

# REVIEWS FOR *AMANIMAL*

By Rifleman Productions  
Produced by SHOW PONY

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*FRINGE OFFERINGS DELICATE, FIERCE AND FUNNY*

Reviewed by Raewyn Whyte, 1 March 2013

Wellington-based Rifleman Productions have brought two separate works to Q Loft in their double bill, which comes to a close tonight. At 7pm is the now decade-old award-winning *Terrain*, a boutique-scaled work featuring segments of densely crafted, intricate and awesome choreographic manoeuvres in tiny spaces.

Developed by Malia Johnston and Guy Ryan and toured extensively by them in New Zealand and Australia, it has now been passed on to Anita Hunziker and Luke Hanna.

*Terrain* gently and deftly explores the relationships between a man and a woman and their interactions with a continuously transforming environment, reflecting some themes from *Gulliver's Travels* in its use of miniature objects that contrast with the apparently huge humans.

Beautifully presented by Hanna and Hunziker, the dancing is set against an eclectic collection of tracks played on vinyl records, many of them ballads.

***Amanimal* at 9pm is a feral, fierce and surprisingly funny investigation of some of the deeper aspects of human nature, structured as a series of interactions that eventually turn full circle. Dancers Paul Young and Ross McCormack are riveting to watch (and listen to), performing an astonishing array and sequencing of movements and vocal effects against live music (bass and lead guitar, loops, effects and vocals) created by Eden Mulholland. Their various guises bury them in fake fur coats and wreath them in sheets and they're also responsible for a live sound score and cleverly timed effects with projected film by Rowan Pierce.**

With overall design by John Verryt, *Amanimal* is the first version of what will become a larger work in the Rifleman repertoire in due course.

The dance programme continues with six more premieres yet to come.

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## *PROVOCATIVE ART AND VERY FABULOUS PERFORMERS*

Reviewed by Felicity Molloy, 28 Feb 2013

Malia Johnston belongs to a celebrated company called Rifleman Productions that hails from Wellington. Much of her work resonates with the influences of the diverse contemporaneity of Impulstanz, an annual international dance festival in Vienna. Rifleman Productions' distinctive choreographic hallmarks feature artistic collaborations with musical powerhouse, Eden Mulholland, theatre director, Emma Wilson and the finely calibrated designs of John Verryt and Rowan Pierce.

For the Auckland Fringe 2013, Rifleman presents two boutique dance works on separate bills. In order of the evening: Terrain, which is most definitely a festival favourite in that it combines charm and quirkiness with downright brilliance, and a premiere of dance theatre Amanimal. A new generation of contemporary dancers takes on the now decade-old Terrain, Anita Hunziker and Luke Hanna; whilst the mature virtuoso more seasoned performers, Ross McCormack, Paul Young and Eden Mulholland perform Amanimal. Taken together, as a double bill, the two works share viscerally organised movement and intense, fearless aerial bouts of partnering, plus jagged, plangent music renderings, visual disjunctions and pastel colours, making a compelling evening of engaging and immersive dance theatre.

**After a long interval with plenty of time to eat and share stories in the comfy Q Theatre Lounge, the second work of the evening, Amanimal is a richly rewarding exhibition in visuals and motion: of animal-ibilia, fur coats on males, graphic evisceration (not real though), imaginative animation and enigmatically disturbing movement.**

**Amanimal is the third major collaboration between Malia Johnston and theatre director Emma Willis, and maintains an exploratory bent towards ecological sustainability and creature surrounds. In the first moments, a set of fur coats with satin lining, worn and tied as representations of fear, death, sex, fun and love, race across the stage and from then on we have fast tracked delivery and all actions set at a slightly crazy speed. Within the arc of the work there are several faked deaths and plenty of shouts of pain. A microphone, set up to gather and thrust live sound into the disheveled space becomes a fourth performer.**

**The most notable movement sequence occurs between the two male dancers - Paul Young and Ross McCormack drive electrifying energy, unstoppable shapes and powerful sentience through an extended duet, intriguing and unusual and rich in imaginary happenings. Often hysterically funny, sometimes pain-filled, it is filled by characterisations of men in the world - running, catching, falling, listening, caressing, humping, eviscerating carcasses -- highlighted by Rowan Pierce's animations and the design swirl of pastel sheets.**

**Taking his fair share of the performance landscape, Eden Mulholland is thrust in, beard and all, in full modus operandi: composer, storyteller, singer, muso and actor en scene. In the relish I feel at watching the musician, I am reminded of my teen years smirking at late night live bands.**

**Rifleman Productions once again brings to the theatre provocative art, a compelling sensitivity towards creativity and very fabulous performers.**

**Amanimal is more than a premiere work. It foretells a world worth supporting, and mapped by artistic practitioners with belief systems that bespeak a future of innovation, the results of which may be challenging and dramatic yet preclusive to a necessary environmentally sustainable change.**