

# the DANCE i n s i d e r

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Nightmares of Flossing with Scott Heron  
By Chris Dohse

NEW YORK -- To appreciate the subversive delight of Scott Heron's "Flossing and Other Dances," it is best to read them through the lens of clowning rather than dance. Heron embodies buffoonish characters unknown by Barnum, but who contain familiar elements: the village idiot, the class clown, the town crier, the canary in a coal mine. He is simultaneously wretched and cute as a button, a churning urn of disgust and desire.

Like in the rollick of Punch and Judy, both of whose genders Heron channels within instants, levity threatens violence. The cautionary tale of "Flossing" -- a tapping, high-heeled box of floss visited by the Ghost of Tooth Fairy Past -- warns of the nightmare that awaits us all if we neglect dental hygiene.

The details of his slapdash aesthetic and visual foolery beguile. At the same time, he chews the scenery with an abandon that creates underlying anxiety. Will he hurt himself or spew some unspeakable fluid into the audience? At one moment, Heron and a collaborator, singer/composer Corey Dargel, look adorable in mismatched wigs. Dargel croons in the world-weary, butter-and-rust style of Stephin Merritt while Heron organizes a surreally expanding collection of faux cupcakes. Later, he abjects himself on the floor among the seats, nudging his body under people's feet, thereby shedding -- and nearly shredding -- the prom gown he'd been barely squeezed into. A crowd-pleaser: in "Donovan X3," he pulls his shorts down so he can get a better look at his own butt, which he then draws on a pad of paper and shows the audience, beaming.

"Big Lake," a film by Thomas Little and Heron, is a Halloween jewel, cutting between Heron as a weepy drag Ophelia -- mad as a wet hen and haunting some unlucky body of water -- and upside-down close-ups of another, Max Schreck-like Heron who seems to be regurgitating a gobfull of bugs. These are shamanic rites using structure and necessity as girders within apparent anarchy. Heron posits a self that isn't a noun, a fixed entity, but a verb, a becoming: our decade's Stan Laurel.