

Festival *Special*

Revolutionary French circus Archaos are **Razing the big top** for a series of death-defying performances. We have ten copies of the book of the show to give away



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ARCHAOS

Razing the big top

Report by
**ALEX
HENDERSON**

Gavin Evans packed his camera and went to join revolutionary French circus Archaos, who are once again pitching their tent for the Festival

With a trill of piped birdsong and the screech of an electric guitar, the mayhem begins. Archaos, the runaway success of last year's Fringe, are back with their latest death-defying version of the Greatest Show on Earth, this time as part of the International Festival.

You can forget the sawdust and sequins – this is circus for the Nineties. The new two-hour show – entitled Bouinax, which means bodgers, bunglers and backstage hacks – is not for the faint-hearted. Backed by Parisian rock group The Chihuahuas, Archaos destroy cars, blow up television sets, and chase each other with snarling chainsaws.

Archaos began life 15 years ago as a traditional travelling circus with 25 horses and exquisite gypsy caravans, working the villages and small towns of France and Italy. By the mid-Eighties, its founder Pierrot Bidon had decided it was time for a change. He explains, 'We live in an industrial world so we decided to embrace it.'

The result is frequently deafening, often breath-taking and sometimes plain weird. Motorbikes roar; acrobats and trapeze artists defy gravity; fish fly, and a man in a pith helmet cycles serenely backwards round the tent. A caged, straitjacketed figure hangs from a crane; a driverless black taxi circles; performers clad only in cod-pieces cause havoc in the audience. One loses his head – literally.

It's almost impossible to keep track of all the frantic activity. At one end of the enormous tent, the band leaps about on stage. Far above them, oblivious to the noise, a man walks the high wire. Meanwhile, down in the ring, the juggler gets on with his act. At the other end, three of the crew drop their trousers for added interest, just in case you're getting bored.

Go and see Archaos if you dare, but remember to duck if you spot a semi-naked man or a dead fish heading your way. ●

Archaos are on Leith Links from 11 August-2 September (excluding Mondays). Booking information: 031-225 5756

WIN A BOOK

If you're not brave enough for the show – or simply want a souvenir – Gavin Evans' book, *Archaos Cirque Revolutionnaire* (PE Press, £7.95), captures its spirit. His beautifully-observed portraits – some of which appeared in *Scotland on Sunday Magazine* last summer – feature many of the troupe's star performers.

The first ten readers whose names and addresses are drawn from a hat after 2 September will receive a free copy. Send your postcard to Archaos Competition, *Scotland on Sunday Magazine*, 20 North Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1YT.

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