



'Metal Clown'

WEMBLEY ARENA

The title of Archaos's new show refers to helmeted nutters with bits of corrugated iron strapped to their backs, but the theme is incongruously Brazilian. It arrives in the shape of Bahia Axe Bahia, a troupe of costumed dancers, drummers and acrobats — exotic wallflowers to the motorbikes, flame-throwers, fireworks and chainsaws. But circus director Pierre Bidon's attempt to impose a concept — the clash of colonialism with indigenous South America — on his itinerant show is about as enlightening as a brick in the face. Somehow this doesn't seem to matter.

It's Archaos's staple diet of titillation and indulgent spectacle that people have come to see: the bare-chested woman strutting down the runway on giant stilts; another having her panties ripped off by an extremely fat and hairy trans-

vestite; a Hell's Angel pimp having his cellulite testicles (three for some reason) cut off with a cutlas; a bald Bob Dylan type being crucified against a telephone box; and the disparate collection of out-sized, ludicrously customised rigs that they rev down the concrete runway which bisects the huge, cathedral-sized tent.

Yet within this noisy mayhem there is elegance and skill — the trapeze artists winging it around a massive aluminium frame, the fluttering aerialists suspended from a Soviet crane, and three Moroccan acrobats who perform incredible balancing acts on top of a battered army truck. This year's band, the aptly named, Brixton-based, Thunderdogs, is more tuneful: Subway Sect nihilism with the obligatory tracts of heavy metal. It's pricey stuff: £15 a ticket. But the audience, who all seemed to have migrated from Carnaby Street, still roared their approval.

James Christopher