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Interzone – review

Bate's Mill, Huddersfield

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Andrew Clements

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Enno Poppe's music has been a regular feature of the Huddersfield contemporary music festival since 2006. But Interzone, the multimedia work from 2005 that opened this year's proceedings, is more substantial and ambitious than anything by Poppe that has been heard before in Britain.

Huddersfield contemporary music festival

Until 28 November

Box office:

01484 430 528

[Festival website](#)

Interzone is a collaboration between the 40-year-old German and the video artist Anne Quirynen, whose flickering images of cityscapes are projected on to four screens suspended above the performers. Their starting point was William Burroughs's early writing about Tangier, with its idea of the city as a point of intersection, where many cultures have interacted and overlapped.

The text is credited to Marcel Beyer, but what comes directly from Burroughs and what is merely inspired by him wasn't divulged, nor was any of it printed in the Huddersfield programme (never the festival's strongest point in any case). In performance, it's all divided up between a speaker – Omar Ebrahim, seen both on video and live – and a five-part vocal group, Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart, whose ululating, hallucinatory lines are frequently embedded deep in the instrumental and electronic textures.

If one rarely knew what was being sung, or the point that Poppe and Quirynen were trying to make, the sounds were often strikingly effective, especially in the instrumental section that closes the first of the work's three parts, a rhythmically ferocious toccata for the reed-dominated ensemble of wind, percussion and keyboards, balanced by a similar passage shortly before the slow fade with which the work ends. The best ideas are rhythmic ones, even when the extramusical element remains frustratingly obscure.

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