

A BREAK-THROUGH OF A SHOW

[TMC: Under The Influence](#)

at Concert Chamber - Town Hall, THE EDGE, Auckland
Until 17 Oct 2009
[1hr 20 mins]

Reviewed by Kat Walker, 15 Oct 2009

TMC is one of the most talented hip hop dance crews that Auckland has produced. Starting off as a Two Man Crew with brothers Richie and Andrew Cesan, TMC has slowly added on members over the years whilst showcasing their unfaltering unique style.

The crew was crowned New Zealand champions this year at the SDNZ Hip Hop championships, and has competed at an international level several times since being together. This year they succeeded in making it to the finals in the World hip hop championships in Las Vegas.

Under the Influence, performed in the Auckland Town Hall, is the crew's first attempt at a full-length show and for that reason they should be fully commended for the end product.

The first thing I notice is that the Auckland Town Hall is a huge space to fill, both the stage for the performers and the seating area for the audience. To my surprise the audience packs out the hall, which is great to see on an opening night of a hip hop show.

Unfortunately I think the performance area may be too large for the dancers to fill. At times performance projection is lacking and energy is too low for TMC to fully command the space. Perhaps this is due to first night jitters or lack of preparation.

The stand out performer is Les Mills choreographer *Gandalf Archer*, who seems to have a natural projection and is the only crew member who keeps consistent high energy in all of his performances.

I feel the performance quality may be better suited to a more intimate venue. However, the audience - filled with what seems to be more of the general public and contemporary fans rather than hip hop enthusiasts - might disagree. All scenes are rewarded with awesome applause and after the curtain call this lasts well after the performers have left the stage.

The technical side of the show is high quality. Multimedia items are projected onto the back wall and serve as a narrative highlighter throughout the evening. Four mini tramps are placed at each corner of the multi level stage which add an entertaining way for performers to enter and exit (however these are overused at times). The sound system also works without any unintentional cuts. This is a great feat for a hip hop production!

The show starts with a practice-type scene where multimedia images of cellphones pop up with text messages from the crew members, indicating they will be late and asking for practice times. This brings the audience into the true chaos of running a rehearsal.

An important thing to note is the good sense of humour throughout the show. This is kicked off by a voice-over from producer and manager *Jacqui Cesan*, going through notices and instructions for the crew. Jokes and comedic skits continue throughout different events in the show with much laughter from the audience.

Under the Influence is made up of individual sections structured around each crew member's 'influences' and background. Each member has creative ownership of their pieces from choreography to direction and this shows in the individual styles exhibited in each piece. Each item deserves its own review and for this reason you should go see it.

Technically these dancers are amazing; showing off their individual skills from new school hip hop to contemporary to tap. One member in particular, and the only girl in TMC, Reyna Marie Tafa, exercises tremendous control and execution in all of her new school hip hop movements.

The crew has definitely hit the nail on the head with their new school choreography and technique, however to the hip hop eye the old school popping and locking technique still needs a bit of work.

Flow from piece to piece, and sometimes during the individual sets, is a bit clunky. This needs more work as at times I am left wondering what is happening. There are moments when there is too much to take in and I'm not sure what to focus my attention to. The intention of many of the group sequences is lost. Hopefully this will smooth out as their season progresses.

Despite these fall backs, TMC should be highly praised for the different ideas they have behind their show. If you have not been to the majority of hip hop performances over the last few years you may not understand what a break-through of a show this is. To carry a full length dance work without any guest acts is a 'never been seen before' accomplishment for New Zealand hip hop crews.

Individually the sets possess great ideas In particular crew leader Richie Cesan's piece stands out to me. The idea of 'challenge creates improvement' is portrayed through the takeoff of a video game fighting scene. The multimedia shows the process of selecting all the members in TMC, which brings them to the stage ready for the chance to show off their remarkable acrobatic skills.

It is interesting to see the meanings behind the pieces and to understand what makes those dancers tick. If you didn't know TMC at the start, you will definitely know them at the end.

Under the influence introduces a new style of show for hip hop crews in New Zealand. Though the show still needs to progress in some areas, TMC has definitely taken things to the 'next level'.