

# edinburgh people's festival

[www.edinburghpeoplesfestival.org](http://www.edinburghpeoplesfestival.org)

## DAILY DIARY

10/08/08

### First Day report of the 2008 Edinburgh People's Festival

#### EXHIBITION

This years People's Festival got off to a thrilling start. The exhibition at the 'Artspace' in Craigmillar opened yesterday and it is all that we hoped it would be and more. It is just fantastic and I'm so proud of it.

The venue is superb and well worth making the effort to find. It is well lit, spacious and welcoming with John Maxwell's outstanding mural 'Childrens Games and pastimes' on the end wall being just magnificent and so appropriate for our themes.

But it is the exhibition itself which makes this a 'must see' attraction. With 23 beautiful white panels [constructed especially for us by the inmates of Saughton prison] containing the story of the Edinburgh People's Festival for the very first time all standing to attention in a pathway resplendent in magnificent colours, they really catch the eye.

The exhibition has been laid out by Johanna to walk visitors through the entire space and includes two huge cabinets [gifted to us by the Museum of Scotland] crammed full of artefacts and reports of festivals from 1951 through to 2008. Irvine has produced a terrific film for us, as part of the exhibition, with video interviews with Flora McNeal from the 1950's, myself and Richard Demarco.

The entire exhibition experience is wonderful. We can all feel very proud of it. It is superb and impressive, beyond what I imagined it would be like when we first talked about it.

My thanks to everyone who came along to the opening.

The exhibition runs until next Saturday afternoon – don't miss it. I can't wait to go back.



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## CABARET

Our great first day was rounded off superbly with the concert in the Gaff Theatre which presented a diverse and multi-talented, multicultural troupe of artists.

Young Erin Todd on guitar again sang magnificently for us following her impressive People's Festival 'debut' at the May Day march earlier this year.

Suhayl Saadi provided cerebral stimuli reading poetry and lyrics from his repertoire of international themes. He enjoyed himself immensely he told me afterwards he will gladly come back anytime. I had been trying for three or four years to get him along to the People's Festival.

Classical guitarist Jan Stachjynski played Spanish and Cuban songs with such beauty. He was simply mesmerising with his finger picking skills, dexterity and timing. Finishing with some Burns we made a note to get him back in January.

Vladimir McTavish had us all in stitches again. Sitting in the front row I could hear Irvine bursting with laughter in the back seats. Paul thoroughly enjoyed it all as much as the audience. He said at the end he will now reschedule his diary for Friday night so that he too can be on the bill at our comedy night in the BMC Club in Gorgie. Praise indeed!

Imran Masra performed a 10minute monologue from 'Strangers' a play by Wave Theatre which Ekua and Annie Gorge are producing and he was great. Go see the full play!

Greg Rybak is a young Pole now settled in Edinburgh. He read 5 of his poems and the final one, an ode to his countrymen/women here in Edinburgh questioning their 'anti-racism' evoked for me visions of Hamish Henderson's 'Freedom Come All Ye'. Greg has agreed to translate Hamish's ballad into Polish for us to put on our website.

Finally we had the local Craigmillar music group Audability to rock the house down.

More than 50 people attended and they all thoroughly enjoyed themselves.  
My thanks to all those who made the evening such a success.

*.....Now its off to Muirhouse for the arts show. It is rumoured to be as good as the exhibition by those who have seen both.*

*We have 50 paintings on show [which is fantastic]. The judges have made their decision.....oh the excitement!*

Colin Fox  
People's Festival Chairman  
10/08/08