

Here they are: The Best of the Fest

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Around Wednesday of Fringe week is a good time to go for superlatives, so here I am with mine. Here's my first annual Best of the Fest list — the best shows I've seen so far (with an addition from my co-critic Dean Johnson). These are don't-miss shows, and I suspect there may be more to come during the Fringe's final days. Keep a lookout.

Elizabeth Maupin's Best of the Fest:

- **The Bike Trip:** Martin Dockery's thrilling solo show is a trip of another kind — an expedition to another country, yes, but also one into the reaches of his own heart and mind (EM).
Remaining shows: 10:20 p.m. Friday 5/28, 2:10 p.m. Saturday 5/29, 3:25 p.m. Sunday 5/30. Silver venue.
- **The Cody Rivers Show Presents: Right Back Where We Finished:** Whatever Mike Mathieu and Andrew Connor are doing, they do it with such focus, such athletic grace and such a heightened sense of fancy that you feel you've entered an alien world — the kind of world where everything is for a purpose, if you only knew what that purpose might be (EM). Remaining shows: 10:30 p.m. Thursday 5/27, 6:40 p.m. Friday 5/28, 6:55 p.m. Saturday 5/29. Orange venue.
- **Dirty Stuff:** Jonny McGovern is consumed by his characters (a would-be trailer-park superstar, a blaxploitation diva, a black pimp), and he plays them so convincingly that you forget he's

just a gay white guy in a golf shirt — which makes his show a pleasure and a stitch (EM). Remaining shows: 5:20 p.m. Wednesday 5/26, 8:10 p.m. Friday 5/28, 12:40 p.m. Saturday 5/29. Pink venue.

- **The Dream Express:** Joe Swanberg and Rebecca Fisher take you for a ride as Spin Milton and his lovely ex-wife Marlene, who weave the dream-inducing, mind-expanding intonations that are the heart of Len Jenkin's play (EM). Remaining shows: 5:05 p.m. Thursday 5/27, 8:30 p.m. Friday 5/28, 3:20 p.m. Saturday 5/29. Yellow venue.
- **Fruitcake:** Rob Gee's solo show, about the residents of psychiatric institutions he tended as a nurse, gets at his attitude toward his patients — the humor-filled, even-tempered and compassionate way he seems to have dealt with people who were at the ends of their ropes (EM). Remaining shows: 10 p.m. Thursday 5/27, 2:20 p.m. Saturday 5/29, 1 p.m. Sunday 5/30. Green venue.
- **Lucky Nine:** It's fascinating to watch TJ Dawe's mind at work — the mind of a bright, funny man who sees himself as a loner and a "wild vagabond artist," who doesn't gravitate towards the social movements of strangers and who comes to the realization that some of that can change (EM). Remaining shows: 11:50 p.m. Wednesday 5/26, 6:50 p.m. Friday 5/28, 10:50 p.m. Saturday 5/29. Yellow venue.
- **Plā:** Jeff Wirth has figured out those of us who shrink from audience participation, and his brilliant improv show proves that if you make the people in the audience feel safe and comfortable, we're more likely to join in voluntarily — and we're

- much* more likely to have a good time (EM). Remaining performances: 5:15 p.m. Friday 5/28, 12:35 p.m. Saturday 5/29, 1:35 p.m. Sunday 5/30. Blue venue.
- **Reincarnation Soup:** In Viet Nguyen’s solo show, an entire stage full of people wait in a sort of purgatory between birth and death – or reincarnation – and each tells of his or her life, of disappointments and of hopes (EM). Remaining shows: 11 p.m. Wednesday 5/26, 5:30 p.m. Thursday 5/27, 9:25 p.m. Friday 5/28. Red venue.
 - **6 Guitars:** Six guitar stylists, one lone performer: Chase Padgett makes you believe you’re really seeing six different men in a show that’s sometimes poignant but mostly hilarious (DJ). Remaining shows: 6 p.m. Thursday 5/27; 7:40 p.m. Saturday 5/29, 5 p.m. Sunday 5/30. Brown venue.
 - **... Some Other Day:** Two physical comedians, Ben Schave and Caitlin Reilly, move together so gracefully, even as they perform headstands, somersaults and all manner of physical stunts, that they seem to have been created as one (EM). Remaining shows: 5:05 p.m. Friday 5/28, 8 p.m. Saturday 5/29, 3:20 p.m. Sunday 5/30. Pink venue.
 - **T-O-T-A-L-L-Y:** Picture the teenage girl who, like, totally says “like, totally” all the time. Then picture her so irrepressible that you, like, totally *like* her – and that’s Kimleigh Smith, the ball of fire whose compelling story shifts from light to dark in the blink of an eye but never allows the ‘V’ word – victim – to cross your mind. Remaining shows: 11:45 p.m. Friday 5/28, 11 a.m. Sunday 5/30. Brown venue.

