

---

# New DV8 is not quite so gr8

---

Last Updated: 12:42PM BST 31 May 2005

---

## Ismene Brown reviews DV8 Physical Theatre's Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DV8 Physical Theatre's Lloyd Newson is one of the few dance creators who make one impatient for his next production, and it has been five years since he unveiled *The Cost of Living*. He has laborious methods, however.

---

### Related Articles

**Victory at the Hackney's Arcola Theatre, review** (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/5011751/Victory-at-the-Hackneys-Arcola-Theatre-review.html>)

**Half-term family events around Britain** (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/festivalsandevents/5361401/Half-term-family-events-around-Britain.html>)

**Must see: Dance and Comedy** (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/5278389/Must-see-Dance-and-Comedy.html>)

**Royal Ballet: New Works at Linbury Studio Theatre, review** (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturecritics/sarahcrompton/5345100/Royal-Ballet-New-Works-at-Linbury-Studio-Theatre-review.html>)

**Hannah Takes the Stairs, review** (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/dvd-reviews/5258041/Hannah-Takes-the-Stairs-review.html>)

---

Physical theatre isn't about writing steps in a studied dance language, but about exhaustive workshopping of performers' psyches and experiences, packaging ordinary words and movement into a hyper-reality that, at DV8's best, needles its way into your head - and sticks.

Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men and MSM explored the furtiveness and secrets of young gay men; Enter Achilles exposed a gay man in a 1990s pub, re-spelling British as brutish; The Happiest Day of My Life was a passionate, brilliantly staged inquiry into a wedding, and *The Cost of Living* became, in its final version (as Channel 4's screening of DV8's film on Sunday showed), a sharp, tender portrait of misfits.

Hence high expectations of *Just for Show*, Newson's latest production, which now tours worldwide until returning to London in November. His targets have increasingly migrated out from his own inner torments to a mood of grumpy sarcasm at society's petty evils, most of all the media's obsession with physical perfection. *Just for Show* is a cabaret show, strangely (and I mean that it's strange for such an original fellow) derivative of Pina Bausch, the German leader of dance theatre.

It is particularly similar to her landmark *Nelken*, the stageful of pink plastic carnations echoed here by his screenfuls of pink video roses. Again and again, Bausch's trademarks seem to appear - the red-lipped Ute Lemper-ish glamour-puss, the violently sexual lovers, the playing to the audience, and the audience participation.

This resemblance may, of course, be just for show, his joke on culture-vultures - and there are some magical effects that reveal Newson's romantic heart under his thorny exterior. Performers seem to float in the sea of roses. A man and woman make slitheringly choreographed love, but when they're done, the floral wallpaper projection switches off, leaving them bleak and deflated. A lone man meets three male shadows and the sadistic-looking pick-up may only be him dancing on his own.

This is highly complex video-and-light integration, directed with a master's eye - but it doesn't equal the water tanks and construction sites of his great shows, largely because the text is so puny. The Ute Lemper figure, Tanja Liedtke, has a body like a pack of pipe-cleaners, and can tie herself in a double reef knot upside-down and still talk and smile cheesily, which is quite amusing. It is also quite amusing when men manipulate her like a doll for a TV camera, even polishing her legs, but when she reels off dozens of empowering clichés that can be mimed ("keep your chin up", "don't look backwards", etc) the ingenuity of her contortions doesn't conceal the thinness of the party game.

The 75 minutes fly by like fast food; the dark, clotted anger of the old, young Newson has been replaced by a middle-aged success's slick potshots at little targets. DV8 no longer deviates.

- National Theatre, London SE1 (020 7452 3400), Nov 10-19