

40p

Wednesday

August 21

1991

Published in London
and Manchester

The Guardian

NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL 29

Queasy riders

Déjà vu

Archaos

MENACE, violence, noise, sex. For those who have never seen the grotesque French circus troupe Archaos, you must. Every festival people try to get it banned and every festival they fail. This year even the most hardened fans are queasy.

A woman is decapitated, her twitching head pressed to a skinhead's groin. Another woman is involuntarily buggered, her assailant electrocuted on the spot. Meanwhile, a man silently digs his grave in the corner, stopping every now and then to eat his sandwich.

Above all this, trapeze artists hurl themselves across the huge tent, faking falls which leave the audience gasping. Two acrobats perform an erotic display, a man cycles furiously on the high wire while below him two more behave like Lester Pig-got on BMXs.

For those who have witnessed Archaos, this year's offering is tamer than last. It lacks structure and it's not as funny as past ones. Where is the girl who used to spit mackerel heads into the audience? Or Roman, the transvestite rope man, who used to select an Edinburgh solicitor and then stick his tongue down his throat?

But it is still a hell of a show. Voyeuristic violence of the most disturbing kind.

Joanna Coles

● At Leith Links at 8.30pm,
until September 1.