

Chunky Move

### Live Acts

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Performance dance and nightclub dance. The metaphorical space between the two has become the definitive safe haven for many 90s theorists, constantly positioning the club scene as the site of bodies in dance space.

These abstract arguments leave me dry, as all good theory should, and yet every time I left the Live Acts shows, I felt wet; the wetness that follows a night mixing with sweating ravers.

There's nothing particularly new about art crossing over into secular venues - pub theatre, art gallery cafes, movies under the stars and so on - yet there was a lot of hype surrounding the idea of taking dance to the club scene, and it has opened up a market niche for Chunky Move.



Live Acts #1

Chunky Move © Revolver

Image: Virginia Cummins/Nitrous Industries

While only 5-10% of Australians attended dance performances last year, nightclubs took up almost as much of our entertainment time as cinema and television. And we spend around a third of our clubbing time watching others dance; there's a market of kids out there viewing dance,

but they're not too keen on straying from the safety of the club. So Chunky Move took the dance to them. According to Artistic Director Gideon Obarzanek, when he watches dance what he really feels like is a ciggie and a G&T.

Commissioning choreographers from both within and beyond Chunky Move's circles was a dynamic process; teams were assembled in true multidisciplinary fashion. Local DJs and fashion designers were brought in as part of the collaboration - reinforcing the 'youth/club' status so heavily bound up in Live Acts' promotional imagery - as well as visual artists. Much of the safety of the club space derives from the music, and Chunky Move were wise in keeping it familiar - with music by the likes of Aphex Twin and Moby, mixed by DJs including Ollie Olsen and Scratchergirl. Add to this costumes designed by Lisa Gorman for Fat 52, and well ... the space between dancers on stage and those on the floor really starts to contract.

Averaging around 7 to 10 minutes, each piece was as accessible as a block of television between ad breaks; short, punchy moments instead of longer, narrative-driven sequences. Between pieces, the audience seemed almost as intent discussing the performance as who was buying the next round. There was a sense of being at once somewhere special (a dance performance) and somewhere ordinary (a local club). Thoughts of 60s 'happenings' readily came to mind.

Chunky Move was itself interested in how the series evolved as a happening. Around halfway through each show audiences were given surveys, which focused more on patterns of dance attendance than whether they were enjoying the show. Live Acts was more an experiment in location than in dance aesthetics.

Indeed, not all the pieces were particularly innovative. Kareena Oates and her many hoola-hoops (as impressive as it was), for example. What some pieces lost in precision and rigour however, they gained in appearing impromptu and care-free. Kareena Oates's piece worked, less because it was dance, but more because

it was obviously enjoyed immensely by the audience.

There were, however some pieces of exceptional quality. In Kate Denborough's *This Side Up*, Fiona Cameron and David Tyndall performed upside-down with heads in giant cubes, legs dancing and striving to stay in synch with each other. Set to orchestral and drum 'n' base distortions by DJ Ransom, the piece alluded to how easily our bodies are disabled in unfamiliar contexts. With big audience cheers, its lack of artistic pretension or deep metaphor seemed to resonate with the crowd.

Lucy Guerin's *Gift* - performed at Live Acts #3 and #4 - also brought forth hoots of applause. Much laughter derived from the commodification of body parts (limbs and heads wrapped in cellophane), and the tensions drawn out when Luke Smiles tried to reject the present of Fiona Cameron's leg.

What really matters is that Live Acts evoked an adjective historically more the domain of nightclubs than modern dance; fun. Lavished with a keen sense of humour and self-deprecation, and fueled by some funky costumes and intense techno/industrial soundtracks, Chunky Move infiltrated the nightclub scene with seamless ease. Now armed with a mailing list from the Live Acts audience, they'll surely be striving to steer this new market through new spaces of contemporary dance.

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