

One Two.. by Suspect Culture

Creation

What kind of a story does music tell? What kinds of thought and reaction does music create in us? What is it that's so watchable about how musicians are on stage? Are they acting or being themselves? What happens when this performance style meets that of theatre performers?

Bringing a band and its music into a theatre context and building a show around them has allowed us to examine some of these questions.

Allowing ourselves to be led by the music has created a different sort of show. The stories and themes that have emerged are instinctive, emotional responses to the music with which we began the process. The connections between these stories are not linear but suggestive. An idea raised in one story is developed into the next. Certain themes seem to crop up repeatedly but in different forms. In this sense, the narrative structure unsurprisingly resembles a musical structure. But maybe also the structure of thought itself. Not the organised thoughts of a rational mind but the wandering, tangential thoughts of a restless mind, perhaps somewhere between being awake and asleep. A mind struggling to process and resolve in some way the excess of information it has to deal with and trying to come to rest.

Music has always been important to Suspect Culture. It's been an ongoing project to fully integrate music, often played live, into each of our shows. Despite this ambition it's sometimes been frustrating to see it gradually sidelined as a show develops – pushed out to the edge of the stage, accompanying the 'main action'.

With "ONE-TWO..." I wanted to put music physically and conceptually at the centre of the project. The band are a large part of the action, the ten pieces of music are the scenes. We've woven stories, video images and performances in and around this music to create a show somewhere between a play and a gig. A show that brings a thought process to life and expresses it with and through music.

Graham Eatough 21.7.03

OSKAR

Johnny and I formed OSKAR a few years ago after we were asked to write the music for a performance art show, and enjoyed our experimenting so much that we decided to carry on for ourselves. OSKAR's musical vocabulary is a negotiation between the analogue and the digital, the melodic and the dissonant, the mathematical and the random, the naïve and the clever played over a backdrop of manipulated 'found' sound. We also like to rock out.

It is the interpretive or transformative quality of the music that led Graham and I to discuss taking OSKAR's music as the starting point for a new Suspect Culture show. Basing a show around an abstracted musical starting point has dangers, but also opens huge opportunities to let the chains of association run wild.

Within this, OSKAR has become a character of sorts, scanning the world, seeing what it can do with what it sees and hears, trying to understand, sometimes acting up and breaking down.

We are delighted that OSKAR's glamour quotient has increased exponentially with the addition of Ruth and Sarah to the line-up, both of whom are longstanding contributors to the music of Suspect Culture.

Design

The setting for “ONE-TWO...” is an attempt at producing an environment within which the various production elements of music, performance, lighting, sound and video are introduced as individual components with clearly identified mechanisms. These elements begin to work together as the music and stories unfold to create the ‘machine’; OSKAR.

The heart of OSKAR is the band. The musicians are stationed on platforms with no attempt made to hide the workings of a live band; power and instrument cables run where they need to, keyboard brands remain, coloured indicator lights flash on digital displays and various signals are given, mid-song, to the sound engineer at the side of the stage.

A single mic stand is placed at the front of the stage in a conventional ‘lead singer’ position.

A simple assembly of 2 metal-frame towers, with a balcony running between, provides a structure on which the performers and their stories are introduced. Video images which support and enhance the stories are projected on screens mounted on the towers.

Lightboxes and a graphic identity, based on generic safety and information signs, which is revealed on the stage structures, set details and props completes, we hope, the image of OSKAR as an industrial dream-processing facility.

Ian Scott

Video

The video for 'ONE-TWO...' has been created during the devising process, reacting to the process rather than being made in isolation as video often is. The images are intended as an additional texture for the piece, often functioning to convey ideas that would be impossible to create on stage.

Shiona McCubbin