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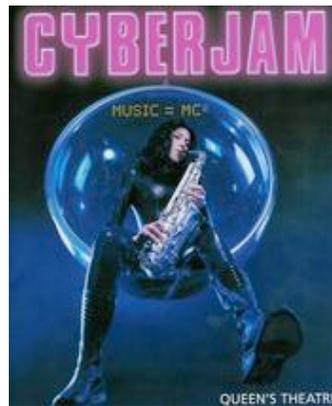
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### Cyberjam

at the Queens Theatre

Review by **Alan Bird**  
 Email: alan@londontheatre.co.uk  
 24 Sep 2003



I must admit that Geoff Hoon most probably relished appearing before the Hutton enquiry with more enthusiasm than I had for reviewing Cyberjam. I had visions of a pretentious show by a director who wanted to flaunt how clever he and his sound and lighting designers could be with electronic synthesisers and synchronised light displays. The very name Cyberjam sounds like a marketing device merely to appear hip and trendy. The write up in the programme notes is full of melodramatic statements such as "The task - not an easy one - make the so far, unreal, REAL!" and "The arrangements were perfected and then 'spiced' with the most revolutionary sounds". Not being sure what such ostentatious words are meant to convey other than egotistical self-praise, I felt a sense of impending dread as I waited for the show to begin.

Within the first ten minutes I began to relax, the show starts well, exceptionally well. The write up in the programme is not over the top. These young musicians and dancers are indisputably gifted and the compositions and staging is exquisite. The music is both wild and entertaining, the use of lighting subtle and clever and the dancing phenomenal. However, it is not long before it becomes repetitive.

This is a show of amazing baton whirling whilst performing intricate dance routines and of great music played mainly on brass instruments, trumpet, saxophone and trombone, along with wind instruments such as flutes and clarinets. Not only do the performers play these instruments with superb skill, but they dance whilst doing so. The concentration involved is exceptional as they perform with natural ease and elegance. However, as

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talented as this group of young performers are there is not enough diversity to keep the initial rush of enthusiasm on full flow. Everything that follows appears like a variation of the same theme. Instead of an ordinary shaped baton being thrown in the air, we have a crescent, or some other shaped baton being twirled. The music concentrates too much on bass instruments, some selection from the string side of the orchestra would have created more variety. Much of the music selected is interesting, 'Bohemian Rhapsody', 'Good Vibrations', 'Blue Rondo a La Carte' and each is given a Cyberjam spice remix.

My initial rush of enthusiasm soon began to wane as more and more I felt as if I watching an extended musical interlude on some 1970's TV light entertainment show. I was expecting the music to stop and someone like Cilla Black to walk on stage and say "And now on with the show".

The musicians that stand out amongst this amazing talent are Joey Oakley on the drums, Matt Corey on the tenor saxophone who performs some exquisite solos, Adam Rapa on the trumpet and Christopher 'Kit' Chatham on percussions. Christopher 'Kit' Chatham performs at the back of the stage in a raised oblong performing area, yet his skill and exuberance makes him mesmerising to watch. During his solo when he and his percussion instruments are pushed to the centre of stage, he raises the energy level to even greater heights. Amongst the gifted dancers Ellissa Johnson stands out. She has wonderful grace and elegance and is exceptionally gifted with a baton. It comes as no surprise to discover from her bio that she has represented the USA in International baton competitions for the last ten years.

Artistic Director James Mason has assembled an incredibly talented group of young musicians and dancers, and Jim Moore, George Pinney and Jonathan Vanderkolff have created some interesting dance routines, though they do rely too much on synchronised baton twirling. At times all that seemed to be missing was a pool with a large overhead mirror so that we could witness on-stage synchronised swimming.

Cyberjam sets out to prove that recorded music will always be missing that magic quality that can only be found in a live performance. And never has a show been more alive with energy then Cyberjam.

Alan Bird

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*What other critics had to say....*

JACK MASSARIK for THE EVENING STANDARD says, "Visual and aural pleasures holds the attention for two hours." LYN GARDNER for THE GUARDIAN says, "Neither revolutionary nor particularly interesting." CLIVE DAVIS for THE TIMES says, "The performers all carry it off with enormous zest and professionalism."

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