

Byron Perry and Antony Hamilton are amongst the most recognisable contemporary dancers in Melbourne, having featured heavily in the calendars of Chunky Move and Lucy Guerin Inc for several years as well as popping up in the works of younger dancemakers. Their first original collaboration, *I Like This*, can't really be classed as the debut of two emerging choreographers. There are two immediately apparent reasons: firstly, both dancers have distinct styles and interests which have been evident in their previous performances for others. Secondly, the influences of these earlier mentors have left particular traces in the witty, astute form of *I Like This*.

Billed as a choreographic conversation between Hamilton and Perry, the work is partly an exploration of the process of dance-making, in which their ideas of what the work is to become are played out around them by a cadre of talented performers. But while this kind of meta-theatre is hardly ground-breaking—and reached a superb apex in Guerin's and Chunky Move's respective contributions to the last Melbourne International Arts Festival, both starring Hamilton and Perry—*I Like This* takes its concepts in pleasing new directions. It's not a navel-gazing piece of the sort presented in Wendy Houstoun's *Desert Island Dances*, another MIAF event. Here, action supercedes analysis.

The duo clearly recorded their rehearsal process and used the result to produce a kind of remixed dance. The performers begin to move, then rewind, skip or become stuck in loops. All the while, Perry and Hamilton sit surrounded by lighting panels, power boards and snaking cables, orchestrating the handheld lamps carried by the dancers. In fact, Perry and Hamilton's visual design for the work deserves particular mention, becoming a character almost in itself, with hundreds of perfectly executed changes whose sometimes stroboscopic effect makes lighting operation appear a form of choreography in its own right.

It's self-reflexive dance, certainly, but by incorporating technology in such a sophisticated way it becomes something much more. And when the work ends with the two choreographers covered by a giant quilted doona, lights sparking underneath like flashes on a distant mountain range, the result approaches the sublime. Emerging artists? Far from it.

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