

Archaos

DURRANT'S

TEL: 01-588-3671

103 WHITECROSS STREET, LONDON EC1Y 8QT

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Anarchy still rules, OK?

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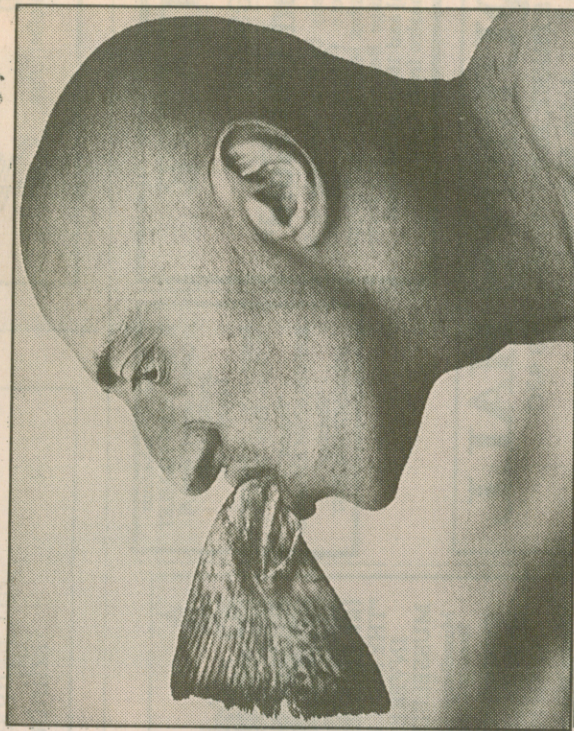
THERE'S this man, see, who does a bicycle wheelie on a high wire. Then there's a woman who is mugged by a gang of bikers and laments her plight with a trapeze dance suspended from a full-size Soviet crane.

This other guy is decapitated by a chainsaw-wielding maniac. After that, the Muriel Gray-lookalike returns for more bizarre clowning with variations on a theme of fish. There is an elegant change of pace with some balletic eroticism. And lots of jugglers sort of, er, juggle.

The set? It's an arena with the Chihuahuas elevated at one end. They are a Parisian cult band who blast out funk, reggae and subtle atmospherics in tandem with the show. Facing them is a wrecking yard of junked machinery and trashed TV sets from which the maulauding roadies launch their terrorist attacks.

By the end, the air is thick with smoke. Heavy rock music blasts. A motorcycle circles menacingly. Welding torches sear the air. The urban jungle is detonating.

This is Archaos. The French circus has returned for its second year in Edinburgh with what it



All hype on the night: Archaos, a spectacle of contradictions

extravagantly hypes as an all-new circus show. By most accounts it has changed even since it hit Glasgow last month.

It is not theatre, but a spectacle of contradictions. It alienates its audience yet grips them. It seems to include everything yet comes to nothing. It is not as shocking as the hype would have you believe, yet it stuns the senses by total assault.

The troupe provide an organic show which keeps its vibrancy through the turnover of the line-up. But it is the unpredictability of the surreal sense of spectacle and the outlandish variations on traditional circus skills that mark them out as one of the most extraordinary and riveting of live shows.

Douglas Fraser