



Edinburgh Fringe Review: Winston on the Run*****

by *Alastair Stewart*

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Venue: Pleasance Courtyard; 24 - 27 August (2.45pm)

I HAVE A confession: Winston Churchill is my political hero. Seeing Winston on the Run was thus a natural, if nerve-racking, thing to do.

I wasn't disappointed.

Freddie Machin (Young Winston/Co-Creator) and John Walton (Director/Co-Creator) have made something exceptional. Set in 1899 during the Boer War, we find Britain's future savior hiding alone in a mineshaft just having fled a POW camp. A sartorial wreck and delirious from exhaustion and fright, young Winston oscillates between wild defiance and brutal introspection as he hopes for escape.

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The tightly packed and humid Pleasance theatre physically draws the audience into Winston's predicament beside a flickering lamp. Both setting and sudden noises overcome our foreknowledge with a fear of imminent discovery and capture before the end of the hour's performance.

A one-man tour de force, Manchin convincingly portrays a character possessed by anxieties familiar to young men the world over: the need of money and the dread of failure.

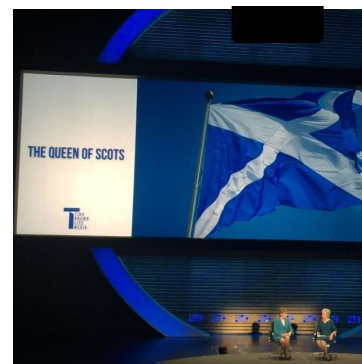
Through flashbacks we gradually see this is an unsuccessful Winston, haunted by his Father's damning cries of failure and stupidity and fleeing the UK after losing a sure bet bi-election.

While the fluctuating bombast of the character, despite his situation, is a clear allusion to a far away future, the show's strength is its emotional irony.

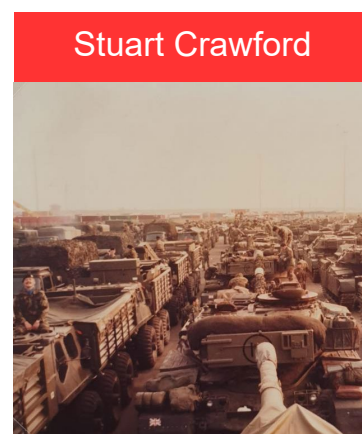
This is a glory hunter, punching at the world with increasing showmanship to substitute with public affection the love he never knew from his emotionally distant parents. Yet even this arrogant and self-promoting young man could never imagine the final revelation: in the end, the public didn't just want him - they needed him by the time of WW2.

Factually confident, well directed and above all well acted, this play is a delight for Winston aficionados and anyone who likes a cracking good adventure story with a fair whack of emotional substance.

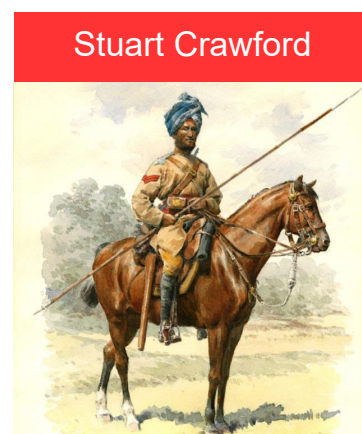
You'll have noticed I haven't referred to young Winston as Churchill. It's because he isn't, and to assume he is spoils



*Image without substance:
Nicola Sturgeon and the
SNP*



*Musings of a REAL Tank
Commander – Part 14
Overrun by Yanks but
saved by very cheap Gin*



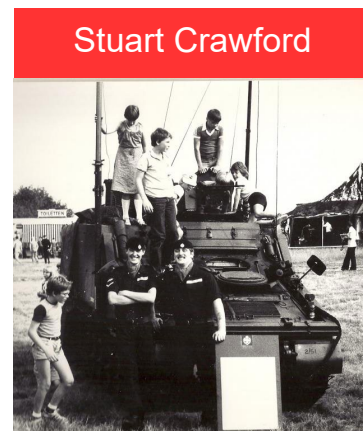
*Musings of a REAL tank
commander – Part 13*

the play. This is a performance more akin to *Batman Begins* than *Attenborough's Young Winston*. The eccentricities, the habits and force of expression are purposefully close, but always off the mark. We continue to watch and to thread our thoughts in the hope of a glimpse of the inevitable greatness we know lies ahead. The joy of this play rests not in expecting to see the fulfillment of destiny by the final curtain, but in being convinced everything we know hangs in the balance if this young man doesn't overcome his demons.

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