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JD Shapiro: I'm With Stupid



22/08/22

Gilded Balloon, Teviot (Billiard Room), Edinburgh

It's a Monday night on the Fringe and it's raining, which no doubt explains why the audience in the Billiard Room is best described as 'modest'. No matter. JD Shapiro takes the small number in his stride and comes out with all guns blazing, ready to dish the dirt on his adventures in the screen trade. He warns us right up front he's going to be dropping a lot of names tonight, but clearly has no fucks to give on that score. Drop them he does, in large quantities.

Shapiro is the kid from New Jersey, who arrived in LA with one hundred bucks in his pocket and a crazy dream in his head – a dream of making it big in Hollywood. He's the guy who wrote a silly movie called *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (on spec) and managed to get it into the hands of Mel Brooks, via the dentist that they both used. He's also the guy who, when offered a first chance to direct a movie, turned down *Dude, Where's My Car?* (yeah, I know, but it made a ton of money) in favour of a little thing called *Battlefield Earth*, starring John Travolta, which now rejoices under the title of the 'worst film ever made'.

Shapiro is refreshingly open about it. He agrees that *Battlefield Earth* is terrible and tells us he spent some time trying to get his name removed from the project before it ever came out. Because, of course, the finished movie wasn't what he'd envisaged at all... but you know, too many cooks and all that.

Shapiro is a likeable character with a real twinkle in his eye, a raconteur who interacts easily with us, offering us a series of projected illustrations from various points in his career, and his opinions on all manner of things. He talks about the time he took Michael Jackson for a ride in his jeep, the crazy projects he tried to launch with Marlon Brando (who actually seemed more interested in making cookies), and the fifteen years he spent working alongside his closest pal, Stan Lee. With names like this to drop, who wouldn't go for it?

This show is part stand-up, part memoir, and it's a splendid way to pass an hour on the Fringe.

I leave feeling strangely upbeat, thinking that I must have another look at the screen adaptation I made of one of my novels. I wonder if *my* dentist has any contacts? You never know...

Meanwhile, why not take the opportunity to nip down to the Billiard Room and experience for yourself the ups and downs of the film industry?

4.2 stars

Philip Caveney

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