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Posted: September 11, 2010 01:30 AM

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Theater: Top 5 Picks for NYC Fringe Fest Encores

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The best and worst part of fringe festivals, like Edinburgh and New York City's International Fringe Festival, is the sheer volume of shows. You can't possibly see them all and when you do pick and choose, you're certain to miss out on some gems. So [FringeNYC Encore Series](#) is especially welcome. You get a second chance to see 21 of the best shows out of the 200 that were performed. Here are my five top picks for shows worth seeing (or seeing again) from now through September 26.

FringeNYC is the only Fringe Festival I've attended so I can't compare it to any others, [unlike Jason Zinoman](#)

[of the New York Times](#). All I know is that I was very lucky with the (far) too few shows I saw. Each one was worth my time and two of them were exceptional. So here are five shows to jump at, along with links to all my reviews.

FRINGENYC ENCORE TOP PICKS

1. **The Twentieth Century Way** -- Playwright Tom Jacobson is new to me and perhaps new to you, but his success is sure to rise with the terrific new play *The Twentieth Century Way*, one of the most polished and assured productions I have ever seen at the Fringe Fest and certainly destined to have a further life Off Broadway, at the very least. This is top-notch work delivered with assurance and not to be missed. [Click here for my full original review on AOL's gay blog Queersighted.](#)

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Betty White: 'I'm Going

2. **The Hurricane Katrina Comedy Festival** -- I'll be shocked if The Hurricane Katrina Comedy Festival doesn't run off-Broadway or at least tour around the country after its successful run in the New York International Fringe Festival. It's a polished, ready-for-prime-time look at Katrina through the stories of survivors portrayed by five talented actors. Like Spike Lee's documentaries on the subject, you may think you've heard everything you want about this unnatural disaster (it was the dikes and vanishing wetlands, not Mother Nature, that destroyed the Gulf Coast). But the moment their stories begin, you're utterly engrossed. [Click here for my full original review on AOL's gay blog Queersighted.](#)

Here are three shows I'd like to see.

3. **Pope! An Epic Musical** -- The name made me a little wary: spoof musicals are rarely as full of easy laughs as the creators expect. But this garnered good reviews and the musical numbers online from an earlier workshop are appealing.

Away For A While'

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4. **The Secretaries** -- How did I miss the fact that this is a Five Lesbian Brothers revival by TOSOS? That alone would have made it a good bet in my book, not to mention a description that urges, "Join this cult of murderous Slim-Fast drinking, high-heel wearing, big-haired secretaries who work the desks of the Cooney Lumber Mill in Big Bone, Oregon. It's just like your office, only with chainsaws."

5. **Hearts Full Of Blood** -- One of the smartest ways to narrow down your choices during Fringe is to look for shows that have played elsewhere to good reviews. This tense drama comes from Chicago (great theater town, of course) and strong reviews from the *Chicago Tribune* and *Time Out Chicago*. Here in New York it scored raves from the top critics, including four stars from *Time Out New York* and **Chris Kompanek right here on HuffPo**.

I also reviewed two shows that aren't in the Encore run: **a one-man spin on *A Separate Peace*** and ***Rites of Privacy*, a solo showcase for actor David Rhodes**. Click on the links to read my full reviews.

*Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the cohost of **Showbiz Sandbox**, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his website and his daily blog. Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called **Popsurfing** and also available for free on iTunes.*

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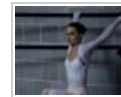
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