

+/-Human, Roundhouse, London — dancers upstaged by balloons

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Big white balloons floating overhead in formation, powered, drone-style, by little fans and engines. Balloons that can react to each other's positions like a skein of birds in flight and adjust their air velocities and flight paths accordingly. Balloons with brains.

When the Royal Academy throws one of its blockbusters — David Hockney sticks in the mind — it is possible to spot the acolytes all over the West End: all-terrain sandals, a Daunt Books carrier bag, a faint whiff of cheese sandwiches. The same was true in the Chalk Farm Road last Saturday night as Wayne McGregor's fans made their way to the Roundhouse for *+/-Human* — only the uniform is different. (Am I the only woman in north London who wears coloured clothes?)

There was the same vague sense of pilgrimage. Many were doubtless veterans of *Rain Room*, the 2012 collaboration between McGregor and the art collective Random International which saw people queueing for eight hours to watch dancers going through their routines in near darkness in steady drizzle.

Rebecca Bassett-Graham and Calvin Richardson perform '+/- Human' © Getty

[Random International's spheres installation](#) can be viewed every day from noon but the movement, performed by Ed Watson, Mara Galeazzi and 13 dancers from the Royal Ballet and McGregor's own company, is weekends only.

The audience encircle the main arena as the “sonic world” starts up, supplemented by the surreptitious fart of the fans and motors that pilot the globes. Lighting by the unfailingly brilliant Lucy Carter enables the dancers, clad only in tight black undies, to glow in the dark, as if we had stumbled upon a ritual by a super-fit cult gathered to mark the new moon.

After a fairly brisk 60 minutes it is the humans who are applauded and the big, sentient bubbles do not float back on for a curtain call (no one ever accused a McGregor piece of having a sense of humour) but were we really watching the dancers? They were performing at eye level, McGregoring away with silky smooth muscularity, but McGregor's performers, as so often, managed to touch one another without actually interacting and the inevitable lack of focus made it far, far easier to look up. Every neck had been craned to watch the scene-stealing corps de ballet overheard, each member of the audience enjoying a weekend access visit from their inner child.

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To August 28, roundhouse.org.uk