

7 JOURS
July 8, 2010
Montreal (Canada)

CIRQUE
ÉLOÏZE



Breathtaking acrobatics

By SOPHIE MONTMINY

Thursday evening, during the Montréal Complètement Cirque festival, we were confronted with the question of identity, as Cirque Éloïze's show *iD*, had its American premiere. Several members of Quebec's arts community were on hand to witness the troupe's amazing acrobatic members.

Robert Charlebois, Paul Piché, Emmanuel Bilodeau and dozens of other artists walked the red carpet to enter into the world of this highly anticipated new show. The creator and director, Jeannot Painchaud, called upon technology, youth and street dance to impress the crowd.

The tone is set from the first number. Urban noises are heard, colourful and flamboyant costumes flood the stage as the young artists take over, imposing their rhythm. Then, in the centre of the crowd a clash occurs between a rebellious young woman and a young man, who begin to argue. But undeniable chemistry is quick to settle them, and they begin to do stunts. All throughout this number, we hold our breath, because the girl is mostly held from above by a single hand. Her flexibility is impressive, as is the power of the young man holding her.

The second number strikes with force. A street gang arrives. All members start to dance, while the clan leader takes centre stage. The man, looking tough, begins to perform a human flag number by attaching himself to a pole. Sometimes, he lets himself slip, head first, and sometimes he dares to make a few twirls while clinging to the pole.

This fast-paced show is punctuated with captivating numbers, like the one in which a duo consisting of a dancer and an incredible contortionist dazzles the audience. In addition, Cirque Éloïze has incorporated multimedia into their show for the first time. From the first number, we see futuristic images that lead us to understand the virtual world in which these young people live.



It's a rhythmic presentation, featuring contemporary numbers that Jeannot Painchaud has developed. Even if there are a few flaws (several balls lost their way during the juggling act), *iD* is a sight to see, and it is accessible to people of all ages.

Vertigo and acrobatics

In an interview a few days before the show, Cirque Éloïze's director and founder, Jeannot Painchaud, warned the audience: "By creating this show I wanted to put the narrative side, and I left place for extreme sports and surprising acrobatics."

The audience certainly holds its breath during Philippe Thibaut's bike trials. In this number, the performer amuses himself by jumping over the dancers and climbing small steps embedded in the decor. With each jump he rises higher, and with each jump we hold our breath so that he doesn't fall. During this number, there is also concern for Xuan Le who is recklessly rollerblading. He is even chased into the stands by the cyclist!

***iD* will run from July 8 to 25, on the Quays of the Old Port of Montreal during the Montréal Complètement Cirque festival.**

WWW.CANOE.CA
July 9, 2010
Montreal (Canada)

CIRQUE
ÉLOÏZE



Youth's beautiful energy

By BENOÎT AUBIN

Something new happened yesterday, something beautiful and important. It was the premiere of Cirque Éloïze's new show *iD*: a wonder, a treasure, and above all a generational shift in the art of this form of entertainment – a form as old as the world itself.

It's the soundtrack we hear first – the sounds of car horns and sirens – and then there's the stage, consisting of constantly changing video projections, and then in comes the hard rock music. The city, its atmosphere and its energy, is the setting and soul of this show.

Sixteen constantly moving athletes cheerfully blur the lines between dance, acrobatics and theatre. Each individual number – hand-to-hand, contortion, juggling, aerial hoop, balancing bike – is of the highest calibre, and could be presented by itself.

But every number is part of another movement, a larger show of dance and acrobatics with brilliant staging that makes for a stellar performance. This is a show that will go far and will run for a long time.

A break with style

This new show by the Montreal company marks a radical break with the more narrative and poetic style of its three previous productions – *Nomade*, *Rain* and *Nebbia* – all which bore the stamp of Daniele Finzi Pasca.



The show was electrifying and the direction brilliant.

Explaining that it was time to explore new avenues and try new things, artistic director Jeannot Painchaud harnesses and releases an almost violent brute force of energy – the energy of youth and of a city – with music pumped at high volume.

Here dance is everywhere: it's the sauce in which the whole show and acrobatic performances simmer, reminding us of the original origins of the circus and its distant beginnings.

The creation of a new Cirque Éloïze show – the first in three years – is an event that is anything but reserved. Athletes, politicians, actors, and all the celebrities, and parents of children old enough to be invited, all sweated on the red carpet leading to the big top, delaying the show for about half an hour.

Last night, the message was clear: Cirque du Soleil is not Montreal's only favourite.

LA PRESSE
July 9, 2010
Montreal (Canada)

CIRQUE
ÉLOÏZE



Cirque Éloïze's *iD*: hip-hop between the tracks

By ÉRIC CLÉMENT

Cirque Éloïze's show *iD* opened, last night, the first Montréal Complètement Cirque festival in a magisterial way – with high-flying numbers and an urban stamp of exceptional modernity.

Directed by Jeannot Painchaud, *iD* is a marvel in every way from beginning to end. The multidisciplinary show begins with the atmosphere of an American city. The artists arrive onstage, one after the other, in a grand fashion show – beautifully dressed in the modern style, trendy women with Chantilly horse-racing hats or white bear fur collars, men dressed in the dandy style of the 1920's or suburban chic. A little surprising, as we were expecting a style that was more Harlem, but it's got bite, a wink perhaps to Dolan and his slow motion.

Then enters Jean-Philippe Cuerrier and Catherine Girard, for a solid hand-to-hand number featuring beautiful contortions and acrobatics. But the two young lovers are separated by a vagrant, Fletcher Sanchez, who then makes an impressive show of force on the Chinese pole. He jumps the length of the pole while being accompanied by the beautiful voice of rapper Boogat.



Next is the showstopper with the exceptional Philippe Thibaut who climbs everywhere – on cubes and to the top of the trampomur (perpendicular wall to a trampoline) – during his bike trials, and all after arriving full speed from the flabbergasted audience.

We continue to remain amazed during the contortion performance by the king of street dance, Christian "Sancho" Garmatter, and Leilani Franco, who one wonders if she was not born from the crossing of a nymph and some rubber...

A graduate of École nationale de cirque, juggler Nicolas Fortin then plunges us into the world of a construction site where Xuan Le zips around small orange cones with in-line skates.

Catherine Girard returns with an aerial hoop number, her body taking the form of the instrument: acrobatics that are as spectacular as they are artistic. Catherine is a master of the hoop, and has the flexibility and grace of a dancer. She is wonderfully supported by the effective music of Jean-Phi Goncalves and Alex McMahon.

Then, two groups arrive on stage, each member equipped with a skipping rope. The two gangs size each other up, tease and then

confront each other in some breathtaking choreography – an amazing jump rope number that is set to a very catchy tune. Everyone jumps, even the cyclist, and even two young performers – one standing on the other's shoulders! Super dynamic!

After intermission, an audience member is chosen to lie on the ground. Philippe Thibaut jumps around him with his bike, grazing his left arm at one point. Close call!

This is followed by Hugo Côté Ouellet's aerial straps, a number that will leave you breathless and show you the trampoline like you've never seen. We no longer know where the ground is, the sky, the wall! The masterful and colourful set projections create the perfect urban atmosphere. The acrobats do some pretty incredible feats on this trampoline.

Finally, a completely incredible show! They are young. They are beautiful, smiling, and dancing wonderfully. The audience lets loose and dances on the spot, giving them a

standing ovation. The artists are moved and exhausted.

"I'm happy because two weeks ago, I didn't think it would be so successful," said Jeannot Painchaud, after the show. "The magic worked." Many political figures were present, including Finance Minister Raymond Bachand, Opposition Leader Pauline Marois, former Premier of Quebec Bernard Landry, and City Hall Opposition Leader Louise Harel. Montreal Mayor Gerald Tremblay was absent.

Louise Harel very much enjoyed herself: "I've never seen anything more urban than that," she said. "Leaving here, we love graffiti artists!" As for Pauline Marois, she found the show to be "a powerhouse".

THE GAZETTE
July 10, 2010
Montreal (Canada)

CIRQUE
ÉLOIZE



The sky's the limit with *iD* Aerial acts, manic dance and so much more in big-top extravaganza

By PAT DONNELLY

Montreal has gone completely crazy. Circus crazy. (In addition to being festival crazy.)

This weekend, there are two active big tops down at the Old Port. One shelters Cirque du Soleil's Totem, the other Cirque Éloize's latest work, *iD*, which had its North American premiere Thursday night.

It's the opening act of a new festival called Montreal completement cirque, featuring more than a dozen circuses from around the world at various venues, including the circus-dedicated TOHU.

Cirque Éloize, founded in 1993, is regarded as Quebec's No. 2 circus -after Cirque du Soleil, founded in 1984.

But it tours widely and has its own solid reputation, built within theatrical venues rather than tents.

With its urban-themed *iD*, Cirque Éloize is operating under a big top for the first time. This means increased heavenward space, opening up new possibilities for aerial acts. Unfortunately for the spectator, the tent seating consists mostly of thin cushioned benches without back support. (Only those in the first few rows have actual chairs.) The washroom facilities are of the port-a-potty kind. And on opening night, the show started a full half-hour late -at 9 p.m.

Fifteen minutes into the show, none of this mattered at all.

iD is a thrilling piece of work, full of attitude, energy and invention. It begins with the sounds of traffic. Pedestrians pass in front of a skyline backdrop provided by video projections.

Then it morphs into West Side Story gone hip-hop circus. There's a hand-balancing love-story duo (Jean-Philippe Cuerrier and Catherine Girard), interrupted by male rivalry, then an exhilarating show of machismo as a bare-chested young man (Fletcher Sanchez) shows what he can do balancing on a pole.

Various artists constantly dart in and out, breakdancing, stealing stage here and there, necessitating full alert. There's a bicycle trickster (Thibaut Philippe) who hops from high platforms on one wheel and an online skater (Xuan Le) who does fancy footwork between traffic-diversion cones. Dancers work the stage to a funky

soundtrack (composed by Jean-Phi Goncalves and Lex McMahon) like they're auditioning for a Jay-Z or Beyonce video, but the line between circus and dance doesn't have a definable seam. The look is anti-glam.

Contortionist Leilani Franco is rubber-doll cuddly, as opposed to anorexic and underage, as is often the case. Emi Vauthey goes quirky with the aerial "tissue" act, teaming up with the skater for twirls.



Bicycle tricks are among the stunts in Cirque Éloize's dazzling multimedia performance *iD*, presented by Montreal completement cirque. Photograph by: PIERRE OBENDRAUF / THE GAZETTE, The Gazette

The juggling act (Nicolas Fortin) is a dazzler. As Fortin keeps his green-apple balls in the air, the faux city scene behind him rains with hundreds more of them.

The eye-popping graphics used throughout hit their peak during the final riot of wall-climbing bodies, turning it into the most entertaining trampoline act I've seen anywhere.

With *iD*, Cirque Éloize has departed from a European aesthetic in favour of a North American one, leaning on urban arts.

The ultimate charm of the show is the way it hangs together, with energy, anarchy and attitude, from beginning to end, thanks to director Jeannot Painchaud. This is his masterpiece. Although *iD* is clearly aimed at the under-25 crowd, spectators with a low tolerance for loud hip-hop/ electronic music are also likely to be swept away by this fast-paced show.

LE DEVOIR
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Montreal (Canada)

CIRQUE
ÉLOIZE



Cirque Éloize's *iD* - heat lightning in the Old Port

By ISABELLE PARÉ

With high-voltage energy and adrenaline in abundance – coupled with an atmosphere that would melt tarmac – Cirque Éloize raised the temperature several degrees during the premiere of *iD* at the Old Port during the opening of the Montréal Complètement Cirque festival.

A flash of Magdalen heat literally hit the big top that Cirque Éloize had invested in for the occasion.

With its bold new urban creation, inspired by break-dance and Japanese manga, Éloize deployed a new batch of powerful artists on stage who are naturally and prodigiously energetic.

From the outset, *iD* plunges us into an urban jungle, like a 2010 version of *West Side Story* with b-boys and b-girls, rival gangs, and street fashionistas at the forefront. Jean-Phi Goncalves (Beast) and Alex McMahon's decibels heat up the atmosphere, which ignites as soon as the dancers begin increasing their spins on stage. During the first half, the crowd becomes paralyzed with the appearance of a cyclist who defies the laws of gravity by climbing a retractable wall with his bicycle.

The hand-to-hand, aerial hoop and Chinese pole numbers reveal the power of Éloize's acrobatic team – a power that reaches its peak in the second half during a stunning trampomur number, set to a lively rhythm, on walls animated with graffiti and projections. Launching themselves from all sides of the floor, and from the walls and its cracks, these Gatorade-fed acrobats nailed spectators to their chairs.

The one drawback: some numbers were less actualized during the second half, including an aerial silk number where the urban spirit that inhabits the rest of the creation was lost in transit.



iD's main strength lies in the fusion of highly acrobatic street dance and high-flying circus numbers.

We would also like to have seen more of the well-oiled performances delivered with a quarter turn by the amazing dancers Elon Höglund, Emmanuelle LePhan and Kone Thong Vongpraseuth. We would take a double dose of their spins, footwork and intense popping. *iD*'s main strength lies in the fusion of highly acrobatic street dance and high-flying circus numbers, a mix that makes a coherent whole. The merger is osmotic and a true exchange happens during a contortion and break-dancing number. The crazy costumes designed by Linda Brunelle and the dynamic projections (sometimes under-used) by Robert Massicotte gives the whole a powerfully urban DNA.

After sealing the poetic marriage between circus and theatre in *Rain* and *Nebbia*, Éloize succeeds with circus and dance in *iD*. But in this 180 degree turn, it must be said that the narrative force and the emotional charge that Éloize has instilled in its previous creations has fallen through the cracks. We do not leave *iD* shaken or moved, but the creation still exudes an adolescent energy that is highly contagious and infects the whole audience. Raw energy, delivered masterfully.

WWW.PATWHITE.COM

July 12, 2010

Montreal (Canada)

CIRQUE
ÉLOÏZE



Cirque Éloïze and *iD*: the must of the summer

By THOMAS BASTIEN

Last Friday was my first experience at the Montréal Complètement Cirque festival. It was also my first Cirque Éloïze experience. There is only one word to describe it: mind-blowing!

This is what Cirque Éloïze is offering with *iD*: 16 artists on stage, 10 circus disciplines, and a mix of urban dance, hip-hop and breathtaking acrobatics. The numbers are choreographed to perfection and are all linked to a changing set that allows the young artists to perform multiple cycling numbers, on a trampoline, on the ground, or even in the air. Whether on stage or in the public, the pleasure is palpable. Ultimately, the two-hour performance flies by in seconds. One disappointment: the show ends!

The show takes place in an atmosphere that reminds us of scenes from *Starmania*. In the midst of rebellion and change, gangs form and dissolve to create an explosive ensemble in the end. The rock and electronic music that permeates this creation gives it a bold urban air. Director Jeannot Painchaud has skilfully combined intricate choreography with acrobatics that only an athlete can perform.



Of course, each show has its highlights. For me, it was the contortion number that left me simply speechless: a performance that is innocent and naive, as well as a bit seductive. I also loved the juggling number and the trampoline number that featured the entire troupe.

As you can see, the praise could be endless. As my neighbour who has not missed any Cirque Éloïze show would say, "We're coming back tomorrow!"

Congratulations to the artists and to Cirque Éloïze for this creation that has put stars in our eyes!