

## ***The Peak* Review of iDUB**

### **No Boundaries**

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By David Wilson McLeish

Western society does not often engage with dance outside the realm of dance clubs. Perhaps this why last weeks's iDUB performance seemed so relevant – even necessary.

Choreographed by Montreal based artist Martha Carter, iDUB took place at the ScotiaBank Dance Centre in a large open space similar to that of a club or rave environment. The event collapsed the boundary between dancers and audience members by having the dancers perform on the floor and on club-style boxes in and around the audience. This format placed social dancing within a context that we are already familiar with – in a club, as seen through a crowd of people- and provided an intimate appraisal of current social dance.

iDUB was presented in three parts. The first part consisted of a series of solo performances on a single box near the center of the space. This early portion of the evening was the closest that iDUB came to a traditional separation of audience and dancers. However, this minor distinction allowed the audience to explore the unique environment and come to terms with how they might occupy it. The solo performances seemed dissociated from hip hop and dance cultures, tending towards more abstract gestures, although one solo performance incorporated some recognizable break dancing moves. The moderate to low energy of the first part and its spatial orientation, was likely meant to showcase the most impressive audio-visual media. Using a real-time video feed, the movements of the dancers were processed and projected on three giant screens located around the environment. And ,presumably, the music involved an element of real-time manipulation as an arsenal of shiny Macs and mixers located in the corner of the room were attended to by five or six people at all times. The music varied to ambient to drum and bass with an obvious bent towards experimental. I must admit I was slightly disappointed that this work overlooked the incessant rhythmic informality of most electronic dance music - an aspect that facilitates the concomitant dancer's meditative and euphoric quasi-religiosity. Ultimately, however, this was a personal performance, and the repertoire seemed well suited to the interdisciplinary approach of Carter's choreography.

At the beginning of the second part, the audience was asked to the center of the area - the first indication that the level of interaction was about to increase. The dancers performed in groups and alone, appearing in various locations around the room, always corralled by a halo of light. The audience learned how to reorganise itself for each new

performance, and they quickly developed a consciousness of both the dancers and the other spectators in the arrangements.

The dancing in the second half was more recognisably informed by hip hop and rave traditions including b-boy and b-girl 'battles', beatboxing, liquid robots, and posse boosting, the choreography was, of course, slightly more challenging than what you might see on Much Music. It was convincingly communicated dance's persistent humanity, despite the juxtaposition in a high technologically-mediated culture context. The b-boy moves became momentarily ape-like, and the connection between deep, immersive bass sounds and the heart beat was explored without appearing saccharine, and without the recourse of drug-use clichés.

In the final segment of the performance, the audience was invited to dance with the dancers in what became as near to a club setting as the basement of the ScotiaBank Dance Centre would allow. I did not stay long enough to see if this total breach of the performer-spectator boundary was successful, but initially, it seemed to be a difficult transition for the audience to make. Perhaps the prospect of following such gifted performances with their own inept shimmying was overly intimidating.

IDUB was the first genuinely compelling dance performance I have ever encountered. Rather than impose extraneous significance into dance, iDUB took contemporary dance practices and their social context seriously, demonstrating dance's relevance as an artform for an emerging generation.