performer do most of the work. Adrian Mullan's simple lighting design was often functional, but it too showed moments of promise hinting again at what could have been.

There is some fine writing on display and a lively intelligence at work in "Jellyfish," but one that thematically and theatrically didn't go far enough. As a commentary on the chaotic nature of the world as it is, or the world viewed through mud coloured glasses, its endless tirade of complaints and observations risked being reductive of its character, concerns and observations. Yet "Jellyfish" showed moments of real promise. As did Malseed and Baxter, who clearly have much more to offer and are certainly ones to watch out for.

"Jellyfish" by Alice Malseed and Sarah Baxter runs at the [Project Arts Centre](#) as part of the Tiger Dublin Fringe till September 11th. Shows begins at 2.00 pm

Tickets: €12/€10

For further information go to [Project Arts Centre](#) or [Tiger Dublin Fringe](#)



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