

# Grab a taste of America

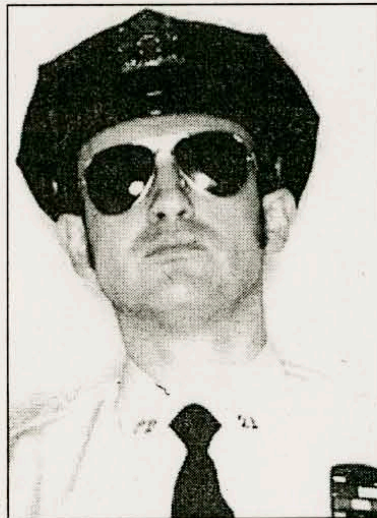
★ **FROM** cop shows to big cars, Britain has long held a fascination for all things American and this theme provides the basis for Blast Theory's latest production showing at Northampton's Roadmender this month.

Something American tackles our double-edged obsession with the US, as with one eye we watch in awe the reflection of our own country 20 years down the line and with the other we are repulsed by its crime levels and appearance of general degeneration.

Blast Theory, a London-based theatre group, attempts to reflect this obsession using one character, the archetypal American cop, who talks to the audience about the thrill of the force and even shows on a projection behind him his five favourite film explosions ever.

Matt Adams, a member of Blast Theory, explains: "We wanted to make a show looking at what America means to people in Britain. We were struck by how people are so obsessed with the country and when my partner and I went to America last year for the first time we realised it was an ideal opportunity to use the experiences we were having.

"Both of us have always been fascinated with the US and we took super-8 footage



and kept a diary while we were there to help us put this together."

He added: "The cop is a very familiar American figure to us. He is a figure of power and we wanted to explore that. There is a very complex set of associations there. As we see them on TV, they are usually in control and powerful but at the same time are often very sad and lonely people. We thought that was a good metaphor for the country he represents."

Something American is playing on May 30 at The Roadmender.

Ein weiteres interessantes Beispiel für den Einsatz elektronischer Medien auf der Bühne lieferte die Gruppe Blast Theory. In ihrer Produktion „Something American (Etwas Amerikanisches)“ ging es nicht um die Darstellung der Befindlichkeit der Akteure, sondern um das Spiel mit amerikanischen Klischees: Freiheit, Highways, Mickey Mouse, Filmstars, Star Wars – eine Collage aus Comic-, Kino- und Nachrichtenbildern flimmert über eine 12 Meter breite Leinwand. Drei Schauspieler treten mit den Bildern in Interaktion. Sie tanzen durch wilde Actionfilme, boxen mit Sylvester Stallone, malen Sprechblasen auf die Leinwand oder lassen ihren Schatten in einem Sonnenuntergang verschwinden. In der Flut der künstlichen Bilder tauchen reale Figuren auf: Ein amerikanischer Polizist erzählt dem Publikum von seinen Obsessionen: seinem Colt, seinen sexuellen Phantasien und seinem Hobby – Videoaufnahmen von Explosionen. Die besten fünf führt er vor. Ein befriedigtes Lächeln gleitet über sein mürrisches Bullengesicht. Die anderen Akteure durchbrechen die Theatersituation. Sie berichten von ihren Studien zur Vorbereitung der Produktion und laden das Publikum ein, Fragen zu stellen. Dann geht die Show weiter. Die Zuschauer werden mit Bildern, Musik, Szenen und Szenenfragmenten überflutet. Am Ende der Vorstellung: Verwirrung und Applaus. Ging es nun um Amerika oder die neuen Medien? Liefert die Show Leitbilder oder Zerrbilder? Was wollen die Akteure? Blast Theory gibt Denkanstöße. Die Botschaft ist das Medium selbst. Videobilder und Computerklänge können sehr theatralisch sein, wenn mit ihnen gespielt wird. Blast Theory ist die derzeit innovativste Multimedia-Gruppe des britischen Theaters.

Theater der Zeit (Sept /Oct 1996)

Extract from "In the Centre, Nothing New: Observations during the last London theatre season" (Oliver Kranz).

"Another interesting example of the use of electronic media on stage is presented by *Blast Theory*. Their production 'Something American' is not about the representation of the existence of the actor, but rather about playing with American clichés: freedom, highways, Mickey Mouse, film stars, Star Wars - a collage of comic, cinema and newflash images flickering across a 12 metre wide canvas.

Three performers interact with the images; they dance through wild action films, box with Sylvester Stallone, paint speech bubbles on the canvas and let their shadows disappear into the setting sun. From the tide of artificial images, emerge real figures. An American policeman tell the audience of his obsessions: his colt, his sexual fantasies and his hobby of videoing explosions. He shows the best five. A contented smile drifts across his sullen bullish face. The other actors break out of the theatre context; they explain their studies and preparation for the production and invite the audience to ask questions.

Then the show continues. The audience is flooded with images, music, scenes and fragments of scenes. The performance ends: confusion and applause. Is it just about America or is it about New Media? Does the show present ideals or distortions? What do the actors want? *Blast Theory* provides food for thought. The message is the medium itself. Video images and computerised sound can be extremely theatrical when played around with. *Blast Theory* is currently the most innovative multimedia group in British theatre."

NORTHAMPTON HERALD & POST - THURSDAY, May 23rd 1996 Page 23

# A taste of America through British eyes

**THE Roadmender has teamed up with the Herald & Post to offer readers a chance of winning a pair of tickets to see *Something American*.**

Something American, presented by Blast Theory, looks at America from a British viewpoint: a fictional place constructed by those who consume its culture everyday. Although we all experience America on a daily basis, we do so

only via the media and cannot check the fictional representatives of TV, books and films against any reality.

Influenced by and using sequences from films including *Alien*, *Blade Runner*, *Hearts of Darkness*, *Rocky* and *Terminator 2* and a soundtrack including Bjork, Sonic Youth and Lee Marvin's *Wanderin' Star*, Blast Theory delves into Britain's fascination with the American dream.

Blast Theory were formed in London in 1991 and aim to combine the excitement of gigs and clubs with the ideas and production standards of theatre and dance.

Something American has won a Barclays New Stages award and will be appearing at the Roadmender on

## Win a pair of tickets to the show

Thursday, May 30. Doors open 7.30pm.

We have 5 pairs of tickets to offer to readers. All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning a pair of tickets is to phone the Roadmender from 1pm tomorrow (Friday) on (01604) 604603 and ask for Natasha.

