



londondance.com - Libby Costello, 30th October 09

Performance: 28 & 29 Oct 09

Reviewed 28 October

ACE Dance and Music came to **Rich Mix** in East London this week with their **Switch** double-bill. This Birmingham based company who combine contemporary dance with African and Caribbean movement styles to great effect, also have a unique collaborative working practice – putting dance and music at the heart of the company's work.

This double bill made up of **Switch** and **Listen** pushed the dancers technically and emotionally. **Switch**, choreographed by ACE's Artistic Director **Gail Parmel**, was a physical work exploring transference of energy. The highly stylised contemporary movement borrowed timing and execution from Hip Hop – an interesting way of merging genres.

Opening with six dancers in grids of light, the music sounded like a factory generator trying to start up. In random succession the performers executed quick linear solos in their individual squares of light. The harsh industrial gritty feel was retained throughout as this company worked through more steps than some dancers would perform in a life time!

Where **Switch** showcased pure movement, **Listen** exhibited topical emotion. Based upon the psychological effects of modern day war this work by Parmel and **Dougie Thorpe** was, in places, the stuff of nightmares. The fast staccato phrases were contrasted with an Eastern style restraint, only for the dancers to break into a 'fitting' sequence, displaying no bodily control. The haunting phrase 'We want you, and you, and you, and you' was repeated throughout – a sinister play on recent army ad campaigns.

For a small touring company the production quality and dancers technique was second to none.