

REVIEW TIN CAN GANGSTERS (BLIKJESBENDE)

YOUTHDANCE FULL OF FUNNY ACTS

Isabella Lanz
NRC Handelsblad
November 26th, 2003

Performance: Tin Can Gangsters by MEEKERS Outspoken Dance.
Choreography: Andreas Denk (Hans Hof Ensemble)

A good stage design is half the work. That is certainly true for *Tin Can Gangsters*, the new performance by Arthur Rosenfeld's children's dance theater MEEKERS. The first thing one notices is the eye-catching stage set. The back wall resembles a '60s art collage produced from junk- an old car door, recycled wood, a zink plate- and is replete with a windows, hatches, doors and ledges. It works well as decorative hiding place and climbing wall. A nice additon is the set of colored oil drums that can be moved and rolled around, and in which the dancers can conceal themselves.

The creator of *Tin Can Gangsters*, Andreas Denk, designed this multi-functional set- together with the light man Pink Steenvoorden. Denk is a founding member of the Hans Hof Ensemble and this time has been commissioned by MEEKERS. So it is no surprise that the atmosphere and the sort of theater bear a strong resemblance to Hans Hof: playful, witty and light.

Tin Can Gangsters' plot is not its strongest ace in the hole. The tale of a young pack of thieves living in oil drums- a trio that lives from stolen food tins- versus a gaudy mafia couple who look like they were plucked from a '50s thriller, is paper-thin, and serves merely as frame on which to hang the many inventive movement acts. The latter- the trademark of Hans Hof- are to be found a plenty. The three little hobos have a high time rolling around in and dancing on, around and between the oil drums. It is right out of a comicbook the way a large can with feet waddles around the space, and downright spectacular how one of the players spins oil drums into a dance with the delicacy of a Chinese dish juggler. There is also space for a touch of melancholy in a solo sung about lost love. But that is the exception. Tin Can Gangsters swarms with comical movement sequences that are suitably linked by the music: fragments of film music, songs by American crooners, sentimental German *schlagers*, heavy rap and solid disco music. That the story is thin is beyond the point- there is plenty of compensation. Still, the ending could have done with a bit more sophistication. While the dance, on the other hand, in view of the tight dimensions of the theaters where it plays, should have been somewhat smaller and thus more subtle.