



## SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUE

### PREVIEW

*Michael Nyman and Plan K*  
*Institute of Cultural Anxiety*  
*The Devil's Chauffeur*

### LIVE ART LISTINGS

### REVIEW

*National Review of Live Art*  
*Forced Entertainment's Hidden J*  
*Blast Theory's Stampede*  
*Wolf Vostell, Rebecca Horn, Alastair MacLennan*

## Cambridge

Even the new kids on the block grow up. The hair may be still be short and the cut of the jib aggressive, but the theatrical nous is considered and moderate.

Blast Theory's Stampede draws on police riot procedures (there is video footage of the Poll Tax demonstrations, readings from a riot control handbook are a kind of time marking device through the show), and sometimes the audience is herded to make room for an action or image but most often we simply collude with the performers and move as a herd. There is an anonymity as part of this audience and the performers are ciphers, although stripped down versions of themselves. They perform functions: giving information, relaying live the transcript of a conversation about S & M practices (which we are told as a postscript is an actual conversation with a Blast Theory member). There are more images than is usual in a BT show. A row of cow boys and girls walk stiffly across the floor (the show is performed in the big open space of the Junction) like a vague memory of a scene from Peckinpah, a kind of gunfight at OK Corral. As with other BT shows, performers will fall down (dead), and get right up again. It's the mechanics of the image that seems to interest them, and the distance between the

fiction and the reality of making the fiction, which isn't to say the reality the fiction represents. What interests them as far as representation is concerned is the media(tion) of reality. They are interested in ideology, then, the 'truths' we believe which mask the real relations between us and the state, for example. As media generation kids (but not quite Generation X, thank God), their focus is electronic and image media, so the television, film and computers are the channels they interrogate, appropriate and activate. As with all work that is made by theatre artists; they have a style and a set of formal preoccupations which are extended and developed in each piece, whatever the issues being dealt with. Here they clearly have the Criminal Justice Bill in their minds, but the formal concerns (the floor pads which trigger computer operations on light and sound, a concrete chair, a metal wall, the concern with sexuality, the mechanics of mediation, the closed circuit video which is the only access to desperate actions, the lighting states, the 'clubby' music) all serve as fetish But we are not participants, only voyeurs, and there is a kind of sexual frisson to the

action. It is as if something sexual is going on, some promised or implied sexual activity derived from the hidden, obscured and covered. It is particularly strong when one female performer undergoes a relentless and orgasmic series of falls and recoveries behind a closed screen which is relayed by video to a large projection screen. But BT are into the textual, not the sexual, and this is certainly not an attempt to circumvent language, to get to real experience of the body and its pains and pleasures. They are in the realm of the imaginary, the semiotic, it is all about codes. About languages. One of the most charming and well structured pieces of new work I've seen for years was No Lost Souls in Nitrogen Narcosis - A Play, at BAC in London's Battersea. The stories of two synchronised swimmers, interviews with Ibsen who has taken the form of a goldfish video-relayed to us from his bowl, two neat diving board podia and Sarah Dawson and Stuart Wilde's beautifully constructed text. Tim Etchells, watch your back. David Hughes