



In Loyal Company, from Lab Rats, blew through town last night for a One-Night-Only engagement at Pleasance Theatre on Caledonia Road and **Pawn** was there for the whole hour of it.Â Yes, 1 entire hour; this being a piece conceived for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, it was constrained in length.Â A one-hander starring [David William Bryan](#), who also wrote it, with Sascha Moore, tells us the story of a young Liverpool lad, Arthur (Joe) Robinson, who joins up during WWII and is sent off to the Pacific theater. Joe, Arthur's family nickname, is telling us his story, while skillfully acting out the best bits of it, on a mostly bare stage.Â He tells of his time in training, for reconnaissance, and his deployment.Â He tells of Loyal Company, his battalion, and his reassignment to an infantry division.Â He tells, of the hardships of slogging through jungles and confronting an enemy unschooled in the gentleman's battle behaviour Joe has trained for.Â When a Japanese unit breaches a line of barbed wire — the first wave throw themselves upon the wire and subsequent waves cross their backs like a bridge — he is shocked.



He was shocked?!?Â We were shocked, such is Bryan’s amazing ability, through both his storytelling and his delivery, to draw us into the world he’s inhabiting, and to let us see through his eyes, feel through his soul.Â More than a few times I was left scrobbling for tissues to staunch the tears as one trial, indignity or another was visited upon poor Joe; when we heard the notes his Mum wrote on his behalf, or those he crafted (wrote upon his mind, lacking stationary) to her.

I won’t tell any more of the story, as this show “has legs,” as they say, and will likely end up on telly or tour or otherwise present many opportunities for more audiences to see it.Â And it deserves to.Â Bryan has given us not just a view into the unsuspecting young lads thrust into unconventional warfare, but this unsuspecting lad was Bryan’s great uncle, and the story is true.Â He has researched it with great effort, and crafted a compelling narrative which brings the audience along with self deprecating humour and magnetic pathos.

Kudos to Bryan and his team for a job well done, a story well told, and for not being afraid of the raw nerves and emotions which come from telling true stories of people we love.