

Everybody Loses Review

Grace Lowry | Melbourne Critique

Sept, 2018

With the title of this work having had audience wondering if they'd be in for some kind of *'battle royale'*, there was an eerie energy afoot when Tobias Manderson-Galvin (as Margaret Schmidt) arrived to escort them to an undisclosed location. The guests enjoyed wine on the house, while Margaret talked about the terrible fire in the kitchen and ran cold water over their burnt hand.

Doppelgangster have delivered a very curious experience. Dr. Schmidt steps up to the mic like a dictator and doesn't move for the duration except for quick eyes and expansive arms. A screen with great obscure visuals and title cards help to keep track of the barrage of language. Everything (including a minimal yet wacky score by Melbourne's Maria Moles and Adam Halliwell) is timed perfectly thanks to the use of an earpiece – technology that allows long monologues that maintain spontaneity without the drag of memorisation.

Everybody Loses took place on a back verandah; LEDs combined with the house's own lights created a pleasingly symmetrical box for this solo performance by Dr. Tom Payne (as Dr. Karl Patterson Schmidt). Being seated on the lawn with blankets reminded one of childhood skits but also, somehow, of future forms for a more volatile and fearful time – a forcibly intimate theatre.

The writing is adapted from the doctor's own 'death diary' and embellished by Manderson-Galvin and Payne with flair, humour and urgency. Here a scientist is dying from a snake bite but refuses hospital as it would 'upset the symptoms'... While governments are content to measure and discuss our changing climate, we all slowly roast to death.

In the Jungian dawn-state the snake eats its own tail... death and taxes... black star.

[LINK TO ORIGINAL ARTICLE](#)

Doppelgangster: Masters of the piratic form (*Everybody Loses* / THEATRE REVIEW)

Dr Sam Christie | drsamchristie.com

Nov 25, 2017

These days it seems that many things simultaneously eclipse and exacerbate long held fears for our planet. While Donald Trump meddles incompetently with the affairs of the world, his bumbling, dangerous actions apparently trivialise the very things he threatens. Surely only a fool would propose building a border wall with Mexico or set about operating global diplomacy on such an improvisational level that it's uncertain what relationship the US actually has with Russia or China?

Most satirical media responses are necessary and provide light relief, but concentrating on Trump's small hands, or whether his pronunciation of China sounds a bit like 'gina could perhaps be seen as a further distraction. We are ignoring the realities and embracing the fatalism afforded us by social media 'click'.

It was in light of this that I felt some pleasure contributing to the recent production by UK / Australian performance company [Doppelgangster](#) of [Everybody Loses: The Death Diary of Karl Patterson Schmidt](#); written by award winning Dadaist poet [Tobias Manderson-Galvin](#) with ecological raconteur [Dr Tom Payne](#) and performed as a compelling one man show by the latter.

What Tobias and Tom attempt in this work is to provide a very concise response to the idea of recording, or witnessing our own deaths. The result is an edgy and lyrical interpretation of the true story of the gradual demise of Dr Schmidt (herpetologist), who was bitten by a boomslang snake at the Chicago Field Museum in 1957 and doomed to die 24 hours later. As much as he realised this, he was driven to record his own passing in diary form. Maybe he didn't believe he really would die, or perhaps – when it was quite obviously too late – his diary changed tone and became 'the death diary'. The allegorical weight is obvious.

This approach is typical of Doppelgangster, never shying away from visceral and prescient responses to our global troubles. Company Directors Tobias ([MKA: Theatre of New Writing](#)) and Tom ([Sheffield Hallam University](#)) engage with urgent themes such as the climate change and the Anthropocene in a way that challenges how we hide in distractions and fatalism and addresses our failings directly through provocative and agile performance pieces. This business comes with some risk; indeed Doppelgangster must surely be one of few performance companies to have an [event cancelled because of serious health and safety concerns](#) (electrocution and drowning).

It is in this unflinching response that change is facilitated. Direct confrontational live documents will strong-arm opinion. Both Tom and Tobias have quickly become masters of this piratic form; to see these maverick performers in action is to be handed your opinion. Unlike the documentary film, which passively pleads to be noticed, this performance approach makes demands. The more I consider the documentary as a vehicle for change, the more I question its efficacy; despite Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) Vegas happened. Is Doppelgangster pioneering the next way to speak out, in hybridised protest/performance? Muscularly battling fatigue and apathy it's worth noting the past and planned schedule of this innovative performance collective, both a list but also the echo of a yell or a sharp intake of breath for the next round.

Making what began as promotional videos for this project, quickly became somewhat rooted in my own filmmaking practice and the not inconsiderable effort I had spent making [Forecast](#) (2015), my feature documentary about climate change in which I walked the Wales coastal path from Ramsey to Bardsey posing climate related questions to those I met along the way. Filmically, these works ultimately ask how we might encapsulate the auto-ethnography of impending death? The initial challenge with *Everybody Loses* was how we might summarise in 'bite size' social media films the peculiarity of Schmidt's endeavour and the seeming connection to our own death drive.

Neither Tom nor myself made light work of producing the videos for *Everybody Loses*. Tom was keen that each sequence be timed precisely so as to fit with the rhythm of the performance text and Melbourne based duo [Maria Moles and Adam Halliwell's](#) hypnotic and percussive jazz score. In the pursuit of precision and with openness to improvisation, I used a Glidecam and a 50mm prime. Capturing Tom's dances and movements happened only through the control of the focal length in direct relation to his moving body at various sites in the post industrial wastelands outside Sheffield. Filming in this way allowed the creation of the record itself to become part performance and a genuine collaboration.

Everybody Loses: The Death Diary of Karl Patterson Schmidt is an expanded theatre project, or perhaps a piece of expanded cinema. The show will go on (planned events are quickly taking shape) and these video vignettes serve to illustrate, across platforms, this powerful allegorical tale. These films serve as rhizomatic media texts, joining the virtual to the living; the already dead, shot and edited media text is woven into the living performance. In some ways these are created in non-linear, pixelated environments, but engaged with the live performance, they continue into the architecture of the theatre space and link that space to the mise-en-scene of the films.

If you didn't manage to catch this critically acclaimed performance, keep a close eye for the show coming to a location near you.

[LINK TO ORIGINAL ARTICLE](#)

Everybody Loses | Review

Rhian Boyt | Ceredigion Herald

Dec 01, 2017

A performance about how a snake bite leads to death was very well received by members of the audience at Aberystwyth Arts Centre last Thursday (Nov 23).

'*Everybody Loses*', brought by international production company *Doppelgangster*, provided a very intense and exciting account into how one man experiences death from a snake bite. It was an impeccably detailed documentation which illustrated the stages of how a fatal bite affects a person's mental state.

The flawless performance was carried out by Dr Tom Payne, a lecturer in Performance Studies at Sheffield Hallam University and Co-Director General of *Doppelgangster*.

In an impressive one man show, Dr Payne set the dark scene and took the audience on a journey of suffering and death.

The performer drew on the true, self-documentation death of world famous herpetologist Dr Karl Patterson Schmidt.

Karl Patterson Schmidt died in 1957 after he was bitten by a young boomslang snake at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago.

He held the snake in an unusual way and consequently it bit him on the hand, which resulted in him creating his 'death diary'.

The bite caused him to die within one day and even though he did not realise he was going to die, he documented every detail of his pain and suffering before passing away.

He even refused medical attention due to fearing it would interfere with the symptoms he was experiencing.

Observing how brilliantly '*Everybody Loses*' reflected on historical accounts of the religious ritual of Snake Handling and explored the societal obsessions with eternal youth, eternal life and the destruction of our planet was extremely intriguing.

'Everybody Loses' presented the audience with many thought-provoking themes and Dr Payne provided a convincing performance which allowed the audience to experience the gruesomeness of a snake bite and death vicariously.

The performance gave the opportunity for the 'death diary' to be brought to life from paper, and the way in which Dr Payne delivered Dr Schmidt's words was captivating.

With video clips playing in the background representing suffering, which enhanced the suspense, 'Everybody Loses' kept the audience on their toes in the best way possible.

Doppelgangster (UK/AUS) are an international performance company creating iconoclastic, politically charged entertainment.

Critiquing contemporary issues at local, national and global levels, and responding to urgent concerns such as climate change, migration and the effects of corporatism, Doppelgangster's work traverses unconventional spaces, using intimate face-to-face encounters, large scale spectacles, and online environments.

'Everybody Loses: The Death Diary of Karl Patterson Schmidt' is the fourth full-length performance work by Doppelgangster, and was first trialled as a ten-minute performance at Hot!Hot!Hot! Festival of Climate Arts in Melbourne in 2016.

[LINK TO ORIGINAL ARTICLE](#)

Everybody Loses Review

Prof. Mark Whitehead | Placing the Anthropocene

Dec 30, 2017

A triangle of light, a single stool, and a vintage microphone lie in the centre of the room. Then you notice him. Dr. Karl Patterson Schmidt, staring intensely at the audience in silence. Clad in a snakeskin jacket, his silence begets the silence of the audience. And then we begin an exploration (or perhaps it is an exhortation) of the *Death Diary of Dr Karl Patterson Schmidt*.

The eponymous Dr. Schmidt was an eminent American Herpetologist who is portrayed in this performance by Dr. Tom Payne. Schmidt is now possibly most well-known for self-documenting his death after being bitten by a young boomslang snake in 1957. There are two particularly tragic, yet salutary, aspects to his diary of death. The first was that, despite his scientific expertise, Schmidt did not believe that the juvenile snake could produce a deadly dose of venom. The second was, because of his scientific training, he was keen to meticulously document his symptoms, even to the point of refusing medical assistance lest he should interfere with the results of his embodied experiment. Everybody Loses utilises the deeply ironic and disturbing case of Dr. Schmidt, and his embodiment of irrationality within the rational, as a form of morality (perhaps immorality) tale that speaks directly to contemporary human relations with our planetary home. Yet speaking directly is by no means the intent of this performance piece. This *performance of a death bite* weaves together science, comedy, song, drama,

and prose that is at one and the same time intimate and yet sweeping, highly personal and yet geopolitical, embodied and yet planetary. Its effects on me were both profound and discombobulating.

Our first ventures into Schmidt's diary sets the tone:

"4:30-5:30pm Strong nausea, but without vomiting, during trip to Homewood on suburban train. A first-hand report of an untreated bite has special value. Very special value-I think. I am feeling a little like I'm losing my mind. Worse for wear. Perhaps it's the snakeskin suit"

Here, at least for me, Schmidt's diary echoes the work of Charles David Keeling who began the assiduous monitoring of global average carbon dioxide from the lonely Mauna Loa volcano in the Pacific Ocean. His data, and the Keeling Curve it produced, are now our clearest signal of the declining climatic stability of our planet. Is this our first hand scientific account of an untreated environmental intervention at a planetary scale? Schmidt's body here becomes planetary in its symbolism. But Schmidt's tale also invokes the NASA scientist James Lovelock whose Gaia hypothesis led to the first scientific accounts of the Earth as a living body. What ultimately unites Schmidt, the Keeling Curve, and the Gaia hypothesis is not the scientific method, but how the scientific discoveries they embody (quite literally in Schmidt's case) have been paralleled by a declining ability to act upon them. Schmidt's stubborn refusal of medical help reflects humanity's refusal to act decisively on climate change. Schmidt's inaction is born of either a commitment to the scientific method, or an inability to think straight (or perhaps a mixture of the two). Our inaction is the complex product of certain psychological flaws and political economic norms, but is ultimately in spite of science not because of it.

Beyond the diary there are other themes that creatively weave their way through *Everybody Loses*, connecting together the particularities of Schmidt's death diary and the signs of our dying planet. First there is the snake, "A boomslang with undivided rear plate. – a thirty-inch snake brought for identification to Chicago Natural History Museum by Mr. Truett of the Lincoln Park Zoo." The biblical implications of the snake are, of course, evident it evokes Genesis, it evokes The Fall. But, in this performance the snake becomes so much more. In its naming, and "taming" under the herpetologist's gaze it comes to stand for a nature transformed by human categorization and exploitation. At one and the same time, the snake represents nature "biting back" through climate instability, pollution vectors, and resource depletion: we hear of the ancient myths of a giant snake who once disturbed will "rise from the ground, wrap itself around the earth, and crush it. And that'll be the end of this". But the snake in the hands of Schmidt also invokes the ecological irresponsibility of mankind: why did he hold the snake so carelessly, so unthinkingly?

In scene 4 our focus becomes death and taxes. Death here operates on at least two levels. While we are engaged in a visceral and, at times, surreal account of Dr. Schmidt's demise—"9:00pm – 12:20am slept well. No blood in urine before going to sleep, but very small amount of urine. Urination at 12:20am mostly blood, but small in amount. Mouth had bled steadily as shown by dried blood at both angles of mouth"— ecological death is never far away. What this performance is incredibly effective at conveying are the potential banalities of catastrophic ecological degradation. As with the gradual worsening of Schmidt's condition we are left to ponder the ultimate consequences of the slow death of the planet. Many writing about sustainability today have described the emergence of environmental management systems which are predicated on sustaining gradually degrading ecological systems. In *Everybody Loses* we begin to discern the ludicrousness of thinking that gradual degradation will not ultimately be

calamitous. Schmidt's death is a slow and gradual one, but even though its steady nature allows him to document its course, it does not change the nature of his ultimate death.

Beyond death the only other certain thing is taxes. With an impromptu tax audit, we are reminded, "All of us. Every person. Every last one of us. Owing all that. That massive cosmic debt to the reaper and the HMRC/ATO/IRS. Owe all that, killing us all, and the weather". While Dr. Schmidt owes a personal debt of death to the venom, our cosmic duty is increasingly understood in the terms of an ecological debt. Popularised in the 1990s, the notion of ecological debt has become a common way of conceptualising our collective relationships to the ecological systems on which we depend: ecological debt is the product of the resources we take out, and the pollution we put in to ecological systems, that outstrip those system's ability to replenish and absorb. *Everybody Loses* interprets ecological debt as the product of the freedoms we enjoy, "the ability and access to global, local – hell even elevators or new sneakers – travel, and the billions of hours of self-produced, mass-produced, and all-the time on demand entertainment."

Running through each of these deeper themes, *Everybody Loses* is characterised primarily by its embrace of the absurd. The absurd takes various forms from the constant contradictory qualifications that stream from the consciousness of the dying Dr. Schmidt, to the random banalities that enliven his monologue: "The road to hell... Is paved [...] So, um, any shoes will do really. Loafers will do fine." In its embrace of the absurd, *Everybody Loses* embodies all that is best about the Dadaist tradition. It embraces the irrational to shatter the rational veil of the capitalist-materialist complex, and reveal its absurdities. To paraphrase David Attenborough, anyone who thinks that we can sustain infinite growth on a finite planet is either mad, or an economist! Surely to get ahead of the absurd, we must first know absurdity.

The absurd is also evident in the particular deployment of humour that this performance utilises. It is the form of humour that makes you think about the nature and purpose of humour itself. First things first, *Everybody Loses* is funny. At one point Schmidt asks the audience, "How's everybody feeling? I'm using a complex system of nerves, electrical and chemical releases, distributors, and receptors". Funny, right? But humour is important within this performance not because it soothes, or massages our intellectual egos (in the sense that we get the joke). Here humour operates on the level of enabling us to recognise that we can see the absurdity, that we can even rise above it enough to find it entertaining, perhaps that we can actually do something about it.

If I am honest, watching *The Death Diary of Dr. Karl Patterson Schmidt* was a challenging experience. It expects a lot of the audience. But isn't this what true theatre should be about. *Everybody Loses* is enlivened by an incredibly diverse, thoughtful, and thought-provoking script. Dr. Tom Payne's performance of the eponymous Dr. Schmidt was eerily effective, committed, and strangely charming. If I have a criticism it would be that *Everybody Loses* can so easily lose you in its disorientating fabric. But this is a harsh criticism, given that its intent is to generate an effect of disorientation and confusion. The issue here then becomes a question of balance between the relative values of bewilderment and comprehension. As an artistic intervention within contemporary human-environment affairs, *Everybody Loses* is both original and unquestionably effective. It is gripping and intelligent and should offer inspiration to others engaged in bringing the performing arts and the ecological crisis into conversation.

At one point Dr. Schmidt asks the question, "Vox Pop. Is anyone here a reviewer. Suggestion. To whit: Five Stars. He was a good man. He was stimulating, and exciting. Both a true exchange, and it was good.

Sharing our fortunes, and fates, and becoming one". I find this self-assessment to be entirely reasonable.

[LINK TO ORIGINAL ARTICLE](#)

Everybody Loses Review

Erin Kavanagh | A Modern Antiquarian
Dec 05, 2017

Dear Diary,

November 23rd, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, 7.30pm.

I think that the oceans might have begun to boil. Or perhaps they already were and we were too entranced with sitting in a theatre, listening to somebody talking about how the ocean's might one day boil, too busy applauding, to notice.

Rarely, are moments gifted to us when we can step back from this, our own noise, for a moment. To step, with total commitment, into somebody else's opera; to make room for one hand clapping (and other such luxuries).

Being an audience is an experiment. An experiment in paying attention. An audience is both one person and all the people and all the people as one person.

Paying.

Attention.

We tend to forget this though, when we buy our tickets, putting all the pressure upon who we are audiencing for, making out that theirs' is the only activity under scrutiny. Sometimes though, just sometimes, that vulnerability barrier is removed. Sometimes, instead of feeding off one another, bouncing energy back and forth in some sort of abstractedly hungry game of tennis, the audience and the actor loop together. There is a conversation inside somebody else's head, in which everyone has a voice. Thus, instead of disappearing for the jurisdiction, everyone becomes more present.

This is what those of us did, who attended Doppelgangster's latest One Man Show (sans snake). Within the Round Studio in [Aberystwyth's Arts Centre](#), we nestled like little vipers in a basket. Before us was a triangulated stage, a chair, a microphone, a screen, a person.

It was a simple account of a snake bite, the story that is.

To be more precise, it was an account of a scientifically recorded experience of being bitten by a Boomslang.

To be totally precise, it was an account – we never saw the snake, although we knew it was there.

“Drawing on the true, self-documented death of world famous herpetologist Dr Karl Patterson Schmidt, historical accounts of the religious ritual of Snake Handling, Doppelgangster’s own personally documented accounts of self-poisoning, and reptilian myths of genesis and the coming apocalypse, EVERYBODY LOSES interrogates societal obsessions with eternal youth, eternal life, and the destruction of our planet.” ([AAC](#))

Thus states the show’s marketing blurb. I won’t disagree with the appraisal, however I will move it a little away from anihilism. For me, this show was emblematic of survival – not of the body but of experience. A value was placed upon recording and tracking thoughts, of interrogating an honest humanity; of humanity’s need to keep moving at any cost. To purge and engage at a distance, to be in denial and yet most particularly informed, to be clearly going nowhere whilst running; keeping right on running. Words sticking to other words like musical refrains, a cadence of denial. No margin for error. This was the madness of the snake bite, the myth of eternity. The almost-frenzied nature of Dr Schmidt’s demise was relentless like the sound of a typewriter printing from a Word Processor in one’s memory.

It was loud. The concept, I mean. It was loud and uncompromising and exhausting and emotional; funny, poignant, universal. Rather like life – only with better timing. Shadow and light played a wonderful dance and the script flowed like a river, deep as mountain pool, as sustaining as a saline drip.

Staged Post Modernism can be ungrounded, pretentious and essentially vapid. Climate Art can be yet another person in plastic, sculpting ice. This was none of those. It was approachable whilst challenging, skilled and confident with impeccable pausing; a masterclass in techniques without ever feeling like an exercise. It made difficult concepts oddly accessible. Payne-full puns a plenty, it played with our understanding of words as if we were sharing in the joke, comfortable with it being at our own expense. It was un-sited, yet specific, performance.

This, this was Sci-Art:

and now everybody else needs to up their game.

[LINK TO ORIGINAL ARTICLE](#)

Everybody Loses Review

**Dr Anna Sokolova | Unpublished review of performance at KXT Theatre Sydney
Dec 05, 2017**

DR ANNA SOKOLOVA

Anna Review - Audrey Journal Everybody loses The Death Diary of Karl Patterson Schmidt By Doppelgangster Performance Dr Tom Payne Writing + Direction + Scenography Tobias Manderson Galvin & Dr Tom Payne

I got a free ticket for Tuesday, but had to refuse, and decided to get there on Friday, but was not feeling sure that it was a good idea at the end of a very full on week. I needn't have worried, I ended up having the best night at the theatre I've had in ages!

Everybody Loses is a part of the Sydney Fringe, and was performed at the tiny but very difficult space on Level 4 of the Kings Cross Hotel. There was a tiny stage decorated in a vari  t   style, with heavy dark red plushie curtains at the rear and fairy lights running over the top front of the stage creating an arch. To the left was a big screen, illuminated by a projector located on the floor.

There were soft red couches and simple chairs for the audience. It was a pity that a lot of those were vacant. Regretfully, the marketing of the performance did not appear to be very strong.

The show was a combination of a narrative by Dr Tom Payne, and a silent video running in parallel. The psychedelic set of the movie with the agonistic performance of Dr Tom Payne, operated to bring to light the unconscious background of what was a very complex story.

The text, demanding for listeners, was packed with a lot of references, with turns and returns and thrown out associations, the details of which I find hard to recall, but easy to remember, like a footprint left somewhere in my mind.

The core of the narrative was the real diary of a scientist - Dr Karl Patterson Schmidt - who was recording his own symptoms following a deadly snake bite at the Chicago Natural History Field Museum in 1957.

Fragments of the diary have been mixed together and stretched further into a talk about ... eternity, life, death, and disappearance. On repeat.

In parallel, on the video, there were feet in business shoes, stepping on concrete, and dragging that top layer of concrete further, step after step. The whole video was full of industrial concrete, empty, and unkind to humans.

On the stage, the Doctor was standing at the mic behind a thin chain. Caged, and framed by the strip lights, he seemed like a museum exhibit.

The assistant, Tobias Manderson-Galvin, had been telling the audience before the start that the Doctor has been bitten and nobody knows if it is contagious, hence, it is highly recommended not to get too close...

I shall say here, that it seems that for Manderson-Galvin the night was hard. From what I've seen before, his feature characteristic as a performer is to entertain, or bother, or involve, or make fun of the audience. It seems yesterday was damn hard to do it with only a few people. Throughout the performance he was adding little accents for the show itself. Turning on the fog machines, opening and closing the chain for the Doctor, as and when was needed. He was not involved in the story itself, but his presence was so charismatic, that he was definitely a part of the happening.

Getting back to the story... Being a scientist myself, I was absolutely delighted to see the life story of another scientist being brought up to the theatre stage. Also, the very beginning of the performance, when Dr Schmidt started to talk about time, space, eternity, numbers, non-linearity, relativity was so nicely done, so precise without any clich   references.

The show began with counting, speaking of 0, and then when I was expecting to hear 1,2,3, it did not happen, and instead the screen started to flick unpredictably. This was such an intellectual delight.

Another point that struck me was later, when Dr Schmidt was getting towards his own end, describing the last struggle, and then suddenly announced "and then I was dead". But then he kept talking! In this way his turn into death was not presented like a final end, but as a jumping off point to the next happening.

This was so strong, so properly theatrical, so catchy, that I even now keep it on repeat in my head, trying to experience it again and again. I so strongly wish that this type of work will appear more on the Sydney stage. It is so fulfilling to be a part of thoughts that are not fake, and that take us beyond the bounds of ordinary existence.

NO LINK TO ORIGINAL ARTICLE

