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Dispatches from the Fringe: songs and stories and 'No Encore'

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No Encore by yeahsurewhatever

Photo by Ciara McKeon used with kind permission of Tiger Dublin Fringe

No Encore by yeahsurewhatever

Rating: ★★★★★

It's No Encore's final gig. We're not entirely sure why. Getting old, not making enough money, accepting you're a has-been that never really was. What we do know is things have finally broken down between singer and guitarist. Described as a gay, has-been frontman falling apart to an indie soundtrack during his band's last gig, "No Encore" has big aspirations but, like its central frontman, suffers something of an identity crisis at times.

Written by Ciarán O'Keeffe, "No Encore" follows O'Keeffe in his shiny black jacket with Gaga epaulettes as the arrogant frontman discussing love, loss and betrayal on the gay scene, charting his personal descent from innocent to victim to abuser in love. Beside him an unimpressed female guitarist performs classic covers of indie love songs which he sings in between anecdotes. The

song, anecdote, repeat format sits uneasily between theatre piece and live gig, with live music supplied by Kiara Gannon as the female guitarist, performing some excellent acoustic arrangements to strong vocals by O'Keeffe.

While bravely venturing into some new territory for yeahsurewhatever, "No Encore" wasn't quite as brave or as organised as it might have been. Its premise of a less than illustrious cover band was often problematic for, as the show progressed, it felt less like a band and more like a solo artist with a backing musician. Though this was partially the point, we learnt very little about its female guitarist, whose main function seemed to be to play guitar, set up O'Keeffe's next monologue on his problematic love life and act as his punishing conscience. With very little dialogue exchanged between the two, "No Encore" sat uncomfortable between being a two hander and a one man show with musical accompaniment and additional commentary. Which is not to say that Gannon was superfluous. Her brooding, world weary presence, excellent playing and vocals left you wishing you could have had more of her story and of her interactions with O'Keeffe. Throughout, director Emma Weafer kept movement to a minimum, letting the words and music do all the work while both performers stood, and an opportunity for deeper engagement was lost, glimpsed on occasion as when O'Keeffe began dancing.

Following on from last years excellent "An Insignificant Man" yeahsurewhatever's "No Encore" has the hallmarks of being a transitional piece. Indeed it was never more compelling than when O'Keeffe stepped out of the comfort zone of "twenty eight thousand to one odds of falling in love" and "love makes you vulnerable" themes, even if in "No Encore" they're a little darker and deeper. These stories of heartache on the gay scene were less effective than O'Keeffe's excellent embodiment of a man believing himself a rockstar in his own head admitting he is without talent. You wanted more of this, for here O'Keeffe was utterly engrossing and performing at a whole other level. For unlike his talentless rock star, O'Keeffe does have some serious talent.

"No Encore" by yeahsurewhatever runs at the New Theatre as part of the Tiger Dublin Fringe till September 19th.

Show begins at 8.00 pm

Tickets: €15/€13

For further information visit [The New Theatre](#) or [Tiger Dublin Fringe](#)



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