

THE SCOTSMAN



LEFT: US-based comics Josh Nasar, Ahmed Ahmed and Aron Kader offer penetrating insights into their adopted home

Stars and sideswipes

COMEDY
**THE AXIS OF EVIL
TOUR**
★★★★
C (Venue 34)

ANYONE who can make Ricky Gervais hesitate is either exceptionally sharp-witted or brashly oblivious to *The Office*, and regrettably, Josh Nasar is the latter. Loud and direct, on overhearing Gervais' squealing giggles from the audience he enquired if he was Jewish too, a comedy cul-de-sac that neither emerged from with credit.

Thankfully, this half-arsed chutzpah was brief. Nasar was

only compering for young Palestinian-Mormon, Aron Kader, and Gervais's Egyptian mate, Ahmed Ahmed. Real parentage and real unfortunate name respectively, these comics offer a penetrating insight into America by Arabs who both live there and find it especially difficult to leave. So while you can predict the airport jokes, you might not appreciate the sheer frustrated humour to be wrung from them.

With his dubiously privileged dual perspective, Kader sees US brand imperialism with a lacerating

focus, particularly when he links US immigrant communities to Guantanamo Bay in a taxi conversation that skillfully captures the love-hate relationship minorities have with "the great Satan". His George Bush impersonation has a keener psychological truth than most; his reasoning on country music's popularity makes absolute sense; and a portrayal of a redneck workmate is cruelly touching.

Kader's still developing, though. Ahmed is the finished comic – less forgiving, but otherwise, every hairy, heavyweight inch an American Omid Djalili, and

similarly given to hand-wringing about his Hollywood bad guy roles. One discussion with his agent about promotion from Terrorist No 4 to No 1 is easily the funniest, least politically correct thing I have seen at the Fringe this year. Gervais near snickered himself to death.

Ahmed needs to learn that UK audiences read but choose not to whoop about it, but on the perils of dating white women and the different reactions of his black and white friends to 9/11, he is close to the knuckle.

Jay Richardson

Until 21 August. Today, 11:40pm