# Comedian Matt Forde warns rising Edinburgh Festival costs make UK comedy more elitist



Comedian Matt Forde has highlighted concerns over the increasing financial barriers linked to performing at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, warning that these costs are making comedy in the UK “more elitist.” Speaking at a Commons select committee hearing on the live comedy sector, Forde criticised what he termed the “Edinburgh model,” saying it is “almost impossible to become a working-class, successful comedian in this country” due to the high expenses involved.

Forde, known for presenting the political satire programme Unspun, outlined the financial challenges comedians face as comedy clubs have seen declining earnings over time. He remarked, “A lot of comedy clubs, the money has gone backwards since when I first started gigging. The money has got worse.” He explained that performers now contend with higher costs but less income, with the traditional method of gaining recognition—through a successful Edinburgh Festival appearance—becoming increasingly unaffordable.

“The single biggest cost is accommodation. The single biggest barrier to be able to perform, and indeed visit the Edinburgh Festival, is the exorbitant rents that landlords charge,” Forde said. He noted that rents for accommodation during the festival have soared year after year, driven by landlords charging premium prices for the temporary use of their homes. This rising cost affects both performers and audiences, contributing to a more exclusive atmosphere surrounding the festival.

Forde emphasised that the financial pressures foster an environment where only “privileged people” can afford to do hours of unpaid work in the hope of launching a full-time comedy career. “The only people that can afford to perform at Edinburgh, and indeed visit Edinburgh, are privileged people,” he added. This observation echoes sentiments expressed by former BBC presenter Gail Porter, who last year said she had been “priced out” of attending the festival in Edinburgh due to soaring accommodation costs.

In addition to discussing the festival's economic implications, Forde spoke positively about the forthcoming British version of the long-running US sketch comedy show Saturday Night Live (SNL), which is set to air on Sky. “I’m really excited that SNL is coming to the UK. I think it’s a very good thing. I think we need more topical comedy on telly. We need more sketch on telly,” he said. Forde noted that Edinburgh remains a fertile ground for diverse comedy forms, particularly sketch shows, which differ from stand-up and should have greater representation on television. However, he tempered expectations by stating, “I think SNL in itself isn’t going to dramatically change the culture here.”

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is widely recognised as one of the world's largest arts festivals and has been pivotal in launching the careers of many prominent figures in comedy and theatre. Notable examples include Phoebe Waller-Bridge, who premiered her acclaimed play Fleabag there, and Richard Gadd, whose show Baby Reindeer was staged at the Fringe before becoming a successful Netflix series.

The remarks from Matt Forde were made during the Culture, Media and Sport Committee’s evidence session, the first of several hearings under the State Of Play inquiry. This inquiry invites input from across the UK creative industries, particularly those sectors often overlooked, to guide parliamentary examination of the challenges and future of live comedy and other creative fields. The Irish News is reporting on this development.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.scottishdailyexpress.co.uk/news/scottish-news/edinburgh-festival-fringe-acts-being-26679598> - This article discusses how extortionate accommodation costs are pricing out acts who want to appear at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, highlighting the financial barriers faced by performers.
2. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/comedy/features/edinburgh-fringe-accommodation-cost-rent-b2386395.html> - The article addresses the skyrocketing accommodation costs artists face during the Edinburgh Fringe, noting that these rising expenses are making the festival increasingly unaffordable for performers.
3. <https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/edinburgh-festival-fringe-threat-as-impact-of-soaring-300-accommodation-cost-rise-revealed-4869104> - This piece reveals the impact of soaring accommodation costs on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, with costs rising by up to 300% in six years, affecting both performers and audiences.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cqqn31yqv19o> - The article reports on how comics have spoken out against soaring costs and pure greed, which will prevent them from performing at or making money from the Edinburgh Fringe.
5. <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/edinburgh-fringe-chief-accommodation-prices-will-kill-life-force-of-festivals-271315> - This article features comments from the Edinburgh Fringe chief, stating that accommodation prices will 'kill the life-force of festivals,' emphasizing the detrimental impact of rising costs on the festival's sustainability.
6. <https://www.scotsman.com/whats-on/arts-and-entertainment/how-costs-for-edinburgh-festival-fringe-performers-and-venues-have-gone-absolutely-mad-as-accommodation-bills-soar-300-per-cent-4715919> - The article discusses how costs for Edinburgh Festival Fringe performers and venues have increased dramatically, with accommodation bills soaring by 300%, making it increasingly difficult for artists to participate.
7. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/cost-of-edinburgh-fringe-means-comedy-is-becoming-more-elitist-says-matt-forde-KJFBSNGK6ZJLDJAIVQ6R7Z6B6A/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data