

**A Very, Very Good Variety Show | The Edith | Until 16 Feb | ★★★★★**

What do you get if you combine the brilliant musicianship of the Perth Cabaret Collective instrumentalists with three vocal soloists and two comedic burlesque performers: *A Very, Very Good Variety Show* indeed.

Led by the ever vivacious baritone saxophonist and musical director Jess Herbert, Perth Cabaret Collective give a captivating and entertaining performance, immersing the audience in the era of flappers and cabaret. The performers take us on a musical journey through the Jazz eras with numbers from the nineteen thirties through the decades.



The thing which sets Perth Cabaret Collective apart from any other jazz band that I've watched, is their impeccable ensemble skills. Each band member is a featured soloist throughout the evening highlighting their talents in many a brilliant instrumental interlude. The on stage band members are so attuned to each other; there is never a poorly balanced sound or unnoticed soloist and props to the sound and tech crew who facilitate and ensure this.

The brass and wind sections work amicably with one another, conversing harmoniously with their tempi often driven by the cohesiveness of the keys, drums and bass. Each of the nine instrumentalists bring their extensive skills and love for jazz music to the stage in this superb fringe show. Their respect for each other and the on stage rapport amongst the performers is palpable which makes for a thoroughly enjoyable performance.

Burlesque performers Veruca Sour and Lucy Lovegun captivate and entertain the audience with their physical comedy and racy flapper-esque dances. Their light hearted and flirty performances add that sprinkle of magic to the show, especially during the group numbers.

The dazzling, sassy vocal soloist Cougar Morrison brings to the show a vibrant and witty performance. Her ability to make the audience comfortable whilst explaining the ins and outs of preparing as a drag queen to a prominently hetero audience without the usual

vulgarity, is a welcomed education from the audience. Cougar wows the audience with her beautiful gowns and funny anecdotes, however she truly shines in her Piaf inspired, playful rendition of Milord. Her French diction, bright tone and blonde finger waved hair, took us back in time to a spot lit stage in a Parisian jazz bar. Drummer and percussionist Cam Fermoye, bass player Kate Pass and piano extraordinaire Tim Voutas brilliantly carry and drive the ensemble in this up beat, toe tapping piece.

The contrast from Cougar Morrison's dazzling and theatrical rendition of *Big Spender* to Mia Matthiessen's velvety tone left the entire audience sitting silently in awe. In the unaccompanied opening lines of *Willow Weep For Me*, Matthiessen delivers a sound with the depth and tone of a woman much larger and older than she. Mia's graceful presence and sparkling personality shine through her singing to round out a very professional performance driven by her vocal agility and luscious tone.

All of the vocal soloists bring to the stage a unique and loveable personality, but it is Mark Turner's ever so smooth, suave crooning that gets the audience wildly cheering. Turner's refined yet cheeky stage presence is emphasized as he wows the audience with his rich, classic sound. Mark has the entire audience wrapped around his little finger, emoting so eloquently through his voice and taking them on this musical journey through time.

It is a pleasure to see the performers' contagious energy and enjoyment as they share the stage with one another. With only two performances left before the end of the fringe season, I strongly encourage you to head down to the Edith Spiegel tent to sit back and enjoy this feast for the senses.

**See [A Very, Very Good Variety Show](#) until Sunday 16th February.**

*Claira Prider is a WAAPA and Adelaide University graduate of Bachelor of Music in classical voice with Honours. Trained in Opera and stagecraft, she reviews for OUTinPerth and is currently working on an autobiographical web series with a female led, all Western Australian team.*

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