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## Borealis: A Festival For Experimental Music

Various venues, Bergen, Norway

How much experimental art and music can you fit into one weekend? The curators of Bergen's Borealis festival must have taken this as a challenge, filling the port city's major art and literature centres (and spilling out into a few other venues) with performances, talks and DJ sets that went on into the small hours.

The opening night got things off to a suitably weird start with the premiere of *It's All True* by the New York based collective Object Collection (profiled in *The Wire* 387). It's a shouty and brilliant opera based on the collected stage banter from Fugazi's entire run of performances. Four performers skulked and glowered around a stage set with thrift store armchairs, lamps and piles of craft materials. They threw down righteous political statements and play fights, to an assault score by the electric guitar quartet Dither, who played a loud, complex post-rock set the following evening. Object Collection kept their jaw-clenching aggro at full blast for over two hours – so polarising the audience that some walked out in protest. I loved it.

Finally, Object Collection returned to close the festival, with their take on Steven Segal's 1992 schlocky nukes and Navy Seals thriller, *Under Siege* – with reworked, live, often gender-swapped dialogue mocking the hypermilitarised, overly macho plot and a new score featuring Pearl Jam, Bikini Kill, Aerosmith and video game music from *Super Mario Brothers* and other games of similar vintage during the fight sequences. The recent ATP festival at Prestatyn featured an interactive, singalong version of *The Wicker Man* that was fun, but nowhere near as wacked out and hilarious as this. I can't imagine many other festivals offering such a generous space as Borealis does to try out these ideas.

Emily Bick

On Location | The Wire | 79

AV Festival