

"Of course, the show has changed somewhat since you saw it," the publicist confided. "It's never the same twice in succession anyway, but there aren't any fishmen anymore because Chrystof got drunk and fell and broke his arm, and the other one, the bald one, got talent-spotted and he's in the Folies Bergeres."

"And the roller-skating motorcyclist got the sack because he crashed a lorry. Oh, and the couple doing the erotic acrobatics on top of the taxi will be topless... well, he was already, but now she will be, too."

But the dogman... there is still the dogman?

"Oh, yes. The dogman's still there."

Praise be. Naturally, we weep at the absence of the two fishmen. We will miss their clowning, their pretend fish, and the water-filled Mini they used to drive around in. But yea and verily, while the dogman still bounds through rings of fire and snarls in his leather jock-strap, salvation for every journalist remains a solid prospect.

Archaos is a publicist's dream and a godsend to brainless hacks everywhere. Archaos is the circus to big-top and full-stop all circuses. It's coming from France to Glasgow Green for a fortnight from Thursday, July 21. Book now at the Ticket Centre, Candleriggs, for the show that was made for Glasgow as for no other city on earth.

In Britain, tabloid shock-horror-outrage heralds every move of the gallus Gallics who comprise Archaos. Last year at the Edinburgh Festival sundry po-faced, pursed-lipped scribblers feigned moral indignation as they invented things about Archaos being chock full of full-frontal naked gay sex rumpuses (*rumpi?*).

The big-top and full-stop of all circuses



DIARY

David
Belcher

They also claimed that it corrupted squads of innocent weans and routinely staged terrors unspeakable enough to drive legions of unsuspecting families outraged and screaming from the big top.

Rags like the Sun frothed and ejaculated, prematurely, as ever. Tory tabloid politico Sir Anthony Beaumont Dark thundered to order and by the yard. "These people are lunatics, the whole lot of them," he blustered. "It amazes me that they can get away with it in the name of art."

Last month, barely days into Archaos's four-month British tour with their new production, Bouinax, the whole tabloid to-do started up again. Storms of protest were alleged in local Bristol newspapers at the very idea of Archaos's visit there in September. "Fury over steamy sex circus," the headlines blared. Local Tory MP Michael Stern called

on the police to jolly well look into it, and representatives of the Avon and Somerset constabulary will indeed be journeying to Manchester to see Archaos in action there.

All of which rather overshadows the essence of what Archaos is actually about. Yes, on one level Archaos is a flaming, detonating Jaguar XJ6 and the wanton destruction of three scrap cars and innumerable redundant washing machines per performance. Archaos is roaring chainsaws, and fire-eaters, and folk who appear to belong to mutant inner-city tribes. It's snarling, cyber-punk women on rollerskates and unicycles who all look as though they've just crawled out of a cave after having survived a major nuclear inci-

dent. Archaos is high-wire jugglers, apocalyptic air-raid si-

rens, fireworks, and shrieking dervishes on motorbikes.

Archaos is a trapeze artist whirling high above the heads of the audience from a rope being rotated by a battered mobile crane. Archaos is two mind-blowing hours of explosions, loud blasts of olde punke-rocke-style music from an eight-piece band, the Chihuahuas, and cars falling on to other cars from great heights.

At one point — blink and you might miss it because most of the foregoing is happening all at once, most of the time — Archaos is young stagehands dressed as anarchic janitors baring their bottoms as a comical, critical comment on what is happening in the circus arena beneath them. In some ways it's a Strangeways prison riot with better music and nicer people.

All these aspects of Archaos were inadvertently summed up for one of the many British journalists, who, like me was taken to Paris for the show's opening in April. After the show's creator, the swarthy and charismatic Pierrot Pillot-Bidon, had spoken at him in high-speed, fractured Franglais for several minutes, the writer realised that the only words he'd fully comprehended were "ferkin' dangereuse."

But there is a lot more to it than this. For those who care to open themselves up and look and think and feel, there is much more to Archaos.

Currently funded by France's Ministry of Culture and with the express backing of arts minister Jacques Lang, Pierrot founded Archaos four years ago as "a new kind of show... a circus that tells the story of life, that is more than true. It employs 130 performers in two separate companies... people from dif-

ferent cultures, with different educations, different possibilities.

"It is not really dangerous. We know what we are doing, there is the impression of danger. But this is a show made with life and life is danger, so a show without danger is a show without life. Our next show, next year, will be our most important step."

"It is called Mechanic en Swet, and it is to put in evidence the cruelty of the world, of the circus and of people together. It is a show that will ask how can we love with death, disease, God, and Margaret Thatcher in the world."

In being true to life, Archaos is cruel and violent, but no more so than Tom and Jerry, and considerably less so than many acts perpetrated either in God's name or that of Mme Thatcher's Third Reich. Nevertheless, due to the noise, nippers should not be seated in the front rows: this is not a cosy circus in the traditional British style, where animals are the only ones to be put through hoops.

Yet aside from the din, the smoke and the spectacle, Archaos's Bouinax plainly has a purpose and a story. In fact if you don't feel your life has been enhanced at the show's conclusion, why, you must be as unimaginative and emotionally retarded as a Tory MP or a Sun tripewriter.

But Archaos holds out hope even for the latter. The dogman, you see, was once a French freelance features writer, Cyril Kasmene. He went along to do some interviews and ended up staying as the show's scantily-clad canine strongman.

Imagine: if Archaos can liberate journalists, what might it do to expand the possibilities of us Glaswegians, we whose inner horizons are already limitless?

■ Waiting to entertain you: during the course of the show's run in Glasgow, Archaos reckons on destroying 28 scrap cars and 140 TV sets. Anyone happy to donate quantities of either — especially scrap cars — will be rewarded with free tickets. Would-be donors should contact Robin Morley now on 0273 821588 or 0831 220401.

