



Sexy step away from traditi

Review

360 Degrees
Sydney Dance Company
Playhouse, QPAC
Until April 25

FOR a quarter of a century, audiences largely knew what to expect from Sydney Dance Company. Not any more.

Moulded into Australia's most glamorous troupe by founding artistic director Graeme Murphy and artistic associate Janet Vernon, SDC has gone for a post-break-up makeover. After trying on different styles last year, it's favoured an edgier, more youthful image.

Whereas Murphy's choreographic take on contemporary dance firmly reflected his balletic origins with thematic clarity, new artistic director Rafael Bonachela's introduction is a sensory assault.

With a Gen Y sensibility featuring ever-changing video, sound and lighting effects, sleek costuming and a nifty mirrored set design, some

viewers might find *360* too busy and overpowering at times.

Comprised of 11 sections set to music ranging from industrial, ambient and percussive to airily melodic strings, harp, piano and vocal chants, with no precis from Bonachela (although the title's references are apparent), interpretation is in the eye of the beholder. The most rewarding are segments that allow our focus to settle on a soloist or unison corps work. Highlights are Annabel Knight's beautifully controlled, sculptural and sinuous opening study *qujela mine*, and the lyrical group movement of *waves and hopes*.

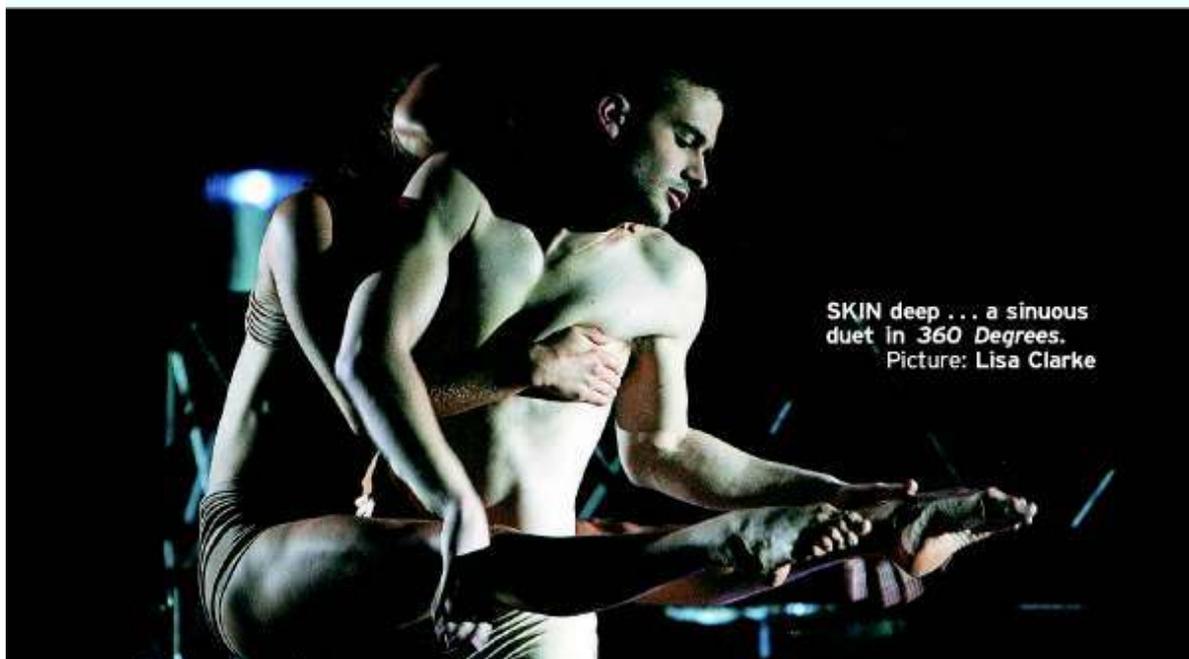
Often however, after finding yourself watching one side of the stage or the intriguing overhead projections, which aren't always what they first appear to be, you realise you've missed something on the other.

There's also not much scope, apart from the solos, for individual dancers to make their mark. So while Queensland-trained Connor Dowling and former QB dancer Adam Blanch (performing in Brisbane for the first time since joining SDC in 2006) have their own moment in the spotlight, some of the company's well-known artists, as well as new Queensland

recruits Emily Amisano (ex-Expressions) and Janessa Duffy, instead blend into the ensemble. This may be due to the adjustment of installing seven new dancers since Bonachela created the work last year prior to his appointment, but in a company hand-picked as superb, classically trained technicians, they deserve to register beyond such *corps de ballet* anonymity.

At the same time though, in some sequences on opening night there was slight yet uncharacteristic disparity in lines and timing. However, the premiere's rhythm was literally interrupted by technical problems; the show was stopped for several minutes while the projector was fixed.

With this calibre of dancers and integral design elements (production and costumes, Tony Assness; lighting, Hugh Taranto; music sound design George Gorga; and composer Ezio Bosso), Bonachela looks set to continue SDC's classy aesthetic. These always make the company worth seeing, and *360 Degrees*' step away from traditional territory could well garner new fans.



SKIN deep . . . a sinuous duet in *360 Degrees*.
 Picture: Lisa Clarke