

I want to tell you a story

Perrier Award-winner Daniel Kitson's new show moves away from stand-up to tale-telling. He tells Stephanie Merritt why

Stephanie Merritt

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On top of Daniel Kitson's fridge sits a fat silver bottle on a plinth, brown and tarnished in the sunlight. 'What better symbol could you find of how quickly its glory fades?' says Kitson with his characteristic giggle, holding his Perrier trophy from last year aloft and blowing the dust from it. 'I wanted to book a run at the Soho Theatre this autumn and they said, "Sorry, we're holding that slot for this year's Perrier winner." I thought, God, I'm last year's news already.'

He's joking, mostly (that is his job), but although he made it quite clear at last year's Festival that he neither wanted nor valued the award that 99 per cent of working comedians would sell a kidney to win, Kitson is, nevertheless, concerned that its indisputable cachet won't be enough to counteract the unexpected strangeness of this year's show.

It would have been easy for Kitson to return to the Fringe and sell out one of the big venues with a variation on last year's show. Instead, the winner of the biggest award in stand-up comedy has chosen to go back for a full run with a show that contains no stand-up at all.

'I've had this problem to a degree with the previous Edinburgh shows,' he says. 'The first year, people came expecting filth and they got whimsy. Last year, they came expecting whimsy and got some bitterness. This year, they're getting a story with some film and music.'

But will they be disappointed? Kitson tends to laugh away his anxieties, but with less than a week to go, he admits some concern about whether the new show, *A Made-Up Story*, staged at a new venue away from the main comedy arena, will even sell.

'If people have enjoyed my previous work, then I hope they'll respond positively. But there will be people who don't like it because it's not stand-up, and there will be people who don't like it because, well, it's a bit wanky.' He giggles from underneath his beard. 'But in previews, two-thirds of the audience have really enjoyed it, and one-third has been kind enough not to spoil it, so I don't know how it's going to work.'

A Made-Up Story is the tale of four characters. Kitson narrates over a series of stills and video images that he has filmed in his neighbourhood of Crystal Palace, and he is in the process of putting together a soundtrack.

'There's a song I've taken from the film Punch-Drunk Love which begins with the line, "You'd better hope there's someone for you/ As strange as you are." It's perfect. That plays over the intro film.' It's a line that captures the essence of Kitson's first acclaimed Edinburgh show, Love, Innocence and the Word 'Cock', which detailed the perils of looking for love when you're a bit unusual, and at the heart of the story is the notion of seeking out magic and adventure in a grey world.

Although the Perrier can often lead to lucrative television offers, Kitson has eschewed all such openings in favour of total artistic freedom. 'Sometimes, I think I'm just being contrary,' he says, grinning. 'But I don't want to feel that I've been forced into anything. So sometimes you end up in a situation that you're not entirely happy with, but at least you can say, well, I chose it.'

• A Made-Up Story is at the Pod, 30 July-24 August

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