# The Last Incel exposes the human despair behind toxic masculinity with dark humour



In a provocative exploration of toxic masculinity and digital culture, "The Last Incel" unpacks the disturbing undercurrents of incel ideology through a darkly comedic lens. Originally staged at the Edinburgh Fringe, the play has found a new home at London’s Pleasance Theatre, where it continues to resonate with contemporary audiences confronting the complexities and brutal realities of misogyny today.

Set against an absurd yet telling backdrop, three men gather in an online forum, exchanging violent and derogatory slang for women. They are the incels—"involuntary celibates"—who concoct a world where hate is valorised, and male celibacy is worn like a badge of honour. Their discussions are brutally anti-feminist, echoing sentiments that many may find discomforting, yet they illustrate a chilling truth about loneliness and despair. The plot thickens with the unexpected confession from Cuckboy, played with acute sensitivity by Fiachra Corkery: after a one-night stand with a journalist named Margaret (Justine Stafford), the entire dynamic of their insular group splinters.

The play deftly employs visual quirks, such as the actors using cardboard frames to suggest laptop screens, which not only injects humour into the grave subject matter but also critiques the digital landscape from which these ideologies spring. As the plot avatars grapple with their self-perceived inadequacies, their virulent disdain for women comes to light, revealing a desperate craving for connection masked by contempt. This creates a narrative tension that is simultaneously queasy and captivating.

Jamie Sykes, the playwright and director, has crafted a script that draws sympathy for these men, some of whom bear the scars of extreme bullying in their youth. Their anti-woman rhetoric is often laced with graphic self-hatred, suggesting a deeper malaise festering beneath their surface-level bravado. Sykes's use of humour intertwines effectively with the themes of loneliness and existential angst, as the incels engage in hilariously misguided attempts to express their frustrations through dance and music, underscored by striking choreography reminiscent of Kate Bush.

Yet, despite its successes, the portrayal of Margaret, who brings an intellectual perspective to the group, raises some questions about narrative convenience. Her character often serves as a mouthpiece for counterarguments against incel ideologies, referencing significant issues, such as the historical Magdalene laundries in Ireland and the societal constraints surrounding women's autonomy. While her role adds an essential layer of critique, it sometimes risks oversimplifying the men’s motivations and the intricacies of their worldview.

Critics have lauded "The Last Incel" for its raw and authentic dialogue, where incel jargon immerses audiences into this troubling subculture. The dynamics among the characters reflect a toxic society that fuels misogyny, leading to real-world consequences—a point further illustrated by narratives around lost lives and the impacts of incel culture on families, such as Margaret's brother, whose tragic story is alluded to, though only briefly.

Ultimately, while the play grapples with heavy themes, it triumphs as a gripping and queasily entertaining piece that holds up a mirror to its audience. It challenges viewers not only to confront the grotesque expressions of masculinity but also to consider the isolation and despair that underpin these derisive attitudes. As Sykes continues to develop as a playwright, "The Last Incel" is a clear indication of his ability to tackle challenging subjects with originality and an unwavering commitment to exposing the darker corners of human experience.

This production is not just a commentary on incel culture; it is an urgent call to understand the humanity that often lies entangled in hatred, making it a vital watch for those seeking insight into one of society's most disturbing phenomena.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/18/the-last-incel-review-pleasance-theatre)
2. Paragraph 2 & 4: [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/18/the-last-incel-review-pleasance-theatre)
3. Paragraph 4 & 5: [[3]](https://www.bingefringe.com/2024/08/08/review-the-last-incel-jamie-sykes-edfringe-2024/)
4. Paragraph 2: [[4]](https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/last-incel)
5. Paragraph 4 & 6: [[5]](https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/edinburgh-festivals/edinburgh-festival-fringe-theatre-reviews-scaffolding-the-last-incel-the-expulsion-of-exculansis-4743322)
6. Paragraph 1 & 2: [[6]](https://broadwaybaby.com/shows/the-last-incel/813308)
7. Paragraph 1: [[7]](https://www.broadwayworld.com/scotland/article/THE-LAST-INCEL-to-Play-Edinburgh-Fringe-20240714)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/18/the-last-incel-review-pleasance-theatre> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2025/may/18/the-last-incel-review-pleasance-theatre> - A review of 'The Last Incel' at London's Pleasance Theatre, highlighting its exploration of incel ideology through dark comedy. The play delves into the contemptible views found in incel forums, portraying characters who valorize male celibacy and harbor virulent anti-women sentiments. The production employs visual elements like actors carrying cardboard frames to represent laptop scenes, adding a ludicrous setup that contrasts with the serious themes addressed. The script elicits sympathy for the characters, some of whom were once terribly bullied boys, all of whom are evidently lonely, inadequate outsiders. The play is gripping, queasily entertaining, and shows clear signs of arresting originality. Jamie Sykes is definitely one to watch.
3. <https://www.bingefringe.com/2024/08/08/review-the-last-incel-jamie-sykes-edfringe-2024/> - A review of 'The Last Incel' at the Edinburgh Fringe 2024, noting its exploration of incel culture through dark satire. The play features four incels—Ghost, Crusher, Einstain, and Cuckboy—whose online discussions are disrupted when Cuckboy admits to having a one-night stand with a journalist, Margaret. The writing is described as superbly clever, with the incel dialogue being hard-hitting and authentic. The characters are well-established, and the use of incel jargon helps build the dark online world they inhabit. The review also mentions the use of makeup and costumes to establish the characters as a toxic chorus. The movement is relevant to the narrative but sometimes overexplains the situation. The sequence telling the story of Margaret’s brother, another boy lost to incel culture, is deeply felt and speaks to the damage that incel culture can do to our nearest and dearest. The group performs the tough subject matter with sincerity and flair, reminding the audience of the horrifying consequences of incel culture.
4. <https://tickets.edfringe.com/whats-on/last-incel> - Information about 'The Last Incel' performance at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The play is described as a dark comedy that delves into the world of incels—a community of men who blame women and society for their lack of sexual success. The narrative follows a group of incels whose ideology is challenged when one of them has a one-night stand with a journalist who later invades their group chat. The play is noted for its wild satire that reveals the human aspects beneath the incel ideology. The performance is scheduled at Underbelly, Bristo Square, with specific dates and times provided.
5. <https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/edinburgh-festivals/edinburgh-festival-fringe-theatre-reviews-scaffolding-the-last-incel-the-expulsion-of-exculansis-4743322> - A review of 'The Last Incel' as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe theatre reviews. The play is described as a hilarious and horrifying study of misogyny, delving into the toxic world of incels. The review mentions the play's exploration of the incel subculture, highlighting its dark satire and the impact of incel culture on individuals. The performance is noted for its authenticity and the portrayal of the incel community's dynamics. The review also mentions other plays in the Edinburgh Fringe lineup, providing a broader context for the festival's offerings.
6. <https://broadwaybaby.com/shows/the-last-incel/813308> - A review of 'The Last Incel' by Stuart McKenzie, describing it as a marvellous leap into the pernicious ends of the incel subculture. The play opens with a cacophony of laughter as the characters launch into a frenzy of vulgarities in their chatroom, drawing parallels with Macbeth’s witches. The narrative follows the disruption of the incel community when one member announces the loss of his virginity, leading to critical self-reflection. The review praises the play's balance of comedy with the nuance demanded of highly sensitive topics such as self-hatred, misogyny, and violence. The use of black portrait frames and matching outfits reflects anonymity, and the interplay between humour and dance routines delves into the machinations of the incel quartet. The review concludes by highlighting the play's examination of the extent to which one willingly sacrifices self-improvement for a sense of identity and belonging.
7. <https://www.broadwayworld.com/scotland/article/THE-LAST-INCEL-to-Play-Edinburgh-Fringe-20240714> - Announcement of 'The Last Incel' playing at the Edinburgh Fringe, inspired by the 2014 'Gamergate' scandal and the Elliot Rodger attacks. The play is described as a dark satire exploring the toxic world of incels—an online community of men who blame women and society for their lack of sexual success. The narrative follows a group of incels whose ideology is challenged when one member has a one-night stand with a journalist who later invades their group chat. The play is noted for its unique Irish take on a universal issue, blending Irish humour and dance with empathy and accountability. The performance details, including dates and times, are provided, along with information about the writer and director, Jamie Sykes.