

ARCHAOS

DURRANT'S

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LAST NIGHT'S

REVIEWS

Archaos Circus • Platt Fields Park

SENSATIONAL is putting it mildly. Forget most of your preconceived ideas about circus and roll up for the big top thrills of this French, rock band-backed, group of zanies.

Cars and most else explode, mad bikers run amok with chain saws, gents in jock straps mingle with the audience, there's a topless balancing act, a water-filled Mini, an ex-Soviet army crane and much more.

It's noisy, smelly, raw, surreal, violent and sprinkled with ambivalent sex, a futuristic, Mad Max, urban jungle, breaker's yard, a whiff of danger and the spice of unpredictability. It's also packed with some very skilful performers. Among the general mayhem are a series of acts that are essentially standard circus fare, from clowns and a juggler to trapeze artiste, high-wire walker

and acrobatic bicyclist. But all offer a new slant, often combining carefully created characters and short stories with the circus charisma.

The tragic trapeze girl sings opera, the acrobatic dance couple are at war on top of a taxi and the high-wire walker is the Valentino macho man you always knew he was.

Lots of zany gags, including a long-running one involving fish. Don't ask. Raunchy backing from rock group The Chihuahuas, fire-works and a belching parade of the giant crane, cars and lorries.

Wear wellies, warm old clothes, take a cushion (there's no interval) and expect the unexpected.

Alan Hulme

● The Archaos big top is in Platt Fields, near to Wilmslow Road, until July 15. An Olympic Festival event.