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Dispatches from The Fringe – Hopelessly Devoted to Smilin

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An Insignificant Man
Smilin' Kanker

An Insignificant Man

Rating: ★★★★★

Smilin' Kanker wants a boyfriend. Simple as. Unashamedly romantic and self-obsessed, he's always wanted a boyfriend for as far back as he can remember. Teasing out the trials and tribulations of a gay man looking for true love on the Dublin gay scene, Yeah Sure Whatever's production of Smilin' Kanker's, *An Insignificant Man*, takes us on a deeply touching and hilariously funny, personal journey through Smilin's failed attempts to meet that beautiful person who makes everything alright. Less a rollercoaster ride and more of a romantic stroll, *An Insignificant Man*, moves with beguiling gentleness and captivating ease, winning you over with its warmth, laughter, tenderness and charm.

Taking to the stage with wildly, gesticulating hands, black suit, no shirt, diamond earrings and a large, pink boa necklace, Smilin' Kanker, alter ego of performer Ciarán O'Keeffe, begins to talk

about love. About loneliness. About nights tinged with sadness and alcohol, about self-help books and little rituals to enable hope triumph over experience so he can once again re-enter the scene searching for love. Punctuated by torch songs sung under the spotlight, audience interactions and a dance routine learnt through a correspondence course with the Ceausescu School of Contemporary Dance, laughter and tenderness abound as heartache hides behind a permanent smile that seeks and fears what it most desires.

Skilfully delivered with impeccable timing and consummate charm, the audience was made feel like intimate friends invited over for dinner and a chat. At first, *An Insignificant Man*, seemed to skirt around the edges, walking up to, but never entering, the dark pool of heartache and loneliness plain for all to see. Often it reached too quickly for the aww gawny response and risked tottering over into self-pity. But this was avoided as it began going deeper and into darker places, revealing the hurt behind that always smile that crashed headlong into itself. While some songs were more successful than others, a heart rending rendition of *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow* left the sentimentality behind and hit home with a kick. If the end seemed one part hopelessness, two parts hope, it all added up to a truly enjoyable and engaging performance.

An Insignificant Man belongs to the tradition of Quentin Crisp's, *The Naked Civil Servant*, and Harvey Fierstein's, *Torch Song Trilogy*. If it doesn't quite have Crisp's rich lyricism and social commentary, or Fierstein's raw power, its large sense of intimacy more than compensates. You may argue there is nothing really new here. Amusing dances, torch songs, stories of trawling through the gay dark side looking for love, it's all been done before. Yet every love story ever told has been done before. It's in the telling that we find something that draws us in. In *An Insignificant Man*, Smilin' Kanker could read the phone directory and make it delightful and engaging. With humor tinged with sadness tinged with even more humor, *An Insignificant Man*, is wildly, hilariously and joyously irresistible. Will you still love him tomorrow? You certainly will.

Yeah Sure Whatever presents Smilin' Kanker in *An Insignificant Man* which runs as part of the [Tiger Dublin Fringe](#) at The Pearse Centre until Saturday, September 20th

Doors open 10.00 p.m.

Tickets €13.00 Concessions €11.00

For more information go to <http://fringefest.com/festival/programme>

Themes of an adult nature, 18+



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