

frontrow ARTS

frontrow@timeoff.com.au

WORLD THEATRE FESTIVAL

BEAUTIFUL HAZE

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR NINE-YEAR CAREER, NEW YORK'S TEMPORARY DISTORTION ARE BRINGING THEIR WORK TO AUSTRALIA. **MATT O'NEILL** SPEAKS WITH ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **KENNETH COLLINS** ABOUT *AMERICANA KAMIKAZE*.

There's something immediately confronting about the work of Temporary Distortion. Formed in New York in 2002, the company's work over the past nine years has oscillated around the development of a tautly rendered audiovisual vocabulary equally indebted to multimedia installation, contemporary performance and cinema. A Temporary Distortion work will often find audiences forced to inhabit a world of statuesque performances, visceral cinematics, and meticulously structured experimentation.

"I think we're a design-oriented ensemble as opposed to a performance-oriented ensemble," artistic director Kenneth Collins explains. "We're a company that's

incredibly interested in design, we're a company that's incredibly interested in aesthetics. I think there is a formalism to our work. I think it's primarily form that we're interested in and content has occasionally taken a back seat to that – the early work of the company was very abstract, very austere, and almost strictly formal."

It's only been in recent years that one has been able to make sense of the humanity at the heart of the company's productions. As the ensemble's core creative team has solidified over the past five years, the company's work has blossomed with an increased appreciation for pathos and narrative. 2006's *Someone In The Ghost Box Told Me It Was You* was a multi-lingual exploration of memory

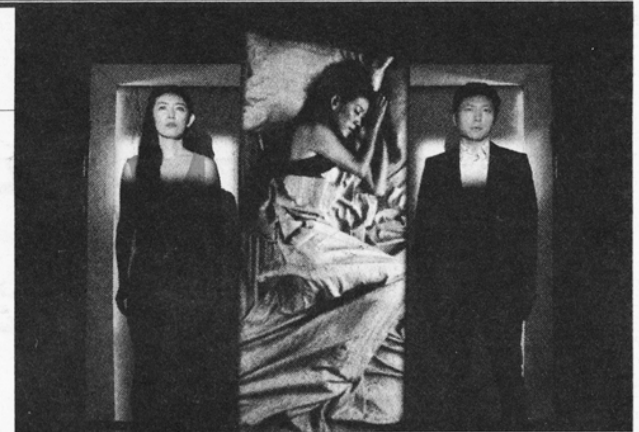
and psychosis while 2007's *Welcome To Nowhere* interrogated concepts of romance and escapism.

"As the work's progressed the last couple of years, it's certainly become more content-heavy, with more narrative and a greater sense of character," Collins reflects. "The last two shows, we've been really interested in exploring film genres. Somehow, with *Road To Nowhere*, the concept of the road movie became the focus – it kind of grew out of my realisation that I'd never seen *Easy Rider*. When it came to *Americana Kamikaze*, I was really interested in Japanese horror.

"I think it's something that's happened quite organically," the

director elaborates. "You know, in the beginning, the company was really just me and a couple of performers I would work with from show to show. There wasn't a consistent artistic team. The last five years or so, though, have seen the company really gel into an artistic team that's really consistent from piece to piece. I think that's something that's really set us apart from other theatre companies."

Americana Kamikaze, Temporary Distortion's most recent production, is perhaps most indicative of the ensemble's developing artistic concerns. While still replete with the aspects of abstraction and formalism which have defined the company since their inception, *Americana Kamikaze* is also arguably Temporary



Distortion's most cinematic and accessible work yet – the ensemble's technical and aesthetic innovation grounded by traditional values of story-telling and entertainment.

"I don't think there's a specific audience in mind for the work, when we're making it, but I think our work is accessible to anyone interested in having an experience outside of what one would normally experience inside

a theatre," Collins considers. "You know, I don't think it's in any way beyond or outside what the public are equipped to deal with in regards to theatre. I do think our work can be enjoyed by anyone if they're open-minded enough."

WHAT: *Americana Kamikaze*

WHERE & WHEN: Brisbane Powerhouse until 20 February