

**THE SCOTTISH ARTS COUNCIL**  
**SPECIALIST ADVISER ARTISTIC EVALUATION - DRAMA**

**Organisation/Venue:**           **SUSPECT CULTURE**

**Title of Event:**               **8000 METRES**

**Type of Event:** PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

**Date of Visit:** **03/02/04**

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: Apparently, six years preparation went into this production. It was well worth it. To try and portray climbing a Himalayan mountain requires huge amounts of vision. To do it this well requires great imagination. I was particularly impressed by the LACK of special effects and the concentration on the human aspect of the whole enterprise. It would have been all too easy to swamp it with not very convincing wind and rain.
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: Very clear. The lighting, sound, design and direction were excellent and the performers were consistently in light and could be heard at all times.  In contrast to some of their recent events, the text and direction were masterfully clear. There was no recourse to mannerism or ornamentation that has sometimes blighted this company's work,
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 (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: This was an excellent piece of work by David Greig. It was informative, amusing and concise. We were spared any great monologues about the vastness of the Himalayas and, most notably, any climactic speech at the summit of Lhotse. This was most welcome. It made the evening entertaining and engrossing. The teenagers in the audience responded readily to the ironic humour and lack of didacticism.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

#### 1.4 Direction

Rating for this section (Please tick)		Comments and key reasons for rating: The direction by Graham Eatough was excellent. The actors moved confidently about the space and the use of the climbing was very good. It was not overly highlighted and was really well integrated.  The direction was also very confident. To allow the climactic event of the evening to be done in silence requires real nerve. This was a really succesful moment. The direction was also very funny. To allow two actors to have a sex scene (unsuccessful), in a tent, onstage was very good.
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: It was a very good ensemble performance. Given that, I think, half the cast had to climb and act – often at the same time – it was very impressive. But what was really striking was how well integrated the physical activities were.  They had obviously really got to grips with tents, ropes etc and, as a result, were very convincing as the characters they were portraying.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

<p><b>1.6 Use of music – Rating for this section</b> (Please tick) <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> Very Poor Poor Competent Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent</p>	<p>The event was almost through composed by Nick Powell. The majority of the music was a series of ambient drones. Some of these became repetitive and ,as a result, were slightly irritating. However, the last piece of music. A long movement for strings was very good and effectively and affectively, used.</p> <p>The music was all recorded.</p>
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**1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography**

<b>Rating for this section</b> (Please tick)	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> A vital part of the evening was the depiction of the climbing in the mountains. This was very well done. The actors, on ropes, using handholds scaled the large wall at the rear of the acting space and on occasions balanced on ledges.
Very Poor	
Poor	
Competent	
Good	
Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There was a very good opening coup de theatre – when a character on the central acting space used the horizontal as a vertical and we suddenly saw an actor on the vertical wall to the rear – but horizontal to us. He had come down perhaps twenty feet parallel to the wall.

**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.

<b>Rating for this section</b> (Please tick)	<b>Comments and key reasons for rating:</b> This was a production that really did try to take on the sheer vastness of the Tramway. The design was simple and effective, The actors were dressed – appropriately enough – in outdoor clothing. There were three locations – a kitchen, a vast central platform and a multi location smaller platform. The latter was the least effectively transformed. The central platform was very well used and strikingly transformed by lighting. The back wall was roughly painted in ochre and had handholds dotted over it.
Very Poor	
Poor	
Competent	
Good	
Excellent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

**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 show was presented to a very high standard. There were a couple of minor cueing errors but given the nature of the event and the health and safety nightmare it must have been – it was excellent.
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: My definition of excellent is that the production is of international standard. This was. It would go down a storm in Australia, New Zealand and the US.  Stated Objective “The play would follow the journey of an expedition all the way to the summit”. We did. I have seen other mountaineering shows. Their attempts were often risible. This was not because cleverly SUSPECT CULTURE did not try to bring the outdoors inside.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	√	

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

Entirely appropriate. My only one qualm was whether one of the actors HAD to say “Fuck, fuck, I’m fucked.”

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

At least 300. Very good applause at well signalled end. Two curtain calls and applause continued after actors had left the stage and houselights came up.  
It was a superbly mixed audience. There were family groups. Some audience members were clearly pensioners. Some inspired individual had brought a coach party. This may have been the large, enthusiastic group of teenagers in the audience. I deliberately sat in front of seven. They were attentive throughout and were deep in conversation about the production as they went out.

## 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?

Entirely suitable. The production had clearly been site specific.

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

- range, quantity and clarity.

There was a very good programme and a display board in the foyer. An audience survey was being conducted.

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

- The production was well advertised. Leaflets were spotted in two other venues. The pre production press was excellent in it's coverage.

### 2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment

It took three attempts to book. Two engaged tones (this gives a very bad impression) but good once I got through.

GOOD

- external signposting

POOR – you really do have to know it's there and parking is POOR.

- internal directional signing

GOOD

- access and provision for disabled people

I saw a number of audience members moving confidently about. However, the ambient lighting level in the foyer was far too low. Very gloomy and forbidding.

- timing of event

GOOD.

2.5 Customer service

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

GOOD

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

Following is an extract from the Scottish Arts Council's conditions of grant for funded organisations:

*“The company should acknowledge Scottish Arts Council funding in press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, notices display and exhibition materials, websites and advertising). Acknowledgement of the Scottish Arts Council grant must also be made in any secondary or indirect products arising from the revenue funding such as recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, and computer programmes etc. “*

Please comment on whether the above conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.

The SAC logo is prominent in the publicity material, programme and on the specific pop up page for this production on the company website.

**Name: JON POPE**

**Date: 06/02/04**

**Advisor**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

*(Please tick above as appropriate)*