

» review

» DANCE

Mortal Engine

Where: Malthouse, Southbank, until Sunday

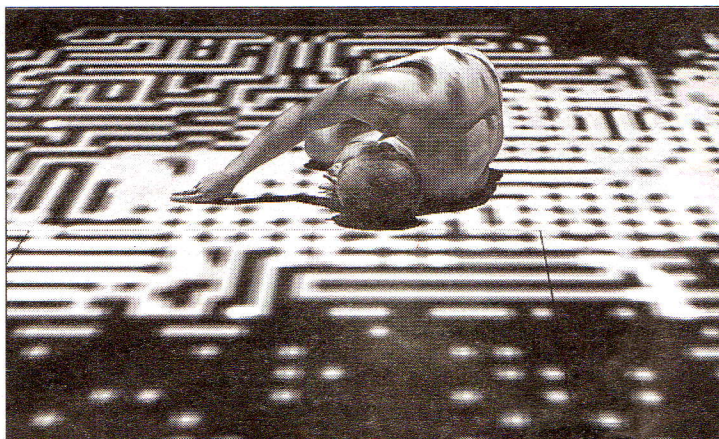
Reviewer: Stephanie Glickman
★★★★

AUDIENCES are coming out in droves for Melbourne's newest festival, Dance Massive. Chunky Move's *Mortal Engine* sold out before the season began and is already booked for several international tours.

It's an expensive, slick, technology-driven work that could easily have become a clunky move, but in the hands of choreographer Gideon Obarzanek and collaborators it is a full-bodied sensory experience with undertones both dark and sensual.

It is unrelenting, with only brief moments of quiet (visual and aural) and the full bore of the technology is not for the faint-hearted or tired-eyed.

Mortal Engine expands on a successful earlier work, *Glow*, in which a solo dancer seamlessly manipulated floor-bound laser and video patterns with her body's movements. This time, an ensemble of dancers creates denser, more complex human/



Potent force: Chunky Move fuses digital technology with dance.

mechanical interactions and a raked white set has multi-plane views.

Large kaleidoscopic patterns merge into a lone dancer (Sara Black) contracting and extending her body, a black shape framing and expanding her every contortion. Dancers slink in and out of tarantula-like visions. Long sweeps of legs spray laser confetti and a dancer is violently jolted by electrical currents. Amorous duets and lovers' quarrels melt like crumbling statues, then re-emerge out of a wall.

The possibilities of such fancy and expensive technology are endless but, in the end, good artistry is the key.

The combination of Frieder Weiss's interactive software, the laser and sound design of Robin Fox and Ben Frost's evocative sound score layered with Obarzanek's choreographic choices and Damien Cooper's lighting create an ebb and flow of images that mix the ordinary with the sublime, the literal with the abstract, and build a work more than the sum of its parts.