

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

**Organisation/Venue:** Visible Fictions at the Traverse  
**Title of Event:** Monster  
**Type of Event:** performance  
**Date of Visit:** 09/10/2003

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: Monster was an excellent example of genuine integration of all creative and technical elements of a production. There was a clear strong overall artistic vision behind the piece.  The structure was imaginative and worked well – moving between action onstage, action onstage relating to video, multi-media on its own.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>X</b>	

**1.2 Clarity of Communication.**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: The piece was a (fairly) linear narrative. Imaginative structure and use of multi-media enhanced communication of the story.  The communication of emotion was very well achieved.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>X</b>	
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: An adaptation by Douglas Irvine of an American book. Irvine skilfully avoided the clumsiness that frequently occurs when translating book into script. The setting of the piece was changed to a Scottish housing estate, with consequent change of idiom. The dialogue was natural and entirely believable.  The characterisation of the people, especially the young males, was excellent and true to life.  There was a lot of humour, which tended (perhaps unsurprisingly) towards the black.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>X</b>	

**1.4 Direction**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: Strong direction by Douglas Irvine, which was necessary given the structure of the piece to keep it as a cohesive whole and to avoid fragmentation.  There was a good variation in mood and emotion throughout. The humorous elements were handles skilfully without undue prominence, which made them very effective as a contrast to the bleaker elements.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>X</b>	
Excellent		

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

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: The onstage actors worked well together. Two of them switched between multiple roles with confidence. Clayton Wilson's portrayal of confusion and self doubt was convincing. He also managed to maintain the question of his character's guilt/innocence without resorting to cliché.  The actors on video were all of good quality. Worthy of especial mention are Stevie Hannan and Carole Anders whose portrayals of the parents were extremely moving.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>X</b>	
Excellent		

Excellent		
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**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 <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: Composer/Musical director Yngvil Vatn Guttu. The music (and sound) was effective and used to great effect to add another element to the production, enhancing mood.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>X</b>	

**1.7 Use of Movement or Choreography**

Rating for this section <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: No chorography as such. Competent use of set by onstage actors.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent	<b>x</b>	
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 <i>(Please tick)</i>		Comments and key reasons for rating: All the design elements worked well together. Caroline Grebbel's set was appropriately stark. The multi-media (Inigo Garrido) was of high quality and imaginative. The lighting design (Paul Ancell) was of reasonable quality and overcame the challenges that having video onstage presents.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	

Excellent		
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**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: Professionally executed. Good use of live camera.
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good	<b>x</b>	
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: Visible Fictions took themes of murder, casual and habitual violence, guilt/innocence and created a production that emotionally and intellectually engaged its target audience. Adults engaged equally with the production (which perhaps makes the point that good theatre aimed at children/young people can also be good theatre for everyone.)
Very Poor		
Poor		
Competent		
Good		
Excellent	<b>x</b>	

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

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

Traverse 2 c.60% full. Audience predominantly young people (the target audience) but a reasonable number of adults. The production gripped the audience throughout – there was absolutely minimal fidgeting for 90 minutes. Several people (adults) were in tears. The audience didn't always get the humour, though there was laughter. Very enthusiastic reaction.

## 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?

Appropriate.

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

- range, quantity and clarity.

Free programme of reasonable print quality and design. Informative about the company, but it would have been nice to have had some background about the production (perhaps about the book.)

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

- range, content and when and where available. Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Please also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised. Comment on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information.

Flyers of reasonable design and quality.

### 2.4 Accessibility of the venue

- ease of payment Fine
- location Fine
- external signposting Fine
- internal directional signing Fine
- access and provision for disabled people Fine
- timing of event Fine

**2.5** Customer service

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

Friendly and efficient box office and bar staff.

**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.  
Conditions of grant met.

**Name:** Jaine Lumsden

**Date:** 10/10/2003

**Advisor**

**Scottish Arts Council Officer**

*(Please tick above as appropriate)*