

Yours Truly Productions present Prodigious Pilot

Transmission Room (21 & 22 Oct 2009)

By Georgie Goater, 23 Oct 2009 (www.yellingmouth.blogspot.com)

In the heart of high-rise Auckland city, an emerging group in an underground venue take on popular culture through contemporary dance. Indie/pop music (Lady GAGA, Lady Hawk, Lilly Allen, Gwen Stefani... and more) runs until we are casually ushered to the cabaret-seated dungeon facing the stage. Banana lollies in trendy vintage teacups and bowels of fruit are on offer throughout the space. In front of the stage to the right, stand racks of hanging clothes, to the left a mock band of instruments – a drum kit (tagged “The Peelers”), keyboard and 2 guitars made out of cardboard and tinfoil; evoking a memory of the knitted aesthetic in Stereogram’s video “Walkie Talkie Man”.

Out of the darkness lurks the first performer who takes their place on stage (perhaps the lead band member of “The Peelers”) - a 2-dimensional life-size Banana head man, who proceeds to execute a lateral two step dance to the beat of the music, building to a climactic boogie. A gimmick false start to the show along with a voice-over announcement introducing Prodigious Pilot, sets a tone of the ironic mockery of pop hype.

Six young women explode into the space with a sassy synchronised dance routine, of which the integrity is carried through a collective interpretation of the popstars personas, and each performer’s own expression of their ‘bedroom mirror’ alter-egos. This chorus of Cool Bananas complete with uniform yellow printed t-shirts and yellow sneakers is the recurring theme and structure that frames the series of dance vignettes in the show, through theatrical scenarios and leg air-guitar dancing. Overtly characterised and throw-away in performance, yet effortlessly united and succinct to the musical beats, these individuals dance well together.

A stylised Egyptian duet between a male and female is slick, fast and tight, displaying pleasurable moments of unison and partnering movement supported by the dynamic base-heavy track by Santigold.

With the choreographer herself as the bride in between murdering bride’s maids, a soap opera inspired scenario of dance unfolds. Detailed, fast and intricate movement expresses the build up of internal angst, beautifully executed by this technical trio. A deconstructed sound score of dramatic organ sound bites, is the only break in the show from popular music – in all a sophisticated highlight in the show.

An improvised dance to Joy Division has a solitude woman staunchly enter the space and bounce on and off beat across the concrete floor like an awkward lone rocker at a concert. An honest performance, as the dancer naturally progresses through the build up in the movement and melts into a grin; this is a delight to watch.

Melancholic Moby and Iron & Wine play musical access in a private friendship heart to heart duet. Helping each other into long dresses, the weighted dancers come off the floor into a soft dance of freedom.

A final solo dance to Billy Idol's hit track "Dancing with Myself" triggers the return of the Cool Bananas, in a chorus frenzy of high legs, quick turns, swooping arms and the repeated gesture and sound of eating (bananas). The dancers charge around the space through the audience and up on to chairs chanting "go bananas" infusing the audience a with sensory banana overload.

Yours Truly Productions has bravely taken on pop music as their access to self-expressive choreography, despite the challenging nature of predisposed associations other popular art forms can present when making dance. The punchy, catchy dancing always matches the level of hype and interest of the pops songs and is never outweighed – a challenge I believe these girls achieved with their innovative dance moves. The banana as the symbol of pop eventually exhausts the show without development from its original introduction – a journey is missing with this idea. I am left wanting more, but with less banana.