

REVIEW

Chemical Wedding

● Green Room, Manchester

EXPERIENCE teaches that when the seats are missing, the show will stand towards the outer fringes of the experimental.

But experience is something we haven't yet got a lot of when dealing with Aids, which is what this experiment sets out to demonstrate. Grappling with the impact of this deadly new virus demands new methods.

Chemical Wedding comes from London-based Blast Theory, a company formed two years ago and committed to using video and computer technology with physical theatre.

Spectators promenade around the performance space. In one corner, fronted by a platform stage upon which is a single bed, are two screens, joined at right-angles, both showing the same images simultaneously. Those images range from multiplying, multi-coloured cells, to black and white Hollywood B-movies with a medical content.

Dangerous

The live performers, two men and two women, move amongst you doing strange things. They are first discovered searching through piles of books — presumably for the answer — or chalking around the prostrate form of one of their number, as they do around the dead bodies in American TV cop shows. They progress to dangerous dance in the style of DV8 — a lot of jumping and leaping and thumping onto the floor.

Snippets of interesting information emerge from the deluge of music and commentary on the surround-sound system. Car crashes, we are told, killed more people in Britain last year than died from Aids, but people continue to drive.

The piece reaches a climax with the two women hooked up to a wires and pulleys arrangement, with buckets attached that they desperately try to fill with sand.

An audience survey, part of the fun, revealed that over half of last night's motley lot had had a verruca, very few were patriotic and an alarmingly-large percentage had had an HIV test.

The show's message is that our current thinking about the virus is too constrained by out-dated attitudes. Aids, says one of the more memorable lines, is a record of where you have been and what you did there.

● Repeated tonight.

Alan Hulme