wolves in the piazza

the SPIN programme

by Toby Oakes

■ For two weeks in February the British Library hosted SPIN, a programme of sound works by artists drawn from and inspired by the collections of the NSA. Ten artists produced six very different pieces which transformed the public areas of the library, brought new audiences into the building and proclaimed the presence of the NSA at St Pancras.

William Furlong's *Balcony of Sound* invigorated the lofty void of the entrance hall with bells and birdsong, Polly Gould and Anne Eggebert's *Tall Stories* peopled the gloom around the King's Library with a complex narrative woven from fragments of speech and documentary sound. Katherine Meynell's *Story* provided a witty and knowledgeable critique of the Library in the form of an unreliable audio guide to the building. Tucked away in a first aid room, visitors lay down to hear Ian Breakwell's rather sinister *Bedtime Story*. Marcia Farquahar and Uriel Orlow's *Walking Talking Living Yarn* led listeners through the old badlands of King's Cross, contrasting the current clamour of restoration and rebuilding with the grim testimonies of former inhabitants. Roney Fraser Munro's *Dr Qua* was a broadside of sounds and images satirizing the New Labour way with the soundbite. Finally Brian Catling and Tony Grisoni provided SPIN's highlight when as *The Hushers* they moved impassively through the building emitting sounds from their coat sleeves and brief cases, the culmination being their stately exit across the piazza trailing the sound of howling wolves.

Four of the artists also led a series of very successful workshops which introduced students from the London Institute, St Martin's, Camberwell, and Kingsway-Princeton colleges to the work and to the NSA.

SPIN would not have happened without the energy and enthusiasm of Sarah Wang who initiated and curated the event, but we can take considerable satisfaction from the way that the NSA worked with staff from Public Affairs and AV Services to produce and present an ambitious programme of new work to a professional standard.

Elizabeth Hunter

'Bedtime Story'