

REVIEW

Dance collaboration peels away the borders

COLLABO
East London Dance
★★★★★

An expansion of horizons appears to have been the driving force behind Tony Ardigun's ten year experiment by the name of Collabo. Short for "collaboration", the premise hinges on two different factions coming together to meld divergent styles, influences and interpretations in hip hop-centred dance.

What might appear risky or, at the very least, likely to yield car crash performance art is, in practice, successful. With a crowd encouraged to hoot and holler mid-performance as a measure of appreciation to the

dancers, an edgy, visceral atmosphere ensues, like a frenzied cauldron of dance. This is certainly aided by the host, Ricky Norwood, who proves to be an audience-savvy compere.

The lithe lyricism and emotionally evocative nature of the performances, locked-in with incredible synchronicity that only occasionally stutters, is a striking facet of each of the showcase segments. Light and shade presents itself in the choreography too. This isn't a question of relentless bludgeoning of the senses. In see-sawing between frenetic pace and pared-down sensual movement, the mind is allowed to absorb the message, which veers from a

topical look at gang violence, to the sum of our fears, to the Black Lives Matter movement and beyond.

Collabo proves to be a peeling back of the borders and a move away from parochial, self-imposed constraints of a music genre that has more often than not boxed itself into a corner in the last 15 years.

You really had to be there. If you weren't, don't fear, as they have promised to come back. In turns exhilarating, exhausting, engrossing and entertaining – and often all at once – this was a series of one-off performances to inspire and thrill. There is no more life-affirming statement to offer than that.

Greg Wetherall



■ Jordan Melchor and Remi Black

Picture: ALEX RUMFORD