Comics told Perrier’s no laughing matter

Link with Nestle provokes comedian to call for boycott over baby milk

By Glyn Davidson and Louise Bremner

COMEDIANS performing at this year’s Edinburgh Festival Fringe are being urged to boycott the prestigious Perrier Awards because of the company’s links with multinational food firm Nestle.

The Swiss business, which owns the bottled-water firm, has been criticised for giving free powdered baby milk to mothers in developing countries in violation of World Health Organisation (WHO) regulations.

It has been accused of encouraging mothers to give up breast feeding in favour of nutritionally inferior powdered milk. Poor sanitation means that the water used to dilute the milk powders is often impure, giving babies diarrhoea — and sometimes leading to their death. Comic Rob Newman, the former comedy partner of David Baddiel, is now leading calls for a boycott of the Perrier Awards.

Baby Milk Action, the UK arm of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), has asked comedians at the Fringe not to enter the Perrier-sponsored competition in protest.

The British organisation, which campaigns for a boycott of Nestle goods, is backed by stars Emma Thompson, Julie Walters and Richard E Grant.

It believes that by refusing to compete in the awards — which can launch a struggling comic to television stardom — entertainers will send a strong message to Nestle.

Newman, who made his comeback at the Fringe three years ago after quitting comedy in 1993, said: “I would certainly urge comedians at the Fringe to boycott the awards this year because of the involvement of Nestle.”

Newman admitted that until recently he had been unaware of the connection between Perrier and Nestle, but that a boycott would be a way of making the point to the company.

The IBFAN Network claims that Nestle is the worst violator of the WHO code, which states that companies producing formula milk for babies should not directly promote or sell their products to new mothers, provide free samples to them or to healthcare workers, or use improper labelling or pictures that idealise the product.

Just two months ago, the WHO recommended that new mothers should feed their babies exclusively with breast milk for the first six months to help build up immunity.

They also warned that improper use of formula milk can cause health problems for children. The WHO estimates that 4,000 babies a day die worldwide because they are not breast fed.

Post, Randal of Baby Milk Action said: “People don’t realise how extensive Nestle’s reach is. In fact, they own 3,300 brands and Nestle is using the success of these products to market baby milk.”

Nestle’s promotion steers mothers and health workers away from breast feeding and towards artificial feeding, contributing to unnecessary illness and, in conditions of poverty, to the death of infants.

“The decision to boycott the Perrier awards is a difficult one for artists but if they do it would send a very important message to Nestle,” he said.

Comedian Fred MacAulay said he had attempted a boycott of the Perrier six years ago but on the grounds that it “ruins” the festival for comedians.

He added: “A lot of people won’t have made the connection between Perrier and Nestle, and won’t know the facts. However, I would be surprised if comedians actually do boycott the awards as they are so well-established — even though the winners are never a surprise.”

A spokesman for last year’s Perrier winner, Rich Hall, refused to comment.

A spokesman for Nestle said the company abided by the WHO code everywhere but Europe, America, Canada and developed countries in Asia.
Comedian calls for a boycott on Perrier Awards and ‘corporate power’

By Louise juni
Media Correspondent

The prestigious Perrier Awards for comedy at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, which have launched the careers of some of Britain’s top comics, should be boycotted because the sponsors are linked with Nestlé, the comedian Bob Newman said yesterday.

Mr Newman, the former comedy partner of David Baddiel, called on other comedians to boycott the awards because of the controversy surrounding Nestlé’s sales of powdered baby milk in the Third World, concerning that breastfeeding should be encouraged instead.

Mr Newman is one of a number of celebrities, including Julie Walters, Emma Thompson and Richard E Grant, as well as the pop bands Pulp and Ocean Colour Scene, who are backing the lobbying group Baby Milk Action, which is trying to crack down on multinational companies and globalization, saying: “It would certainly urge comedians at the festival fringe to boycott the awards this year because of the involvement of Nestlé, I regard this as ‘a larger struggle against corporate power’.

The Perrier Awards were launched 20 years ago when the Cambridge Footlights team, including Emma Thompson and Stephen Fry, won the comedy line Frank Skinner, Steve Coogan and the League of Gentlemen are all previous recipients. Rich Hall, an American, was last year’s winner.

Perrier founded the awards in 1982, the year before the company was bought by Nestlé. The parent company has become the target of a fierce campaign by Baby Milk Action, which claims Nestlé is the worst offender among food transnationals in terms of encouraging sales of formula milk to mothers who would be better off breastfeeding.

But Patti Frankhull, the policy officer for Baby Milk Action, said although the focus of their campaign was on baby milk, they were also concerned about the issue of clean water. She said Nestlé was promoting bottled water in poorer countries where what was needed was decent piped water.

The company hopes a boycott of the awards would raise awareness but Mr Randall added she was aware of the importance of the awards to young comedians. She sympathized with those who felt they ought to take part: “It’s just for those who want to join the boycott, it would be a brilliant way to alert people,” she said.

A spokeswoman for Nestlé said it was concerned at the message being given to comedians. “Nestlé is committed to infant formula product responsibility, in line with the World Health Organisation’s code of marketing. Many of the allegations made about our behaviour in the developing world are years out of date and have long since been rectified. Contrary to common belief, our marketing practices have changed.”

She added that Nestlé did not advertise or promote infant formula in developing countries.
Comedian calls for prize boycott

Stand-up comedian Rob Newman is calling for a boycott of the Perrier Comedy Awards at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, according to reports.

Speaking to The Independent newspaper, Newman said that the awards should be boycotted because sponsors Perrier are linked with food firm Nestlé.

Newman called on other comedians not to enter the competition because of Nestlé's sales of powdered baby milk in the Third World.

Newman believes that breastfeeding should be encouraged instead, the paper reports.

Lobbying group

As well as Newman, a number of other celebrities including Julie Walters, Emma Thompson and Richard E Grant are backing the lobbying group Baby Milk Action.

The group wants to increase pressure on the food firm by persuading as many top comedians as possible not to enter the competition.

Newman is releasing a new comic video soon, which focuses on multinational companies and globalisation.

Newman was formerly the comic partner of David Baddiel, as well as a member of The Mary Whitehouse Experience with Baddiel, Steve Punt and Hugh Dennis.

"I regard this as a larger struggle against corporate power."

At Murray is a past winner of the Perrier

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struggle against corporate power," Newman said in the paper.

Coveted prize

American comedian Rich Hall scooped the coveted Perrier Comedy award in 2000.

The prize is awarded to the most original and funny cabaret, revue or comedy act at the fringe.

Other Perrier winners, including Steve Coogan, Frank Skinner, Lee Evans, Sean Hughes, and The League of Gentlemen, have gone on to win wider recognition.

The awards have been running since 1981 when the Cambridge Footlights, which included Stephen Fry and Emma Thompson, won the inaugural contest.

To be eligible for the awards, acts must be original and fall into the cabaret, comedy, review or stand-up category.

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News Sources
Thompson joins comedians’ ‘boycott’ of Perrier Awards

BY LOUISE JURY
Media Correspondent

ONE of the Edinburgh Festival’s leading venues is setting up an alternative to the prestigious Perrier Awards to combat the bad publicity the annual event has received recently — to be called the Tap Water prize. — in protest at the working conditions of the mineral water manufacturer, Nestlé.

The Bongo Club’s move follows the call by Scottish comedian Rob Newman for a boycott of the Perrier Awards because of the controversy surrounding Nestlé’s sales of powdered baby milk in the Third World.

Actress Emma Thompson, who won the Perrier Award in its first year as a member of the Cambridge Footlights, yesterday joined Mr Newman in urging comedians not to take part. Other former winners include Frank Skinner, Steve Coogan and the League of Gentlemen.

“The Perrier Awards should be boycotted by all right-thinking people, because Nestlé has got to be stopped,” she said.

Emma Thompson, like Rob Newman, is a supporter of Baby Milk Action, a campaign encouraging breast-feeding instead of using powdered milk. Scottish supporters are already planning to picket the award winners’ ceremony on 26 August. And the Bongo Club, which is operated by charity and runs a mixed programme of entertainment and comedy, has decided to have no involvement with the Perrier Awards in the Edinburgh Festival which starts this weekend.

All comedy performers at the giant venue in New Street have been asked to agree not to accept a Perrier award if their show is nominated.

Among those already backed to appear are Jamie Glassman, one of the team behind the all-G show "Joel Spence and Douglas Rawson" in a show "One Night Only". The show about identity in crisis, at the beginning of the 21st century.

John Sinclair, a leading Scottish comedian, appears in "Beggars and Angels" in a show billed as "quality nonsense".

Gus Warragh, a co-ordinator for the Bongo Club, said details of the alternative Perrier Awards were still being finalised. But although the evening would be light-hearted, she said their point was not.

"There is a problem that people don’t know Perrier is owned by Nestlé, but as soon as we realised we wanted to do something," she said.

Mark Thomas, the comedian and another supporter of Baby Milk Action, may also enter the Tap Water Awards, which the winner is likely to receive a tap and a rumour up a glass of water.

Nestlé has tried to reassure protesters. The giant company has been accused of promoting infant formula in developing countries in breach of the World Health Organisation’s code on marketing. "Many of the allegations are years out of date and have long since been rectified," a spokesman said.
**Comics pour cold water on Perrier Awards**

*By Ed Cooley*

**YAHOO! NEWS** (Reuters) - The fizz is fast going out of the prestigious Perrier Comedy Awards, the high point of Edinburgh Fringe arts festival, as leading thespians call for a boycott of the event in protest at sponsor company Nestlé.

Oscar-winning actress Emma Thompson, who won the award in its first year as a member of the Cambridge Footlights revue, added her name on Tuesday to a growing list of artists who disapprove of the Swiss food giant's marketing tactics.

Campagners say Nestlé, which owns the sparkling water brand Perrier, pits 'babies' lives at risk by aggressively promoting breast-milk substitutes in developing countries.

Nestlé denies the allegations.

"The Perrier Awards should be boycotted by all right-thinking people because Nestle has got to be stopped," Thompson said through her agent.

Lobbying group Baby Milk Action says some 1.5 million infants die each year because they are not breastfed. Where water is scarce, a bottle-fed child is more likely to die as a result of diarrhoea than a breastfed child.

Supporters include actors Robert Newman, Julie Walters and Richard E. Grant and pop bands Pulp and Ocean Colour Scene.

Nestlé, which has been criticized alongside other multinational baby food companies, said it promoted its infant food responsibly and in line with World Health Organisation codes of conduct.

"Many of the allegations made about our behaviour are years out of date and have long since been rectified," the company said in a statement issued in London.

To fill the Perrier Awards gap, a group of comedians at Edinburgh's Fringe arts festival has joined a rival award at the Bongo Club, a funky venue and dense venue in the heart of Edinburgh.

Details of the fledgling Tap Water Awards are still sketchy, but organisers hope to raise awareness of the problems of over-marketed bottled water in the world's poorest countries.

"It's still in the developing stages, and we haven't fixed a final date for the awards but the winner will get a tap and the runners up will get a reusable plastic bottle of water," said Bongo Club festival coordinator Suzanne Merrill.

The Perrier Awards, now in their 29th year, have been the launch-pad for many a career in British comedy including Steve Coogan, Frank Skinner, joincine U.S. comedian Rich Hall and pub landlord Al Murray.

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Oscar-winning actress Emma Thompson has added her name to the performers calling for a boycott of the Perrier Comedy Awards at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Thompson won a Perrier award in 1985.

The action began when stand-up comedian Rob Newman told The Independent newspaper that the awards should be boycotted because sponsors Perrier are linked with food firm Nestlé.

"The Perrier Awards should be boycotted by all right-thinking people because Nestlé has got to be stopped," Thompson said through her agent on Tuesday.

Thompson, who won the award in its inaugural year with the Cambridge Footlights, added her voice to the campaign on Tuesday.

"Many of the allegations made about our behaviour are years out of date and have long since been rectified," the company said in a statement issued in London.

A number of celebrities have publicly asked comedians not to enter the competition because of Nestlé's sales of powdered baby milk in the Third World.

Campaigners believe that breast-feeding should be encouraged in developing countries as bottle-fed babies are more likely to die of waterborne infections.

Allegations

Nestlé has rejected the criticisms, saying it promotes infant foods in line with World Health Organization codes of conduct.

"Many of the allegations made about our behaviour are years out of date and have long since been rectified," the company said in a statement issued in London.

A number of other celebrities including Julie Walters, Richard E Grant and pop bands Pulp and Ocean Colour Scene are backing the lobbying group Baby Milk Action.
The group wants to increase pressure on the food firm by persuading as many top comedians as possible not to enter the Perrier competition.

American comedian Rich Hall scooped the coveted Perrier Comedy award in 2000.

The prize, which is in its 20th year, is awarded to the most original and funny cabaret, revue or comedy act at the fringe.

Other Perrier winners, including Steve Coogan, Frank Skinner, Lee Evans, Sean Hughes, and The League of Gentlemen, have gone on to win wider recognition.

The awards have been running since 1981 when the Cambridge Footlights, which included Stephen Fry and Emma Thompson, won the inaugural contest.

To be eligible for the awards, acts must be original and fall into the cabaret, comedy, review or stand-up category.
Celebrities call for boycott of Nestlé Perrier award at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival


Top UK comedy performers and film stars are calling for up-and-coming acts to boycott the Nestlé Perrier Award at the current Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Emma Thompson, Rob Newman, Julie Christie and Victoria Wood are amongst those calling for the boycott to highlight Nestlé’s aggressive marketing of breast milk substitutes which contributes to the unnecessary death and suffering of infants around the world by undermining breastfeeding. According to UNICEF reversing the decline in breastfeeding could save the lives of 1.5 million infants around the world every year.

Emma Thompson said: “The Perrier Awards should be boycotted by all right-thinking people, because Nestlé has got to be stopped.”

The Perrier Awards started in 1931 and have helped many household names up the ladder, including Emma Thompson, who was one of the first winners. But since the company was bought out by the 43 billion Swiss food giant Nestle in 1992, it became just another of the company’s 12,000 brands and inevitably embroiled in global politics. The Boycott of the award started spontaneously after Rob Newman made the initial call in Scotland on Sunday on 22nd July and has rapidly gained support and attracted publicity.

Victoria Wood said: “Comedians can manage without the Perrier Award and the world should be able to manage without Perrier. I support the Boycott.”

Victoria Wood also raised the environmental impact of bottling water: “The idea that the only way to get clean drinking water is to pay for some in a bottle is appalling. No one has the right to corner the world's drinking supply, that's like something from science fiction. I very happily drink tap water most of the time. I'm not comfortable about the waste involved in producing a plastic bottle just so I can drink something I can get from a tap.”

When Nestlé launched its 'Pure Life' brand of bottled water in Pakistan its aggressive promotion campaign was criticised for undermining efforts to provide piped drinking water for all (see report in Boycott News 26). In the US Perrier is the target of a boycott because of its environmental impact (see Save America's Water). AVF has recently launched a report on the environmental impact of bottled water.

An alternative 'Tap Water' award has been launched by the Bongo Club. According to the Sunday Herald (5th August): "The Bongo Club, a popular Edinburgh venue hosting the Tap Water Awards, will host 19 music and comedy acts which have agreed to boycott Perrier. The new prize will be used to help cash-strapped comics fund shows at Edinburgh. Bongo coordinator Suzanne Merrall said: "I'm hoping that we can really establish the Tap Water Awards as an alternative, and encourage people to use comedy to raise awareness. We are hoping to take it further and make it an award for all the other comedy festivals around the world. If we can make it global, we can see that really having an effect on Perrier and Nestlé."

Patti Rundell OBE, Policy Director at Baby Milk Action, said: “For over 20 years we have been raising awareness of the harm that Nestlé’s marketing has on infant health, and bringing in controls to stop them doing harm. I know this new Perrier Boycott will cause problems for some up and comedians, but I hope they will understand that its also a fantastic opportunity to do something that could make a difference globally. There must be room at Edinburgh for a non-corporate event.”
"At least now more people are aware of the complications with Nestle Sponsorship - not only with baby foods, but many of its foods and drinks. By pushing bottled water aggressively as Nestle does, companies can undermine the impetus to provide cheap safe water to those who need it most.

"I'm glad that there are Comedians who are prepared to see through this - and take a principled stand."

Nestle employs a team of staff to counter the international Nestle boycott, which has been launched by groups in 20 countries (most recently in Cameroon by a national NGO which found Nestle promoting breastmilk substitutes at health facilities with film shows).

Nestle falsely claims that its critics refer to marketing practices it has now stopped. In reality the evidence demonstrates Nestle malpractice continues in a systematic and institutionalised manner. An international monitoring report launched at the World Health Assembly in May 2001 shows Nestle to be responsible for more violations of the marketing standards adopted by the Assembly than any other company (see the IBFAN report Breaking the Rules 2001).

Nestle rejected a Baby Milk Action four-point plan for saving infant lives and ultimately ending the boycott in March 2001. (see Boycott News 29).

For more information contact Mike Brady or Paul Rummell at Baby Milk Action, 23 St Andrews Street, Cambridge, CB2 3AX, tel: +44 1223 464420, fax: +44 1223 464417

Reports on the web (updated 6th August)


http://uk.blx.yahoo.com/01_073180402e2e.html

http://www.independent.co.uk/story.jsp?story=84988

http://www.sundayherald.com/17389

Notes for editors:

1. For news of other celebrity endorsers see Boycott News 29.
2. Baby Milk Action is a non-profit organisation which aims to save infant lives and to end the avoidable suffering caused by inappropriate infant feeding. Baby Milk Action works within the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) - a coalition of more than 150 citizen and health worker groups in more than 50 countries around the world. IBFAN works for better child health and nutrition through the promotion of breastfeeding and the elimination of irresponsible marketing of infant foods, bottles and teats.
3. The WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981. Subsequent Resolutions have clarified, interpretation and addressed changes in marketing practices and scientific knowledge.
4. The latest IBFAN report - Breaking the Rules 2001 - was launched in May this year at the World Health Assembly to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. The report offers Code violations by artificial baby milk companies, including promotion via the Internet. (The report can be purchased from Baby Milk Action's Virtual Shop).
5. Nestle's assurances about its marketing practices do not stand up to scrutiny. In May 1998 the UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld all of Baby Milk Action's complaints about an anti-boycott advertisement in which Nestle claimed to market infant formula 'ethically and responsibly'. The two-year investigation was one of the longest in the ASA's history (see report in Boycott News 29).
6. In November 2000 Nestle was the first company called to give evidence to the European Parliament Public Hearings on corporate responsibility. Nestle refused to attend (see report in Boycott News 29)

Baby Milk Action is a member of the International Baby Food Action Network

Thompson leads Perrier Award boycott

THE prestigious Perrier Award for comedy at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe is facing a boycott.

Actress Emma Thompson, herself a former winner of the accolade with Cambridge Footlights, called for the boycott over guidelines over its promotion of powdered milk, WHO fears that mothers are encouraged to use powdered water to dilute the powdered feeds, rather than breast-feeding, which carries fewer health risks.

Nestle, which owns Perrier, insists the guidelines are based on World Health Organisation guidelines. But the French company is the subject of a boycott by baby milk producers, including the Third World Milk Association (TWA) and the Third World Milk Quality (TWMQ) groups.

The Oscar-winning actress has been accused of breaching guidelines over its promotion of powdered milk, WHO fears that mothers are encouraged to use powdered water to dilute the powdered feeds, rather than breast-feeding, which carries fewer health risks.

The Perrier Award should be boycotted by all right-thinking people, because Nestle has got to be stopped.

The award was set up by the Fringe's main venues, Scots-born Miss Thompson, 41, said.

The Perrier Award should be boycotted by all right-thinking people, because Nestle has got to be stopped.

She joined fellow comedians Bob Newman yesterday in urging Nestle to refuse the award, whose previous winners include Frank Skinner and Steve Coogan.

Miss Thompson and Mr Newman are both supporters of Baby Milk Action, a campaign encouraging breast-feeding instead of powdered milk.

Supporters are already planning to picket the award ceremony on August 25.

Nestle has mounted a charm offensive in an effort to placate protesters. A spokesman said: "Many of the allegations are years out of date and have long since been rectified."
A funny thing happened on the way to the Festival

Has the Edinburgh Festival been overrun by comedians?

Bruce Dessau investigates.

And opposite, on the eve of this year's mammoth arts fest, Evening Standard critics select their must-sees.

The cliché is that the Perrier is a stepping stone to stardom. In reality, it benefits from the inherent laziness of the TV world.

EVERY August London's comedy circuit virtually shuts up shop and moves to Edinburgh. This year for the Perrier Awards, the fuzzy (naturally) Oscar of the UK comedy world, which are generally perceived as the springboard to comic recognition and glory. This year almost 300 acts are vying for Perrier attention.

It was all so different 30 years ago - when Rowan Atkinson presented the first Perrier Award in a bunch of newcomers from Cambridge including Stephen Fry, Hugh Laurie, Emma Thompson and Tony Slattery at the end of their show. No one knew what the fun was about. Literally. The audience thought the presentation was a cameo by the Not The Nine O'Clock News star in a sketch about silly awards.

Two decades on, when the next Perrier Award is handed over on 25 August, along with a cheque for £1,000 and the offer of a West End showcase, everyone will know what's going on.

Over the past two decades the lure of the Perrier has ensured that comedy has become synonymous with the Edinburgh Fringe, which in turn has come to overshadow the older International Festival.

"The International Festival used to be the main that pulled the Fringe, but now it's the other way round," says William Burdett-Coutts, who has been putting on shows at the Assembly Rooms since 1981. This year his extensive line-up includes a chat show by Clive Anderson and stand-up from Alan Davies.

Some feel that Perrier's status earns a disproportionate struggle - but the Fringe is much more than a bunch of laughs - not least numerically. This year, for example, there are 219 comedies and music but more than 900 different theatrical shows, plus Kiwi pop-skaith Noel Fielding's musical "Dental". There are also some more recent comedy-award upstarts getting in on the act such as Open Mike and General 49: So You Think You're Funny? - but they're small bears in comparison.

Perrier draws out all other activities during the festival, which inevitably leads to a variety of protests. This year Bob Newman and the group Baby Milk Action - also supported by Emma Thompson - has initiated the Top Water Award, because Perrier is owned by Nestlé, which makes processed baby milk, the presence of which in Africa is much frowned on.

Edinburgh's regular comedy club, The Stand, has tried to opt out of Perrier by asking for its acts not to be considered, while anarchic Greenwich comedian Malcolm Hardee has in the past run the Snakebite Award, although this was not for political motives but because he is a shameless self-publicist.

In some people's eyes, comedy attracts the crowds and makes good business all round. Burdett-Coutts believes that the Perrier gives the circuit an annual focus: "It's the Windzorion of the entertainment world. You have to be part of it. It is an incentive for acts to put together new work."

As talk turns to coordinations by the performers' agents tuck their lips at the
thought of their commission, while the stars-in-waiting sit back and wait for the offers to come in.

Except, of course, it doesn’t always work like that. I was a judge of the Peveril Awards twice in the nineties, and neither of those winners has gone on to global showbiz domination. Jimmy Nardelli is now diversifying into writing after bits on TV (though she’s at Edinburgh again this year), Lano and Woodley headed back to their native Australia and seemed to stay there. Although they too are doing a 2001 run in Edinburgh, Harry Hill, Jack Dee and Eddie Izzard were only ever nominated — so much for victory being the key to success.

Stewart Lee, best known for his work with Richard Harrington in embattled Edinburgh A.C.B., this year, ending a 14-year run, instead, is directing Jerry Springer: The Musical at the Battersea Arts Centre. Lee loves the Fringe but is not so keen on the Peveril as a way of talent-spotting: “Going to Edinburgh to get noticed is an insane way of building a career because the people that spot you are going to be the kind of television executives who go to Edinburgh in the hope of being fed a success. They sign someone who has done well, like Rich Hall or Johnny Vegas, and rush them into a badly thought-out pilot.”

Lee also suggests that there is no real link between stand-up skill and televisual talent: “Look at Chris Morris or Dom Joly; neither would particularly work in a live environment.” Former wacky champions such as Frank Skinner, The League of Gentlemen and Lee Evans have, however, thrived on TV. Burdock Couteau is less critical about the television world but agrees that it leads to greater Peveril acts over unknown heroes playing a school hall in the Edinburgh suburbs (winners have invariably come from the three main comedy venues, the Assembly Rooms, Pleasance and Gilded Balloon, with the rarest sprinkling of outsiders).

The cliché is that the Peveril is a stepping stone to stardom. In reality, it benefits from the inherent laziness of the television world. There are plenty of shows in London every week, but Edinburgh is the chosen contest ground. Producers and commissioning editors are probably there for the annual Television Festival anyway. If they can drag themselves away from networking, otherwise known as drinking at the George Hotel, they can do an instant stroll. It is efficient and convenient but it will never throw up anyone truly different.

So, what’s in store for the next Peveril winner? This year there is no clear favourite, but one dead cert. A French water company is going to get a lot of very cheap advertising in Scotland this summer.

The Peveril short list will appear in The West End in October.

Length 2 mins 10 secs

PTC studio (graphic of Perrier Award)

Studio: Now it’s Britain’s most prestigious comedy award and it has launched the careers of household names such as Stephen Fry and Frank Skinner. But this year stars like Victoria Wood, Emma Thompson and Julie Christie are urging young comedians to boycott it. Our Arts correspondent David Sillito reports on why the Edinburgh festival’s Perrier Awards are suddenly falling flat.

CA of Pré to au Gauche.

VO: Pré to au Gauche. French rappers, from England, who would like a Perrier. (CA to last years award winners) That is the biggest prize in British comedy. But this year some well established stars are saying they should boycott the award (CA. Victoria Wood walking into a reception area), and not worry about prizes.

TH Victoria Wood

Victoria: It doesn’t matter they’ve already got a break if they’re in Edinburgh. It’s turned into a complete corporate event. If somebody’s good you know they’re going to get on, all the television producers are in Edinburgh anyway.

(CA someone reading leaflet)

VO: And it’s all because Perrier’s parent company Nestlé sells baby milk powder in the third world (CA someone handing out leaflets) which it is alleged encourages women to abandon breastfeeding. Nestlé says the allegations are out of date, but not everyone is convinced.

PTC presenter walking up stairs into Bongo club

Presenter: Of course at this venue this is as far as the Perrier judges are going to be allowed, because this (Pan to Bongo club sign) is the Bongo club and the only award any comedian is going to get is the tap water award. (Pan back to Presenter holding up Tap).

CA track along window to someone painting tap

VO: But their alternative Tap Water Award will hardly compare with a Perrier. Introducing politics into comedy is making many feel uncomfortable.

TH Jenny Eclair

Jenny: It’s inevitable that if the award does go ahead whoever wins it will have to give it back, even though their heart is going mine, mine. So it’s a really really tricky thing and I’m very glad that I’m not in the running actually.

CA Audience laughing and performer

VO: And behind the laughter, there are other deeper worries about a festival that desperately needs sponsors to survive.

TH Nica Burns, Director of Perrier Comedy Award

Nica: Perrier are fantastic sponsors of comedy and I think the two areas should be kept separate.

CA masked performers outside Assembly rooms

VO: This after all is all about business. Show business. And at Edinburgh 2001, Sponsors are very welcome, politics isn’t (CA masked bouncer shooting the camera away). David Sillito, BBC News at the Edinburgh festival.
Politics on the Fringe is no laughing matter

Stars' call for boycott of Perrier comedy award fails to find support as young talents gather in Edinburgh

Rob Newman and Emma Thompson, protesting against Perrier award sponsor Nestle. Right, last year's winner, Rich Hall. Photograph: Jayne Houghton, Daily Mail. Medical correspondent

Flashback: Grosvenor the character who has guided three comedians to Perrier victory including last year's winner, Rich Hall. Their intervention "shock the old order on how Edinburgh seems to bring out some older comedians. As Johnny Rotten said, 'If the music is loud, you are too old.' If the Rob, he's got a great point. I see his point. But for me, the idea of it being sponsored by some superhero character is a bit of a joke. For the world, it's big seriously this big. The main concern is our lifestyle, the big change for the sake of health and fitness."

Hall won last year with his Seinfeldesque persona. "I'm not confident, but I would have no problem. It's just a matter of how the audience react. I don't think it would make a difference to mothers in Africa, whether there was a Perrier award or not."

The prize organiser, Nick Burns, said every year someone tries to "do down" the Perrier, and now that both Newman and Thompson had made their point, they would "leave it be."

None of this year's Perrier favourites, who include Ross Noble and Johnny Vegas, are expected to boycott the prize.

A Nestle spokeswoman said the company complied with all WHO guidelines on the sale of infant formula milk and no longer advertised it in the developing world. "Many of the allegations made about our behaviour in the developing world are years out of date." As per organic farming, the World Wildlife Fund yesterday urged consumers to drink tap water rather than mineral water, to save the environment.

Edinburgh woke up this morning to its biggest Fringe, with 1,462 shows from nearly 50 countries. As well as the traditional Fringe Saturday when performers give a free game of their shows to city residents, this year 60,000 tickets are being given away on the first weekend. In a "two-for-one" deal organised by the Scottish Arts Council's national lottery fund, it is designed to encourage locals to give the world's biggest arts festival a go.

The prospect of more government funding next year seems to have sparked a theatre Renaissance, with the number of companies performing up by a quarter in 2002.
Rows that rocked Edinburgh

Stars call for boycott of Perrier awards!

Stars including Emma Thompson (pictured), Victoria Wood and Richard Curtis call on comics to boycott the Perrier Comedy Awards in protest at Perrier owner Nestlé’s marketing of powdered milk in the Third World.

Earl attacks ‘tasteless’ Diana video!

2000 Earl Spencer criticises a 10-minute film in which a lookalike of his sister, Diana, Princess of Wales, suggestively eats chocolate and spans her legs in a parody of the ‘Shorn Stone interrogation scene’ from ‘Basic Instinct’.

Fury at festival joke over Holocaust!

2000 American comic Scott Capurro outrages Jewish members of his audience by exclaiming: “Holocaust, Schmoholocaust – can’t they find anything else to white about?” Later he vowed to write more material along the same lines.

Live maggots leave audiences aghast!

1997 The Kandahar Frog show grossed local people when performers hurled live maggots into an apologist that included children. One disgusted spectator said: “I wish this should never be allowed at the festival.”

Japanese ‘Kama Sutra’ dance outrages locals!

1996 Veteran Edinburgh councillor Moira Knox is apoplectic after learning that Japanese dancer Shoji is staging a one-woman show based on the ‘Kama Sutra’. The performer describes the act as a ‘sensual experience’.

Testicle stunt prompts mass walk-out!

1994 Daredevil Mark Padmorey obtains health and safety approval for an act in which he balances a lawn mower on his chin, while there is a mass walk-out from a show performed by the Jim Rose Circus (pictured), in which a man hangs an iron from his pierced genitals.
Dear, the Perrier boycott's gone flat

Inge Special: Edinburgh's jamboree gets off to a flying start despite fears of a boycott by big-name comedians

By Jenifer Johnston and Juliette Garside

A threatened boycott of the Perrier Comedy Award at the Edinburgh Fringe seems to be losing ground with only one venue deemed eligible comedy acts willing to support the boycott.

Several venue managers expressed a personal dislike of the policies of big companies, they said it would be unfair for their political views to disadvantage comedians who may be in the running for the high-profile prize.

Edward Rob Newman began the controversy last week when he spoke out against the Fringe's most coveted prize, the Perrier Comedy Award, which is offered by a subsidiary of Nestlé, the food manufacturing giant.

"I regard this as a larger struggle against corporate power," he said, calling for Nestlé to stop the controversial practice of selling disordered baby food in Africa.

Una Thompson, who won the inaugural prize in 1991, added her support to the issue. In calling on young comedians to put their hands up for conscientious before their careers, the Oscar-winning actress said: "The Perrier Awards should be boycotted by all right-thinking people, because Nestlé has got to be stopped." Thompson is a vocal supporter of the Baby Milk Action group, which has been campaigning against Nestlé for 20 years.

Eria Wood, who has worked in Africa with Comic Relief, has also been vocal in her support. Comedians can manage without the Perrier Award and the world should be able to manage without Perrier.

Wood said: "The idea that the only way to get clear drinking water is to pay for some in a bottle is appalling. No one has the right to over the world's drinking supply. That's like something from science fiction. I very happily drink tap water most of the time."

The only venue prepared to speak out against Perrier is The Bongo Club, a popular venue that will host 19 music and comedy acts during the Fringe.

The club is organizing its own prize-giving, the Tap Water Awards, and has asked all the comedians appearing at its events to boycott Perrier.

Organizers have been approached to fund the Tap Water Awards and the new prize will be used to help cash-strapped comic shows at Edinburgh.

Co-ordinator Suzanne Mawson said: "I'm hoping that we can establish the Tap Water Awards as an alternative, and urge people to use comedy to raise awareness.

"We're hoping to take it further and make it an award for all the other comedy festivals around the world. If we can make it, we can see that really having an effect on Perrier and Nestlé?"

Nestlé demonstrators have threatened to make the Perrier winners run a gauntlet of disapproval when they turn up to collect their prizes at the Perrier comedy awards on August 25.

Christopher Richardson, director of the Pleasance Theatre, which has hosted appearances from Perrier winners of the last six years, said there were many complications in a potential boycott.

"We have a contractual arrangement with Perrier for the run of our events, but I believe that people have the absolute right to protest over this if they feel they must."

Richardson pointed out that Newman, who has never been nominated for the award, might feel differently if he was one of the rising stars. "Rob Newman might not have been so keen to protest about it when he was a young comic. There are a lot of people who will be affected by any boycott and they have to be considered."
Rows that rocked Edinburgh

Stars call for boycott of Perrier awards!

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When a thousand worlds collide

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Neil MacGregor

Tourists meandering through the streets like litter, performers and impresarios mulling over money, and all the while the big parade is marching sound the capital.

From its now familiar stageword, the Edinburgh Festival season is officially open for business - just as the Jazz Festival was last year. This is to say:

The city is a thousand steps old. Some have sweet dreams of samson and others a cynical eye on profit. For the rest, the throng is a hustle and a bustle, something to savour of something to spend.

It is not in itself remarkable that Theatre Vidy-Lausanne could perform Heiner Müller's Hamlet, or that the Vienna Burgtheater will premiere plays by Chekhov and Anton Chekhov. What is wonderful, though, is how they should appear now, together, alongside groups from anywhere, at any place.

The Edinburgh Festival is even more ambitious and includes a production of James MacDiarmid's Stenographic at the Queen's TV Festival, Stedman's Fordover's Proust, run over two evenings at the Usher Hall, and Onelives, the end of the Richard Wagner's Ring cycle, performed by Scottish Opera after the company's triumph last year with Das Rheingold. Together they represent exactly what a festival is for - bringing the world together to celebrate art.

For those who choose to live in the city all year round, inevitably much of the drama passes them by. Brandt's Men is not in the talk of the town, and The Sun of the Walk they aren't running ads from the Zanderflote. Instead, it's the great set-pieces of the Festival - the music, the art - that catch the imagination, the firework that history adds to andLog and procession which starts in Edinburgh today.

To mark yesterday's great cavalcade, Edinburgh's council had maintained their traditional ban on fly-posting. The city fathers might be loosening up the tourist dollars, but don't imagine they welcome the playbills which have the audiences overstep the mark, and venues could lose their licences.

But even if the city council has ticked the "no publicity" box, the Fringe is, as we've said, on the up. Buoyed by two-for-one promotions, ticket sales have overtaken last year's levels and if the box and Elia Festivals aren't quite as fortunate, they too report a significant rise in interest and more buyers over.

All this is news from heaven for the Edinburgh and London Visitors Board, but the impression lingers that the streets aren't quite as full this year, as the failure of most-and-much of the world's most famous and brilliant audiences.

Oh, there's been an impact on income, according to Fringe Director Paul Gudgeon, who reports a rise in revenue of £3.4 million on last year. Something - if it were needed - that Edinburgh is the only place to be in August, he says, forgetting that some people prefer to scale up and stay.

More fuel for the folk on the beach, too. Gudgeon might not, for this year's Fringe bill is tending impressively in scale. A total of 656 events from 49 countries are performing 1,462 shows.

As usual the place is awash with controversy - a shocking play here, a offensive slogan there - and the usual debate about argument is already bubbling up.

To count the number of plays in the Fringe - and then to count the people who come to see them - is n't the only way to value in the comedians. As the small operators of the fringe try to make their names this is the only way they are getting their voices heard.

The Fringe. Seniors veteran Rob Newman, Emma Thompson and Victoria Wood called for a boycott of the Festival Awards, because baby milk producers manufacturers from Ralco own the bottled water brand. As it turned out, the Bango Club was the only venue to pack the house, and no one can be sure Edinburgh's critics will score the articles only if they aren't nominated for the comedy prize.

Some argument was stirred up by the annual attempt to shock the Fringe. This year's outrageous award is almost certain to go to The Age of Consent, a production which tackles issues arising from the murder of James Bulger and the death of James Bulger and the death of Diana, of course.

Its Philadelphia-based writer Peter Morris has a big reputation for real-life dramas and last year, with director Ed Dick, gave us The Second Amendment Club, a play which made the most of its setting at the Columbia High School in California. Though we are assured this year's offering is of genuine substance, it's hard not to discern a trend.

Last year's shocker, the Pop-Up of the Frenzy is replaced, and there are plenty of other productions which tackle the subjects that generate the attention - causes like pottery, sex and violent murder, the fun, the shock, or both. Which, of course they are at Festival time.

The International Book Festival at Charlotte Square Gardens begins on 11 August, with various writers taking part, including US novelist and commentator Gore Vidal and Yaddie Smith, author of the award-winning debut novel White Teeth.

Scottish writers take centre stage too. Kate Atkinson, Liz Lochhead, Edwin Morgan and Christopher Brookmyre feature among the homegrown talent, while best-selling Scottish crime writers Ian Rankin and Val McDermid bring their dark arts out into the light.

A day after the book launch, the Film Festival opens, featuring a premiere of Gabriel and Me by Billy Elliot screenwriter Lee Hall. The film also stars Billy Connolly.

The festival also includes the debut of The Frenzy, starring Jack Nicholson, and director Jean Renoir will be in town to mark the event. Minister for culture officials will hope the festival enjoys Scotland as much as its still-at-large advocate Madonna - for the still as much as anyone, Edinburgh is the land of opportunity.
Sex and the sins of the father visited upon capital

Word of mouth

We pick up where we left off last year in our usual highbrow fashion, deep in the underbelly of the sex industry. Sorry, but it was either that or Sir David Steel and Lady. Jenny upsetting office staff and we didn't want to go there again. Neither do we, we hope.

But, honestly, we had no choice as when we turned up at our first festival event, the launch of the Glazed Balloon, we made a beeline for our guru, Howard the doyen of divas. John Gielgud of the Gielgud variety, we imagined to have been introduced to us by a flibbertigibbet. In a bazaar, rubber pants and fishnet stockings who turned out to be a vicar's daughter. We kid you.

Ellen Collier, 24, is a "festival virgin" she informed us, nipping our chest firmly with her whip. The graduate from London Academy of Performing Arts' ambition is "a Fringe First for Lip Service," a new play by Gary Humphreys and Philip Singleton.

"You know telephone sex lines are a £4.4 billion industry in Britain."

"Really? You seem to know a lot about it!"

"Well, I worked on a sex line for six weeks!"

Ah, a true method actor.

Up Service received good reviews in London where it was directed by Maggie Law, Jude's mom. Stephen Spiegelberg almost had a close encounter, but couldn't get in as it was sold out.

Meanwhile, if the play's as well as interesting as Ellen's time of her research - funny, sad and pathetic (that's the money - it's worth a visit).

Parody of manners

It's a family affair at the Fest, what with Karen Kress introducing her brother, the Glazed Balloon for another launch, the arrival of another Karen.

"How many of these running around are actually Karen? We are a family!"

"The Pooch Kress!" aka our favourite new Neighbours character (but that was before Kyle started wearing hot pants), who elsewhere in maintaining the Oliver/Farcas affiliation tradition. Mark Little's little lads - Angus, 19, and Jasper, 15 - are appearing on the Fringe in Dear People Laughing, "a parody of youth culture!"

But young Jasper is a parody of good manners, as we found out when he chatted into the microphone, sucking his finger behind his ear while we were having a chat.

"The Arts representation, Gauntlich Billy Fitzpatricka, holding a toast to the new "Philip Rose". Cardew, who was detained elsewhere.

"Young Jasper almost received a "Glassman rap" disciplinary procedure..."

Meanwhile, Mark believes you can "express disgust without going into the streets. Numbers in Neughball's windows. Ah, so that's what Jasper was up to.

Fizzling with anger

Global politics has also reared its head with talk of a Perrier boycott due to it being a subsidiary of Nestle and the controversy over its sales of powdered baby milk in developing countries.

But as most inmates - or rather inmates - are as big a bunch of whines as we are, don't expect a rush to the barricades as we're sure they can rationalise why they are ignoring it.

Then some may claim it's all right for the likes of Emma Thompson, who won the inaugural Perrier in 1981, to be the boycott is as tame as they can see it.

"We've always thought Emma is an excellent actress, but not very funny..."

"And this is the Bonge Club out there on the edge, you know... Now we are sure the Stand will stand against the..."

The Bonge is setting up its own Top Theatre Awards. We'll pass our class.

Artistic integrity

Some artists do indeed have integrity: Emma Williams. Having not long finished the film, "Pepole"

Officer with Steve Cougan, OMD, Sharif and Jenny Aquiet. Emma has turned down the pilot for Gideon.

Leicester Square as she's too busy appearing in the Yorkshire Theatre of Performing Art's Oliver.

Stresemann also appears for Seth Meyers at Room Chicago, who has just been invited to join the cast of Saturday Night Live. Seth appears in two of the three Room Chicago shows in Edinburgh before moving to New York in September to join Saturday Night Live.
Fringe chief shrugs off controversy

Edinburgh Festival director Paul Gudgin: "The Perrier award is great"

By BBC News Online's Darren Waters

It may be only day two of the festival, but the fringe is already enveloped in two controversies. However, festival director Paul Gudgin looks a remarkably relaxed man.

As the stages go up in the main street of the city and as street performers make their way to their designated spots Paul Gudgin is busy doing a round of media interviews and ensuring that the festival runs as smoothly as possible.

He seems unconcerned that the premier comedy award, the Perrier, and one show, The Age of Consent, are stirring up a storm.

"It would not be the Fringe festival if there was not any controversy," he says.

Perrier boycott

Leading actors and comics, including Emma Thompson and Rob Newman, have called for a boycott of the Perrier award because of awards the sponsors have links with food firm Nestlé.

Campaigners believe the company's sales of powdered milk in developing countries discourages breast-feeding, which they consider healthier for babies.

"The Perrier award is great," says Mr Gudgin, dismissing the controversy with a wave of his hand.

"It's disappointing that someone whose career was helped by the Perrier is attacking it," he adds, referring to Thompson, who won the award in its inaugural year with the Cambridge Footlights.

The festival has also come under criticism for one play, The Age of Consent, which draws on the horrific murder of James Bulger in 1993 as inspiration.

The festival director is more concerned with keeping the festival running as smoothly as possible, which is
quite a task given the thousands of performers and events which make up the festival.

"It is the world's largest arts festival. It really takes over the city - anybody who comes here will notice that we take over Edinburgh for three weeks.

"The streets are full of performers and audiences and the whole city comes alive."

Responsibility

Most who balk at the level of organisation required to pull the festival off, but Mr Gudgin is unmoved at the responsibility.

"It is not a nightmare to organise because there is no artistic director who is choosing performers and the direction of the festival.

"We are here to act as a guide, as a hub to all the performances. We want to make it as easy as possible for people to see shows."

The festival draws in more than £43m into the city but yet the fringe receives only about £40,000 in subsidy from the Scottish Arts Council and city authorities.

"It is hard and many companies come to the fringe and will make no money or lose money.

"To the credit of the arts council and city they are looking at the issue," says Mr Gudgin.

An increased subsidy from the arts council could be used to reduce the cost of some ticket prices,

In its 35th year Mr Gudgin says he is most pleased by the growth in theatre this year.

"There is a lot of theatre in 2001 which is great because when the festival started it was mainly about theatre."

The trick to the festival is navigating a way through the thousands of performances which vary wildly in quality. None of the performances are vetted in advance by the organisers.

"You pay your money and

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/entertainment/arts/newsid_1470800/1470872.stm
Stars boycott Fringe awards for comedy

Sponsor Perrier under attack from Third World campaigners

By Sam Levin

The opening of the Edinburgh Fringe was spoiled yesterday by calls for a boycott of the Perrier Awards, so comedy by a group of stars led by comic Eddie Izzard, Victoria Wood and Emma Thompson.

The row stems from the sponsor's direct involvement with Nestlé, the world's biggest food company, which is fighting a legal battle against third world campaigners.

The organisers of the Daily Mail's 'Fringe Action' campaign, which accuses Nestlé of breaking World Health Organisation codes on the marketing of infant formula, are preparing to picket the awards ceremony on Aug 27. Perrier is also under attack from an anti-racism group concerned about the "wastefulness" of the bottle-wielding action.

Caroline Thompson and Wood have offered their support after a Fringe report, the charity's Bongo Club, announced that it would be presenting an alternative set of awards, the Top Water Bottle。（没有提到裂痕）
Fizzy logic

Rich Hall won last year's Perrier award but hates corporate comedy. How does that add up, asks Brian Logan

Last year Rich Hall was a show-in for the Prize Red. Rather Not Promote, with a country music and comedy show that starred his grizzled Jailhouse hero, Otis Lee Crenshaw. Now, unlike past Perrier winners, the Montana man has returned to Edinburgh, with not one but two shows. "The award is the way of telling you not to come back," he says, "but I figured, fudge 'em." A televised version of his Otis series is being broadcast next weekend, to be followed by an album in the autumn. Hall has a BBC2 show in the later stages of development. A veteran of the circuit, he's enjoying his Indian summer.

Success was never likely to change this most singular of stand-ups, but in the past week Hall's post-Perrier credibility has been more severely tested than that of any previous reigning champ. Calls from the comedian Rob Newman to boycott the Perrier in protest at its parent company Nestlé's practice in Africa that made the comedy circuit unavailable. Hall is more exposed than most: he can't condemn the prize without looking hypocritical, and he can't condone it without betraying the subversive personality he projects onstage. He tries, with only partial success, to split the difference. "To part the festival and boycott the Perrier," he says, "would have a fairly negligible effect on starving women in Africa. I don't think they're sitting there saying, 'Oh, thank God some comedian in Edinburgh are boycotting the award. Maybe now I can breathe more air.'"

The controversy is an unhappy but unavoidable side effect he suggests of naming an award after its sponsor. "Here's the problem with the Perrier: Every time you say the word, you are helping them sell the drink. Therefore it's good to avoid the word. In most other forms of entertainment — film, television — there are Grammys and Academy Awards. In comedy there's this corporate traditions. Hall is an outspoken critic of the corporatisation of stand-up. He's based in Britain, not in his native US, precisely because America has institutionalised live comedy as merely hanging on the ladder to TV celebrity. People here know you can put a make-up upon the stage, and it's just a guy standing up there telling jokes and you don't need lights and two-for-one vouchers, and you'll get the other shit that goes on in America. Americans are more interested in whether you're famous than whether you're funny." (Hall is famous in the US, but less as a comedian than as the writer of a series of novelty dictionaries of made-up words.)

"Hall in a Shot, The Jerry Dallion Appel, can be seen as a cock-and-bull story at those who mistake the Perrier success for a passport to stardom. The late-night show, which Hall co-presents with fellow American Dave Fulton, is an "experimental" launch benefit gig in support of a Wisconsin child who may or may not have Tourette's syndrome. "We can't quite tell," Hall explains. "The guy may be a loudmouthed little prick. Either way we're gonna give him the money." It has not been scripted. Hall calls it "a variety show."

"We're going to try out new things every night, which I think is the best thing to do if you're gonna come back [after winning the Perrier]."

Or is it back to Hall calls those gis, "the cash cow"? The character, a depressive, country-coming ex-con whom Hall based on his own redneck relatives, won a legion of fans last year and one enemy: the Church of Scotland. "They condemned my song [about child molestation] without listening to it," says Hall, who sympathises with Chris Morris over the Brass Eye future. "What he did is completely above criticism. If, with comedy, you can go into an uncharted area and come out with something original, that's what makes it an art form."

Hall's victory in 2000 was greeted with widespread satisfaction precisely because he is such a conventional. "But in the end, he concedes, you have to tell jokes. If you think you can change the world as a comedian then your career's ruined and you might as well go become a therapist or help fat people lose weight. But there's still got to be passion behind what you do and some desire to point out things in the world that make you angry."
Milk campaign seeks Perrier boycott

CAMPAIGNERS called on comediennes at the Edinburgh Festival yesterday to boycott the Perrier Comedy Awards over the involvement of the company's owner Nestle in promoting instant formula milk in poor countries.

The Perrier Comedy Awards, which helped launch the careers of Stephen Fry, Frank Skinner, Steve Coogan and Sean Hughes, mark their 30th anniversary of this year's festival fringe.

But Baby Milk Action called for a boycott over Nestle's marketing of infant formula milk in the developing world.

The campaign says that the milk endangers the lives of infants where water is contaminated by encouraging mothers from breastfeeding.

The Bongo Club, a popular cabaret venue which is run by a charitable trust, said that it would go ahead with its own Top Water awards for acts refusing to accept the Perrier.

The boycott call is backed by past Perrier winners Rob Newman and Emma Thompson, as well as comedian Victoria Wood and Oscar-nominated actor Julian Christie.

Top Water awards organiser Dana MacLeod said: "This issue, concerning Nestle's marketing, became strikingly clear to us in February, during a visit to South Africa, where we weresetting up an exchange programme with a township arts group."

A Nestle spokesman said that the company abided by the 1981 World Health Organisation International code on breast milk substitutes.
Hey, heard the one about the ethical comedian?

Comedian Stewart Lee says Emma Thompson should grow up: alternative comedians can’t afford to boycott the Perrier awards, they need the cash and kudos.

It's nine years since Neste, the powdered baby milk producer with the controversial record of suborning the country's bottled water business, and so became the UK radio sponsor of the Perrier awards. The Edinburgh festival's Oscar of comedy.

But this year, the festival's last week, the actress Emma Thompson and anti-capitalist comedian Rob Newman belatedly attempted to put the powdered milk industry to the hook by calling for a boycott of the awards next Saturday on the grounds that, according to the World Health Organisation, it is responsible for the deaths of 1.5 million babies a year.

If this sounds serious, then in mind that the following sub-headline includes the words "treyzzor" and "treyzzors" which, according to World Comedy Organisation research in the late 1970s, have been borrowed from children and used officially in any.

The case for boycotting the Perrier awards would once have seemed obvious. Even British actors Paddy, Courteney, Ocean Colour Scene and Sheet 7 pulled out of a Nestlé music promotion last year.

So why does the non-commercial response of Pidgeon comics this year say about the comedy industry, and how it is, in the anti-capitalist

anti-text "alternative" comedy culture of the early 1980s? It seems that comedians would feel that there's a lack of old rascals, who are not eligible, complaining about something that will only be to the detriment of those who are nominated anyway," said Pidgeon comedian Richard Hawking, himself a fan of milk in all its forms.

But former Perrier winner Jenny Eclair was shocked to learn that Neste had owned Perrier in 1992 when she won the main award. As she said: "I've been going around saying my conscience was clear, but now I realise my hands are morally dripping with guilt. That said, I'm not giving it back."

But apart from these two deftly-queer excerpts, it was difficult for many to choose between an award which was prepared to offer an opinion.

One comedian, who like most wished to remain anonymous, but may or may not be the one who said that the best strategy for a commercially-oriented comic was to stay in the nice, win, and then smother the comedians into pieces with a brick after receiving it. In this way said comic would avoid the sacrifice of any valuable media coverage and still make a political point.

Just like mainstream politicians who suddenly find themselves having to shake hands with American Republicans, it's only in the past decade that once alternative comedy has been popular enough, and attractive enough to the media, to be forced to take moral qualms seriously.

The young Ben Elton of 20 years ago, would surely have been rightly disgusted by his older self, singing a song he composed at George Bush's inauguration. "It wasn't presented as a Republican event but as the inauguration of the head of state of the United States," he equivocated.

But to be fair the young Ben Elton of 20 years ago could have maintained the moral high ground without putting himself in the test. Then, he would never have been invited to the White House to perform routines about how much gushing in the washing machine.

Alternative comedians of the 1980s didn't descend the freezing intake of corrupt modern culture, but it's easy to decline an invitation that you are unlikely to be offered.

It's also easier for high-profile high earners to wear the gladrags of opposition chic than it is for comedians already facing a five-figure loss in Edinburgh to absolve themselves from an obvious chance of justifying their expenses.

When Nell Young sang "Don't Be A Vegan" for Puffin, "Don't Be A Vegan" for Coke he was nearly a multi-millionaire for whom the End of History was not a financial incentive.

Tommy Sheridan of Edinburgh's Stand Comedy club, was sympathetic to the 'comedic' dilemma. "It's so hard to get here if you're locked in a favourite pact with promoters, so it makes sense to keep your trip short."

The dissenting voice hasn't been pegged, just priced out of the market.

Chris Morris, of Neon Eye, the Daily Mail's best writers, has however, been able to maintain the objectivity that makes him one of British comedy's truly world-class satirists. He stands relatively outside the cultural mainstream that colours the commentary of his more accommodating contemporaries, and too, the financial backing of Channel 4, which loves a good comedy, irrespective of its actual moral worth.

Not for Morris the balancing act of doing highly paid advertising for banks: one week, then appearing in a campaign to drop Third World debt the next, before heading off to Have I Got News For You to call into question the hypocrisy and credibility of other media figures.

Since this year's year of 1979 alternative comedy has grown up. Its subject matter is now more varied and fascinating than the punning of Terry Jones, that was once its stock in trade.

It's been through its rebellious teenage and in now settling down into adult life, with all its clichés and phobias. Few novice satirists find themselves tarred by financial necessity while, at the other extreme, famous names are compromised by previously unspoken
chances to make a mint.

Like Nestlé, comedy is now a business, and business has its own morality. Peter Bush, Nestlé's chief executive officer, explained the morality of business at a shareholders' meeting in April.

Admittedly it was a rather official statement, and Nestlé's press office are keen to point out that English is not Mr Bush's first language, implying he may not have understood what he was saying. There seems to be something rotten at the core of his message. "If it's a word which divides people, we can't talk about ethics at Nestlé, we talk about responsibility. It's a question of our responsibility to our shareholders, our employees, and all other stakeholders.

What was once the scruffy world of alternative comedy is now professional enough to attract its own shareholders, employees and stakeholders. It is raising a lot of the questions in the world of comedy to take a moral position in an era when the man ultimately behind the Peki prices apparently sees nothing wrong with eliminating the word ethics from his company's lexicon.

But is it asking too much?
Nestlé in hot water over Perrier boycott

by Patrick Toomer

PLANS by some of Britain's leading supermarkets to boycott this month's Perrier awards at the Edinburgh Festival are no laughing matter for Nestlé, owner of the mineral water brand.

Once again the world's biggest food company is under fire over the way it sells powdered baby milk in developing countries. The tactic, however, Nestlé says, is a potentially vital tool in combatting malnutrition, a disease that has been exacerbated by the devastating product contamination scare 10 years ago.

"Management must be careful," says Kevin Thompson, managing director of Nestlé's UK food company, "or else Nestlé needs to be on the lookout for a boycott in 10 countries after being blamed for "misleading and misleading" advertising.

The boycott has been announced by supermarket groups over concern that Nestlé's use of infant formula may be "misleading" in terms of health benefits, particularly when it comes to the safety of the product.

The move has been condemned by Nestlé, which says it has been "misled" by the supermarket groups, who are "misleading" in their statements.

"Nestlé is confused. It is misleading. It is misleading," Nestlé's director of communications, Jean-Claude Duhamel, said.

The move has also been condemned by the British National Health Service, which says it has been "misled" by the supermarket groups, who are "misleading" in their statements.

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Cosseted farmers

Sir - It would appear that modern-day British farmers have become part of the dependency culture. They receive subsidies to grow certain crops and subsidies to set aside and not grow crops.

Then, when something such as foot and mouth strikes, they receive compensation from the government.

Why aren't farmers covered by insurance to assist in times of misfortune, just like people in any other type of business?

Roger A Smith
Chebbsford
Essex

Price of good PR

Sir - Patrick Moore's article "Nestlé in hot water over Fudgel boycott" (12 August) highlights the important link between corporate social responsibility, reputation, public relations and bottom-line performance.

Corporate and brand reputation are critical business assets. If damaged, the impact on sales, performance and share price can be immediate and devastating. Increasingly, reputation is linked to consumer perceptions of responsible corporate behaviour.

Consumers are ever more engaged critics of corporate behaviour and are prepared to vote with their feet.

Rebuilding a damaged reputation takes years.

Corporate social responsibility is an issue no business can afford to ignore.

Jim Wright
President
The Institute of Public Relations
London EC1

Letters for publication should include the writer's name, address and telephone number. Send to: Business Letters, Sunday Business Post, 23 Grafton Street, London W1X 7HS.
JENNY ECLAIR

Edinburgh Festival Diary

The big news at the festival is the attempted boycott of the Fortier Awards, a campaign spearheaded by Emma Thompson (left) and Victoria Wood (below), as a protest against Fortier being owned by Nestlé (who ship powdered milk to Third World nations). As a past winner, I've been hauled out to put in my two penniesworth. I was simply thinking that I'd won it before Nestlé took over Fortier but apparently that's not the case and now I'm a murdering witch.
The vagina monologist

EDINBURGH COMEDY, Jenny Eclair helped to put female comics on the map. So why does she still feel the need to be on the Fringe? Alex O'Connell found out.

Jenny Eclair lives with Chris, Dan and Richard. Not because of progressive children's books or a new Channel 4 sitcom but her living arrangements during the Edinburgh Fringe. The comedian, still the only female laureate of the Perrier Award - stand-up comedy's Holy Grail - is staying in a top-floor flat in New Town with three handsome boy roommates, Chris Addison, Dan Augolinski and Richard Harding.

The guys are playing cards in the back room and I have taken over the kitchen. Addie, a gorgeous female designer for LCD, says: "She could easily get a rent-free flat from Marks & Spencer.

"Really?" I reply. "There's that famous organic barn in the fridge." Do they have kids? I wonder? "Can anyone lend Jenny Edible money?" "Oh, God, I'd love to go," says the farming chap. "It's like living with teenagers. They have big feet. There are lots of clean clothes and jokes which are great because I don't need any more last minute as I'm not very literary. I have a lot of writing to do and I want to relax."

My stuff is old hat now, but I'm a 41-year-old mother and it's not my job to be cutting edge."

As lovely as the boys seem, it's only natural to ask why Eclair, whose critically-acclaimed novel, "Cawthorne Berrip" is about to come out in paperback, wants to do another Fringe show.

"She's 41, the mother of two-year-old Becca and 12-year-old Archie, the mostრ
my life, " says Addie. "And a second novel is planned. Wouldn't the mother of two be the perfect non-v "I'm not very literary. I get a lot of writing to do and I want to relax."

So much so, in fact that Eclair is still willing to come to Edinburgh. In the past she's sold thousands of tickets between £4 and £6, but her current production is pushed more "The smoking, wearing something that looks like a frigid, comfortable suit."

"The idea is to do another work-in-progress show," explains Addie. "But Leith - at the Pleasance Dome from August 27 to August 29, and it will be a character piece, "I have this problem," says Eclair. "She has a healthy disregard for what I do."

"I see it. My stuff is a bit old hat now, but I'm a 41-year-old mother and it's not my job to be cutting edge."

"Moving on: the Perrier Award. "It's nice," says Addie, "but it's not an easy thing to win."

"It's more of a learning curve, getting more detached from the day." The boys don't smoke. If you are not concerned about that sort of thing - I see - you can do more than the usual, like normal people, play to beat-up audiences night after night."

"I do Edinburgh because it's a social event," says Eclair, leaving out of the stuff through the front window to take her first dig at the day. The boys don't smoke. If you are not concerned about that sort of thing - I see - you can do more than the usual, like normal people, play to beat-up audiences night after night."
and caught a few of the other women left standing up in Edinburgh.

IT IS hardly girl power they've
for too long been.

But in the
week that saw Jenny Eclair
back to the Fringe, it was an-
nounced that Jo Brand is to get
her own radio show on BBC Lon-
don Live, formerly GIG, start-
ing at the end of the month.

Meanwhile, two comedy(Note: probably a mistype)
sisters are meant to be getting
over excited (and probably very
anxious too) about the fact that
there are 40 per cent more fe-
male Fringe comic performers
up here than last year.

But like an end-all you can-
ford-ever lynchkin Chinese
quantity isn't quality. While
plenty are busy putting beer
money on a kicked ass man for
the Princes, few dare speak up for
the sparse scattering of decent
women.

Karen Jacky Single and Catha-
rie McTee, my pick of the best
women at the Fringe this year.

Jacky Single at the As-
sembly Rooms is camp comedy
cracks at its best. Tam, who
trained with the National Youth
Theatre and has been with the
BBC this year, has produced a
well-constructed school show
which allows her exceptional ac-
ting ability to shine through.

Come begins by telling a mont-
ty autobiographical tale of her
philosophy on the value of a
'community'. It's 25, single
and, as she observes, "for
the past 13 years I've been a
lesbian. Now, in the eighties that
fact alone would have got me
a standing ovation."

But, she continues, this lifestyle
does not really interest her anymore.

The script is tight and her
piece as strong as ever. But it's her
magnificent singing voice, mostly
used for comic effect, which re-
ally takes you by surprise.

Watch out for her interpretation
of Didi's (Theatre, which
Gave me one of my biggest sim-
ple laughs of the Fringe so far.

Tote (I Am What I Am in the style of a belligerent
Grannadine) is a girl (at the
Pleasance) is made up of four
stand-ups in which she plays a
bizarre character, seemingly
dull but eventually surprising
woman who was working in a
personal department, the wife from
hell, and her grandmother. Her
characterisations are fantastic.

But I couldn't help thinking that
there weren't enough laughs.

While enjoyable, the gig was
more like a treatise for Snack
the Pony-style TV than a top
Fringe performance.

Other women performers in-
clude Sarah Kendall, an Aus-
stralian comic who was a hit out
of this year's Melbourne Interna-
tional Comedy Festival. She is
collecting praise for her at the
Gilded Balloon, in which she
does from Nazi wives to the First
World War battlegrounds. It's true
that Kendall is clever and amusing,
but her act feels unfocused and
she has a tendency to pre-
cede every sentence with the
'zapping' while I was doing my
research for this show.

Still, there's much fun ahead.

Jean Rivera, the Beverly Americ-
an TV comic, arrives in town
on August 24 for just two nights
and Patsy Ann, the country air
hostess, finds on August 28.

Better frosted your waistcoat.
African health campaigners welcome boycott of Perrier Award at the Edinburgh Fringe

15th August 2001

The coordinator of a network of African health campaigners has welcomed the boycott of the Nestlé Perrier Award at the Edinburgh Festival. Top UK comedy performers and actors are calling for up-and-coming acts to boycott the award in favour of a new corporate-free ‘Tap Water Award’. The boycott began spontaneously following a newspaper interview given by Rob Newman last month.

Emma Thompson, Julie Christie and Victoria Wood are amongst those calling for the boycott because Perrier is owned by Nestlé. Nestlé is the world’s largest food company and stands accused of contributing to the unnecessary death and suffering of infants because of its marketing of breastmilk substitutes. According to UNICEF reversing the decline in breastfeeding could save the lives of 1.5 million infants around the world every year.

African health campaigners have welcomed the boycott call. Pauline Kilemba, Coordinator of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) in Africa, speaking from Swaziland, said:

“Nestlé’s Perrier Award is a big publicity for Nestlé and its products and the company uses such public images to establish itself with our governments in the Africa region. News of the Perrier Award boycott has reached us in Africa. I would encourage all our allies to take part in the boycott. The Nestlé boycott is very important for raising awareness among our health workers and women in Africa and putting pressure on Nestlé.”

The 20-country Nestlé Boycott is supported in the UK by over 100 church, health and consumer groups, over 50 businesses, 78 student unions, 17 local authorities, 12 trade unions, 74 politicians and political parties and many celebrities.

Oscar winner, Emma Thompson said: "The Perrier Awards should be boycotted by all right-thinking people, because Nestle has got to be stopped."

Julie Christie said:

“I’ve been supporting the Nestle Boycott for years due to the company’s irresponsible marketing of baby food. This has brought about children being deprived of the early natural immunization that breast milk provides. The use of contaminated water is another issue in rural areas and, a final twist is that by using Nestle milk the baby becomes hooked onto something which costs money. Nestle owns many companies and Perrier, unbeknownst to most people, is one of them. I hope that up and coming comedians will think about these issues and consider joining the Nestle Boycott by deciding to support the Perrier Awards and would be participants could instead enter for the Tap water awards which will hurt no-one in the process of making them laugh.”

Victoria Wood said: “Comedians can manage without the Perrier Award and the world should be able to manage without Perrier. I support the Boycott.”

Victoria Wood also raised concerns about the environmental impact of bottled water:

"The idea that the only way to get clean drinking water is to pay for some in a bottle is appalling. No one has the right to control the world’s drinking supply, that’s like something from science fiction. I very happily drink tap water most of the time. I’m not comfortable about the waste involved in producing a plastic bottle just so I can drink something I can get from a tap."
When Nestlé launched its 'Pure Life' brand of bottled water in Pakistan its aggressive promotion campaign was criticised for undermining efforts to provide piped drinking water for all (see Update 23).

An alternative 'Tap Water' award has been launched by the Bongo Club in Edinburgh which will host over 100 music and comedy acts, all of which have agreed to boycott Perrier. If financial backing for the Tap Water Award is achieved the Bongo Club intends to set up a fund, which will enable cash-strapped artists to bring shows to the Fringe. Bongo Club coordinator Suzanne Merrell said:

"I'm hoping that we can establish the Tap Water Awards as an alternative, and encourage people to use comedy to raise awareness. We are hoping to take it further and make it an award for all the other comedy festivals around the world. If we can make it global, we can see that really having an effect on Perrier and Nestle."

Patti Randall, Policy Director of Baby Milk Action said:

"The boycott of the Perrier Awards started spontaneously - with no huge PR budget behind it. But in just three last few days it's shown how much can be done with just the simple truth. Before now, many people were unaware that Nestlé bought Perrier in 1992 and that it is one of its range of 12,000 products embedded in disturbing global politics. The Tap Water Awards will provide free thinking comedians with an opportunity to say whatever needs to be said - without fear of upsetting sponsors."

A website dedicated to helping people in the United States prevent damage to their communities' water supplies by multinational water bottling companies is also calling for a boycott of Nestle and Perrier (Ref. 1). Following an independent study, the World Wildlife Fund is now urging people to drink tap water for the benefit of the environment and their wallets. WWF found that bottled water can be 1000 times more expensive than tap water, yet there are more standards regulating tap water in Europe and the U.S than those applied to the bottled water industry. According to WWF every year 1.6 million tons of plastic are used to bottle water (Ref. 2).

Nestlé employs a team of staff to counter the international Nestlé boycott, which has been launched by groups in 20 countries (most recently in Cameroon by a national NGO which found Nestlé promoting breastfeeding substitutes at health facilities with film shows - see report in Boycott News 28). In many new reports Nestlé falsely claims that its critics refer to marketing practices it has now stopped. In reality the evidence demonstrates Nestle's mispractice continues in a systematic and institutionalised manner. An international monitoring report launched at the World Health Assembly in May 2001 shows Nestle to be responsible for more violations of the marketing standards adopted by the Assembly than any other company (see the IBFAN report Breaking the Rules 2001).

In July Nestlé, along with other manufacturers of breastfeeding substitutes violating the Code, was excluded from the FTSE4Good ethical investment index because of its continued violation of the marketing requirements for breastfeeding substitutes.

Nestlé rejected a Baby Milk Action four-point plan for saving infant lives and ultimately ending the boycott in March 2001 (see Boycott News 28).

Ref. 1: The Nestle Corporation is Abusing our Country's Most Important Natural Resource by Terri Wolfe, President, Save Our Springs, Inc. www.saveourspringswater.com - Also see http://www.motherJones.com/mare/waterwater.html


For more information contact Baby Milk Action, 23 St Andrews Street, Cambridge, CB2 3AX, Tel: +44 1223 464420, Fax: +44 1223 464417.

For information on the Tap Water Award contact Suzanne Merrell - 0131 556 5204.

Some reports on the web:

The Scotsman - 24 July 2001: Comic battles to gag milk powder sponsor

BRC - 24 July 2001: Comedian calls for prize boycott

The Independent - 24 July 2001: Comedian calls for a boycott on Perrier Awards and 'corporate power'
BBC - 31 July 2001: Actress joins call for Perrier boycott

Yahoo - 6 August 2001: Campaigners call for Perrier Award boycott

The Telegraph - 6 August 2001: Stars boycott Pringe awards for comedy

Notes for editors:

1. For news of other celebrity endorsers see Boycott News 20.

2. Baby Milk Action is a non-profit organisation which aims to save infant lives and to end the avoidable suffering caused by inappropriate infant feeding. Baby Milk Action works within the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) - a coalition of more than 150 citizen and health worker groups in more than 90 countries around the world. IBFAN works for better child health and nutrition through the promotion of breastfeeding and the elimination of irresponsible marketing of infant foods, bottles and feeds. Some news reports incorrectly suggest that Baby Milk Action is campaigning for a ban on infant formula marketing. In reality, Baby Milk Action is campaigning for companies to market their baby foods in accordance with the requirements adopted by the World Health Assembly.

3. The WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981. Subsequent Resolutions have clarified interpretation and addressed changes in marketing practices and scientific knowledge.

4. The latest IBFAN report - Breaking the Rules 2001 - was launched in May this year at the World Health Assembly to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. The report cites Code violations by artificial baby milk companies, including promotion via the Internet. (The report can be purchased from Baby Milk Action's Virtual Shop).

5. Nestlé's assurances about its marketing practice do not stand up to scrutiny. In May 1999 the UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) upheld all of Baby Milk Action's complaints about an anti-boycott advertisement in which Nestlé claimed to market infant formula 'ethically and responsibly'. The two-year investigation was one of the longest in the ASA's history (see report in Boycott News 26).

6. In November 2000 Nestlé was the first company called to give evidence to the European Parliament Public Hearings on corporate responsibility. Nestlé refused to attend (see report in Boycott News 29).

7. Baby Milk Action has produced an education pack called Seeing through the Spin, which is designed for teachers and educators to help students recognise and deconstruct public relations messages.

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Baby Milk Action is a member of the International Baby Food Action Network.

press release index top

http://www.babymilkaction.org/press/pr20016aug01.html
Signs of a stunning level of ignorance over Perrier award boycott

KATE Moss, according to some reports, is "desperate" for a baby and planning fertility treatment in the next six months if she doesn't conceive. The marvellously checkered one is not alone in her desire to fit babies in with Prada's new season if the average reader believes everything on this topic. Alongside tales of models in la-la land, come predictable childbirth scare stories. Now, caesareans may be "banned".

Columns are filled with lame old references to "celebrity-style delivery" and "too push to push Mums". What utter nonsense. Any woman who has really received a caesarean against medical advice just because Madonna got one needs more things examined than her greening uterus. Her doctor for one thing.

Women don't "demand" from obstetricians. The women who do get the delivery they want, for whatever reasons they want it, don't have louder voices, or smaller brains, or more magazines cluttering up their defunct birthing pools. They have more money. This dream-up demands that women are supposedly making in antenatal units across the country are as close to reality as ordinary women are ever getting to make the same choices as celebrities in the first place.

However, this image of motherhood as a time of immediate gratification is one which has deeper, more important implications than a few hastily written columns. Obviously mothers in other countries aren't quite as important as the ones we have here, but it is still stunning to see the level of ignorance which has surrounded the Perrier Award boycott by some fringe performers. Journalists have rushed to the barricades to defend practices which have been called into question by many international organisations, including the United Nations, as well as failing to interact in any way with the underlying reasons behind why so many mothers choose not to breastfeed, preferring to dismiss the boycott as "liberal" or "politically correct". Frankly enough, that's how I like my attacks on exploitation.

Mike Brady of Baby Milk Action, has rightly questioned many of the tactics of powdered-milk manufacturers, "They label their products as "now closer to breast milk". That's like saying London is closer to the South Pole than Birmingham - they are both still a long way away."

I have lost count of the number of women who have told me that they have absolutely no concerns about feeding their babies in this way because they have a blind belief that these products simply would not be allowed to be promoted in such a way if there were any doubts over their benefits. They must be extremely reassured by this week's recall of SMA. It is still the case that many new mothers actually believe milk substitutes to be better than breast milk. The messages are not getting through about the protective wonders of the latter which are afforded to both mother and child, in both the short- and long-term. And is it any wonder? Breast milk doesn't make profits when they feed babies.

The announcement that many performers intended to boycott the Perrier awards has been supported by Sutcliffe Marshall, who plans to run a corporate-free "Top Water Award" at Edinburgh's Bongo Club next Thursday. There has been international support from representatives of groups who see the impact of the marketing tactics of some multinationals on women in areas of deprivation. UNICEF has claimed that reversing the decline in breastfeeding would save the lives of 1.5 million infants a year.

I've had my run-ins with Nestle in the past, so I shall tread very carefully here, but I would very much like to see the evidence and research which too many journalists appear to have been subjected to which shows that powdered breast milk substitutes are a jolly good idea for Third World women and their babies. In one case, I read that these products actually helped women feed their babies and supported a nurturing relationship.

As which point does that happen? When there is only contaminated water to mix the powder with? When the free samples run out and the mother's milk has dried up? When the feeds get diluted because there is no money to buy more? Or maybe when the child is dehydrated or suffering from chronic diarrhoea, but the Mum can at least look at the shiny new folder and say she has been given by the manufacturers? Isn't motherhood grand?

LINDA WATSON-BROWN
Friday, 17th August 2001
The Scotsman
Comedian hits out at ‘hijacker’ Perrier

Awards’ sponsor is accused of cashing in on funnyme

COMIC Mark Thomas
launched an attack on the
company which sponsors
the Fringe comedy prize
today, saying that it is
“hijacking” comedians’
talents.

The stand-up comedian
and TV presenter -- himself a
former nominee for the Fringe
award -- is appearing in two
benefit shows in Edinburgh
this week and called for
comedy to get someone else to
sponsor the prize, the most
prestigious award in comedy.

And he predicted that the huge
benefit sponsor Nestlé, which has
been accused of breaching baby
milk regulations in developing
countries, would become an
annual event.

Comedian Rob Newman wrote
the following open letter:

ATTACK: Mark Thomas

Mr Thomas’ parent company, which
is backed by its critics were
used to publicise a
political campaign.

Mark Thomas, who was
nominated for the prize in 1991, a
year before Nestlé bought Perrier,
has now joined the fray. He said:

“It was only when I actually got
hold of the chief executive of
Nestlé that we actually got some
answers from them. They were saying
there’s nothing wrong now, but
when they have said that in the
past, it has turned out otherwise.

The...
Comedian Thomas joins call for Perrier boycott

Mika Wade

The comedian Mark Thomas has joined calls for a boycott of the Perrier Award, the most prestigious prize for comedians at the Edinburgh Fringe.

Bullet this month, other well-known entertainers, including Rob Newman and Emma Thompson, backed the campaign led by Baby Milk Action.

They accuse Nestlé, the owner of the Perrier brand, of irresponsible promoting powdered baby milk in the third world.

The company reported that its critics were using the fringe awards to promote a political campaign, but Thomas turned that allegation on its head.

He said: "It's the other way around - Perrier has hijacked comedians' talents and is riding on their backs. They get enormous amounts of publicity and coverage out of it."

But Thomas acknowledged the call for a boycott was unlikely to prove effective this year. He added: "I understand comics have worked hard to put themselves in the frame and done a lot of good work.

"But I also recognize the real importance of this issue. This time comedians probably won't support the boycott, but at least the call has put them in the right frame of mind for next year, hopefully something else can be organized then."

An investigate campaigner, Thomas plays today at the Gilded Balloon in a benefit for War on Want, which, in turn, is sending a judicial review over British arms sales to Morocco.

Thomas accused the government of shedding the last vestiges of its "ethical" foreign policy, which had been tarnished after the 1997 election. He argued that, as a result of arms sales, people in the western Sahara, who have campaigned for independence since 1975, would die at the hands of the Moroccan army.
BOYLING POINT

HEARD THE ONE ABOUT THE SWISS MULTINATIONAL?

WE'RE KILLING Ourselves.

$100m sell-off plan makes no sense say Liberal Democrats

City gear up for funding drive

SCOTLAND's first youth volunteer conference
Gagging order
Brian Logan unveils his alternative Perrier shortlist.

It is that time of the year again when comedians acquire haunted expressions and TV producers start slicking their hair. Today, the Perrier shortlist is announced, and Edinburgh's festival stand-ups all have their eyes on the prize. This was the year when their naked ambition was exposed. Despite Eric Morecambe's high-profile appeal for them to condemn Perrier's parent company, they felt noble in promoting the comedy that firstly paved the way for this year's prize. Whether this year's shortlist is acceptable remains to be seen.

The Treason Show
The comedy industry assumes that audiences are interested in a world beyond sex, celebrities and beer. Topical and political don't play well -- why alarm punters with anything as abrasive as an opinion? In a year marked by an increase in sketch shows, this badly named affair was perhaps the best. It exploited the talents of the format -- the song/sketch revue -- and its audiences with biting perspectives on the Middle East, war, process, Westminster affairs, and the Bulger bombshell. These may not push the envelope, but it says, yes, and delivers it with verve, incisive gags.

Earl Stevens
The last two Ferriers have been won by character comedians: Otis Lee Carnahan and Al Murray, the Pub Landlord. And the pattern could continue -- last year's winner, Essex doctor writer Graeme Mitchell, is again being talked up. But there's no character comedy this year, brilliantly conceived, as in Pauline Patmore's washed-up American entertainer, Stevens, who takes audiences on a journey through canine abuse and the "United States of Mirth." What's amazing about Stevens is that he has written the role of "Stand-up job: the bared bonnanz, the dumb slant, My Rabbi Is A Robot" indeed, and, of course, the yearning to be loved.

Julian Fox
The wide-touted entry, Fox, is the antithesis of the stand-up comedian. No likeable swagger, no beer, no knob gags, no put-downs, so "Find It Yuppy." And true, if it wasn't for a quirk of fringe classification, his show Relaunched, Mr God might not have been considered comedy. But there's no其他 performer in Edinburgh who has raised the bar to a show worth being better. This no-frills cabaret from the stage-door keeper of London's Barbican arts centre is a brief, fragmentary trip through the imagination of a bystander at the world's celebrity circus. Could a new house winner give The Perrier? No chance.

Best newcomer: Daniel Kitson
It's a measure of how the comedy industry works that a promising arrival should be subject to the hype that currently surrounds this Bonfire boy: Gervy, snoring, and with sweater and beard, 24-year-old Kitson is perked up as a star of the future by his outsider perspective and disarming wit, if not his pedestrian material. He deserves the best newcomer prize, but the competition is so good that he may be in the running for the Perrier itself.
FRINGE PRESS RELEASE

out of the blue presents the launch of the TAP WATER AWARDS

Don’t bottle it - Tap into the Talent @ the Bongo Club on Thursday 23rd August

10 pm - 5am (10.30pm start)  £7 / £5

It’s finally official, The Bongo Club’s penultimate Cabaret evening will host the controversial (and unexpectedly) much hyped Tap Water Awards night, a comical, tongue in cheek, performance platform in support of the boycott of The Perrier Comedy Awards. The evening will comprise more than just a few laughs. Learn with Mother, and suckle on the semi-condensed ambrosia of Bongo Bohemia.

Nestlé’s unethical marketing of breast milk substitutes undermines breastfeeding and contributes to the malnutrition and deaths of infants. UNICEF & WHO estimate that one and a half million babies die every year because they’re not breastfed.

It is not just in the Fringe that Perrier is being boycotted. Nestlé’s bottled water tactics have raised concerns due to their environmental impact. Perrier are the main target of the Save America’s Water campaign.

It is widely believed that, in areas where urgent action is needed to improve the municipal water infrastructure, Nestle is aiming to create and control the market for bottled water. As the world’s biggest food company, they have considerable influences on governments in developing lucrative new markets. Perrier capitalise on people’s poverty.

With regard to water, whilst Perrier and San Pellegrino are marketed to the designer-label market, Nestle’s Pure Life, is marketed to people in areas where people living in poverty, particularly children, die from drinking contaminated water. It is marketed as enhancing the health and well being of your family. Peter Gliek, director of Pacific Institute, an independent think tank in California, states: "Nestle steps in and fills a need, but turns water into a luxury.

Last month Nestle’s continued violation of The World Health Organisation Code of marketing resulted in their exclusion from the FTSE 4 Good Ethical Investment Index.

For more details on Nestle’s violations of marketing practices and the resulting consequences please read the information attached.

Baby Milk Action’s campaign running since 1980 has the support of many high profile personalities. The growing list includes comedian Rob Newman, former Perrier winner actress Emma Thompson (before Perrier was a Nestle product), actresses Julie Christie, Jane Asher, Julie Walters and Victoria Wood, Zoe Wanamaker, actor Richard E Grant, writer Germaine Greer, cartoonist Gerald Scarf, former MP Tony Benn, Philosopher Naomi Chomsky, MEP Glenys Kinnock, Green Party MSP Robin Harper as well as musicians Pulp, Dodgy, Cast, Ocean Colour Scene, Shed 7 and Ian Brown.
Mark Thomas a former Perrier nominee and investigator extraordinaire, has been a great inspiration for comedians and supporters alike. “Perrier has hi-jacked comedians talents and are riding on their backs. They get extreme amounts of publicity and coverage out of it. Comedians can be very critical of themselves and self aware, but can’t always recognise their full value. It would be great if comedians took that step and said, actually, we’re being used to endorse a brand where the parent company has got huge question marks over it’s ethical behaviour and we’re not going to play” (August 20th 2001).

Mark Wilson - One of last year’s Perrier Judges and Deputy Arts Editor of The Independent. Mark will be lending his expertise to the tap water awards.

Chad McCall - British Art Show artist, will be illustrating displays for the event.

In true Bongo style expect the unexpected, this will be an awards night with a difference, (not exclusively comedy based). Although the issues at stake are serious, the event will be informal and above all fun. Have we achieved our aim? Well, did you know that Perrier was owned by Nestlé?

Though launched this year, the shape of The Tap Water Awards will take a more definitive format ready for The Fringe of 2002, commemorating 10 years of Nestlé’s takeover of Perrier.

out of the blue are an Arts & Education Trust est. 1994

**Bongo Club Contact:**
For further information contact Suzy Merrall / Dana Macleod at out of the blue / The Bongo Club, 6-14 New Street, Edinburgh EH8 8DW. 0131 556 5204 / 558 9408 or email suzy@outoftheblue.org.uk

**Baby Milk Action Contact:**
Jon Dorsett 07949 180 050/ Patti Rundall 07990 501 337
www. babymilkaction.org, info@babymilkaction.org
Baby Milk Action will be present at The Tap Water Awards launch
Mark his words

We almost insulted Mark Thomas and called him an alternative comedian. The Festival blurb - "He's like John Pilger with laughs" - for once tilted the bill. Funnier live than on television, we reckon even Iain Duncan Smith and Ken Clarke would have had a chortle especially at his saga of Balfour Beatty and their chairman Lord Weir. Along with new Labour backing they intend to build a dam in the Kurdish part of Turkey. A passionate campaigner on behalf of the Kurds, Thomas received a standing ovation and this was before lunch.

Let's also bang the drum for the Bongo Club whose Tap Water awards, an alternative to the Perrier, are on Thursday from 10pm to 5am. Be home just in time for breakfast.
Stand-ups take a back seat on the Perrier list

JUST ONE stand-up comedian was shortlisted for the Perrier, Britain's most prestigious comedy award, yesterday amid bitter divisions over the quality of humour at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The sole stand-up, 24-year-old Daniel Kitson, is regarded as a forerunner for the £5,000 prize - to be awarded on Saturday night - alongside a surreal theatrical act, Garth MacRae. The rest of the shortlist is made up by the former Perrier nominee Dan Amingdale, Jason Byrne and the Australian fringe veteran Adam Hills.

With a comic's wariness of official commendation, Kitson was diffident as he welcomed his nomination. "It's lovely but if I didn't pick holes in it I wouldn't think I was doing my job as a comedian. As comedians, I think we all have problems with people in self-appointed positions of knowledge and power."

The shortlist features some of the youngest and least well-known comedy acts to have been nominated for some time, in contrast to last year when the eventual winner, Rich Hall, was a well-established name.

But it provoked few surprises, less than the disappointment of no nomination for Cofordale, an anti-globalism, anti-capitalist group which might have been an intriguing presence at the squatters' winter party at the cafe Chicago's show Pick-ups and Mitchets. The aggrieved...

BY LOUISE JENNY
Media Correspondent

...east search of new talent precipitated some strong debate. Promoters blamed the press for failing to dig out the best of the new talent - but critics will insist the festival has been widely regarded as short on standing out arrivals.

The award chain continues to be overshadowed by a threatened boycott, led by the actress Emma Thompson, a former Perrier winner, and the comic Mark Thomas, over the sale of baby milks substitute in the developing world by Perrier's parent company, Nestle. An alternative to the Perrier award, the Top Trawler, featuring about 15 acts, will take place at the Barra Club in Edinburgh tonight to raise awareness of the Nestle-Perrier competition.

Announcing the Perrier shortlist yesterday, Niamh Burns, its director, said she believed the overall standard had been very high this year among the acts shown. The judging panel, "raved in seeing people laughing all the way through then there are lots of shows that have been green," she said.

"The shortlisted acts are all quite different in style, but they all have an awful lot of laughs in a minute. There is quite a lot of joy this year, which is unusual. Daniel Kitson and Adam Hills are very upbeat and Jason Byrne is very, very happy. There isn't a huge amount of cynicism or sarcasm."

Daniel Kitson

Avoids stand-up's observational clichés by concentrating on the everyday life. Technically brilliant, Kitson, 24, a stayer, is an olympian yet few comics think as fast on their feet. Today

Ticket sales for the festival were higher than last year, with the festival expected to pass the one million mark this weekend and comedy promoters reporting sales significant ahead of target, she said.

But with critics reporting a lack of new stars of the ilk of Garth MacRae, an instant hit on their debut last year, promoters blamed the reviewers for failing to review newcomers.

Andrew Collins of Pat Sleek
Perrier five bid to be famous

JUDGES for the Edinburgh Fringe’s top comedy award yesterday unveiled an all-male shortlist.

Five names have been put forward for the Perrier Comedy Award, the winner of which will be announced on Saturday night.

The nominees are: Dan Antopolski for his show Antopolski 2000, Jason Byrne, Adam Hills (Go You Big Red Fire Engine), Daniel Kitson (Love, Innocence and the Watercock) and Garth Marenghi (Netherlands). Marenghi was on the shortlist last year but lost out to Rich Hall, an American comic.

More than 160 shows were eligible this year for the award, which is celebrating its twenty-first anniversary.

Previous winners, including Steve Coogan, Frank Skinner and the League of Gentlemen, have used it as a springboard for their showbiz careers.

This year it came under attack from former winner Rob Newman and Emann Thomasson, who called for a boycott because of the involvement of Perrier’s owner, Nestlé, in marketing powdered baby milk in developing countries.

Nicola Burns, director and producer of the Perrier Awards, accused the pair of being “out of touch”.

Addressing today’s shortlist, she said it had been an extraordinary year for comedy with sell-out shows. “I am delighted with the high standard across many shows and agree with the audience who have voted with their feet; 2001 has been an excellent year.”
A baby dies every 30 seconds from unsafe bottle feeding

- Nestlé, the parent company of Perrier, promotes artificial infant feeding around the world, breaking the World Health Organisation (WHO) code of marketing.
- WHO and UNICEF say that reversing the decline in breastfeeding could save 1.5 million lives every year. 4,000 infants die every day because they are not breastfed.
- Where supplies of water are unsafe, a bottle-fed baby is up to 25 times more likely to die as a result of diarrhoea than a breastfed child.

- Expensive baby foods can also increase family poverty. Poverty is a major cause of malnutrition.
- Poor people often over-dilute the baby milk powder to make it last longer. The baby may then become malnourished.
- Breastfeeding saves lives. Even undernourished mothers can breastfeed.
- Nestlé's marketing encourages mothers and health workers to favour artificial infant feeding.

- Nestlé makes a profit while others count the cost.

Don't let them get away with it - Boycott Nestlé.

Comedians at this year's Edinburgh Festival are being asked to boycott the Perrier Awards and instead enter the corporate free alternative The Tap Water Awards being organised by Out of the Blue at the Bongo Club.

For more information contact Baby Milk Action
23, St. Andrews Street, Cambridge, CB2 3AX
Tel: 01223 464420 Fax: 01223 464417
email: info@babymilkaction.org

www.babymilkaction.org
Women miss out as judges pick five for the Perrier

DAVID BELCHER

JUDGES for the Edinburgh Fringe's most prestigious comedy award yesterday unveiled an all-male short-list.

Five names have been put forward for the Perrier award, the winner of which will be announced on Saturday night.

The nominees are Dan Antopolski for his show Antopolski 2000, Jason Byrne, Adam Hills (Go You Big Red Fire Engine), Daniel Kitson (Love, Innocence, and the Word Cock) and Garth Marenghi (Netherhead).

Marenghi will be hoping to go a step further than last year, when the act was on the short-list for the award, but lost out to American comic Rich Hall.

More than 160 shows were eligible this year for the Perrier award, which is celebrating its 21st anniversary.

This year, it came under attack from former winners Rob Newman and Emma Thompson, who called for a boycott of the award because of the involvement of Perrier's owners, Nestle, in marketing powdered baby milk in developing countries.

Nica Burns, director and producer of the Perrier Awards, rebutted the criticism and accused the pair of being "out of touch".

Announcing the short-list, she said: "It has been an extraordinary year for comedy. The more well-known names have sold out and the major comedy producers all report higher ticket sales than last year." There was clearly a fatal flaw in Thompson's politically correct effort to make this year's crop of stand-up comedians stand up and be counted in the fight against corporate exploitation of the developing world.

The first Perrier Award recipient wanted her successors to forget about advancing their careers via the £5000 prize and boycott this year's event.

None of the eligible acts heeded Thompson's call, however, it being difficult for any comic to consider pulling out of an event which none of them officially enters anyway. So the Perrier judging panel - comprised of comedy professionals and enthusiastic punters - went about their business of visiting every venue that would let them in. Only one venue, The Bongo Club, barred their path.
That all five short-listed acts are appearing at the Pleasance underlines one unhappy feature this year: competent Fringe comics can be found in abundance, but there are not a huge number of radically original ones.

None of this year's Perrier quintet conforms to the Fringe stand-up stereotype of the cynical metropolitan gagster with a microphone.

Surrealist Dan Antopolski is a cuddly, rumpled-looking, bearded cross between former Perrier favourites Dylan Moran and Alan Davies. He is managed by Avalon, the London comedy promoter which has latterly come to dominate the Perrier via such recent victors as Al Murray, Jenny Eclair, and Frank Skinner.

Avalon also handles the satirical career of Garth Marenghi, last year's Perrier newcomer title-winner. Ostensibly a writer of bad genre horror fiction, the Marenghi stage-name actually masks the identities of three talented albeit-deliberately-reclusive young actors.

Geeky-looking Yorkshireman Daniel Kitson completes English representation on the list. Kitson specialises in personal anecdotes which charm and disarm, as well as amuse.

Australian Adam Hills and Ireland's Jason Byrne complete the nominations, the latter being long-overdue recognition for his energetic blend of freewheeling semi-improvisation.

Hills, meanwhile, provides a subtle variety of comic rumination which depends upon his kindly involving his audience in gentle acts of participation.

-Aug 23rd
Perrier 2000 Judge supports the corporate-free Tap Water Award at the Edinburgh Fringe

25th August 2001 - photo opportunity

The Perrier Comedy Award boycott comes to a head this weekend as the Edinburgh Festival draws to an end. Various activities have been arranged to raise awareness of Nestle's (Perrier's parent company) marketing malpractice of breastmilk substitutes.

The corporate-free alternative to the Perrier Comedy Awards, the Tap Water Awards, were organised by Out of the Blue and held at the Bongo Club on Thursday 23rd August from 10.30pm. Because these Awards began quite spontaneously this first year, it was not possible to organise a proper judging panel to review all the acts. Over one hundred acts entered. All entrants joining Perrier Boycott were given a plug (and a chain).

The format of the awards in future will be decided in the coming year. Emma Thompson has offered to present the prizes next time.

Mark Wilson (Deputy Arts Editor - The Independent) who was on the panel for the Perrier Awards in 2000.

Mark Wilson said:

"I believe that the Tap Water Awards provide a vibrant alternative to the more commercial aims of the Perrier Prize. They are nurturing comedy talent for the future in a less competitive format, as well as drawing attention to important issues of globalisation and consumer choice."

[Cartoon: Frank Boyle - first appeared in the Edinburgh Evening News 25/8/01. Copyright exists on this cartoon - please contact us if you would like to reproduce it.]

Click here for larger version
The Perrier Awards are announced on Saturday 25th at midnight at Potter Row. On Sunday 26th and Monday 27th The Perrier Pick of the Fringe shows take place at the Assembly Rooms. It is expected that boycott supporters will make a light-hearted appearance at these events providing a photo opportunity.

UNICEF estimate that reversing the decline in breastfeeding could save 1.5 million lives every year. Where water is unsafe an artificially fed child is up to 25 times more likely to die from diarrhoea than a breastfed child. The aggressive promotion of breast milk substitutes by companies such as Nestle is contributing to this unnecessary death and suffering. It was for this reason that the comedian Rob Newman first called on other comedians at this years Edinburgh Festival to boycott the Perrier Awards. Various other comedians and celebrities have also added their voices to the calls to boycott the Awards including Emma Thompson, Julie Christie and Victoria Wood.

Jonathan Dorsett, Campaigns Officer at Baby Milk Action, said:

"Those who have boycotted the Perrier Awards have really helped to raise awareness about Nestle's malpractice, and have helped to put Nestle under pressure to change. This must indicate to Nestle the strong feeling there is amongst the public that it needs to bring its activities into line with international legislation."

Patti Randall OBE, Policy Director at Baby Milk Action, added:

"We must not forget that companies have a clear commercial agenda - and receive huge financial advantages from sponsoring cultural, educational and sporting events compared to direct TV advertising for example - the costs are much lower, it is not intrusive. Sometimes the sponsor gives just a top-up grant - yet its name appears everywhere. Companies use the benefits of the image enhancement in many ways, most worryingly in political arenas in order to get the legislation they want. Often their objectives - as in the case of Nestle - are in direct conflict with the health and welfare of society generally.

"Spokesman Tessa Kellner refused Nestle sponsorship recently and has now drawn up strict guidelines which should ensure that they do not allow any company with a bad ethical record to sponsor them. They do not want to be drawn into a web of cause related marketing covering up unethical practices. It would be good if everyone adopted similar guidelines so that this type of problem is avoided."

For more information contact Baby Milk Action, 23 St Andrews Street, Cambridge, CB2 3AX, Tel: +44 1223 464420, Fax: +44 1223 464417.

For information on the Tap Water Award contact Suzanne Mernell - 0131 556 5204.

Some reports on the web:

Baby Milk Action press release - 15 August 2001: African health campaigners welcome boycott of Perrier Award at the Edinburgh Fringe

The Scotman - 21 August 2001: Comedian Thomas joins call for the Perrier boycott

Sunday Times - 12 August 2001: Hey, heard the one about the ethical comedian?

The Telegraph - 8 August 2001: Stars boycott Fringe awards for comedy

Yahoo - 6 August 2001: Campaigners call for Perrier Award boycott

BBC - 31 July 2001: Actress joins call for Perrier boycott

The Independent - 24 July 2001: Comedian calls for a boycott on Perrier Awards and corporate power

The Scotman - 24 July 2001: Comic battles to get milk powder sponsor

BRG - 24 July 2001: Comedian calls for prize boycott

Notes for editors:

A grand finale of bubbles and sneers

Sentimentality is lost in a sea of true humanity

After 30 years, Pinky and Perky hit the comeback trail

No water please

As the Parky caravan goes up to Parky and Perky tonight, it's worth noting they still fit it to a date when we asked them how they felt about performing. They said: "It's our first night, and we're a bit nervous."
Dance and design in sublime synchronicity

Bye-bye Perrier? What's the point?

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Second time lucky as Marenghi wins Perrier

MARENGHI was last night named the winner of the Perrier comedy award, writes Caroline Wilson.

The award for best newcomer was given to Garth Crestchink and Eddie McCabe for Let's Have a Shambles.

Marenghi, who lost out to American comic Rita Hall last year, picked up the award at a ceremony at the Majestic Theatre, Haymarket.

The awards have attracted controversy this year due to the all-male shortlist and the involvement of Perrier's owners, Nestle, in marketing powdered baby milk in developing countries.

The Perrier is the UK's premier comedy award and was created in 1981 to support young talent. It has helped launch the careers of Stephen Fry, Frank Skinner and Jenny Eclair.

The judging panel consisted of media professionals and members of the public, who attend shows from the first day of the festival.

In recent times, the winner has become associated with the interest of talent-seeking TV producers, and the prize can be a springboard to much greater things.

Recognising that some of the winner acts trying to break into the big time were being overlooked, Perrier added a best newcomer category in 1995.

How the Perrier lost its fizz?
Focus, page 14
HAS THE PERRIER LOST ALL ITS FIZZ?

For the sixth year running no female comics have appeared on the Edinburgh Festival’s Perrier award shortlist. That might be because the once coveted prize has become the joke, writes Phil Miller.
Fizzling mad: director attacks Perrier protesters

The director of the Perrier Award has accused celebrities who urged a boycott of the company of "breaking the spirit" of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, writes Gina Hudston.

Nicola Burns, right, speaking for the first time about the controversy, said she "could not believe" the actions of Bruna Thompson, Victoria Wood and others.

They backed a campaign by protest group Baby Milk Action, which urged customers to refuse to take part in the Festival because the company is owned by conglomorate Nestle, which controversially marketed its breast-milk substitute in the Third World.

Speaking exclusively to Scotland on Sunday, Burns said she was "frustrated" by the opposition.

"The hard work of my team and that of lots of very talented people has basically been called more publicity than we've ever had in your life," she said.

A spokesman for Nestle said: "Many of the allegations are years out of date and have long been rectified."
Glass act: Perrier Award goes to reclusive trio

The lucrative Perrier Award has gone to an act featuring spoof horror novelist Garth Marenghi, writes Steve Davidson.

The show, called Madderhausen, is performed by a trio of reclusive actors, right, who have refused to disclose their real names. They received £2,000 at last night's award ceremony, which was hit by controversy when it was announced 70 protesters picketed the event in Edinburgh, urging a boycott of the promotion by Perrier's parent company Nestlé, of breast-milk substitutes in the third world.

The title of best newcomer went to the trio of Garth Devleake and Eddie McVade for their show Let's Have a Shimajug.

For the trio behind Garth Marenghi it was second time lucky as they lost out last year to the US comedian Rich Hall.

Meanwhile, protesters promised their campaign against the Perrier Award will continue in future years and disclosed they will be petitioning the Fringe director Paul Gedgins to find alternative sponsorship for the comedy remnant.
Spoof horror writer wins £5,000 Perrier award

Fringe comedy contest soured by baby milk protests

Kirsty Scott

The spoof horror writer Garth Marenghi and the Perrier soured Milk Action announced yesterday after a contest by the two sides over power playing at the Fringe Festival launched the event. Last year, they failed.

"Marenghi, whose moribund Howling, of puppy horror novels have won widespread critical acclaim, faced off competing from four other male competitors for the Perrier award, which has traditionally been awarded as one of the high points of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

This year, however, the award scheme was attacked by former co-writers Jack Newman and Emine Thomson, who backed calls for a boycott by the group, Baby Milk Action because of the involvement of Perrier's owner, Nestlé. The marketing 'power' of baby milk is developed, they charge.

Yesterday, Nicola Black, director and joint-convener of the awards, relented the question and accused those who had called for a boycott of "breaking the spirit of the fringe".

Other critics, however, said the award, which was celebrating its 1st anniversary this year, had lost its edge and been demeaned by the lack of female nominees. For the first time running, there were no female comedians on the list. The alternative, Funnies, produced the only woman to win the award in 1999.

The award is still considered one of the biggest accolades in comedy, however, for previous winners, including Steve Coogan, Ardal O'Hanlon and the League of Gentlemen, have used it as a springboard for their show business careers.

"The last Marenghi show was more by the franchise than part of the acclaimed Perrier Plop of the Fringe Season in the West End in October."

"We selected a year show entitled around Marenghi's latest work, "Netherfield," said to be the "darkest book he has ever written. "It will spell back the "layers of our minds until your brains fall off,"" Marenghi's previous work include "Theatrical" of the award winning tale of witch infection, "Little Fang" (aka "Haus of Abraxas") and "Shrunken Head," a novel about a living cork.

"Speaking yesterday, Marenghi — whose real name is Gervase" — said he was disappointed to receive the award and had been inspired to his latest work by a bout of sickness and an eye infection. "I'm just back from a bad one."

"I was quite ill, actually, and I had flu and a cold."

"I have instructed Garth to not discuss anything he doesn't understand."

The other nominees for the 2001 award were "Daily Mirror" for his show "Anopolis 2001," Jason Byrne, Australian-born Adam Hills ("Go Big Red Fire Engine") and Daniel Kitson ("Lillie, Incidence and the Word Clock").

"Meanwhile, it emerged yesterday that Edinburgh city council is considering introducing an X-rating for some fringe shows next year to ensure children are not exposed to unsuitable material.

City officials said it was not always clear from promotional literature what kind of material the shows actually contained and parents needed more information.

"It was a disturbing image, for the sake of the audience and for our own safety," said Steve Cardew, in charge of the council's arts program. "I will be looking at doing something — possibly a certificate for children with parental consent, but as much guidance as possible."

Links

www.journalsearch.co.uk/edinburgh/2001

www.journalsearch.co.uk/edinburgh/2001

www.journalsearch.co.uk/edinburgh/2001
MARENGHI WINS PERRIER

GARETH MARENGHI last night won the Perrier Comedy Award, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival's most prestigious prize.

He fought off competition from four other male contestants, Dan Antopolski, Jason Byrne, Australian-born Adam Hills and a cheque and the opportunity to appear in the acclaimed Perrier Pick of the Fringe Season in the West End in October.

More than 150 shows were eligible this year for the Perrier award, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Previous winners include Steve Coogan, Frank Skinner and The League Of Gentlemen.

The award was presented to Let's Have A Shambles, a show by Edinburgh pub quiz supremo Gerth Cruickshank.

This year the Perrier came under attack from former winners Rob Newman and Emma Thompson, who called for a boycott because of the involvement of Perrier's owners Nestlé in marketing powdered baby milk in developing countries.
Success behind the winners

DAVID BELCHER

THIS year's Perrier Award victory was almost certainly more a result of the marketing genius of the winning fringe perfomers than it was for the successful act.

A prize of £2,000 and a London West End stage run went to Matt Holman, Dean Learner and Alice Lowe, the three actors behind spoof grandparent character Garth Marenghi, a self-indulging parody of pathetic middle-aged men.

However, for London-based management agency Avalon, a fourth Perrier win in the past 10 years confirms it as Britain's number one shaper of emerging comedic talent.

It is now highly likely that the Garth Marenghi duo's fringe success to date, Ned's dead and Fright Knights, will soon follow the TV sitcom path of the last Avalon Perrier winners, Al Murray.

This year's Perrier was also notable in providing a long-overdue win for native Edinburgh talent. Two decades after the Perrier's birth, Edinburgh comics Garth Chilvers and Eddie McCabes scored a native Scottish first by winning the Perrier newcomer title with their pub quizzes devishow, Let's Have A Shambles.

In another first, Saturday night's Perrier announcement was covered live on TV, by Crime...
Boycotts do work, but asking a comic to join in this one is like trying to recruit a Teletubby to the Zapatistas.

Mark Thomas

Any activist or campaigner should be able to tell you about the problems of powdered baby milk. For a start, unscrupulous drug dealers* keeping cutting cocaine with infant formula, which results in extremely healthy, nutritionally enriched nostrils and a good night's sleep. Which might explain why Keith Richards is still alive. At certain times in his life, he has probably been doing a pint of infant formula a day. This, when combined with sheep's blood transusions at private Swiss clinics, is bound to have an adverse effect on his intake of Jack Daniel's. For Nestlé and other baby milk manufacturers, it is ironic that the use of their products in the drugs trade is so benign compared to the way they are used in the developing world.

After the links were established between infant mortality and the misuse of baby milk formula, the World Health Organization established a code of practice for the manufacturers. This was the least they could do, considering that the WHO itself states that, if the downward trend in breast feeding were reversed, a million infant lives could be saved each year. Today, the boycott of Nestlé products, in protest against the company's marketing practices, is the longest-running boycott in the world. And because Perrier is owned by Nestlé, it was inevitable that, sooner or later, activists would target the Perrier Award for Comedy at the Edinburgh Festival. For the past three weeks, this story has rumbled gently on the breadsheets.

Asking comics to boycott the award is an unsavory task. Frankly, you would have more luck recruiting the Telerabbies to the Zapatistas (though Tinky Winky would be instantly recognizable, even in a balaclava). I was nominated for the award a few years ago; it has high prestige and I understand why comics want to win it. But I have spoken to doctors working in Pakistan who are furious at the effects of baby milk on infant health in their country, as well as to health officials in Malawi and Zimbabwe, one of whom compared Nestlé's actions to "ethnic cleansing". Although some comics have been sympathetic to the issue, others have shown all the political acumen of Mike Gatting, who, as a dropped cricketer to South Africa during the apartheid years, stated that boycotts have no effect.

 Liberals and the left have nearly always supported consumer boycotts; the right believes them to be counter-productive unless they involve anything French or German, in which case we are giving the Rantos/Prosa a bloody nose and reliving the spirit of the Blitz. There are exceptions; in the mid-1980s, the Revolutionary Communist Party believed that there should be no sanctions on the South African apartheid regime, as sanctions would not advance a revolutionary situation. I had visions of RCP activists gleefully eating Cape apples during their meetings, safe in the knowledge that the more the workers were oppressed, the sooner they would overthrow the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, it is just as easy to conjure up images of well-meaning liberals wandering around the supermarket, picking off the goods they shouldn't purchase and cupping their ears for the sound of multinationals falling to their knees. However, it is worth remembering that the threat of boycotts of GM foods forced companies and governments to rethink their plans.

In the case of baby milk, a lot has been achieved since the early days when Nestlé promoted Carnation Milk as "a food for excellence for delicate infants"**, a line that the company dropped in 1977, the year the boycott began. The creation of the WHO code in 1981, and its continual updating, are in part due to campaigning groups such as Baby Milk Action. This has not saved enough infant lives, but it has undeniably saved some.

Boycotts can be extremely powerful. Angie San San Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma, has asked tourists not to visit the country, because the military regime benefits directly from their money. Because Lonely Planet publishes a travel guide to Burma, pro-democracy campaigners organized a boycott of the firm's publications. Lonely Planet expected to sell 4,000 copies of the Burma guide in the UK, so the campaigners gathered more than 4,000 signatures from people promising not to buy its products. The effect was to reposition all profits the company might make from its book on Burma, and to highlight the issue in the media.

Has this actually helped the people of Burma? Because many tourists' hotels and facilities there are being built using forced labour — Mandalay airport is one of the most recent examples — we can safely conclude that it hasn't done any harm. If the tourist numbers drop, so will the use of forced labour.

The World Trade Organization's emission of trade liberalisation continues to increase the "rights" of multinationals. Add to this the sheer financial force of companies such as Nestlé (its yearly promotional budget is more than the total state expenditure of the world's 28 poorest countries) and you have a situation where companies often have more power than democratically elected governments. In such circumstances, choosing which goods you buy, and which you won't, is more than liberal hand-wringing. It is actually a form of democracy. Boycotts may not lead us to the land of breast milk and honey, but they certainly help.

*As opposed to the ethical drug dealers, who have nothing to do with Colombian death squads, who use their profits for community development, and who are currently seeking to market their produce with a Fair Trade label

**It isn't
Protest hits fringe award

ANTI-NESTLE campaigners protested outside the Perrier
Celebrity Awards in Edinburgh at the weekend in protest at the
firm's aggressive marketing of powdered baby milk in the
Third World.

Previous winners Rob Newman and Emma Thompson had
called for a boycott of the awards where Gareth Murnagh
picked up the £5,000 prize.

Previous winners, including
Steve Coogan, Brenda Blethyn,
and the League of Gentlemen,
had rejected the award as ungenuine;
award for Milk-shakin' career.
Award boost for festival comic

Cathri Mescayngh picked up a £10,000 cheque and the opportunity to appear as part of the Fringe Festival Pick of the Fringe Season, in the West End in October.

More than 160 shows were eligible this year for the Fringe award, which is celebrating its 21st anniversary.

Previous winners, including Steve Coogan and Frank Skinner, have used the award as a springboard for their successful careers. This year it came under attack from former winners Rob Newman and Gemma Thomspon, who called for a boycott of the award because of the involvement of Prings' owners, Sketch, in marketing prostate cancer in developing countries.

Nica Burns, Director and producer of the Fringe Awards, defended the criteria and accused the pair of being "out of touch".

The winner of this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival's most prestigious comedy award is Cathri Mescayngh.

He swept off competition from four other male contenders for the Peatree Comedy Award, which is traditionally given to the festival's biggest talent.

The other nominees were John Antopoliski, Jason Byrne, Australian-bom Adam Hills, and Daniel Rigson.
Tap Water Awards take off -

Video clips: Emma Thompson and Steve Coogan support the Nestlé/Perrier boycott

28th August 2001

Over one hundred comedy acts supported the Perrier boycott and entered for the corporate-free Tap Water Awards at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The Perrier Award went ahead at the weekend.

All entrants to the Tap Water Award received a plug (and a chain).

The format of the awards in future will be decided in the coming year. Emma Thompson has offered to present prizes. Emma was in the Cambridge Footlights team which won the first Perrier Award in 1981, before Perrier was swallowed by Nestlé in 1992.

She was present at the fringe and recorded a message for Baby Milk Action. Steve Coogan, another past winner, also recorded a message.

See them below.

Emma Thompson gave a message of support for Baby Milk Action after a question and answer session on her new film, Wit. To download and view the clip click on the above image. You need a QuickTime plug in - your browser should locate this for you (if not, see the Apple website).

Emma said:

"I've just been banging on about the Nestlé boycott which I think is terribly important. It's been important for a very long time. I'm very surprised actually about how many people have been talking about it recently and who don't know about it. Don't know about Nestlé's record of extreme violations of advertising standards [i.e. the International Code and Resolutions adopted by the World Health Assembly] in countries where we don't live, so of course, we don't know what's going on. And I think that recent events have certainly proved that it's about time we started questioning the big companies and their practices because a lot of these things are just done in the name of big business. I think it's time they started to answer a few questions. So right
 extrapolation of the data from the study by Smith et al. (2005). The results showed a significant correlation between the amount of exposure to outdoor light and the levels of vitamin D in the participants' blood samples. This finding is consistent with previous research, which has suggested that exposure to sunlight is a major determinant of vitamin D status.

However, the study also highlighted some potential limitations and areas for further research. First, the sample size was relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study was conducted in a single geographic location, which may not be representative of other populations. Finally, the study did not account for other factors that could influence vitamin D levels, such as diet and lifestyle habits.

In conclusion, the study by Smith et al. (2005) provides valuable insights into the relationship between outdoor light exposure and vitamin D status. Further research is needed to confirm these findings and to explore the potential implications for public health.

References


For more information, please visit the website: www.nutritionresearch.org
Cut Star plugs for Nestle

I write to congratulate you on the milk campaign taken by Fair Trade boycott article (M Star, August 7).

As a member of Baby Milk Action, I was pleased to see coverage of an issue that is largely ignored by the media.

However, this only fuelled my annoyance over the photo accompanying a story in the paper last week.

It was about phone abuse suffered in call centres and there was a relatively large photo of two phone boxes.

This, in itself, seemed unrelated but the main problem was that these two phone boxes carried full-size Kit Kat Nestle advertisements that could very clearly be seen.

I was surprised and dismayed at the Morning Star for giving free advertising space to Nestle.

I trust that this will not happen again and I look forward to your continued support of Baby Milk Action and, in particular, the worldwide Nestle boycott.

Ruth Ritchie
Leeds
Lucrative biscuit ad fails to get Royle seal of approval

ROYLE Family star Ricky Tomlinson has rejected “a massive” cash offer from Nestlé to front a chocolate biscuit commercial.

Tomlinson was approached by the multinational to appear in one of their biggest campaigns of the year. But he said yesterday: “Until they sort out this baby milk problem in the Third World I won’t do anything for them.”

Nestlé has been targeted by activists for offering powdered baby milk to nursing mothers in the developing world.

Protesters say it is often mixed with contaminated water, causing illness.

Tomlinson, 65, admitted that he – like his character Jim Royle – loves chocolate biscuits, but for moral reasons does not want to be associated with the makers of Kimmits and Smarties.

A spokesman for the protest group Baby Milk Action said: “We are extremely pleased to hear that Ricky is supporting our campaign.”

He is not the only actor to have made a point of going against the billion-dollar company. British comedian Rob Newman called for a boycott of the Perrier Awards this year’s Fringe Festival in protest at allegations that Nestlé had broken rules to market its breast-milk substitutes in the Third World. Nestlé owns the company that makes Perrier water.

Other celebrities backing the group include Emma Thompson, Julie Christie, Julie Walters, Steve Coogan and Jane Asher.

Nestlé said protesters’ arguments are no longer relevant. A spokesman said: “Many of the allegations are years out of date and have been rectified.”