

## **CRAVE REVIEWS – Edinburgh Fringe Festival, August 2002**

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The Herald (Glasgow)

August 14, 2002

HEADLINE: REVIEWS

BYLINE: Neil Cooper, Louisa McEwan

BODY:

### **CRAVE**

**What? Theatre**

**Where? The Underbelly**

**Rating? HHHH**

**It's no coincidence that the last words of Sarah Kane's tone poem of purging and redemption are "happy and free". Because, coming as it did at the fag end of the nineties, a decade where the black and whites of belief systems had been absorbed, bastardised, or just wiped-out, here was a plea from the dark chasing after something better.**

**Crave is a holy play in this way, a representation of a period of individual internalisation in search of a saviour that's now moved on and come blinking into the public light once more. And, while Fail Better's new production, delivered with**

**well-drilled commitment by a young cast, gives it a renewed vigour along with a fairly solid context, there's still a danger of mistaking the piece as a stream -of-conscious cry for help, setting Kane up as a poster girl for angst-ridden adolescents.**

**Because, as well as heart and soul, there's real craft to Kane's work, especially here, in a profoundly optimistic work which, like all great art, attempts to transcend the everyday to somewhere other.**

**Neil Cooper**

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The Scotsman

August 12, 2002, Monday

HEADLINE: REVIEW CRAVE

BYLINE: Susan Mansfield

BODY:

**THEATRE: Smirnoff Underbelly (venue 61)**

**CRAVE** is a small, jagged, beautiful thing, in the small but dazzling collection of plays left behind by Sarah Kane. It is not an easy play to perform - so many ideas and emotions, so little time. But *Fail Better*, a young company of recent graduates from Warwick University, have created a careful, well-thought out production which is gut-wrenchingly effective.

The four actors sit or stand at the corners of a square, among shards of broken glass and barbed wire. But look more carefully and you see that the glass is not strewn but placed in a glittering mosaic, and the barbed wire twinkles with fairy lights. This is *Crave* through and through, a play on the knife edge between beauty and destructiveness.

*Crave* is a play full of images and stories. A little boy has an imaginary friend. He takes her to the beach and they play on the sand. Then an old man comes up out of the sea and steals her away. The next day, the body of a little girl is washed up on the shore. It speaks of the imprint of the subconscious on the conscious, what connects us to our past and why we cannot escape it.

It is full of poetry, but with a dark subtext of abuse, damage, rape, loss, the havoc wreaked on one human being by another. The actors deftly handle the interweaving lines which never quite become conversations, the fractured characters who almost but never quite connect, and end up more alone than before. There is a particularly strong performance from Helen Bradbury, whose account of abuse and self-abuse has a harrowing fascination, her scream of despair stops the heart. Though the static nature of the production is challenging, it illustrates powerfully how the characters are unable to move on.

Ultimately, what makes *Crave* so powerful is not its despair, but the way it juxtaposes that with beauty, as if holding up the possibility of light makes the darkness all the darker. It's a tough play for a young company, but this production serves to remind us that this is a young play: its writer was just 28 when she took her own life. In *Edinburgh's dark Underbelly*, it shines as if the ink was still fresh, the tears were still wet.

11: 30pm, today. Runs until 25 August

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The List (Edinburgh and Glasgow)

August 15, 2002

HEADLINE: REVIEWS

Body:

**CRAVE**

**Kane's classic revived**

\*\*\*\*

In an underground cavern of the underbelly, on a simple, beautifully lit, set adorned with fairy lights and detritus, a young company do something that throws one back to the old fringe, where young unhyped, first rate companies could be found in little out of the way spaces.

Sarah Kane's dialogue for four voices, arguably different aspects of the same personality, speaks of disaffection, the need for love and the inability to accept it when it comes.

Jonathan Heron directs four fine young actors, two in formal dress, two in t-shirt and skivvy, through a moving and beautifully timed exploration of the mind.

Go make the discovery.

### Steve Cramer

The Sminoff Underbelly, 0870 745 3083, until 25 Aug (not 21), 7.05pm, until 17 Aug.  
£6-£7.50 (£5-£6.50)

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The List (Edinburgh and Glasgow)

August 22, 2002

HEADLINE: HIT LIST

Body:

**CRAVE. Sarah Kane's beautiful, spare and elegiac writing is set off skillfully by this young and enthusiastic company. A play for four voices, it's about the alienation of individuals in an individualistic culture. Timed and acted to perfection.**

Underbelly, 0870 745 3083, until 25 Aug (not 21), 7.05pm  
£6-£7.50 (£5-£6.50)

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Copyright 2002 The List

The List (Edinburgh and Glasgow)

August 22, 2002

HEADLINE: OUR THEATRE EDITOR ROUNDS UP THE BEST OF THE FRINGE

BYLINE: Words: Stephen Cramer

Body:

**Walking through the Meadows last week, I passed a group who were tossing around a yellow Frisbee, squealing their enjoyment of the sunshine and generally misbehaving. Garbed in t-shirts advertising a no-doubt-little-reviewed show, they seemed for all that, as happy as kittens with a rubber ball. As the big shows soak up all the attention and acclaim, these university-aged kids seemed to me to encapsulate what the Fringe is about. You can only hope their romance with the festival isn't suffocated through want of attention.**

**And some of the smaller scale shows have achieved great things this year. Notable among them is Fail Better Production's version of Sarah Kane's Crave \*\*\*\* (Underbelly, 0870 745 3083, until 25 Aug (not 21), 7.05pm): a diamond of a show on a small scale and limited budget, showing really insight into the Spartan poetry of Kane's text...**

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Copyright 2002 Edinburgh Metro

The Metro (Edinburgh)

August, 2002

HEADLINE: THEATRE REVIEW

Body:

**Crave \*\*\***

**Sarah Kane's later plays, Crave and 4.48 Psychosis arguably work just as effectively as poetry as they do as plays.**

**In fact, listening to Jonathan Heron's production (there is little to watch), one is clearly reminded of TS Eliot's The Wasteland – the tumult of different voices cutting across each other, as well as the lines from that poem Kane consciously wove as echoes into her own.**

**It is a violent, angry and frustrating work and Heron respects all three of these qualities, refusing to make sense where there is no sense while finding much of the piece's internal shape and logic.**

**The impact of the play's cacophony of voices verges on the physical, each voice desperate to be heard but unable to listen, spoken by dislocated, damaged selves who often take lines from each other's stories as though promising coherence and continuity but delivering instead chaos and fragmentation.**

**And yet this tense, static but over excitable dramatization also retains a strong sense of individual voice. The testimonies of abuse, violence, disgust and despair are distinct and personal, the performances from all four cast members are strong, committed and painfully articulate.**

**Almost too much in fact.**

**The audience's relationship with the material is never allowed to let up for a minute and in this lies a small pity.**

**There are silences, spaces and emptiness in all Kane's plays that often speak more eloquently than her words and there is not enough of any of those qualities in this production.**

**Too much of a play perhaps and not enough like a poem.**

**Clare Allfree**

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Fest – festival magazine

August, 2002

HEADLINE: REVIEWS

Body:

## **CRAVE**

**smirnoff underbelly, until aug 25 (not weds), 19.05, £7.50 (£6.50)**

**fail better**

**\*\*\*\***

Sarah Kane's acclaimed *Crave* is an exploration of relationships and "the games we play, the lies we tell". The four actors are posed among a set of broken glass and fairylights, facing the audience and addressing us separately. At points modern and at others timeless and achingly human, their stories occasionally seem to connect but are ultimately ambiguous.

There are phrases, incomplete tales and cries for help, often hinging on doom-laden epithets. The atmosphere is sexual and violent, mirroring the text's balance of intimacy and anxiety. It is short, less than 40 minutes, and the ending comes all too soon with a suggestion of redemption. But not much.

**thrill: Joseph Brack's beautiful monologue**

**spill: Interfering music from next door**

**Amy Liptrot**

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The Guardian – The Guide

August, 2002

HEADLINE: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT SO FAR?

BYLINE: YOUR TOP SHOWS

Body:

## **Crave**

**A symphony of violent poetry and brutal beauty exploring birth, death, love and loss – this masterpiece is at the cutting edge of modern drama.**

Smirnoff Underbelly

Until August 25