

Friendliest



A heartfelt & comedic tribute to growing up queer & becoming the characters we once so longed to be.

Whilst I can't imagine we'll be seeing a surprise appearance from "Faggotman – fist this!" in *Avengers: Doomsday*, your not-so-favourite comic book hero *is* making a splash at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Landing at Gilded Balloon Teviot, with only a table, chair & the slightly unhinged ambitions of every young queer superhero fan, Drew Lausch's one-person comedy *Friendliest* transcends time and borders to be a powerful yet entertaining commentary of queerness and joy, against all the odds.

Hooking the audience on his every inflection, cheeky reference and sexual encounter that references his sister just enough to be uncomfortable, Lausch unpacks his experiences as a young gay man with a tenderness to be heartfelt and a style to be hilarious, jumping from time period to period in a slightly out-of-order exploration reminiscent of the complexities of growing up queer. Whilst this was whiplash-inducing at times, particularly during scene transitions of mere seconds yet which transcended years or even decades, his style and charm quickly overcome any confusion to reel you right back in.

Lausch's stage presence complements his writing incredibly well, a synergy that can only be truly derived by portraying your own material. Under reliable direction from Jenny Leon, the pair blend personal storytelling with a delicious helping of double entendres which take what in some places could credibly be called a trauma dump and turn it into a comedic show for anyone to enjoy. Lausch's own enjoyment and passion shines through, often letting out his own little giggle after a joke has landed particularly well. In many comedy spaces, this may be frowned upon, but in this setting, it's a perfect addition to a powerful piece exploring self and the people who help us grow.

Finding out that both he and I share the same local LGBTQ+ nightclub (I wonder if they'll let us twin Dempsey's in Fargo North Dakota with Dempsey's in Sheffield?), the connections don't stop there. As someone who has been through similar periods to the ones discussed by Lausch, the content is personal & relatable, and incredibly characteristic of the world we live in. I found myself seeing both him and me in several of the scenes portrayed, making his production a quintessential queer experience; an inspiration to all those young people looking for a role model – well, besides his taste in men, of course.

"In comics, your difference is your superpower", Lausch tells the darkened room, completely unknowing of anything about the people he's faced with. But as a result of his visibility, his aura and the fantastic journey that *Friendliest* takes us on, maybe there will be a person or two who leave finally knowing it to be true. Heartfelt, stylish and brilliantly funny, Lausch leaves audiences with one thing above all else – hope.