

# Multi-media boogie

review by Dragos Riuu

Watching modern multi-media dance is like stepping into an eerie hypnotic vision. And Michael Montanaro is definitely a master puppet-master of this kind of dream.

Trying to describe to others the performance of the Montanaro Dance troupe on Sunday night seems impossible. You had to be there. Adjectives like hypnotic, eerie, sensual, moody, dramatic, and graceful can all be applied. But they just wouldn't explain it all.

The colors, the smoke, the lights, the props, the images, they all worked to set up a mood, coordinated with insistent drums and melodic synthesizers. It looked and felt like an... an emotion.

The show started with a brief excerpt from the next piece the troupe would put on. It was an interesting rhythmic dance, with the dancers dancing and banging sticks producing parts of the rhythms themselves. Then the audience was asked to leave while they set up the next piece.

Everyone went to the lounge of SUB Theatre, and... waited. By the time we were all restless the doors to the theater were reopened. Inside was a changed place. The air was smoky, and a variety of hardware filled the stage. The lights slowly came up... and the dance began.

From then on it becomes a hypnotic blur. For the next two hours the minds and senses of the audience were assaulted by stunning images and movement after movement. Neon lights, TV images, the interaction between the dancers and the singing melded. The props and surroundings did not overshadow the dancing, rather they complemented it. Your eyes never relaxed, as one pocket of movement finished another started, all blending into one big flow.

The music was minimalist, consisting mainly of electronic drums and synthesizer. This isn't to say it was inferior because it was just the opposite. The range of the drums in this piece was amazing. From extreme to extreme, they would sometimes be frenetic rock rhythms, and other times jazz-like melodies emerged from Montanaro's drum kit.



The dancing was well choreographed, and captivating. Occasionally the dancers would fall out of sync, but this did not seem like a great offense. You almost barely had time to notice with all the things happening on the stage.

It was fascinating to watch. Particularly interesting were the interactions between the groups of dancers. One would break apart from the pattern of the rest and continue doing her own 'solo' dance while the group did something else. With amazing continuity the two separate dances worked back together until they were again one big group. Nifty!

The lights, the sound, the motion, it ALL worked. It conveyed a feeling. It had no

plot, nothing concrete to put your finger on. But, when you walked out of that theater, you walked out with a feeling.

Montanaro may prove the drums to be the most melodic, and the human body the most expressive, instruments of all in this piece. In the process, he entertained a few hundred people for a few hours.

There were empty seats in the theater. It's too bad. Someone missed an experience. The audience clapped and cheered for almost three minutes after the final piece. The cast came out for bow after bow.

East of Egypt will be playing in Calgary this weekend. If you're going to be there, check it out.

## Third rate strangeness

**Blue Velvet**  
DeLaurentis Entertainment Group  
Westmount

review by Kourch Chan

Remember films that were radical and off the wall like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* or thrilling horrors like *The Shining*? *Blue Velvet* belongs in this category. Unfortunately, it does not make the grade.

*Blue Velvet* is a mystery involving sex and sadism. The story is not extraordinary, but the storytelling is certainly off the wall. Director David Lynch (former credits include *The Elephant Man*, *Dune*, and *Era-serhead*) attempts to lead the audience down a path of shocking sexuality to the underworld.

The story begins with Jeffrey Beaumont (Kyle MacLachlan) returning to his home town from college. On his way back from visiting his father at the hospital, he discovers a human ear. It is this ear which initiates the intrigue and mystery of the film. Our hero becomes obsessed with solving the mystery.

Jeffrey soon discovers a piece of the puzzle connected to Dorothy Vallen (Isabella Rossellini), a singer in Club Slow (she sang "Blue Velvet" three times in the movie, sheesh). Naturally he decides to stake out her apartment to find out more. Indeed, he uncovers more than he bargains for: Dorothy is abused sexually by evildoer Frank Bolon (Frank Hopper) who gets his kicks from breathing helium and being sadistic. Real deep stuff. The fact that this lunatic is holding Dorothy's son hostage doesn't help matters any.

Jeffrey gets involved with Dorothy as he treads deeper into the mystery. As a result, he comes to terms with his own dark passions and face to face with Frank. What ensues is a nightmarish journey into Frank's world.

Lynch's use of unusual and shocking images is what makes this movie so different. It creates feelings of awe and eeriness. However, most of these are overdone. For instance, a giant zoom-in on the rotting detached human ear, with an ominous heartbeat sounding in the background. Intriguing? Maybe. Repulsive and ridiculous? Yes! Most other images are plagued with this obviousness, beating the

audience over the head until they become sick or die laughing.

Lynch has a habit of getting carried away in his directions. Jeffrey is shown going up the same dark staircase six times! To what end?? Even the acting is extremist. It is either off the deep end like Frank's frenzy, putting on lipstick and kissing Jeffrey before beating him to a pulp, or plastic-like mannequins speaking lines. The detective's face did not even show any distress when Jeffrey brought the ear in. It is just too unbelievable.

However, the movie does have its finer moments. It has a dreamy feel as a result of startling contrasts. While Jeffrey lives out his nightmares and passions in the underworld at night, he maintains a friendship/romance with a high school girl named Sandy (Laura Dern) in the day. This night/day corruption/innocence motif works effectively to create a visual fantasy. But this too has its weak moments. For example, when Sandy tells Jeffrey about her dream of robins coming and love triumphing, angelic hymns sound in the background and a church with stained windows appears on the screen. Very corny. Lynch is just beating on the audience again. Scenes like these rob the viewer of his captivation with the movie.

The complicated plot and the series of dramatic images are undermined by a simple ending. Jeffrey simply shoots Frank in the head and "rescues" Dorothy from the villain's further influence. And life goes on as it once had (typical mindless happy ending). The images presented at the conclusion: bright tulips, friendly firemen, blue skies... are exactly the same as the ones that opened the movie as if nothing has happened. The characters are presented in a static fashion after a dramatic event. How trite! It seems Lynch intends on insulting the audience's intelligence.

With the melodramatic images and a complicated plot surrounded by dark mysterious motives (some of which are never revealed), the viewer is bound to be confused (at least once). The director is attempting to create a masterpiece; all the audience gets is a barrel full of self-indulgence.

As Sandy said in one scene, "This is a strange world." This is a strange movie.

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