

**THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL**

**SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue:** Co-production between the Tron and Edinburgh International Festival, presented at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh

**Title of Event:** San Diego

**Type of Event:** Performance

**Date of Visit:** 16th August 2003

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named below. It has been prepared by either a specialist Advisor, or a Council Officer, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work, to the management of the venue if the venue is core funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

The report may be made available to Scottish Arts Council Officers, Council and Committee members, and specialist advisors as appropriate. It will be taken into account in assessing the work of the producing company in relation to applications for funding to the Scottish Arts Council. It may also be used by the Council to report on the overall performance of its Core Funded organisations.

**Evaluators should enter their rating under each section, explaining briefly their reason for the rating with reference to their comments under each section. Ratings should be given in accordance with the following:**

**Very Poor** –standard falls well below what is acceptable

**Poor**- not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation

**Competent**– routine rather than especially interesting

**Good** –well conceived and executed.

**Excellent** –conceived and executed to a high standard.

**1. Artistic Assessment**

Please evaluate the **artistic quality** of the event

**1.1 Vision and Imagination.**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: There were moments of textual and visual beauty, wit and clarity but the piece as a whole felt overlong and over indulgent.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	√	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.2 Clarity of Communication.**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: At times it seemed to set out to challenge the audience into creating their own narrative meaning but at others provided them with one, or a multiplicity of narratives. This frustratingly, meant the piece failed to achieve a cohesive whole. Some of the separate stories were more engaging than others, particularly those of the illegal immigrants, and the Pilot, which set up themes of alienation, dispossession and loneliness which drew one in and provoked audience engagement. Others such as the Laura strand, within the context of the whole, felt predictable and indulgent.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	√	
Good		
Excellent		

You are also asked to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event with specific reference to the following:

**1.3 Script** (particularly in relation to new work, or second productions).

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: In parts witty, assured and thought provoking. In others banal and predictable. Watching San Diego was like watching more than one play at once, but this multiplicity appeared to be more as a result of poor editing than anything else. The ambiguities present did not always seem to be either organically or intellectually determined, but often the result of structural flaws within the text.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	√	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.4 Direction**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Pacing felt overly slow at times. When the pacing worked it felt hypnotic but at others it was simply confusingly slow.  Although the piece was co-directed by two people, I would question whether the involvement of the writer did not add to the feeling of self indulgence that the play seemed to manifest. As the programme points out, the performance was arrived at through a very different process to the work of Suspect Culture. The input of so many people, including the writer, certainly did not ensure that the direction provided the cohesion that the piece required.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	√	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.5 Standard of performers- where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: Most of the company were very good, watchable and drew one into their performances. Two seemed rather wooden but it was difficult to tell if this was a stylistic device, or a weakness of the script., or a combination of the two.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	√	
Excellent		

**1.6 Use of music** – in particular please comment on the quality and appropriateness of any original music composed for the production. Please indicate whether the music was performed live or recorded, in whole or in part, and what effect this had on the quality of the production.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The soundtrack was hypnotic and provided an interesting layer to the piece. It undoubtedly added a strong element to the performance. It was a recorded soundtrack.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	√	
Excellent		

**1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography**

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The piece used little movement or choreography. It was stylistically static
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	√	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.8 Design** – including set, costume and lighting design. Please take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue, and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The design, set, costume and lighting were all appropriate to the venue. As with the rest of the piece, certain elements were more successful than others, in particular the use of the monitor set high which served as both an airplane window and a portrait of the dead David looking down on the living. As a whole the design was understated and so fitted in with the piece as a whole.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	√	
Good		
Excellent		

**1.9 Technical Standards** – please comment on whether the production was professionally presented from a technical point of view.

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The production was very well presented from a technical point of view. Everything appeared to work as required, and as one would expect.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

**1.10 Overall production** – was the production successful overall in relation to any stated aims (e.g. in the programme or other printed material, and stated aims and objectives)

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating:
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	√	
Good		
Excellent		

According to the EIF programme “*San Diego* weaves together a series of ...stories and merges them into a single compelling narrative” As outlined above, I dispute the notion of a successful merging of narratives. I would also dispute that *San Diego* provided a “journey of discovery through the American Dream” not least since a major strand was set in England and had very little to do with America or the American Dream.

**1.11 Was the performance appropriate for the audience?**

Yes, it was a mixed festival audience with what seemed to be a high number of 20-30 year olds.

**1.12 Estimated size of audience and reaction to the production.**

The show was sold out. The applause at the end of the production was relatively muted, however it was very hot in the auditorium, and people seemed subdued during the interval.

**2. Management of Event**

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and by the venue. Please answer, where relevant, with reference to the checklist below adding any other comments/observations you may have.

**2.1 Was the venue suitable for the event?**

Yes the venue was suitable for the event.

**2.2 Information/Interpretive material provided at the venue (e.g. programmes, displays etc)**

- Programme content was interesting up to a point but ultimately frustrating. It was difficult to pin down exactly what was being said in the programme about the artistic purpose and process of the production.

The introduction by Mark Fisher was informative if overly subjective about every aspect of David Greig’s work.

**2.3 Publicity/Pre-Publicity for the Event (leaflets, posters, etc)**

- The EIF website was clear and straightforward and I found it easy to use.

**2.4 Accessibility of the venue**

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- ease of payment - Good
- location – Easy to find
- external signposting - appropriate
- internal directional signing - appropriate
- access and provision for disabled people – clear and appropriate
- timing of event - appropriate

2.5 Customer service

- quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering).

FOH house, box office and bar staff were all polite, friendly and helpful.

**3. Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding** (if applicable)

The conditions of grant were met, The Scottish Arts Council Logo was used prominently on all print seen as well as the EIF and Tron websites.

**Name:** Felicity Hall

**Date:** 28th October 2003

**Advisor**

✓

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

*(Please tick above as appropriate)*