

WEEKEND EXTRA

The Sunday sermon you never knew you needed

LUISA OMIELAN TELLS DAVE FREAK HOW HER EMPOWERING NEW SHOW REFLECTS OUR TIMES

‘I THINK we’ve missed each other,’ reckons comedian Luisa Omielan about her audiences. And she’s right.

On tour with her latest show, *God Is A Woman*, every night she’s blown away by how she’s feeling, and by the audiences’ response.

‘I often find it quite stressful and haven’t toured for a few years,’ she continues. ‘[So] part of me was a bit hesitant this year with the tour - very nervous and anxious - but I’d forgotten how much I love touring, and how much fun it is, and how beautiful the audiences are!’

‘I think audiences have missed artists, and artists have missed audiences,’ she continues. ‘Because there’s just a love there - I’m just having an absolute ball. Audiences are getting very involved, and doing lots of selfies afterwards, and the reviews have been gorgeous and show-affirming - and it shows I’m on the right track, I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing. It feels really good, I won’t lie.’

The Birmingham-based comedian was thrust into the limelight nearly a decade ago with her debut show, *What Would Beyoncé Do?*, in which she realised she was the same age as the US megastar. Its follow-up, *Am I Right Ladies?* featuring her viral ‘thigh gap joke’ (50 million views and rising), proved her first show was no fluke, and cemented her reputation. With a book and BBC specials in the can, she then broadened her canvas with *Politics For Bitches*, adding socio-political themes into her very personal mix.

But the provocatively titled *God Is A Woman* is, she says, ‘a new start’ that builds on previous successes, but also takes her in a new direction.

‘I don’t see many comics with this kind of back catalogue,’ she explains. ‘I think this is a different path I decided to go down, from a party

with jokes in, to a show tackling politics and religion. I like to call it growth, and my audiences have grown with me.’

‘The show is very different to previous ones, especially the first two. But it’s important to me. *Politics For Bitches* was a very overwhelming and hard-hitting show, it was about cannabis oil, and grief, and euthanasia and cancer - it was a hard show. This one is a bit of a turning point: it’s life afterwards, it’s stepping forward into the light and finding joy again. It’s a very hopeful, empowering and gorgeous show. And luckily my audiences, so far, are agreeing.’

Pre-empting anyone who might

‘This show is a bit of a turning point: it’s stepping forward into the light’

suggest the subject matter as a step too far, she says: ‘In my own head I think it’s a naive sexist ideology if you think, ‘oh she’s a female comedian doing d*** jokes, talking about Beyoncé, she couldn’t possibly talk about religion and politics!’ That’s absolute b*****! I talk about that s*** every day with my friends! Every day! We could go out, at night, for dinner, and what do we talk about? What the f*** is Boris Johnson doing? Are priests the original Incels? Do we want extra chips with that? Do we want to bring children into this world? How much has your tax gone up? Why are my jeans buckling? All over a cosmopolitan!’

Luisa, who is from a Catholic background, started writing the show two years ago, as she struggled in the aftermath of the loss of her mother.

‘When things in our lives don’t make sense, we often look to a higher

power, or higher divinity, to try and figure stuff out. So I just started reading about social orders and social structures and history and religion, and how the history behind religion shaped our world. And the lack of women in religion and in history; and if there are women, they’ve got very typecast, and they’re either virgins or whores or mothers. If you’re very lucky, you can be a mother who was a virgin but never a whore.’

‘I started reading more about it, and I was just a bit surprised and shocked and bored - there are so many stories of women throughout history that haven’t been included in the mainstream!’

Attempting a whistlestop tour of the show, she discusses the ‘slut shaming’ of Mary Magdalene, ponders the roots of #metoo in religion, argues the importance of women to farming and agriculture, and discusses the kindness of strangers as a painter/decorator helps restore her faith in humanity.

‘It’s a bit of a mix and match, but it’s a beautiful show. I’m not very good at explaining it,’ she laughs, adding quickly with a chuckle: ‘It’s the Sunday sermon you never knew you needed!’

‘But I do think it’s very reflective of the times we’re living in; it’s reflective and hopefully, hopeful - a hopefully hopeful show for people’

■ *Luisa plays the Glee Club, Birmingham on Tuesday, and touring, luisaomielan.com*



Mixed bag: Luisa’s show covers subjects such as farming to religion and #metoo

KARL GOWLET

LAUGHING MATTERS

SHARON LOUGHER ROUNDS UP THE BEST OF THIS WEEK’S LIVE COMEDY

Tim Minchin

A lot has happened to Tim Minchin in recent years - a bittersweet spell in LA, a relocation back to Oz - that’s made his recent shows a little more wistful in tone. But as the subtitle of his latest, *Back*, alludes - *Old Songs, New Songs, F*** You Songs* - that alluring twinkle in those mascara-ed eyes is never too far away. He’s been growing up with such grace, and it’s been a joy to do it with him.

Saturday, O2 Apollo, Manchester, timminchin.com



Milton Jones

Bought your Christmas crackers yet? Then you’ll probably be in the mood for some more cheerily daft one liners from this walking joke cracker in the Hawaiian shirt. He always brings a little theatrical flair to proceedings, and this time he’s an international spy (Milton: Impossible - geddit?). We’re looking forward to it already.

Tomorrow, Hexagon Theatre, Reading; Saturday, G Live, Guildford; Sunday, Richmond Theatre, miltonjones.com



No Such Things As A Fish

The QI elves are back with more fun and facts as they continue their hit foray outside of the TV screen. Their latest live offering *Nerd Immunity* is essentially ‘two years of pent-up nerdery that wouldn’t have worked over Zoom’, and our inner geek can’t wait.

Tomorrow, Assembly Hall Theatre, Tunbridge Wells; Tuesday, Playhouse, Nottingham, and touring, nosuchthingsasafish.com

