

Review: TMC Dance Crew at Auckland Town Hall

4:00AM Monday Oct 19, 2009

By Raewyn Whyte, New Zealand Herald

The crew share the pleasure they get from dancing and spending time together with the audience.

Photo / Supplied

TMC Dance Crew's *Under the Influence* is one of the most entertaining productions we've enjoyed in this year's Tempo Dance Festival. At around 80 minutes of continuous, choreographed dancing, this is TMC's debut evening-length production. It is a huge step up from the short-form competitive hip hop routines which have made them New Zealand and world champions in the past three years, and the next level in their continuing development.

An energetic mix of co-ordinated street dance and acrobatics is spread over three stage levels accessed by jumping on mini-tramps, and the action moves fluidly to and fro. Behind the dancers are video sequences with which they interact, and which provide the mood for each work.

There are bursts of good-humoured larking-about interspersed among the 15 short works which make up the programme - one choreographed by each core crew member and the rest collaboratively devised. The show share with us the pleasure the crew gets from hip hop and other forms of dancing, music and rhythm, videogames, and spending time together.

Quest for the World Title and the closing sequence *Moving On* included samples of the stunning tight formation work which have made TMC champions, backed by video of the crew in earlier years - rehearsing in the studio, creating risky new moves in the gym, on the road in the US, and posing from group photos. And hip hop moves are all through the programme - tricking and boting, floating and tutting, fancy footwork and power moves provide a core vocabulary which appears in solo, duo, quads, and teams of 6 or 8. But the rest of the show is more stage than street, and often very personal.

Four works stand out. Richie Cesan's witty crowd-pleaser *Under the Influence of ... Getting to the Next Level* is the most fully developed in the show. The dance is set up like a Playstation game, Cesan downstage with the game controls, and interactive projections on the big screen combined with the dancing. This introduces each dancer and some of their more stunning special moves.

Tap dance features in Andrew Cesan's *Under the Influence of ... Rhythm*, an impressively driving hardcore duet danced with Simon Watts to a score collaged from remixes of Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*, rap from Tech N9ne, Krizz Kaliko and TI. Watts' own tap dance work *Under the Influence of ... Sound* is set to a reggae mix and partners him with a projected washing machine, before segueing to a projected sequence from *New Zealand's Got Talent*, with himself and Andrew re-dancing their final performance there, and losing the title.

Reyna-MarieTafa, the only woman in the crew, presents her more lyrical side in *Under the Influence of ... Friends*, a jazzy number set to Alicia Keys, backed up by the men of the crew seemingly overawed by her alter-ego.