



THE FAMOUS SPIEGELTENT IN ST ANDREW SQUARE : STATEMENT, FEBRUARY 2017

R.I.P. Edinburgh's own: The Famous Spiegeltent – evicted from her latest home, St Andrew Square, after 33 years at Edinburgh Festivals!

Big Business kills off the 97-year old Edinburgh icon with no explanation: elitists Standard Life, the Royal Bank of Scotland and other private owners, represented by private management company Essential Edinburgh, terminate festival activity for the public in St Andrew Square, despite renovations in 2008 at a reported cost of £2.6 million from the public purse.

Performing artists, festival-goers, tourists and locals alike lose a premier inner-city festival venue; the New Town loses a key source of festival footfall and associated revenue, including 50,000 ticket sales leaving the heart of the district and heading elsewhere.

13-year old cult show *La Clique*, local Scottish music, community and children's company Captivate Theatre, the Edinburgh International Jazz and Blues Festival, local and international artists – homeless on the 70th anniversary of the Edinburgh Festivals!

- ◆ First ever spiegel tent into the UK, in 1983 The Famous Spiegel tent arrived at the inaugural Edinburgh International Book Festival in Charlotte Square, courtesy of sponsorship by brewers Scottish and Newcastle.
- ◆ First ever spiegel tent at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, since 1996 The Famous Spiegel tent has graced various locations across the city: upon the Princes Mall rooftop plaza; tucked in next to the Sir Walter Scott Monument; establishing a brand new festival hub for eight years in George Square Gardens; bringing the festival back to the New Town with the innovative The Famous Spiegel Terrace in George Street; and, since 2014, as the jewel in the crown of the highly successful St Andrew Square site. 2016 was a stand-out year after three years' investment of energy and finance to create and establish her beautiful new garden home.
- ◆ In her long love affair with Edinburgh, The Famous Spiegel tent has featured at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, the Edinburgh International Festival, the Edinburgh International Jazz and Blues Festival, as well as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, becoming synonymous with Edinburgh's evolution as the world's premiere festival city.
- ◆ Inspired by Edinburgh, The Famous Spiegel tent was the first ever spiegel tent to travel the world to appear at arts festivals and events, pioneering the concept of spiegel tents as international arts festival performance venues, and becoming the industry gold standard: Sydney, Auckland, Adelaide, Melbourne, Dublin, New York, San Francisco, Paris, London, Brighton, Montreal, Cape Town...
- ◆ The Famous Spiegel tent's house show *La Clique* was created and launched in Edinburgh in 2004 and has since played to over two million people as it tours the globe garnering numerous accolades and awards, such as the Olivier Award for Best Entertainment on the West End in 2009. By popular demand, *La Clique* continues to appear in Edinburgh each year as part of The Famous Spiegel tent's Fringe programme.
- ◆ In addition to world-renowned cabaret, new circus, concerts and diverse family and children's shows, The Famous Spiegel tent has been the home of Scottish music for 21 years, showcasing established and emerging Scottish artists to the world festival market, as well as promoting Scottish music internationally with many Scots finding themselves on the familiar stage of The Famous Spiegel tent in different destinations across the world.

- ◆ The Famous Spiegeltent has launched the careers of countless UK, Scottish and international artists, and remains one of the most sought-after venues in the city – by artists and public alike – attracting 50,000 ticket sales last year alone, with audiences comprising local residents, tourists, jazz-lovers and other UK and international festival-goers. The Edinburgh International Jazz and Blues Festival increased ticket sales by 33% in the past two years due to programming in The Famous Spiegeltent at St Andrew Square.
- ◆ St Andrew Square was renovated in 2008 at a reported cost of £2.6 million from the public purse, with the intention of opening up the formerly gated garden to the public as a new public facility in the centre of the city. It has been a perfect inner-city location for The Famous Spiegeltent, pivotal to spreading the diversity of the festival across the city and restoring some balance following the Southside's domination of the Fringe in recent years.
- ◆ The St Andrew Square project offered employment opportunities for over 500 staff and contractors, hundreds of suppliers and more than 1000 artists. The Famous Spiegeltent's iconic vintage housestyle was incarnated by a select team of dedicated and professional festival workers, joined by young Edinburgh locals who received on-the-job industry training. All employment opportunities will now disappear because of this ill-considered and unilateral decision by Standard Life and other big business owners of St Andrew Square.
- ◆ The Famous Spiegeltent provides a platform for Edinburgh-based theatre companies, such as Captivate Theatre who have played to sell-out houses for the last two years with locally produced musicals *Sunshine On Leith*, *Les Misérables*, *Oliver*, *Bugsy Malone* and their own locally written Shakespeare series of musical plays; last year alone, Captivate Theatre sold over 15,000 tickets in St Andrew Square. Captivate Theatre involves over 200 people from the local Edinburgh community: over 100 children aged eight to 18, over 80 adult actors, over 30 musicians, plus numerous technical crew and backstage volunteers.
- ◆ Despite reports to the contrary, the past three years' summer festival activity retained the majority of St Andrew Square as a public facility. The Famous Spiegeltent and its festival site occupied less than half of the Square, with the rest of the Square remaining fully accessible and open as a garden of relaxation and also as a public thoroughfare in its regular opening hours. All public paths, including through the festival site itself, continued to provide unimpeded access from the direction of the St James Centre, Edinburgh Bus Terminal and Multrees Walk, across the tram stop and on to George, Rose and Princes Streets.
- ◆ There were no public complaints in 2016 about the St Andrew Square summer festival spiegeltent project which was hailed as the best, most aesthetic and sophisticated temporary site in the Fringe by Fringe directors; the Square was returned to its pristine condition within three weeks of the Fringe close.
- ◆ The seemingly casual and mean-spirited dismissal by Standard Life, the Royal Bank of Scotland, and other private owners, of the artistic, economic and community value that The Famous Spiegeltent and the St Andrew Square festival project have brought to the New Town over the past three years is quite simply astounding and bears closer investigation.
- ◆ Throughout this fiasco of The Famous Spiegeltent being turfed out of St Andrew Square by corporate interests, there has been no explanation from the Edinburgh City Council, Essential Edinburgh or the big business owners themselves as to why St Andrew Square cannot be used for summer festival activity in 2017 – other than a rumour that Standard Life itself may be interested in the future in purchasing The Famous Spiegeltent...
- ◆ Final word that The Famous Spiegeltent is no longer welcome in St Andrew Square was only received this month and despite intensive lobbying to the Edinburgh City Council and Essential Edinburgh, no viable alternative site has yet been confirmed. Consequently, major programming has already been forced to register with alternative venues, major international artists are no longer available, Fringe deadlines have passed, and availability of contractors, staff, equipment and infrastructure is severely compromised – after 33 years, and in the 70th anniversary of the Edinburgh Festivals, it looks like time has finally run out for Edinburgh's Grand Old Dame.

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