



LUMLEY v ROBINSON

STARS CLASH ON WHETHER TV IS SEXIST AND AGEIST PAGE 3



IBROX MOVE

RANGERS TO SIGN FRENCH WINGER ON LOAN SPORT

BRIEFING

Police crackdown on violent criminal gangs

A CAMPAIGN to stamp out Scotland's most dangerous organised criminal gangs has been launched. Gangsters who create misery through buying and selling drugs and firearms, money laundering and human trafficking are to be at the centre of a two-month crackdown by Strathclyde Police.

Dozens of pubs forced to close

DOZENS of pubs and clubs in the west of Scotland are being forced to shut today, the first day of the country's new alcohol laws, despite pledges of a "softly softly" approach in the first weeks of the legislation.

Finance giant looks to axe 90

ONE of the UK's largest financial firms, Capita, admitted yesterday that more than 90 Glasgow jobs are at risk, just hours after it announced it would be taking on a group of young trainees and paying them from the public purse.

FEATURES



MORE HARM THAN GOOD? The truth about aspirin.

FOREIGN

LA fires rage out of control

THE wildfires burning out of control in the mountains of Los Angeles have doubled in size and torched more structures on their march toward rural communities.

BUSINESS

McColl blasts Scots banks

JIM McColl, one of Scotland's richest men, has criticised the UK's weak commitment to manufacturing and said its banks are "sucking money out of industry and business".

SPORT

McGeady protests innocence

75% of inmates reoffend within two years

Government 'vindicated' over plans to scrap short sentences

ROBBIE DINWOODIE CHIEF SCOTTISH POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Scottish Government yesterday seized on statistics showing almost three-quarters of offenders who are sent to prison for a short time are reconvicted within two years of being released as evidence that the current system is failing.

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill's comments followed the release of an analysis by Scotland's chief statistician covering 2005 to 2007.

Mr MacAskill said it was vindication of plans to scrap most sentences of less than six

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months because they do little to rehabilitate offenders.

He said: "Today's statistics reinforce the trend of recent years, a trend that sees three-quarters of those sentenced to less than six months in prison gain further convictions within two years of release.

"By contrast, three out of five

ludicrous to suggest that these figures justify scrapping custodial sentences for 65% of knife criminals, 71% of housebreakers and 40% of those convicted of indecent assault.

"Claims that reoffending for community sentences is lower don't stand up to any scrutiny because those who are given custodial sentences rather than community sentences have usually already reoffended many times - they are by definition more serious criminals."

Tory justice spokesman John Lamont said the figures showed no improvement over the last decade, adding: "We are not rehabilitating criminals successfully when they are behind bars, we are failing to get them off the conveyor belt of crime and, despite these figures relating to the last administration, Alex Salmond's SNP Government does not inspire confidence that the situation will improve."

For the Liberal Democrats, Robert Brown said: "The figures make a mockery out of the hollow and sensationalist policies of Labour and the Tories on tackling crime. Locking more people up simply isn't the answer as prison clearly doesn't work as a deterrent to crime."

GIVE HER A BIG HAND



FINAL BOW: Street performer Claire Wedemeyer gives one last wave as she packs up on the final day of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The 63rd Fringe, the world's biggest arts festival with 34,000 performances of more than 2000 shows, broke all previous records by selling 1,859,235 tickets. It was a 21% increase on last year's figure.

Kath Mainland, the new chief executive of the Fringe Society, said it was one of the best festivals in 20 years.

"Even in tough economic conditions, festivals chime with people in a way few other events manage to," she said. Picture: Gordon Terris Record-breaking year Page 3

Downing Street vows to publish papers on Megrabi

MICHAEL SETTLE and BRIAN CURRIE

DOWNING Street revealed last night it is to publish correspondence between the UK and Scottish governments over the release of the man convicted of the Lockerbie bombing.

Sources insisted it would confirm the Westminster government's line that no covert deals were struck with Libya before Abdelbaset Ali Megrabi was freed from prison on compassionate grounds last month.

It will include all "relevant correspondence from UK ministers to the Scottish Executive", a reference to letters from Jack Straw, the UK Justice Secretary, to Kenny MacAskill, his Scottish counterpart, and some Foreign Office documents.

The move is likely to be choreographed with the Scottish Government, which is publishing the medical advice leading to its decision to free Megrabi, who is dying from cancer, before a Holyrood debate on Wednesday.

Mr Straw has described as "absurd" suggestions that any trade deals between Libya and the UK had anything to do with Megrabi's release after leaked letters appeared to show he backed away from efforts to exempt Megrabi from a prisoner transfer agreement (PTA) signed with Libya.

A No 10 source said: "We have maintained all along that, despite the conspiracy theories, there was no deal. This was quite properly a decision for the Scottish Executive to make and there is absolutely nothing to suggest that the UK Government tried to influence its decision," he explained.

The spokesman added: "The work going on to normalise our relations with Libya, which was very important to our national security, was quite separate from the issues relating to the release of al Megrabi."

A Scottish Government

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Record-breaking Festival Fringe sells 1.9 million tickets

PHIL MILLER ARTS CORRESPONDENT

LAST night the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the world's biggest arts festival, surprised even its organisers by announcing it has sold nearly 1.9 million tickets this year.

The 63rd Fringe broke all previous records, shrugging off the recession, the rain, swine flu and the weak pound, by selling 1,859,235 tickets, a 21% increase on last year's figure.

This year's box office is also nearly 10% more than the previous record year of 2007, a year many, including those who run the event, thought would not be bettered. The Herald reported in July that pre-event sales were up 20% on the previous year.

Last year, the Fringe was hit by the havoc of a malfunctioning ticket system, and this year the recession could have also lowered ticket sales.

Kath Mainland, the new chief executive of the Fringe

'I've been blown away by the creative energy and artistic vision'

Society, which runs the festival, said: "We can look back on a month of exceptional ticket sales and one of the best festivals in my 20 years in and around Edinburgh.

"Even in tough economic conditions festivals chime with people in a way few

other events manage to. Over the last three and a half weeks I have seen some amazing work, sometimes perfectly trivial and enormously entertaining, sometimes incredibly challenging and often hugely moving.

"I have been blown away by the creative energy, artistic vision and drive of the people taking part, from performers and directors, to venue producers and promoters.

"There are many reasons why you would choose to bring a show to the Fringe, but this year it seems as though the process of making art is as important as ever."

Venues and producers have benefited from people staying at home for holidays - "staycations" - rather than going abroad. The Stand Comedy

Three named as prize-winners for 2009

KEITH BRUCE ARTS EDITOR

Three companies which received glowing reviews in The Herald during this year's Edinburgh Fringe were named yesterday as the winners of the Edinburgh International Festival Fringe Prize 2009.

Glasgow-based writer and director David Leddy, winner of a Bank of Scotland Herald Angel on Saturday for his production White Tea, was among the winners.

The judging panel, which included The

Club also had numbers up more than 20%. It sold a total of 43,388 tickets, a large increase from the 35,874 tickets sold in 2008.

Tommy Sheppard, director,

said he was delighted with the results: "It's been a record-breaking year despite the fact we've had to operate behind an iron curtain imposed by the city's tram builders."

Despite this year's success, some issues do remain to be addressed at the festival.

The first is the sheer scale of the event. This year, there were more than 34,000 per-

formances of more than 2000 shows. A third of these were comedy shows.

Some visitors to the city find the thick Fringe programme daunting, whereas others delight in finding the cultural diamonds amid the 280 pages of close-typed text.

Culture minister Michael Russell admitted a sense of defeat about what shows to see, especially comedy.

He told The Herald that the size of the event was one of the "very substantial questions" to be faced by the Fringe. He asked whether the programme was too big, and "unmanageable".

Defenders of the Fringe would say its size is merely a sign of its overwhelming success.

Expat Scot mugged in Thailand fighting for her life

ALISTAIR MUNRO

A SCOTS expat is fighting for her life after she was mugged by two thieves in Thailand.

Lydia Riach, 58, from Inverness, who lives in Bangkok with her husband, Dougie, was attacked by the men at the weekend.

Details only emerged yesterday of the incident. Mrs Riach, a mother of two, is on a life support machine in hospital. Her daughter Patricia and son Roger were last night described as being "devastated" by the incident.

The attack was carried out by two men on a moped in Bangkok city centre on Saturday. One was driving while the other grabbed her handbag.

Mrs Riach was carried a