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REVIEW

ballet.*magazine**Bruno Beltrao -  
Grupo de Rua de Niteroi**'H3'**May 2009  
London, Sadler's Wells**by Graham Watts*

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Bruno Beltrao is a 30 year-old Brazilian Director/Choreographer specialising in a genre that sits somewhere in no-man's land between the vague boundaries of street and contemporary dance. Regarded by many as a hot new property, he becomes the second international choreographer to be brought to London's attention via the innovation of *Sadler's Wells Debuts*. At £10 a ticket, this was undeniably great value and the Wells' initiative was rewarded by a reasonably full house.

In *'H3'* nine male dancers from Beltrão's company (*Grupo de Rua*) perform a work that's so raw it feels as if we're spying on kids making it up in an underground car park; an image that's enhanced by the early, distant noise of traffic, the makeshift taped dance arena (which is pulled apart to signify the end) and the bare fluorescent

lights that illuminate the last session.

The boys' energy is remarkable and they sometimes seem to keep repeating moves until exhaustion forces them to quit. Movement motifs recur throughout including very fast backwards running, bodies angularly inclined towards the floor; crouched floor-spinning, wheeling away from the centre on hands and feet like leaves spiralling away in the wind; walking with deep back bends, faces horizontal to the ceiling; and fast running leaps. There are occasional adversarial shades of krumping and body-popping contests and several collisions are narrowly avoided.





Bruno Beltrão's *H3*

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The opening sequence – silent apart from the distant traffic – builds up layers of dance, beginning with just two men and growing, one by one, into the whole troupe. Early on, a mobile phone interrupted proceedings, its tinny sounds amplified by the lack of other noise in the huge auditorium. It was unanswered for some time before stopping, but moments later off it went again. A woman behind me lost patience and called out for someone to turn it off. In the dark shadows to the side of the stalls, house staff could be seen looking for the source, apparently locating the offending phone on the side of the stage itself. It was funny and added to the edginess of this raw, exciting ensemble. As well as the sound of distant cars, we also had a session of electronic music, some cymbals and the amplified noise of screeching shoe soles on the rubber dance floor, so its hard to blame the mobile phone. If Balanchine were still with us and choreographing hip-hop, I suspect he'd have kept it in.

The diverse dance influences on Beltrão's style brought to mind the Diversity crew that won BGT on the following evening. It's great to see dance – albeit mainly of the hip hop variety – on such a popular high and the fifty minutes of raw energy in this Brazilian show would be a sure finalist in any world street dance challenge.

