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COMEDY REVIEW

Slaves Of Starbucks

★★★

The enormously gifted Peter Aterman reprises his hit show of the 2002 Fringe (Golden Cockerel and Tapwater Award Winner), bamboozling the audience with 19 different characters all played by himself.

Conjuring up images of corporate drones mainlining caffeine, the potential for comedy seems minimal. But *Slaves Of Starbucks* is biting, thoughtful, engaging satire with an enduring message about Western society.

Exhibiting finely-tuned acting skills, an immaculately deadpan delivery and astute comedy timing, Aterman (pictured) hardly flinches as he flips between roles.

From power-crazed Wall Street executive to morally void figure-skating champion, and moronic American tourists to unscrupulous ex-communist bloc leader, he manages Italian, Slav and ditzzy American female with impressive accuracy.

In terms of his script, Aterman also pulls zero punches. He tears apart the edifice of America's less noble accomplishments and imperious, self-aggrandising nature, balancing explicit satire with subtle, surreal interludes which offer a more reflective examination of civilised man. But, while partly a bonus, these curious intermissions are also where this show



loses its pace. Is *Slaves Of Starbucks* black comedy or some kind of weird morality play? Occasionally, it wavers between the two and, at 75 minutes long, can lose you en route.

Nevertheless, Aterman's is still a stirring performance and considering the vitality of his message, this show is well worth your notes. Ravaging capitalism, globalisation and the ubiquitous, trashy culture of America, *Slaves Of Starbucks* is a bit like a Douglas Coupland novel, albeit with a few more gags to keep you upright.

If only it weren't quite so long, those gags would keep you on the edge of your seat.

Andrew Richardson

Until Aug 30 (not 16 to 18), Gilded Balloon Teviot (V14), 19:30 to 20:45, £8.50 to £9.50, £7.50 to £8.50 concs. Tel: 0131 668 1633. www.gildedballoon.co.uk