

The Catch

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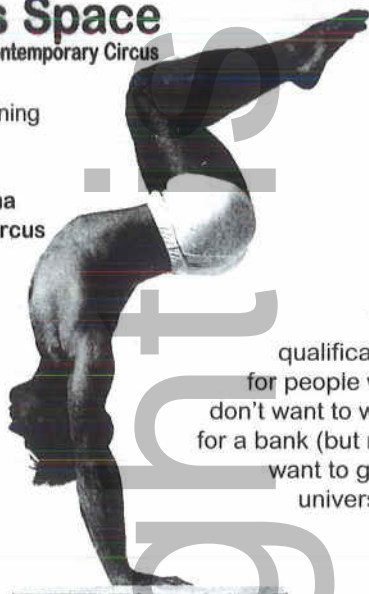
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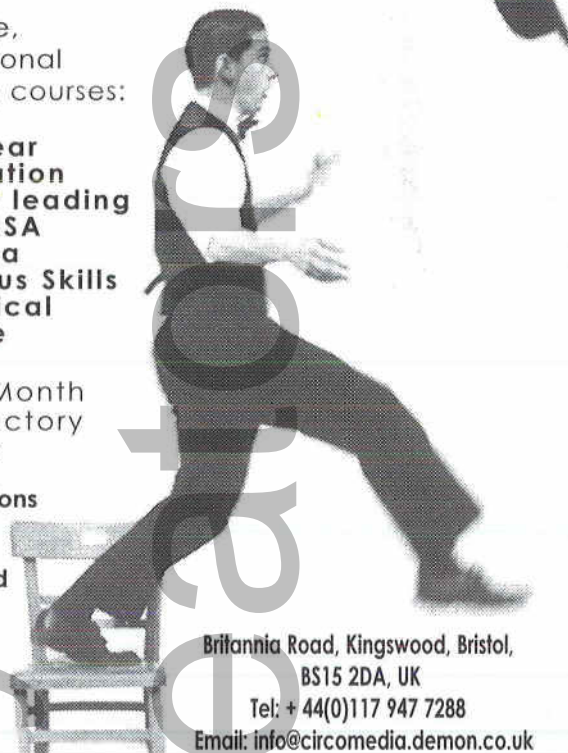
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credits & contents

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TALL TALES

Our friends in high places share their views: walking on the air from A-Z, Amlima to, uh, Scarabeus.

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CATALUNYAC

Some people would travel half-way across Europe for a few free tickets. Andy Wood is one of them. He & his camera get tangled up in Tàrrrega, and no, his holiday snaps aren't much like yours.

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Nearly overshadowed by someone's street act in Paris, the Covent Garden Festival of Street Theatre was none the less the best string of acts seen on those hallowed cobbles for quite some few years. Frankie Agnew tells us how he did it.

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EVEN TALLER TALES

Tallest in the world, in fact. The First Himalayan Jukklung Konvention is alleged to have taken place in Nepal last year. Steve Henwood & Friends even claim to have been there. Summit wrong with that?

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BALLS

Yo! and again Yo! yo' mo'fo! We're literate in all the latest crazes, you know (Literary Section).

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More news than The Sun, more courses than Nicholas Soames' dinner, more dates than Christmas; plus festivals from Africa to Edinburgh.

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The prose that knows the shows.

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Very Heavy Very Humble opinions. «Pof!» goes face-painting, Steve Henwood goes to a meeting. Who do you think had the most fun?

MULTIPLEX

Better prices than FTSE or William Hills.

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Compendium of Catch Central Communications Codes.

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DROP BACK LINES

The pen is mightier than the sword - so sheathe that épée immediamnt and write us a letter. You'll be a cut above this lot.

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CLUBS

Astounding new look to the workshops page. Sort it out, boys & girls.

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THE BIG BACK END

It's the end of the magazine as we know it (as it is every issue) and Robbie feels fine.



Seriously good: that was Torino Convention.

ISSUE TWENTY THREE½ WINTER/SPRING 1998

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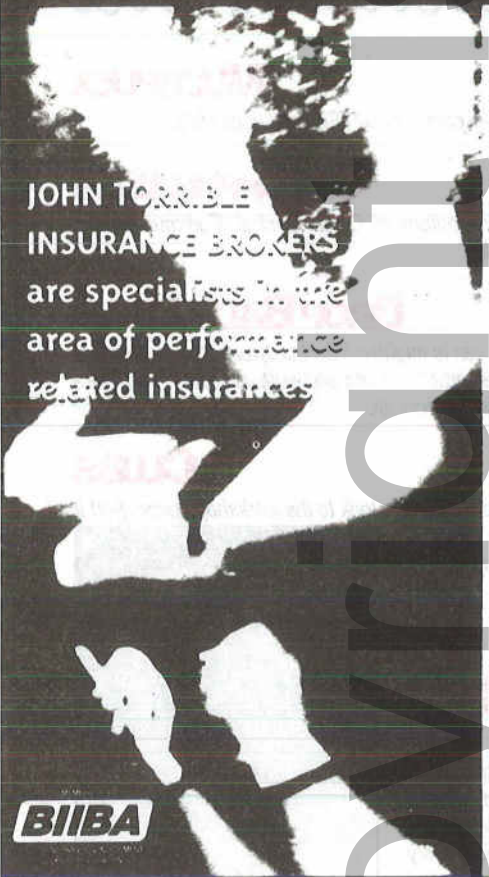
Numbers (juggling)? It's what we do every issue, claim. Next issue, number 24. Volume 2 of course, Summer'98, deadline 07.06.98. Number of categories to which that applies: 8 (dates, news, results, reviews, ads, articles, ideas, others we can't refuse). Number of categories excluded: 0. Total 100%, all, y. If you're that elusive 101%er, speak softly and carry a large cheque. Monitors next issue will focus on: 4 (dates until November), but don't let that deter you from telling us about anything later. Exceptions: 0.

Rate of pay of the average Catch contributor: £0. Rate of copyright control we claim over them: 0%. Source of their numbers (telephone): our number (tel/fax). Amount of information given to credit agencies, News of the World backs, Government agencies not directly connected with the promotion of arts: 0. Does the DLS promote the arts? Keeping on the safe side, we say: improbable.

Percentage of unsolicited articles/reviews/photos/cartoons personally pursued by editor: 100%. Percentage used <50% but it really is worth giving us a try. Proportion of speculative article ideas eventually produced: ~50%; time it takes editor to get round to them: 3 weeks-3 years. Ways of giving yourself an unfair advantage: 2 (put it on disc, enclose bribe). Ways of ensuring you get shut back: 1 (enclose sue) proportion of items returned 95% (we do lose things sometimes, see also timescale above). Number of pages billed directly by readers: 4 (letters page and Drops, aka Controversy Corner). Proportion of opinions, omissions, etc. in this magazine that we take responsibility for: 0%. Ways of complaining: 2 (drop back & drops, see above). Likelihood that that nice Mr Hickson actually meant to imply any such thing 0.034%.

The Catch was created and sustained by Stuart & Jan and other utterly responsible sort of people. You could help its recreation and continued sustaining: see Catchphrases (p.37) and the enclosed questionnaire.

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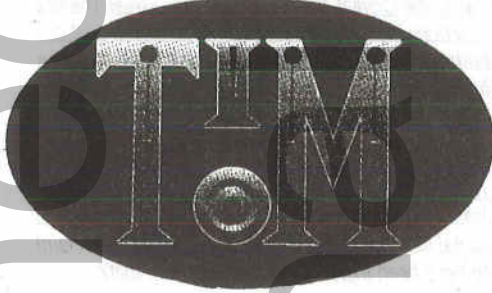
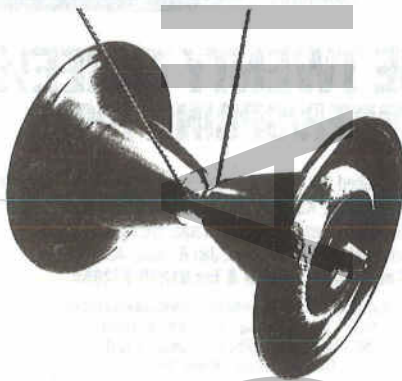
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NESBITT AND TIM-TOM BUILT TO PERFORM

The International High Life

A primary Circus Skill and one we've never written about - well, why? Not 'cos we think stiltwalking is boring but because we've not met anyone who finds it easy to write about. So to start with we've put two of the best sticks-in-the-sky groups we know on the dissecting table *pour encourager les autres*. We're looking for more - it's down to you. Or is that up?

Scarabeus - High Art

Pushing reality just that little bit further - that must be some of the reason people strap on surreal leg extension to start with. **Scarabeus** is the one British-based group we've encountered who have most consistently tried to stretch what they do and what we see; a story worth telling, so we asked **Søren Nielsen** if that ilk to do it himself.

Scarabeus was founded in 1988 by Daniela Essart (Italy) and Søren Nielsen (Denmark), who met on a theatre project in France and subsequently settled in London. After seeing the Moscow Classical Ballet's version of 'Swan Lake', we rushed off and devised our every own version, 'Balletico Fantastico', performed entirely on stilts, which then toured the streets of Europe. Returning to England we were joined by Kevin Alderson, first as a director, and from there as a performer on the ground. Later Kevin became a very proficient stilt artist, though the feature of having people on as well as off stilts has followed us ever since; we believe it opens up endless

opportunities visually and technically. The difference of cultures and performance background gave the company a unique diversity which still exists in our work.

We have always striven to break free of the standard image of stilt-walkers by not walking [*l-d*], but dancing and doing acrobatics, and by not wearing stripy trousers and funny hats - though we've got nothing against people who do. The difficulties arose when we wanted to apply different movement styles and skills to stilts, because there were no teachers. Most of the time we had to go off and learn the skill on the ground and then go back into the rehearsal studio to apply it to the stilts. The ultimate so far was when we decided to combine aerial and stilts, a process that took a year and a half and was dismissed by most people as utterly and completely mad - admittedly we've never come across anybody else doing it! Søren became a human trapeze with Daniela swinging between his legs and



The International High Life

then balancing on top of him. Don't try this at home, kids!

We have always believed that theatre should be accessible to as wide an audience as possible. We have operated this policy on two levels. One is geographical: we have performed, mainly outdoor, all over the UK and the rest of Europe, anywhere that people have asked us to come, thereby reaching a very wide audience of mainly non-theatre-goers. The other is in mixing different performance styles and skills, thereby producing work that is enjoyable on lots of different levels, transcending barriers of language and culture.

We found that the street scene in Britain was very biased towards entertainment as opposed to a narrative performance style, and we've always been one of the few companies striving to make a difference. Now 10 years

on there is a significant shift on the street scene with companies moving towards more visual and narrative shows, daring, taking risks, and also a significant change in the number and quality of street events. One of the pioneers on the organising side has been Zap Productions in Brighton, who now produce street events all over the country of every high quality and have recently set up the first National Street Arts Festival (see *Catch This News*). Through this scheme together with South East Arts, Scarabeus has been commissioned for our new production *'Arboreal - Living in Trees'*.

The show is based on Italo Calvino's books *'The Baron in the Trees'* and *'Invisible Cities'*, and inspired by the *Crocach Crannah* project in Skerry, Scotland. *'Arboreal'* is an international collaboration between Scarabeus and seven international artists: a Scottish video artist, a French choreographer, a French mountaineer, two Italian sound artists, an Italian costume designer and an English set designer. It will be produced as a large-scale outdoor touring performance and later transformed into an indoor multi-media production. It focuses on the way trees define a landscape by their presence as well as absence, and on the way individuals carry landscapes within their hearts. In Calvino's novel a rebellious boy baron, Cosimo, witnessing the destruction of his landscape, resolves to live the rest of his life in trees. The *Crocach Crannah* project on the north-east coast of Scotland is aimed at reinstalling indigenous trees into their local (deforested) landscape. The questions raised about the relationship between the environment and identity, between communities and outsiders, are far more than straightforward botanical/rural issues. As a company based in a city that is still seeing its green spaces threatened and in some cases

destroyed by road building, pollution and development, we feel that *Arboreal* will appeal to audiences on a number of different levels.

The show will as always be a fusion/combination/hybrid of skills and different performance styles. The set is a high-tech, forest made out of Trilite truss, standing 5m tall and covering a surface of 10x10m, in which the performers climb, abseil and perform gravity-defying stunts as well as highly moving and evocative theatre. Asymmetric and complex in design, the structure is free-standing and therefore can be raised in a wide variety of spaces. Through new sound technology the forest becomes a

sensitised arena in which the performers create the soundtrack as they perform. Features of the surrounding landscape will be used during the show, eg. abseiling of buildings and trees. The stilts will still be there through a flamboyant flamenco scene and of course the gruesome logging company stomp through falling trees. The set will be lit by a unique use of non-theatrical lights and there's lots of pyrotechnic effects too - it's designed to be seen by audiences of 2-3000.

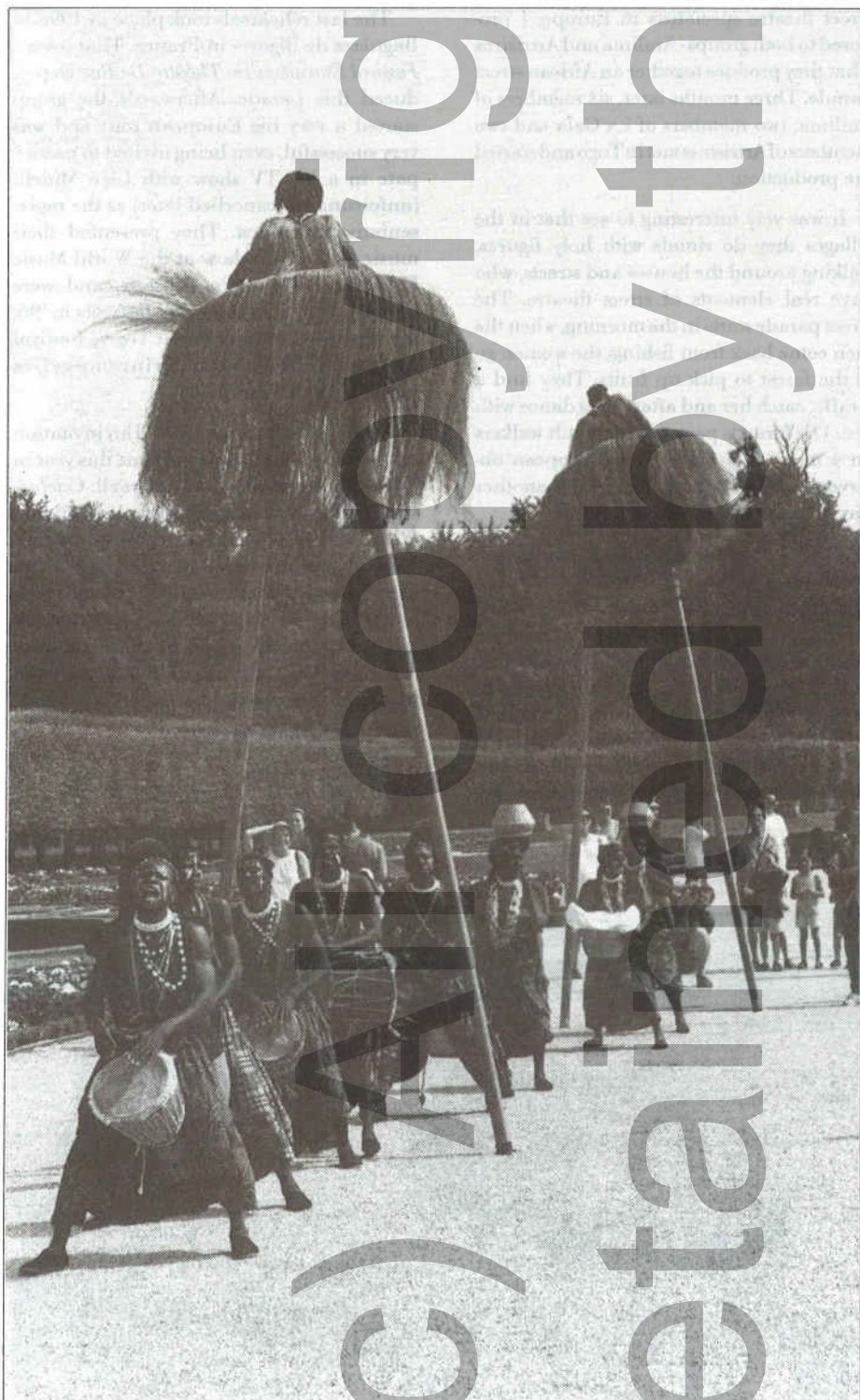
We could go on and on about this, our baby who has been 4 years in the making, but why not come and see for yourselves at the Circus Space, London, May 1-3, or on May 7-9 at the Brighton Festival. More tour dates (Highlands, Stockton Riverside, Crawley, Tarrega, etc.) in *Catch This*.



The big three - Scarabeus at the top of their profession. Pic: Ray Massey

Amlima

- An elevated Tradition



One of the most boggling things we've seen the last couple of summers abroad (Chalon, Tàrrega, etc) was **Amlima** from Togo, scooting about at some serious speed on very-high-indeed bamboo stilts. **Annette Meisl**, from **La Gala**, the agency who brought them over, colours in the background for us.

Photographs by **Cem Türkantos**.

The group was founded by Simon Lawson more or less 10 years ago. In Togo the group consists of nearly 40 artists, they perform especially on funeral rituals, which are very important for the social life in West Africa. These rituals start in late evening and do not stop before the next morning.

The artists of Amlima always have been very interested in tradition, not just of their own country, and have tried to research into the old manner of doing the rituals; most of these are from the voodoo religion. As specialists in folk and ritual music and dancing, they have several times been invited to cooperate with bigger groups like the National Folk Ensemble of Togo and present very big folkloreshow in international festivals and other special occasions. I met them on one of these tours in 1993 when they were in Germany, and am now their manager. I was very surprised by the colourful and impressive show. It had many elements which reminded me of



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The International High Life

Amlima^{continued}

street theatre, even if this concept is totally unknown in West Africa. But the figures, like Zambegeto or Gelede, with big costumes and masks, as well as the stilt artists, demanded a show which broke out of 'normal' theatre.

My organisation, *La Gala*, has worked for years with the Spanish street theatre group *Artristras*, who are one of the most important street theatre specialists in Europe; I proposed to both groups - Amlima and Artristras - that they produce together an African street parade. Three months later, six members of Amlima, two members of *La Gala* and two members of Artristras met in Togo and started the production.

It was very interesting to see that in the villages they do rituals with holy figures, walking around the houses and streets, who have real elements of street theatre. The street parade starts in the morning, when the men come back from fishing; the women go to the forest to pick up fruits. They find a giraffe, catch her and afterwards dance with fire. The forest is personified by stilt walkers on 4 metre high stilts. To a European observer it seems to be naïve and in another way impressive and strong as well.

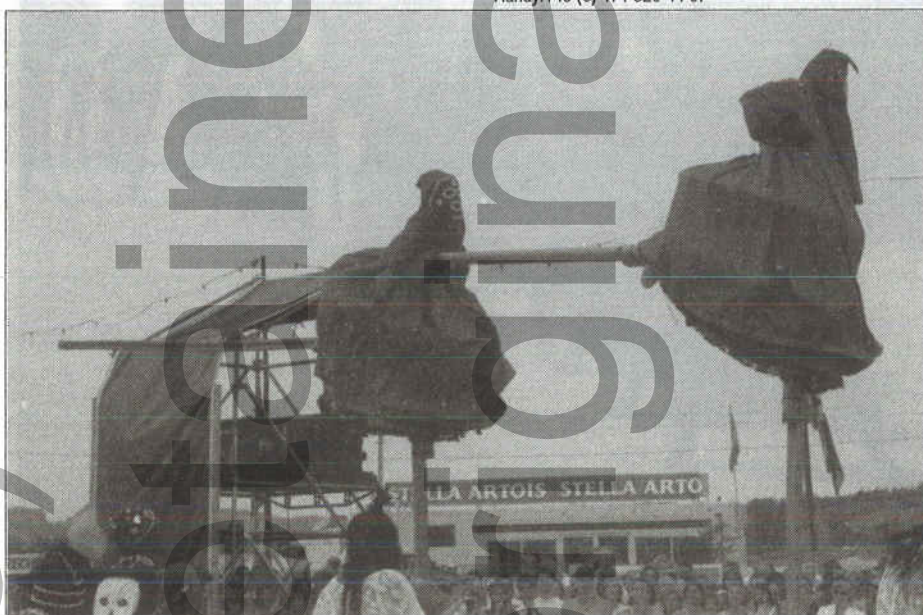
Lola Coll, who created the idea and produced most of the big costumes, based her work 100% on their original costumes, changing (improving) only the materials and combining some of the colours and accessories. Toni Dasquens built the masks of glass-fibre - normally when made of wood they weigh at least 10 kilos - he also made a nice giraffe for stilt walkers (not at all easy!). Quique Alcántara the director did very special work with the

artists, who never had worked with a director before. The production was genuinely a very exciting adventure, where the Europeans involved had the chance to know a little bit deeper the African way of life and art, and the African artists had a very interesting experience of the European manner of street theatre.

The last rehearsals took place in 1995 in Bagnères de Bigorre in France. That town's *Festival Européen De Théâtre De Rue* co-produced this parade. Afterwards the group started a very big European tour and was very successful, even being invited to participate in a big TV show with Liza Minelli (unfortunately cancelled later) as the representative of Africa. They presented their music and dance show at the World Music Exhibition *Womex* in Brussels, and were afterwards invited to several festivals in '96, for example Limburg Straat Teatre Festival in the Netherlands, Printemps Des Comédiens in France etc.

More recently the group had an invitation to participate for the second time this year in a very important Festival in Brazil: *Celebration Of African Heritage* in Salvador de Bahia at the end of November, where people involved in culture with African roots from all over the world come together. For next year we already received invitations from all around the world: again from Brazil, from Australia, USA, France, Spain, Japan and many other countries.

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Fira de Tarrega September 10-14 1997

Homage to Catalonia

It's the best job of the year, covering the biggest street party of the year - and **Andy Wood** was the lucky boy to get it, get that plane and get interesting on tequila and Alhambra Beer. Luckily he took some photos and has somehow managed to reconstruct the proceedings. Vamos!

Imagine a festival with the intensity of Glastonbury, and set it in a tiny crumbling unassuming town in the middle of nowhere in Catalonia. That's Fira de Tarrega, a 4 day orgy of top-notch international (though predominately Spanish) street theatre and also a showcase for the benefit of the many talent scouts from all the big festies around Europe. This was the 17th successive one and probably one of the hottest.

It all kicked off with a dusk procession and firework show by the wonderfully flamboyant **Comediants**, co-founders of the festival now celebrating their 25th year, which left us full of expectation for what was to follow. We were not disappointed.

Disastrosus Circus defied the sweltering midday temperatures to enthrall an opening-day crowd with an hour-long show of high skill blended with great characters and knockabout humour. Arola-bola-ing surfer's joust with Neptune on his globe was followed up by a faultless and innovative straw boater routine; the high-points being a Tarzan and Jane trapeze slot and the walking ladder slapstick. That was about it for circus really, though as I lurched for a cool retreat I was suddenly surrounded by four 10ft John Majors (remember him?) with expanding necks and long brown macs. This was **Compagnie Albedo**, the first of several stilt



We don't know what this is about either. La Fura dels Baus.

impro walkabouts I encountered that day. The best however was the manic **Irrwisch** from Austria, who left no-one safe in their mission to subvert reality. Having stranded a punter by placing him on a first floor balcony they then played *Romeo and Juliet* with an old woman standing at a second floor balcony; one of these mad creatures managing to clamber up the drainpipe, stilts and all, and scramble in through her window. He then proceeded to hand down her pots and pans and cushions as his pals passed up whatever came to hand - beers, chairs, even a pushchair. I ran off eventually, worried for my own safety, ending up at the serene

tranquillity of the captivating diminutive **Enric Magoo**, roller-skating magician.

Come dusk each night, with the cooling down and end of the siesta, huge crowds thronged onto the streets simply gagging to be entertained - an absolute dream for any performer. On the Thursday I even saw some Brits: **Avanti Display** performed a bizarre silent movie featuring a piano hanging precariously off the roof of their van, which later metamorphosed into a church organ, a 10 chair chin balance, and flaming suitcases (you'll just have to imagine it). They were followed by **Peach** who put on a great show



Utterly unobtrusive cat burglars Irrwisch.

Ze Big Brozzers are watching...something...probably Fura dels Baus.

involving some gravity-defying wheelbarrow manipulation. Who else?: our very own **Nashville Sprockets** with their increasingly polished country-and-western-diabolo-ballet-aero medley, **Mr Jules** doing a 10 minute improvised spot in front of 3000 on Saturday, and the **Captain Bob's** Tequila bike, an in-er-face and messy experience.

Lots of musical comedy - and don't they just love to clap along in Spain! - including the amusing **Flic-Flac** and the rocking **Teatre de la Toupine** who rode in on a caravan of **Professor Branestawm** vehicles hung with all manner of battered brass instruments. Oh - and of course the large spectacles. **Sarruga Productions** put on the ambitious underwater ambient piece, **H₂O**. Great props - 15ft fishes and sharks swimming above us and all around, powered and manipulated by tricycles. Awesome to a point but then a bit dull. Give me more drugs. We also had the fire and percussion of **La Salamandra** giving a late night crowd the obligatory dose of quasi-ritual nonsense. Very good though.

Although a lot of the comedy was in Spanish (no good for ignorant me) there was some excellent physical comedy. The tiny master of impro **Leandre** struggled a little



through the stage version of his street show, a sort of one-man *Whose Line is it Anyway?* (you know - how many impressions can you do with a pair of umbrellas?), mainly because of Saturday night's heavy drizzle, but still came across powerfully. **Cams on the Lam**, a 3 piece clown group from the USA, were really in a league of their own in their two indoor theatre shows; 3 sisters in angular Queen of Spades style dresses led us through a series of skits of intense emotion and off-the-wall surreal humour. Never condescending to cheap slapstick or pathos, through their critical timing, precise body language and sophisticated physical humour they produced a memorably powerful silent show which must be seen as a yardstick in clowning.

In sharp contrast was the other high-point, the nightmarish inferno of the **La Fura dels Baus'** warehouse show - a disorientating mixture of visceral theatre, *Archaos* style spectacle and digital broadcast. Totally unpredictable and fractured; I left not sure what I had seen but knowing I had experienced something very exciting.

Dance was also quite a large part of the proceedings, ranging from rather out-of-place-looking shellsuited Barcelona breakdancers to the modernist **Provisional Danza** who abseiled down the walls of a bank to the strains of Mozart. Their show was unfortunately marred by sound loss which was exploited by sections of the over-



*Grinning in the rain - the really rather excellent Leandre. (above)
Another charming holiday snap of La Fura dels Baus. (below)*



large crowd shouting at each other to sit down.

Saturday night was the party night and Tarrega swelled to bursting point. So many people in the bars and in the streets all night - and so many bloody bongos. Sunday was a wind down. Everyone left and the traditional Fira de Tarrega monsoon threatened to wash away the remainder of the campsite. I was on a train to Barcelona with just about everyone else (3000) from the festival. It wasn't a comfortable journey and it took 4½ hours to cover 90 miles. You have to suffer for your sins and Tarrega '97 was more than worth it. Be there next year or be a prize potato.

Spring News from Butterfingers

Here is a selection of new props and toys to titillate your juggling tastebuds. You can see all this and more, and pick up a new catalogue at the British Juggling Convention in Bristol on Easter weekend.

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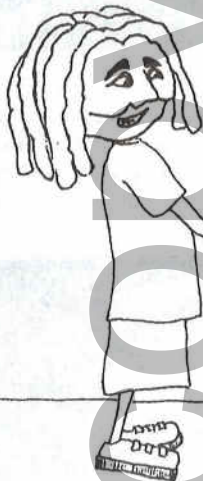
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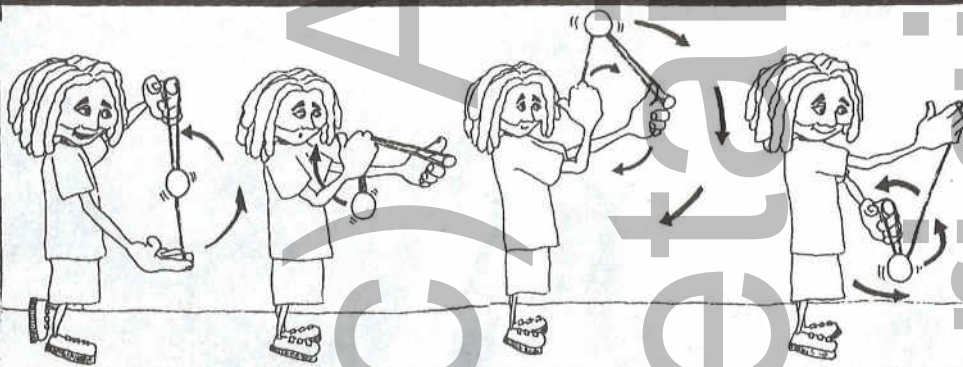


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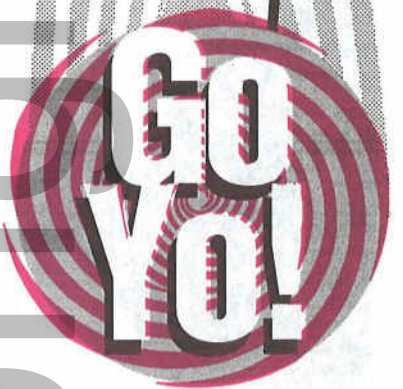
AS IT UNRAVELS THE YO-YO WILL DESCRIBE A FIGURE 8 IN THE AIR.



Sleeper, BrainTwister, Warp Drive... aren't they all Indie Bands? Well they're YoYo tricks as well, now, all among the funky little numbers in **Richie Windsor's** neat little book *'Splitting the Atom'*, here stolen with permission.

Dread drawing talent from

Mark.



Up to the minute

Is there anyone in the juggling field living in the European Community who has not heard of *Spectral FX*? Have you caught the shows at Glasto, Norwich, Grenoble, Nottingham etc.: crazy visuals and stunning choreography fused in a unique way - certainly with style and forethought.

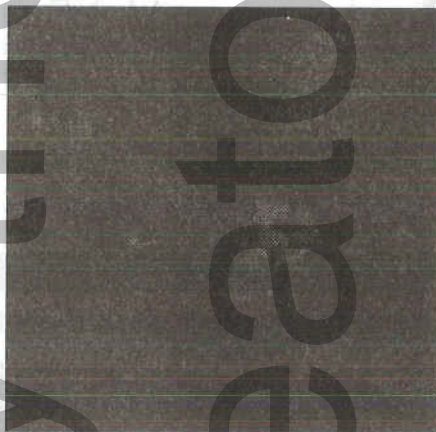
1997 saw *Spectral FX* converted from an arts organisation into a company, *Spectral Productions*, with assistance from the Prince's Youth Business Trust. We have performed all over the place and have crossed over into many different markets. Performance in clubs has become more common/accepted and this has had something to do with *SFX* - we have pushed to get the bookings within this area at events with all different music styles and have helped expand the use of performance within the club scene.

The theatre show *Elimentree*, which is quite calm and ambient, becomes a swirling, speedy, speckled, spacey, spicy freestyle show which slips nicely into the club environment. This UV hypnotiser gets a crowd going with quality high energy juggling and puppet visuals. Working in this area is in no way easy, many events being incredibly hectic - we have learnt now how to fuse the shows with nearly any event regardless of the conditions. Flexibility has to be high on the list, in fact you have to bend over backwards to get the show out there. We are looking for the same sort of respect that a DJ or band gets - this would make our lives a lot easier and the shows

more compatible with individual club nights - not easy.

Many new groups and individuals are springing up all over with funding awards from A4E and the like. This is very encouraging, but with this we are looking to move into new areas of performance and ultimately new higher-end markets. It is vital for us to expand and experiment, take the artform further, not to stay on one plane.

We are currently starting collaborations with new performers and technicians to prepare us to put on larger full-scale productions. Time to turn up the volume in the performance scene.



BLACK

The new show *E-squared* has taken 18 months of planning and development. It is going to be different to *Elimentree*, as it is mainly for use on the club/festival scene. We are fusing art and technology in new ways (a slight hint is that *Aerotech* are helping out in some areas). New juggling props have been developed, more use of movement and physical theatre will enhance what we have already and catapult us well ahead. Once again **John Blanchard** (*Silicon Drum* music production) will be scoring a new soundtrack which will blow the house down, up-tempo big breakbeats ambient freeform dub crossover - well, how else do you describe music with so much versatility? - certainly not the norm, with plenty of analogue treats.

Spectral FX have been showing our work

in Europe a lot with some fantastic results. The respect has been much better than in England and plans are being formulated for expansion into the European market. We have in England some of the finest artists and performers but the age old problem of the English attitude forces them to go elsewhere to perform. Promoters and bookers should sit back and think: if you want good shows then start treating performers better - or there will be a drop in quality.

1999 is just around the corner and Spectral Productions are ready to take it on - hope you catch the show soon.

For further information please contact :-
Mark or Ellie - Spectral Productions +44(0)1923 254041

Make a change to avoid the familiar.

Cover stars **Spectral FX** are well out-there, we reckon, out there among the world leaders in an artform the Brits pretty well pioneered anyway, and keeping well in there with the club scene when many performers have been marginalised again in the incessant quest for novelty (see *Conspiracy* for another side to that one). No harm in them blowing their own digi-trumpet a little, then.

Spectral FX London Royal Festival Hall, August

The stage is black, the lights are out and the audience has gone quiet. No one seems to know what to expect when they see the name *Spectral FX* on the flyers, billboards, neon lights, t-shirts or lighters. They are a complete mystery, these UV dancers, jugglers, puppeteers and futuristic inventors.

As I stand in the queue for the loo my ears are picking up the vibes: "I've heard it's really, really, really good", "something to do with fish", "It's well cool man, I saw them at Glastonbury". My curiosity is growing by the second, so I make my way back to the packed-out auditorium trying to get a sitting on the floor cross-legged feel on a seat, that's the kind of venue it is.

I focus my eyes on the black stage as the music starts. At first there is nothing, just blackness. All of a sudden an orange glow catches my eye. It moves slowly out of the darkness. The glow becomes a hand, an arm, a body and then an orange alien-like creature about 5ft high walks across the stage. How he is being manipulated, moved so elegantly, is a mystery to me, and everybody else seems to have a kind of Bonfire Night look on their faces. Is there somebody very little inside the costume? No, impossible. The adjective on the tip

of my tongue, over and over again, is just plain cool or unbelievably cool. My attention has been grabbed big time.

This little instantly adorable character wonders across the stage accompanied by ambient tinkly music, stars and moons jump out of the darkness like a midnight sky on speed. Then all sorts of other creatures start to appear, multi-fluorescent butterflies land gently on UV flowers which have grown out of the blackness. The little man glows orange, his head is big and bulbous, hair like an alien punk with orange sun-ray spikes. His tummy is round and his legs and arms are so thin. *Mars Attacks* creator, you needed this crew's phone number: without the help of enormous budgets and special effects they have created the most amazing visual extravaganza.

Another alien appears, this time glowing white. The two dance together and swim in a sea full of wiggling multi-coloured sea snakes, jelly fish, schools of fish that turn back and forth, with one swimming off solo. When you see all these little coloured beasts roaming and flying across the stage in every direction, it seems that the group is made of at least 20 people. You would think that this would be enough to impress any audience in the world, but there's more. These puppets not only

dance, jump and swim, but they are made to juggle balls and hoops and disks.

A most amazing hoop routine of changing colours across the stage, as though some wild computer was controlling the image, is like a firework display from planet rainbow. Jugglers who look as though they have four hands each juggle glowing white balls, like mad astral spheres darting in every direction. The choreography is untouchable and at one point a real person comes out of the darkness, as supple as the puppets, cartwheeling ribbon twirling and wearing the most amazing costume. The audience all have expressions like: what on earth is going on? this is all too much! Whatever will happen next? Puppets like people, people like puppets... Whirling, writhing, sinking dancing.

When the lights are turned up and everyone strains their eyes expecting to see a troupe of 8 or 10 people clad in black, they find only four highly skilled sweaty marvellous manipulators and movers behind the scenes of this spectacularly, speedy, speckled, spectral, spacey, spasmotic, spicy, superb spectacle.

[Spasmodic? spicy? Where have I read all those Ss before? No doubt, however, that this is a genuine response to an SFX show - breathless tone kept in in the interests of documentary & poetry... -d]

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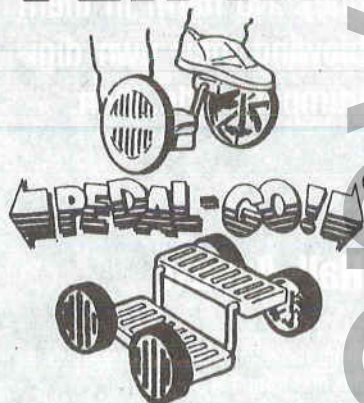
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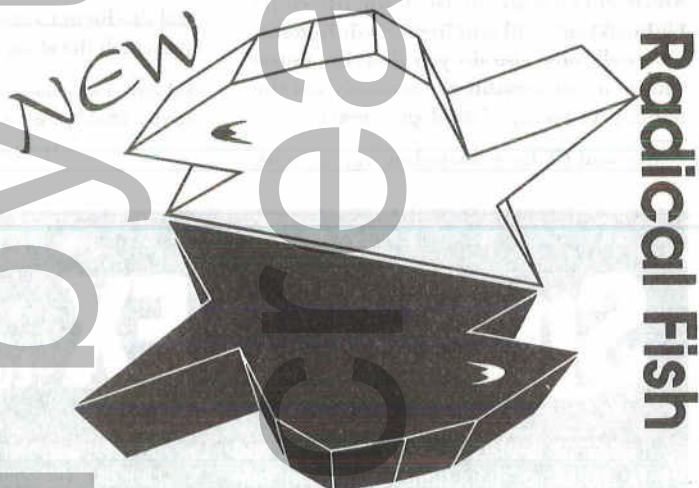
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And they called 'em Dumb Acts!

Reminiscences of the golden age of Vaudeville - when jugglers kept their mouths shut! Excerpted from 'Vaudeville' by Joe Laurie Jr., 1953.

Thanks to Pearse Halfpenny, a classic act himself.

Being a 'dumb act' in the days of variety and vaudeville was really rough. They were acts that didn't talk, like acrobats, bicycle acts, jugglers, etc. They usually opened or closed a show. We used to describe an opening act as "They see 'em sitting down", and a closing act as "They see a lot of haircuts", because the opening act would be on when people were arriving and during the closing act the audience would start leaving to avoid the crowds.

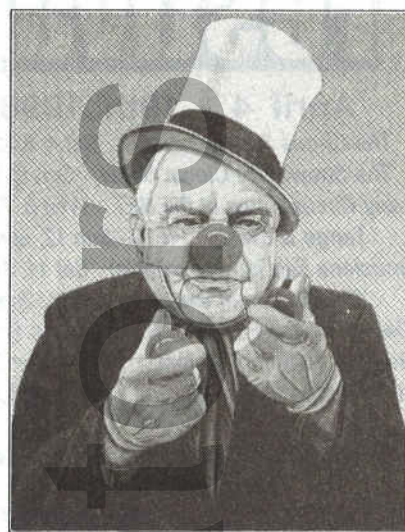
In Europe the dumb act was respected, and was usually *featured act* and many times a headliner. In America it was many years before a dumb act was headlined or featured. Houdini was one of the first to be headlined, followed by terrific box-office attractions like Cinquevalli, May Wirth, Kara, Poodles Hanneford, Joe Jackson, and the Rath Brothers. Most of the great dumb acts were Europeans, because they had the patience to work for hours, weeks, and years to perfect their specialities. The Americans wanted to "do it fast". The foreign troupes had apprentices who worked for years for just room and board, a few clothes, and maybe a buck or two for spending money. The owner of the act would send the kid's parents a few bucks a week, which they were glad to get while their kid was learning a 'profession'.

We have a lot of guys and gals in show biz today that started out as a dumb act and have become fine actors and great

comedians. Fred Allen started as a juggler, as did Jimmy Savo, whose billing was, "Juggles everything from a feather to a piano". And another juggler that did OK was WC Fields. Cary Grant was a stilt walker with the Loumas Troupe; Victor McLaglen, an Oscar winner in pics, was an 'understander' in an acrobat troupe; Burt Lancaster, a fine pic star, was part of the acrobatic act of Nick Cravat & Burt Lancaster. There was a kid who started out doing a trapeze act with his family's rep show, then became a star in all branches of show biz, the famous 'Cap'n Andy' of *ShowBoat*, Charles Winninger. Tom Mix, the most famous of all the cowboy actors, did a sharpshooting act. Eddie Cantor started as assistant to Bedini & Arthur.

Knockabout acrobats, bag punching, boxing, wrestling, and walking acts were some of the early dumb acts in variety. Club swinging was very popular in the early '80s and '90s; there were contests all over the country. The late Gus Hill, one of the pioneer burlesque producers, won the Fox Medal Championship (via *Police Gazette*). He travelled all over the country with his variety and burly shows, challenging the local boys to a club swinging contest. He would build these contests up by letting the local boy win and giving him a medal (he carried a trunkful), then in a few weeks he would play a return date and try and win it back (which meant another jammed house), and this time Gus would win; and so he seesawed through the country, changing championships and medals weekly, playing to jammed houses. He became a very wealthy man. Club swinging was judged by "free swinging, grace, formation, and smoothness". One of the first to swing clubs was Walter Brown, champ oarsman. They were then called 'Kehoe clubs' because a guy by the name of Jim Kehoe made them (which is fair enough). We always called them Indian Clubs and I don't know why. Nellie Clark was the first lady club swinger and DeWitt Cook was the first to do a juggling act with Indian clubs instead of swinging them!

Me and Aggie had a lot of friends among the jugglers. We liked 'em because many of them had a good sense of humour and anyway we figured any guy that wants to be a juggler has something the matter with him enough to make him



interesting. Among jugglers they don't judge each other by the salaries they get. They each stand out in their own particular line. We think Cinquevalli (from England) was the greatest showman of the juggling fraternity. He didn't do hard tricks, but spectacular ones. He was a fine gentleman and a great juggler. He was also a fine violinist (never used it on the stage, but would play for me and Aggie and the rest of the bill after the show). Kara, of course, was the greatest object juggler in the world. He would manipulate more objects of different weights than any other juggler. That's a very tough thing to do in juggling. He missed a lot, but his tricks were so hard you expected him to miss. Harrigan, 'The Tramp Juggler', did a tramp comedy juggling act long before WC Fields (in fact WC stole Harrigan's makeup and tricks when he first started). Later Harrigan became a fine monologist and gave up juggling. WC Fields without a doubt was the greatest American comedy juggler, even long before he started to talk. Salerno was a great object juggler. He claimed (I believe) to have originated the picture sliding down his forehead (I don't know if this is so). But I do know he was great when he threw an envelope in the air and as it came down he would cut the edge off with a pair of scissors. This was later faked by many jugglers.

Chinko was one of the first to juggle eight balls, which was a record for a time. Then along came Ameros Werner, a German who juggled ten, throwing one ball in the air at a time. That caused plenty of "Ah's" until the Max Wesseley Troupe came along and Max juggled sixteen balls, which is a record that still stands as far as I know. Friscarry was a terrific hat juggler; he did four hats at one

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PASSED (continued)

time with one hand. I have never
seen this trick done since.

Tom Hearn, 'The Lazy Juggler', was a very funny man, as was Le Dent, who was the first to have a sign on a screen reading 'Swearing Room', and when he would miss a trick he would go behind the screen (many copied this bit). Sparrow, 'The Mad Juggler', caught apples thrown at him by the audience on a fork in his mouth. The Zanettos also claimed to be originators of this bit - anyway, they all finished with a rotten apple (planted with a stooge) hitting the comic on the head. The Zanettos worked on a battleship, juggling life preservers, knives, and catching the turnip (you see, some of them were clever enough to switch from apples to turnips). In 1894 The Hoopers (tramp act) caught oranges on a fork. So Aggie and me figure they were all originals with different fruits.

While I am telling you about jugglers, I must tell you a true story about my favourite show biz clown, Eddie Carr, of Conlin, Steele & Carr, who also played his own comedysketch for many years. There was a certain (I just won't get sued) Spanish juggler who was brought over here by Martin Beck to play the Orpheum Circuit. He landed in New York, was met by the circuit representatives, and was immediately shipped to Minneapolis where the Orpheum tours started. He couldn't speak or understand a word of English and was assigned to dress with Eddie Carr. This juggler was the headliner, but because the show was a big one and there were very few dressing rooms, he had to share one with Eddie, who didn't speak or understand a word of Spanish, but greeted the gentleman with the universal language, a bottle of good rye which was hidden behind the make-up mirror. As it happened, it was the start of a fine friendship, because the juggler liked rye too! Carr tried to make him understand with gestures etc., that they were going to be together for fourteen weeks and he would teach him English while getting Spanish instruction in return. A few drinks and they were buddies! Carr roomed with him, ate with him, and was with him every minute, while the rest of the troupe couldn't get near him.

In a week or so the Spaniard would come into the company car on a getaway day and greet the troupe with, "Goot heeving", or "Goot moni", etc. But Carr would take him to their drawing room. The man was really a big hit (he was one of the great jugglers of our time). They got to the Orpheum in San Francisco about eight weeks later, and I must tell you that 'Frisco's Orpheum was comparable to the Palace in New York. It had one of the greatest subscription lists of any theatre in the country; subscriptions were handed down in the family, and the audience was not only the finest in San Francisco but in America. So on opening day the Spaniard was a tremendous hit, and to the surprise of everybody on the show, he stopped the music, walked slowly to the footlights, and in his best-taught Eddie Carr English, said, "Laddis and gentlemen, for my next treck I weel juggle billiard kue (showing a billiard cue), billiard bowl (showing billiard ball), and (showing a vase) peeese pot!" (Remember, this theater wouldn't allow you to say cockroach.) There was a moment's silence, and then... oh well, just figure it for yourself.

Martin Beck and Mr Meyerfield ran backstage in nothing flat and cancelled the guy immediately - by the way, he never did get to do the trick; he got scared with the terrific laugh he got. Beck, besides cancelling him, wanted to punch him on the nose. Backstage it was just a young riot - the actors and stagehands didn't dare laugh (that is, in front of Martin Beck). Well it was finally straightened out when they found out that Eddie Carr rehearsed the poor guy for eight weeks and told him it would be a big "heet"! It was. Everybody looked for Eddie, especially the Spaniard - with a dagger! But Eddie, after hearing how his gag got over, went out talking to bartenders. Carr got back on the bill when everybody got the humor of it (even the Spaniard), and because Eddie's brother-in-law happened to be a very powerful manager, Mike Shea of Buffalo! And he started doping what else he could do to keep actors laughing. We in vaude called him Beck's Bad Boy... a terrific guy with a great sense of humor.

CONFESSIONS OF A KNIFE THROWER

- THE STORY *THE SUN* DIDN'T PRINT!

Blatant self-publicist and all-round dood about the ring **Tony 'Snakey Hips' Hickson** sent us this letter - he's always sending us letters, most of them claiming to be from other people - describing his adventures in the world of hype this summer: he really is the **Freddie Starr** of New Circus, we're afraid. Anyway, since you nice people out there possibly didn't catch the tabloid furore, we reproduce Mr Hickson's account below. And because the editor couldn't resist answering back just about every line, which spoiled the whole thing, we've decided to keep Snakey's text unadorned uncut and uncensored - we're sure you nice people out there would find he's not so dreadfully coarse in real life, it's just a persona you understand, and has been known to be quite charming and gallant on occasion. Particularly to young women.

Well circus fans, earlier this year I had the distress to find myself back in N'cle on the Rock and Roll (dole) with **Barclays Bank PLC** being the heavy vibe merchant bread heads that they are wanting the money back which I was good enough to borrow off them in the first place please note (its people like me that keeps that lot in business) any road things were bad I was in shit street. I nearly got a proper job...!

Now as it happens shit hot knife throwers are more rare than rocking horse shit so I rang up the **Foolhardy Folk Circus** and they were so impressed they bought the company. Anyway I ended up doing fire eating knife throwing bed of nails and all that fakir cobblers and some trapeze a couple of girls from **Circus Space** and one from **Circomedia** came along for their first season me being ex-ZACA was able to show them how to do it properly.

Anyway the season went on as normal with the usual circus antics drinking, swearing contests, power belching and bun fights (which I always won) not to mention **Geri** who did a good trick with a 50p piece I think she learned it in Thailand.

I would like to take this opportunity to say I normally love skills beyond reason but one night during my knife throwing act I hit **Joe Fool** one of the clowns who stood at the board. I am not sure how it happened but the audience went very quiet and Joe wasn't exactly jumping around like the king of Mardi Gras - he had to go to hospital and needed 6 stitches he wasn't at death's door, just on death's patio.

Any way next day I was on telly and in the **Sun** and the oohh aaahh **Daily Star**. It must have been the weather but the people were gripped by **slasher mania** our shows were packed out and everybody wanted my autograph. Now all this fame was nice but I never did see the fanny magnet side of it and after 3 weeks I was old hat. Of course I did spawn a lot of imitations but as they say blonde hair and a few knives does not an international showbiz sensation make. So by the time I got to Glasto I was in no mood for rolling around in the shite.

A few weeks later it was the end of the season we had a party did some furniture smashing threw lager over each other and strutted around like a bunch of saucy antelopes. Any way since then I have been working as a presenter on the **Christian Channel** mind you more people have seen Lord Lucan (I did once, but that's another story) so I sit at home and sharpen my knives and dream of past fame.



King and I

IT CAN be revealed today that Elvis is not only alive and well but living in Newcastle upon Tyne. He was seen last week by Tarnya Hickson and her brother Tony coming out of a supermarket in Newcastle's west end and Tony, a keen photographer, took this stunning picture.

Miss Hickson said: "It was amazing. As soon as I saw him I knew it was Elvis."

"I knew straight away that he was genuine and not a look-alike. I was so shocked I ran up to him and asked what he was doing there. He said he was in hiding until he made his big comeback. Then he got into a waiting car and was gone."

F. Simms, Newcastle



That's knife... blonde Joe and blade thrower Snakey

EXCLUSIVE

By GORDON RAYNER

CLOWN Joe Fool too life in his hands who stood in front of a knife thrower... the "Slasher" Hickson. Seconds later he knifed blundered - we in front of 150 circus the top tradition sacred the show. He swayed in shirt for a dark one on the did not show - and per-

acrobatics and slapstick stunts for another 100TV minutes. Joe - real name Robin French - said: "I was in the mood for a bit of a laugh. I had been wounded by slash-ers in the past." Blood Joe, 40, said: "Five minutes later I realised there was a sticky wet feeling under my right arm. I looked inside my jacket and realised there was blood pouring out. I was determined to

Everything

1.9.97

Day one is a success just because it is here. No more contractual hassle or administration, it's showtime. Conspiracy have to get their 2K PA. We have to learn how to operate it and day 1 show 1 is a tech., dress and show all rolled into one. Sorted.

Note: Sound levels are a source of contention in the market. The company want volume and bass. The market want no volume and no bass. A sound level meeting is arranged. The market fail to show.

Street Theatre Festival? This is a shopping centre gig with knobs on, the (un)happy coexistence of art and commerce (I swore once that I'd never...)

Conspiracy is a collective of performers produced by Matt Costain and Gaynor Derbyshire from celebrated aerial company **Higher than the Sun**. A cast of eight are bringing a chilled club culture of contemporary sounds and circus cabaret out into the light in the cavernous hall of the market. This is an interesting idea.

The stage is on three levels. 1: A fishtank courtyard with café terrace and shops. 2: Directly above at ground level is a safety net suspended from railing. 3: Some 10 metres higher, suspended from the glass roof trusses, a trapeze and rope rig. In the past this stage has seen a programme of 5-10 min. aerial routines (very consumer-friendly and easy to manage); today and for the rest of the week it's promised two half-hour shows featuring aerialists, acrobats, escapologists, mimes, stilt walkers and blind poets. Interactive, split focus, theatrical madness. I am tense. We are surrounded by shops smiling benignly.

Meanwhile, out on the West Piazza, the main space for the resident street entertainers, **John Orduna** a Spanish performance artist has created 'entrapment' a theatrical performance in which the artist entraps people, buildings and other things, an installation of ropes criss-crossing the Piazza between St. Paul's, the church, and the Punch & Judy pub. There are banners with disclosures on freedom hung from the church.

"We seem so free and we are so chained down."

Superb, I like it... Pretentious street art at last (or just a load of old tosh)... Just what this place needs.

The monster Frankenstein arrives and puts on his boots.

The rig manager doesn't like some of the Conspiracy rig... "I'm not touching that!"

The PA is going to be fun?... I give a nervous note to the cast about health and safety. Two

shows later and we've made it. It's overrunning by 15, some bits hit and others miss, the stage management carry the can, but hey, that's live entertainment!

As I leave for home the Spanish artist is balancing precariously on bundles of rope stacked one on top of the other, he falls awkwardly to the ground and the pub terrace roars with beer-fuelled laughter. Freedom.

PS. **Swank** come and give the public health and beauty relief. Brilliant.

2.9.97

Bernie Bennet, a Covent Garden original from 1984, is back in town with his low wire act. Bernie used to throw up a wire between the pillars when the pitch first opened. Today he works off a free-standing rig as **Bernie the Superhero**. I catch him flying majestically around the world. He has a loud megaphone. Low level battery-operated PAs only on the West Piazza mean the management complain.

Conspiracy are still working the show in; still nervous about the bass volumes, I get dark looks for playing with the sound levels.

Misha Reale and **Moonglow 2** appear in the aerial 3pm. slot. Misha, a stunning aerialist, pumps up a big cloudswing and catches a wire between two huge hanging lamp vases. The vase swings massively from side to side over the audience



Just hanging out in Covent Garden. Pic: SA

below. Heart in mouth, I can do nothing except watch potential disaster play its final card. The gods are with us. The chain holds, the audience breathes. The area is secured. Misha untangles herself and exits to a huge round of applause. The local press suddenly appear looking for a story. My stress levels hit level nine. That night I dream health and safety.

3.9.97

It's 12.00 am. and finally **Avanti Display** arrive. I've been looking forward to seeing 'The Spurring Man' for a long time and am not disappointed. A master/servant play climaxes with 50 gallons of water cascading from various points of the master's body. A street classic not to be missed.

Conspiracy continue to conspire, the skies are overcast, during the evening the show lamps come on (bar one) and lend the production a charm that only lights can provide. **Buskopia** the weekend event for circle shows is fast approaching and it has been decided to cancel the Saturday for obvious reasons [aftermath of some car crash in Paris, apparently -d], will anyone show on Sunday? The response from nationwide buskers has been poor. Lots of Covent Garden regulars are away on business.

4.9.97

Bedlam Oz bring their living slinkies in today. Skies are blue the sun is warm and spirits are good. **Dave Southern** (he of the giant ladder unicycle and longtime street entertainer) is coming down to play and chair conference on Sunday. The show must go on.

It's the end of week one and out on the West Piazza **Desperate Men** are busy getting in the **Lighthouse**, a comic street opera I saw on a wet and windy day in the springtime. Again, the weather is mixed but we are full of hope. Small crisis appears with the malfunctioning of their amplifier, which becomes larger crisis as it refuses to work and show #1 has to be cancelled. They entertain the audience with a revue of songs from the show. Substitute amp arrives in time for show #2 but the skies are darkening. Finally the show weighs anchor and sets out for the open sea, the fog horns sound great as do the sampled helicopter noises, the cast is on a roll. 15 minutes in, a smallish black cloud zooms in and sets up directly above their set, need I say more? All and sundry are soaked by a 15 minute downpour that empties the Piazza [does it rain every time the *Desperates* do this show? -d]. A bedraggled Richie asks for clemency, the heartless producer sends them out to walkabout as the Pipe People. (When in crisis don dark glasses and rubber glove headgear.) They come in smiling.

Conspiracy finish on a high with two good shows and I feel the experiment was a success.

Hammering out the terms and conditions of a final contract keeps me from my bed for a further two hours.

in the Garden's *Lovely*

7.9.97

Here is the roll call of honour for **Buskopla 97**: thanks to all those that made it (if you weren't here be there next year or we'll be forced to run a competition and that would be innovative, exciting, yawn...)

Dave Southern: Chester wide boy with wheel

Windsor: Sarf London lad with bed of nails

A.Love: Cheeky chappy with chain escape

Ossie: Strong man hip-hop beat box

Chameleon: Dave and Doug wobble and wobble

Julia Strouzer: Bed of nails and fire

Soapy: Ex- *Red Hot* dons straight jacket

John H: Private school on top of a ladder

Guy: A.Nother wobbly rope

Brian: The original but banned from *BloodFX*

Lunatrix: Dutch moon instrument on bike

There were various musicians with PA making life difficult, but those that played had some fun and a meeting that looked at the idea of creating a British Guild of Street Entertainers was held.

It wasn't all I had hoped it would be, but it happened and gave the art of the busker some proper airspace in the world of contracted entertainment. Personal highlights were Dave Pickens crouched crow-like on his slackrope bathed in firelight and Windsor working his following show on the South Piazza.

8.9.97

Week two opens with the good old days, no more 2k bass rumblings or drum'n'bass soundscapes but a programme of aerial cabaret spots. Light entertainment is provided by **Genevieve** on the trapeze and not so light by **Solange** who does a conceptual performance on the corde lisse. The tourists gather as ever and enjoy the spectacle but already I'm missing the energy and physical presence of the Conspiracy Crew. Thank you for all your time, talent and patience.

Le La Les play on the West Piazza and entertain with both skill and witty characterisation ("Course it would never make any money on the street" is heard from the Rezes. There has to be another agenda)

A camel with two English people aboard is seen wandering around courtesy of the **Grand Theatre Of Lemmings** and **The Curious Company** bring a small portion of their *Alice In Wonderland* animation, namely Alice and an Aromatic White Rabbit.

9.9.97

Today was a blue day

Not a greyday

Heir Of Insanity did a turn on their table

Of poise and balance beauty

They are most able

The fab **Stiltoneers**

Blew their horns with aplomb

The tuba the trumpet the rhythmic tom tom

Apologies for this my humble little ditty

But sometimes one just can't help but be witty

Cirque Baroque came and played on their trapeze today. Kati made a very nice bendy aerial ring act and Didier (filling in for swinging trapeze act suffering injury) did some serious dressing down on the cloud swing. Bravo to our cousins across the water and I don't mean the Thames.

10.9.97

The ground crew and I are bored and suffering and don't know if I'm enjoying this anymore, the shopping just won't happen for me, when in breezes **Lucie** the Belgian chocolate with smooth sweet skills and the performing energy to make the trapeze hum. She is a star with enough charm in the air to make a pigeon sing. A joy.

Swirly Girly does mad fun things on the corde lisse and makes the safety net earn its money by using it as a trampoline.

11.9.97

Misha Reale returns to swing on the clouds and **Lila Lifely** makes the difference theatrical by performing a trapeze routine full of introverted beauty that draws me in and makes me believe she has her eyes closed throughout.

Talking point of the day is the performance by the **Invisible Men** who perform a tightly choreographed mime act to a popular soundtrack and end with a lightning quick sub trunk routine. It's all very professional and incorporates following stunts as well as a very funny spirit cloth routine. However it sometimes felt like a cabaret piece that pre-empted audience reactions and lacked an element of live spontaneity. Like all good street acts it's accused of plagiarism by those that feel most threatened. Apparently they made a killing at the Halifax Festival in Canada. Good luck to them.

.....
Frankie Agnew was

instrumental in reviving & rebuilding the Covent Garden

Festival of Street Theatre

back in September into something more ambitious than ever before.

Over two weeks 45 performing companies put on over 120

shows. Of course it was hard work, but at least he was there for

all of it: he kept a little diary to remind him not to do it again and

we reproduce it to remind you lot to come next year.

.....
12.9.97

Today is crammed with street goodies and it's also the last day of the festival which is great, we made it and I'm here to tell the tale. The **Whalley Range All Stars** are here with The Headless People and the Music Box animations. Swank are back to convince the general public of the benefits of beauty, **Facepack** are on the prowl looking for a bridegroom, and **Rebekah & Bruce** are out and about as the spies.

Up in the air the festival is closed by **Matt Costain's** solo static routine pumping drum'n'bass sounds with dynamic choreography. **Tina Clay** performs a beautiful tissu routine hanging and enveloping herself in a rich red length of cloth.

That's it for another year, as festival director I enjoyed it as much as one can when you are responsible for the management of the production. Most of the programme was fulfilled and the work of good quality. Personally I wish the gig only lasted a week and crammed in more over a shorter period. After all, when is a festival not a festival?

When it's a shopping gig with knobs on.

WORLD'S



Nepal's previous attempts to write their name on the world sporting calendar (most notably the Annapurna Open Golf Championship and the Machhapuchhre Frisbee Fling) have been hampered by the fact that it is impossible to find a flat area larger than the average snooker table in the whole country. The consequent distance between convention venues (and the printing of all signage in Devangari script) may have contributed to the small attendance at certain events. OK, all of them.

The cream of international jugglers were there, of course. Haggis & Charlie stayed in their hotels and were generally to be found holding court in Kathmandu bars, with events taking place several days walk away. Jules was off 'organising' something with a colourful chap he met in Freak Street. The Dutch contingent were busking Durbar Square for the fare (they're still there), the Brits are still trying to get the courtesy bus, Captain Bob's broke down in Uzbekistan and started a festival there instead, and the MUni posse was last heard of, eight days in, somewhere north-east of Gorkha.

Having got rid of the enthusiasts it was time to get down to the serious business of the convention (Jukklings Konvention as our hosts had it) - beer! What beer? Not only had no sponsorship been arranged, neither had any beer been bought to the Konvention site, though a single Nepali porter arrived with a whole Big Top round his

head. After lengthy discussion, the entertainments committee came to an arrangement with the Nepali Rum Corporation (each bottle matured for 45 minutes in a rusty tin can) and achieved little else all fortnight.

Nepal is a lot like Wales, basically: you can't understand the language, there's one bus a week and anywhere even faintly salubrious closes early. The mountains have just been stretched a little, that's all - of course Port Talbot is famous for paddy fields and banana plantations. It's simply that "just popped in the takeaway for a chicken on my way home, luv" has different consequences. *[oh, and before you start, we understand this to imply that the country is impossibly beautiful and the people suitably tops to go with it, OK? -d]*

Most events and workshops were a considerable success, among which we must single out the suspension bridge cable unicycling and the Final Solution to the snakeboard problem. The Australians were as always enthusiastic participants in the local variant of the milk-crate balance, the yak balance, and their Bondi Beach gear gave a clear advantage in the ice balls events. Local participation was particularly notable: the children's events (3 x 1 rupee jug-

gling and the optional sweet and school pen variation) were uncontested, the arrival of local champions Siva, Brahma, and Chenrezig saw all European and US records tumble and the competition literally frozen out. The Gladiators was abandoned after the arrival of the Kali OK Thuggee Krew rendered the challenge unwise.

Paul's boomerang workshop is confidently expected to set a world record. Something to do with the space problem mentioned above, one boomerang was lost in less time than it takes a goat to detect edibles; we can confidently assume it won't be retrieved until the rice harvest, it should then spend at least six months being wondered at in the local temple; by the time this is crowned by the legendary efficiency (ie. doesn't exist) of the Royal Nepalese Post Office, this should be the longest return in boomerang history. Finally, despite the Bradford group's attempts at 3030 metres, a passing party of chillum-babas definitively took the "who can juggle highest" title.

In the spirit of cultural exchange, we had brought along our own Guru, Huh La Bha Lu, largely because we wanted to find a suitable Himalayan cave in which to leave him behind. Huh La teaches that to juggle any more than three balls is an

TOP Jugglers

Ah... that should of course imply 'Jugglers at the world's top'. When Steve Henwood claimed he was going to a Juggling Convention in Nepal we smiled encouragingly and put the petty cash box back under the editor's bed pronto. When we received this account we were, frankly, flabbergasted that it could be true. Want Tibet? Thanks to Sister Cathy and Paul Hullabaloo who came too and probably though up all the good lines.

obsession obstructive to enlightenment; he himself is down to one ball, and hopes shortly to renounce all. When he met the Jukkling Lama from the Bon country, Om Nama Mama, who juggles one ball very very slowly (it has spent the last 3000 years on its descending arc) he was ready to take up our suggestion - only he couldn't find a cave that picked up the MTV Asian Babe satellite channel. If you are approached in a Leeds pub it's safer to say nothing.

We hope the Himalayan Jukkling Konvention will become a regular event. As our inscrutable hosts so charmingly put it - "Jukk You Too?"



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BALLS

Splitting the Atom & Other YoYo Stuff

Richie
Butterfingers £2.95

When performing a mix & mingle job, the main problem is what to do with all your 'stuff'; most props are big & heavy so you clump around with a bag or suitcase. What I need is something small, light, will fit in my pocket and give me loads of material avoiding the "the bloke that was here last time did that trick with 12 balls" comment. Richie Windsor, pro entertainer and kicking tea maker, has produced the essential guide for anyone who owns a YoYo or wants to learn a new skill 'cos you've mastered everything else. Published by *Butterfingers*, and the only book to have come to our notice since last issue - there are well over 40 tricks to try.

Someone had a go at teaching me YoYo when I was about 9 but I couldn't get it to spin at the end of its string - a trick Richie calls The Sleeper. Either I was crap at YoYo, the YoYo was rubbish (although the demonstrator could do it), or the guy that was demonstrating was an incompetent teacher - the option I prefer. It's a trick you need to acquire as all the others seem to be based on it; success depends, in my view, on the quality of your YoYo. It's a 'pay your money and make your choice' situation. Thanks to the advice at *Butterfingers*, the trick is no prob now.

'Splitting the Atom' is 46 pages of cartoon tricks well illustrated by some bloke known only as Mark. The character with dreads, big (and I mean big) hands and matchstick arms takes you through all the stages of the trick and it works! If it's a combination trick a box at the bottom of the page will inform you where to find the other stuff. All the tricks have names, from the Sleeper and Slapper to the advanced Splitting the Atom. So, as Richie says, "Have fun!", it's the best £2.95 you'll spend.

The JSA

Zapped For Cash

Brighton's **Zap Club** have been given £400,000 lottery money and much assistance from other quarters to set up a National Street Arts Festival. It's a Millennium Festival, running over 3 years and starting this summer.

As well as their own home-town festival, Zap have exported/toured notable street work around the South, West and Midlands, the money will allow them to expand still further and into Scotland, Wales, N.Ireland - their target is a piffing 1.5 million people a year and a startling 10% of the entire British public by 2000.

They've been consistently had a good record for commissioning & supporting new work (see eg. *Scarabeus* earlier this issue) and importing continental groups. This year's Brighton events on May 7-10 run all the way down the seafront from the Marina & Black Rock to the East and Hove in the west, you'll have to get their programme for all the details but the performances include:

Compagnie Jo Bithume in 'Hello Mister Jo', French big-stuff spectacle at its most impressive;

Scarabeus' 'Arboreal', trailed elsewhere in this magazine;

European street-performance-mountain exports like the wonderful *Duc le Juke*, Barcelona's surrealist hairdressers (!) *Osadia*, sensual acrobats supreme *Ijs en Weider* (ex-Archais), random noise generators *The Primitives*, skills-paragons *Les Acrostiches*, and other names you'll find in our usual superlative-laden reports of Euro festivals (*Les Zanimos*, *Art Tout Chaud*, *Utopium*);

not forgetting a good helping of the kind of British acts that have no problem with this sort of competition - *Whalley Range Allstars*, *Heir of Insanity*, *Mr Green & Mr Orange*, *Stickleback Plasticus*, *Invisible Men*, *The Golfers*, *Flick Ferdinand's Cirque du Birque*, *Swank*, *Hoodwink*, *Creature Feature*, *Dave Holder*, *The Bollywood Band* and a whole day's worth of street bands;

and and and... lots of outdoor dance pieces, a giant maypole and more from the unique *Mischief La-Bas*, and a Brighton student group who have been working with *Lino Hellings* from the legendary & pioneering Amsterdam interventionists *Dog Troep*.

Some of these pieces will doubtless be appearing in other locations around the country through collaborations with local councils & arts organisations - details when we have them.

If you wanna get ahead

If that wasn't enough, this year's Manchester **x.trax / Streets Ahead** double-header festival has just announced its outline programme, and the list of UK & EU companies looks like making it just as essential a show as last year. Both the Ashton-under-Lyme (market place) and Castlefield sites are extensive, pedestrianised and ideal for all sorts of street styles, maybe on balance the latter (Sunday) has the edge, and was depressingly a little under-attended last year: to see shows of this quality for free without going to the continent really is an

opportunity you shouldn't miss. A handful of the very-best-possible acts in Europe are in for the ride, reality guerillas *Cacahuete*, musical mutants *The Primitives*, and British brand-leaders *The Natural Theatre*, along with some of our very favourite newer groups: *Roxy's ToolBox*, *Hoodwink*, *The Golfers* joining national classics like *Avanti Display*, *Le La Les*, *Whalley Range Allstars* and a pub-load or two more. No huge shows this year, but that shouldn't deter you, and at least safety-certified pyromaniacs *PaBoom* will be making another spectacular assault on the stratosphere Saturday night.

Bookers and festival promoters are well-served on the model of the classic European shopwindow events, and organisers boast that 70% of the acts from last year received enquiries for further booking after appearing on the bill, so maybe your company should be there too. Don't delay, enquire today: Liz Francis, x.trax / Manchester International Arts, 3 Birch Polygon, Manchester, M14 5HX, 0161 224 0020 fax ...248 9331. For your diaries, the festival runs Fri-Sun May 8-10 and even more programme details should be all over the place by then.

Ads Lib

Further proliferating the application of information technology to every entertainer/organiser's least favourite occupation, the business of booking, the **Entertainers' Network** aims to coordinate information on acts of all sorts arranged by area and accessible on a freephone number (alla *Talking Pages*) and web site. At the moment some 5000 acts are listed, with apparently some 50% paid-up members who enjoy preferential treatment (more information provided etc. and possibly exclusive advertising if the idea takes off). Sounds like it could save some publicity bills, at least. Give Marc Summers a call on the number below to find out more; to check out what they've got ring 0800 525470 or find www.entertainers.net

Get your nose into a book

The pre-Millennium (9th) edition of the **International Clowns Directory** is currently in preparation. It doesn't cost to be in there (but donations are ever-so-gratefully received) but you really should enter on the proper form, which you can get with an sae. from that well-known goodguy & Christian Clown **Salvo** - 13 Second Avenue, Kingsleigh Park, Hart Road, Thundersley, Essex SS7 3QD 01268 745791 (8-11am. mon.-fri.)

Open Box, Take Money

More lottery winners up in Warwick: **Playbox Theatre** are at the centre of a group building a new *Creation & Development Centre* with *Cirque Du Soleil* designers *Sceno Plus* and the no-messing monicker of **The Dream Factory**. It's going to be aimed at young people, Playbox's area of

most expertise, and includes one of the Soleil-style trampoline catwalks which we all wish we were allowed to play with too. Completion target is April 1999, the *National Association of Youth Circus* will be on board too but they're eagerly canvassing for other suggestions, collaborations, wild ideas. Try 'em on 01926 512388.

More Time For Space

Less successful on the lottery were London's **Circus Space**, whose initial application for £7.5M to do stage 3 of their former Generating Station building project has been turned down. This will slow the pace of the whole by at least a year, even if their re-application this autumn is a success. Circus Space chairman Russell Gilderson points out that circus has only scored £349,000 (under 0.05%) of the lottery capital grant programme, and that theirs was the only large circus application in the pipeline. Better luck next time chaps....

Circus Space's appeal to corporate sponsors remains high, however. - one Michael Lacey-Solymmer, corporate financial director at SBC Warburg (one big cheese) got an 'Employee Volunteer of the Year' award for the amount of time he spends there. Where's my award from the brewery?

Guinness? Cheers!

News comes from the States and the long-running *Justice for Rastelli Committee* - the 1997 *Guinness Book Of Records* has reinstated the great(est?) juggler's numbers records (10 balls, 8 plates) temporarily usurped by US big names Albert Lucas and Bruce Sarafian. As we indicated when covering this story before, the problem rests in the difference between 'juggling' and 'flashing' numbers, and the difficulty of verifying records dating from the 1920s.

The Committee's allegations as to cover-up and financial impropriety in the IJA continue to bemuse us. Get an American friend to explain it sometime.

Transatlantic Brethren

Also from the States; we usually ignore people's publicity sent to us except to nick the good lines for our own, but this lot sounded so far up our street they're already camped in the front garden. The **Bindlestiff Family Circus** combine 'adult' circus/cabaret, creepy carny vibes and raving anarchism - if you can't see the show you could at least check them out at www.atomicage.com/bindle.

Diesel Run Out

Less good news from travelling shows reaches us concerning cyber-crusties **Cirque Diesel**, who suffered a series of non-entertaining catastrophes of the exploding-truck-and-worse kind, leading to them pulling out of a whole summer's work. They're jolly sorry, and so are we to hear it, but will be back in cabaret soon, they promise/threaten.

CATCH THIS NEWS

Academic High-Flyers

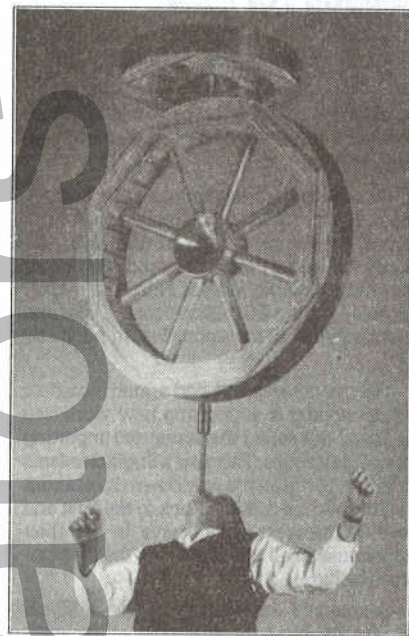
Circomedia recently announced plans to develop a graduate school under newly-signed trapeze/acro tutor **Mike Wright** (Circus Benneweis, Circo Cesare Togni, Billy Smart's, Barnum & Bailey, Circus Krone, Circus Knie, CapeTown Ballet, etc.) - with an obvious and much-needed thrust towards training at a higher level than has been available in the UK outside the masterclass circuit. More details when we have them.

Started already over in Bristol is a new emphasis on the levels of fitness needed to stay in there in circus & physical theatre. Circomedia had looked towards developing the routines used in Dance training, but these were found not to be up to the mark, and instead they've developed a detailed programme with a group of Sports Scientists and appointed **Liz Chandler** as a fitness tutor to keep the boys & babes in lycra feeling as fit as they look.

Unstable Condition

Ace juggler and all-round star of stage screen etc. **Steve Rawlings** ran a jolly-good-yes show at *The Circus Space* recently; 'Live & Unstable' was billed as an attempt to take the variety show into the '90s, featuring Steve, the usual fire & furniture & insane balancing routines, audience brutality, opera with acrobatic heckling, spacemen, illusionists, aerialists and ...wrestlers.

Before this starts sounding like a misplaced review, let's cut to the punchline: so immersed in the unstable spirit of the show was our Steve that he managed to shoot himself in the hand while demonstrating a gun backstage, and his place for the rest of the run had to be taken by the resourceful Mat Ricardo. Steve got out of hospital in time to be a spectator on the last night of the run and is reported to be recovering well, but luckily no more nor less mentally stable than previously.



While You Were Out

What you lot do get up to the moment our back is turned! Things we missed while lost in the wastes of time & space included: *Pretentious Ken* on the radio (several times, probably not juggling), *Songs of Praise* goes to the Circus (trad., predictably), and prob-

ably some even more distinguished media impact; *No Fit State's* annual indoor megashow 'Prophecy' with 12 guest collaborating community arts groups, the first of 3 annual shows leading up to the millennium; *Bread & Circuses'* interactive dance thingy 'Gravity Dancing' which we hope is

going to get further than Chapeltown; and something from *What A Palaver*, well, nothing new actually apart from one of them moving house, which is a good trick but not strictly circus, but there were Smarties in the envelope with their leaflet so i'm putting them in anyway.

World News

Those hard-playing pioneers *The Serious Fun Committee* (see *Catches* past) tried to spark off an International Juggling Festival in Myanmar (Burma), whose attempts to grab some tourist action are generally rather let down by the fact that the military regime spend 35% of their national budget on putting down the democratically-elected government and any other expression of dissent, including locking up Burmese comedians if they don't share the joke. SFC activist **Jude Smith** probably got off quite lightly with being thrown out of the country; "I promised to return with the jugglers when Burma has a government with a sense of humour", she said later. Jugglers who would like to visit Burma, strictly under better circumstances (ie. democracy), are asked to contact the Burmese Embassy "and let them know you're out there."

In a not-dissimilar vein, the *Serious Road Trip* are alive and well and active; the French section is currently setting up a project in either Algeria (who?) or Brasil in collaboration with a French group called 'Artisans de Paix' - "developing the local cultural life (by way of street performances and juggling/circus workshops) in places where the socio-cultural atmosphere is overwhelmed by violence and fear." Brave words, brave people, only fools in the best sense, and always in need of support of the financial and person-power kind: TSRT-CHF 28 rue de la Lionne, 45000 Orléans, France, (+33) 02 38 53 23 11, fax ...75, tsrt.chf@wanadoo.fr

You can now busk in Singapore. If you get a permit (3 month renewable, auditioned). If you give

all your profits to charity or 'registered arts societies' (you're allowed expenses). And if you don't all rush at once, presumably.

There's now a circus school in Argentina, near Buenos Aires - *Charivari*, Malvinas 2555, Mar del Plata 7600 (Pcia. de Buenos Aires) Argentina. [like the address!-d]. Also, if you just happened to be there right now, there's a brand-new piece by the utterly mind-blowing *De la Guarda* currently debuting to crowds of 10,000+.

Other essential gen for the hispanophone aspects of our arts (some of the most exciting of all) can regularly be gleaned from the pages of *El Ambidextro*, the Spanish journal that resembles ours in very few ways at all, actually (and it comes out on time): c/o Alonso Castrillo, 18-bajo, 28020 Madrid, +570 2547. If you're near, also well worth checking is the regular programme of courses and cabarets at the *Escuela de Circo Carampa*, c/o Asociación de Malabaristas, Albergue Juvenil Richard Schirrmann, Casa de Campo, 28011 Madrid, +479 2602.

Don't speak Spanish? You could always try the circus school in New Zealand, Christchurch to be precise; just in the interests of getting those satellite links working, you understand, their number is +64 (0)3 364 9061. Kiwis are complaining that all their juggling shops are closing - know your problem, mates...

Circus and still stranger things are buzzing in Japan, news of record-breaking wire walks over the Chang Jiang river in China and of ground-breaking circus/musical collaborations coming to us from

the Japan Circus Society, if you can understand Japanese you can find out a lot more c/o tel. +03 343 0561 fax. +03 3403 1583.

An outdoor/spectacle festival for Bamako (Mali)? No, we're not sure either, but it sounds exciting - maybe *Acte Septe* could tell you more, they're in France on +33 (0)6 08 46 93 97, fax +33 05 61 34 01 66.

Finally but by no means minimally, we decided not to crowd the events calendar with too many of the major streetshow events in France, but here are some more dates to note if you're mounting a continental expedition: a new show from the audacious *Compagnie 26,000 Couverts* running in Marseille May/June; a new *Royal De Luxe* knock out with an African theme at Nantes (Jun.24-27) Calais (Jul.11-15) and Anvers (Aug.20-23); a collaboration between French group *Oposito* and *Circus Ethiopia* of Addis Abeba can be seen as part of festivals at Blanc Mesnil (May 2/3) and Noisy le Sec (near Paris, 9/10 May); Chalons-sur-Marne, home of the national circus school, holds its *Furies* festival (Jun.4-6); Créteil near Paris has *Fantaisies* (Jun.19/20); Nanterre's *Paradise* Jun.6-7; *Viva Cité* in Sotteville (nr.Rouen) is Jun.26-28, also the dates for the festival at Aubagne (nr.Marseille). More continental capers in our next issue, if you need to know more you need to know too that the best source for French festivals is as ever the comprehensive documentation and detailed discussion provided in the pages of *Arts de la Rue*, available from *Hors les Murs* at 74 av. Pablo Picasso, 92000 Nanterre, France +33 (0)1 46 69 96 96 fax...98.

CATCH THIS EVENTS

Mar. 18-29 **Charge** Colchester, Essex. Festival of Live Art with some installations & outside work including 'Still Running' (21st), praised by our reviewer at last year's Manchester *x-trax*. More details on 01206 577301.

Apr. 3-5?? **22nd Annual Isla Vista Juggling Festival** Isla Vista, California, US.

Apr. 3-7 **Jugglersconvent** Trollhattan, Sweden

Apr. 3-8 **2nd Annual Quad Cities Jugglefest Volume III** (NB New dates) Rock Island, Illinois, US.

Apr. 9-12 11th British Juggling Convention

Whitchurch, Bristol. There was an insert in this magazine with all the details, but if you've lost it already: this year's big event is hosted by the jugglers of Bristol & Bath in a nice sports complex on the very edge of the city, where the geography touches on the confusing: Whitchurch Sports Centre is, more precisely, in Bamfield, the buses you get from the city centre (24,25,524,525 & 51,551,550 which also stop at Temple Meads Railway Station) are going to Rookery Farm, the end of the line, where you get off. OK? Noon on Thursday till the afternoon of Sunday, big show Friday, Springboard Contest for smart kids, Renegade with PeeWee every night, Croissant Neuf, Kaboodle Cabaret, veggie café, late bar, workshops in many many things including Fooling with Jonathan Kay and an Easter Bonnet competition. No dogs (except maybe on stage). Free camping & truck space & crashing floors, or you can rent a 4-berth caravan (1 double 2 singles) with cooking & heating for £140, or put in for a share at £35 for the weekend. Convention fees otherwise are £35 (grownups), £15 (10-16s) £0 (under-10s) all before April 2nd (that's about NOW - if you're trying to pre-registar, late call 0117 9615529), going up to £40 & £20 afterwards. Limited number of cheaper working tickets available, apply immediately. Cheques to Bath Juggling Events Ltd., post to BJG11 12 Norman Road, Warmley, Bristol BS30 5JA. Now.

Apr. 25/26 **Festival de Clowns et Burlesques** Clichy, France (Paris) c/o Mairie/Hôtel de Ville, BP300, 92112 Clichy Cedex, France. Tel. +33 (0)1 47 15 30 00 fax ...92.

Apr. 30-May 3 **Crazy Juggling Session II**, Dortmund

May 7-9 **Streets of Brighton** Prototype event for the National Street Arts Festival, Brighton's street events are becoming more and more unmissable as the years go by - hope the weather is kinder this year. Seafront, Lanes, Black Rock, Marina - see *Catch This* News for more details. Pity it clashes with...

May 8-10 **x.trax / Streets Ahead** Manchester. One of Britain's leading street performance events whether you're audience, agent, booker or performer, with dozens of the best on display in Ashton-under-Lyme (Saturday) & Castlefield, central Manchester (Sunday). See *Catch This* news for details, be there.

May 8-10 **Winnipeg Juggling Festival** Winnipeg, Canada

May 21-24 **8th Dutch Juggling Festival** Veldhoven, Netherlands. Sportshal De Springplank, Mira 4, Veldhoven, near Eindhoven (bus 10 to shopping-centre Zonderwijk). Camping, parade, veggie meals included. Price: Fl.80 pre-registration Fl.85 at the desk. Ffi. Stichting Nederlands Jongleerfestival, De Loop 6, 5501 Er Veldhoven, Nederland. Phone: +31-40-2542798, E-mail: nzc@win.tue.nl

May 29-Jun.1 **Bedlam Fair** Bath, Somerset. Free street festival & some surprises, excellent cabaret Friday. Details on 01225 480079 nearer the time.

May 29-Jun.1 **14th Nordic Juggling Convention** Stockholm, Sweden www.juggling.org/~stockholm/njc98.htm

May 29-Jun.1 **5th International Street Theatre Festival** Holzminden, Germany. Serious-level competition festival (you have to be invited) this year including the likes of Kumulus, Cie Jo Bithume, Tout Fou to Fly, (France), Teatr Biuro Podrozy (Poland) and Scarabeus (Britain). Tel. +221 240 3133, fax ...3247.

May 29-Jun.1 **Ahlen Convention**, Germany +49 2382 80080.

Jun.?? **Italian Juggling Convention** San Giovanni in Persiceto. Ffi. Marco Schiavina, +39 51 827045, fax ...825028.

Jun. 6/7 **Krefeld Juggling Convention** Krefeld, Germany

Jun. 12/13 **XVth Marató de l'Espectacle** Mercat de les Flors & Teatre Grec, Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. Unique two-day cabaret-style marathon of performances of 3 seconds to 10 minutes, from Street to Live Art to, well, anything really. Great self-publicity opportunity. Entry deadline was March 5th so I suspect you've missed it, but for future reference you could always contact: Associació Marató de l'Espectacle/Trafalgar 78, 1-1/080010 Barcelona, tel. +93 268 1868, fax ...2424, marato.espect@cambrabcn.es, www.cambrabcn.es/marato.espect

Jun. 13 **Street Performers Competition** Hesse Festival, Erbach, Odenwald, Germany. Prizes DM 1500, 1200, 800; DM300 p/d expenses paid. Ffi. Karl Kopf, Tilsiter Str.13, D-63165 Mülheim/M, Germany. +49 6108 603 120, fax...100.

Jun. 18-20 **Just for Fun Street Festival**, Darmstadt, Germany. Applications closed, sorry, but could be a good weekend if you're near. +49 6151 53 8040 fax...453 Kw8-Kultur@t-online.de

Jun. 20 **IJA World Juggling Day** Everywhere!

Jun. 25-28 **Glastonbury Festival**, Albion. Usual serious circus outdoor/street & walkabout contingents. No details yet but you know it'll be mega.

Jul. 3-5 **Hat Fair** Winchester

Jul. 3-5 **Swiss Convention**, La Chaux-de-Fonds, near Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Inside sleeping space. Saturday night: public show in a small theatre near the juggling place; after the show, fire juggling with free petrol for everybody. Sunday: games. Ffi. Roman Winiger, Rue de la Serre 3, 2300 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. Bastien.vonwys@etudiants.unine.ch www.unige.ch/gapoptic/Bernard/convention98 including map, train timetable & regular updates.

Jul. 11-12 **Wessex Juggling Convention** Frome, Somerset. Better-than-ever incarnation of what has always been one of our favourite conventions, with added top-level performances as well as all the usual convention goodies. There's an advert on p.16 with even more information on it.

Jul. 12-17 **51st IJA Convention** Primm, Nevada, US.

Jul. 14-18 **Chalon dans la Rue** Chalon-sur-Saône, France. Essential week out among the best of European street & spectacle events. See *Catch Out* for the usual ravings on how good it is.

Jul. 30-Aug. 2 **Stockton Riverside Festival** Britain's best street/spectacle showcase, big thrills, big surprises, big shows, big fun.

Aug. 3-8 **21st European Juggling Convention** Edinburgh. Well-timed to coincide with the mighty Edinburgh Fringe, this is cooking up to be a seriously unmissable week out. Bang next-door to Arthur's Seat, 4 juggling halls (1 24hr.), UV room, stadium (1), parade, stunning-quality Public Shows and nightly cabarets with substantial Fringe input, Renegade, special stages for kids & first-timers, Cellidhs (yes!), Juggling Olympics, MUni, Volleyclub, Juggling Decathlon, Joggling, Unihockey/basketball, kites, Ultimate Frisbee, world record attempts, beginners-to-advanced workshops in everything, etc. etc. Specially family-orientated areas, quiet camping, crèche, playground. Hoop Hoop Hooray! Hoots! etc. More next issue but if you can't restrain yourself or really want to volunteer for something you can get 'em at 1F3 90 Iona Street, Edinburgh EH6 8RW, tel./fax 0131 555 2353 johnny@holyrood.ed.ac.uk www.ed.ac.uk/~johnny/ejc98.html

Aug. 19-22 **Eclat - Festival d'Aurillac** Aurillac, France. The big one.

Sep. ?? **4th Annual St Louis Juggling Festival** South St Louis, US.

Sep. 6-20 **Covent Garden Festival of Street Theatre** frankly rather superb gathering of top names in aerial & animation, plus the country's best circle acts, on and around the world's most famous busking pitch. See pp.20/21, call Extraordinary Artists on 0171 704 6423, get those diaries out.

Sep. 9-13 **Fira de Tàrraga** See article pp.9-11 for even more reasons why this should be in your diary, travel plans and photograph album.

Sep. 18-20 **6th Channel Islands Juggling Convention** Jersey.

Big Beaches, nice peeps, bring a smile. Workshops, Public show (with nosh), Games etc., etc. Further details (including flight and accommodation deals) and registration soon. Ffi. Tel Shaun 01534 615920. Fax and internet when they've sweet-talked someone into making the techie bits available.

Oct. 9-12 **10th Annual Lodi Juggling Festival** Micke Grove Park and Zoo, Lodi, California, US.

Oct. 10 **Durham Juggling Festival** Convivial session with a good show, cheap beer and fluorescent pink signposts. These points may be connected. Offers & information to/from Mini 01642 897191 or Roger 01642 890934.

Join the Web's Wonders but cut the cabbage: to publicise your convention to all those millions of mouse-jugglers out there, connect yourselves with the JIS (Juggling Information Service) via EMail - that's Rupert.Voelcker@bt-sys.bt.co.uk or fax on 01473 644649 or phone 01394 278556. Big carrot no stick.

CATCH THIS GIGS

ZIPPO'S CIRCUS

All-New cast, All-New show
 Mar.4-8 Basingstoke, War Memorial Park
 Mar.10-15 Oxford, South Park, Headington Hill
 Mar.17-22 Birmingham, Cofton Park - Birmingham Circus Festival
 Mar.24-29 Birmingham, Sheldon Rec. - Birmingham Circus Festival
 Mar.31-Apr.7 Birmingham, Perry Park - Birmingham Circus Festival
 Apr.9-21 Blackheath Common, London
 Apr.23-28 Sidcup, Green
 Apr.30-May 5 Barham Park, Brent, London
 May 7-13 Twickenham, Green
 May 19-20 Victoria Park, Tower Hamlets, London
 May 22-26 Roe Green, Brent, London
 May 28-Jun.2 Beddington Park, Sutton
 Jun.4-16 Ealing Common, London
 Jun.18-23 Morden Park, Merton, London
 Jun.25-30 Barne Elms, Richmond

REJECTS' REVENGE In 'Dusty Fruit'

An extremely curious tale involving removal men and something a bit odd in the cellar. It won a Fringe First like *Peasouper* their souper last one and has been known to cause ruptures in those not normally susceptible to stage humour. Physical comedy directed & co-devised by Bim Mason, you really ought to see it, you know. The Rejects were the first foreign theatre company ever to tour Albania.

Mar.11 Accrington & Rossendale College, Rawtenstall
 Mar.12 Atherstone Memorial Hall
 Mar.13 Greig Hall, Alcester
 Mar.14 Romiley Forum, Stockport
 Mar.17 Bideford College Theatre (2 shows tbc.)
 Mar.18 Bridgewater Arts Centre
 Mar.19 Bedford Corn Exchange
 Mar.20 Forest Arts Centre, New Milton
 Mar.21 Fairfield Arts Centre, Basingstoke
 Mar.23/24 Everyman Theatre, Liverpool
 Mar.25 Frodsham Community Centre
 Mar.26 Audlem Public Hall, nr.Crewe
 Mar.27 Gawsorth Village Hall, nr.Macclesfield
 Mar.28 Mollington & Backford Village Hall, nr.Chester
 Mar.31 Forest Arts Centre, New Milton
 Apr.1 Radlett Arts Centre
 Apr.2 Hawth Studio, Crawley
 Apr.3/4 Mercury Studio, Colchester
 Apr.19-25 Singapore (tbc)



Apr.27-30 Israel (tbc)
 May 1-9 Israel (tbc)
 May 19 Paisley Arts Centre
 May 20 Adam Smith Theatre, Kircaldy
 May 21 Cupar Village Hall
 May 22 Glenulgh Village Hall
 May 23 Plockton Village Hall
 May 25 Ardvasser Village Hall, Skye
 May 27 Skerry Village Hall
 May 28 Lyth Arts Centre
 May 29 Rosehall Village Hall
 May 30 Spectrum Centre, Inverness

SCARABEUS In 'Arboreal - Living In Trees'

State-of-the-Art performance from the stilt-of-the-art collective. See feature article upfront.
 May 1-3 Circus Space, London. World Premiere
 May 7-9 Brighton Festival. Outdoor premiere
 May 29-Jun.1 Kulturburo Award Festival, Holzminden, Germany
 Jun.8-20 Scottish Highlands tour tbc.
 Jun.26-28 Viva Cité Festival, Sotteville, France
 Jul.17-19 Festival di Chieri, Italy
 Jul.24/25 MacRobert Arts Centre, Stirling
 Jul.30-Aug.2 Stockton Riverside Festival
 Aug.8 The Hawth, Crawley
 Sep.5 Vie del Teatro festival, Torino, Italy
 Sep.10-13 Fira de Tàrraga, Catalonia, Spain
 Sep.-Oct. Special Project, Watermans Art Centre, London
 Dec. Roma Congressi, Italy

STRETCH PEOPLE In 'There's another one'

Several unlikely uses for a vacuum-cleaner in the convention-faves' new show devised with the extremely silly Flick Ferdinand and directed by RaRa Zoo mainman Dave Spathaky. Reports so far are extremely encouraging.
 Mar.5 Colchester Arts Centre
 Mar.21 Wetherdon Village Hall, Suffolk
 Mar.25 Norwich Arts Centre
 Apr.11 British Juggling Convention
 May 8 Zap Club, Brighton
 May 15 Bowen West Theatre, Bedford
 May 16 Kings Lynn Arts Centre
 May 20 Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead

HEIR OF INSANITY

Goodlooking aerial inside or out, always good to be looking at them.
 Jun.6 Salisbury Arts Festival
 Jun.7 Slough Festival
 Jun.12/13 Chatsworth House
 Jun.20 Northampton Festival (tbc.)
 Jun.21 Bury St.Edmunds Festival
 Jul.3/4 Exeter Festival
 Jul.6 Hampton Court Flower Show (tbc.)
 Jul.11 Frome, Somerset (tbc.)
 Jul.15-18 Claremont National Trust
 Jul.19 Needham Lakes Festival
 Jul.26 Hopeton House Fair, Scotland
 Aug.26-27 Guernsey
 Aug.30/31 Chelmsford Spectacular

festivals & one-offs

CIRCUS SPACE FESTIVAL

Apr.4-19 The Circus Space, Coronet Street London N1 6HD 0171 613 4141
 Something for everyone from art-circus to film to kids' shows, all of it at the usual Circus Space highest quality and risk of selling all the seats: so book now! Events at Circus Space unless otherwise indicated. Forget Time Out, there is nothing else to do in London these nights.
 Apr.4 Circus Space Cabaret (always the best) 8.30pm

Apr.5 The Strawberry Clown Show 3pm
 Apr.8 Early Circus Films at the NFT, South Bank 7.30
 Apr.10-12 Tango & Crash (ace!) 8pm
 Apr.11 Circusiana Fair 10.30am
 Apr.11 Cine-Circus at the Lux 2pm
 Apr.12 Debate on the Future of Circus 4pm.
 Apr.17-19 The Gandini Juggling Project (the best there is at what they do) 8.30pm
 Apr.18 Albert & Friends Instant Circus (top kidstuff) 2.30 & 6.30pm.

PLAYBOX THEATRE / GOLDONI In 'The Servant of Two Masters'

Brand-new clown/commedia-based group built around the considerable talents of Carlo Goldoni, dedicated to innovation as well as a reawakening of the heart of classic clown and using exciting new Brit talent like Juliet King & Amy Steele. Lashings of acro, music, cross-dressing (!) & romance - and even special food!
 Jun.4-6 Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry 01203 524524
 Aug.14-16, 21-23 Ryton Organic Gardens Open-Air Theatre 01203 303517

ZACA SHOWCASE PERFORMANCE

Oct.22 2.30pm. The Big Top, Clissold Park, Green Lanes, Stoke Newington, London N16.
 End-of-term show for Zippo's students, and we always get good reports on the standard: top for talent-spotting!

ARTS ALIVE

Coventry City Centre

Excellent initiative bringing some of the best international outdoor extravaganzas onto your doorstep - and lots of them for free too! See past Catch Out and international festival raves for more on the following, see them anyway:

May 12/13 **Theatre Titanick** (Germany). You've seen the film, now see it for real - with massive pyro and 35,000 litres of water! It takes expanded imagination & experienced Spectacle technicians to pull this off, Titanick are all that and more. Coventry Canal Basin, 10pm - it's the opening of the series and you'll need to get tickets (£3) for it - Belgrade Theatre (01203) 256431.

May 16 **Wurre Wurre** Unhinged Belgians in a comic cockup show: Tommy Cooper meets René Magritte (another great Belgian). Not for the conceptually-challenged, but very funny.

May 20 **Compagnie Albedo** Surreal French interactive walkabout.

May 27 **Avanti Display** in 'Crash' a new static street theatre piece from one of the country's most accomplished and entertaining street companies.

Jun.2-6 **Natural Theatre Company** Another incomparable British institution, here in a rare 8-piece lineup with their usual bewildering variety of static and escaping-off-in-all-directions pieces.

Jun.10/11 **Teatr Biuro Podrozy** in 'Carmen Funebre' Maybeth the single most acclaimed piece of outdoor theatre from the last 5 years gets another deserved encore for its harrowing tales of the Bosnian War. Another £3 ticketed event - Belgrade Theatre (01203) 256431.

Jun.20 **Emergency Exit & Dhol Dhamaka** Long-standing Brit masters of the large-scale event combine with contemporary Bhangra bands & dancers for massive party vibes in the area!

To catch up with trad. circuses, including some we know you'll like, you no longer have to rely on the vicissitudes of flyposting, you can ring the Kingpole (Trad. Circus mag) information line on 0891 343341. It's a premium charge line (you pays your money...) but doesn't have any heavy breathing or even carry on for hours.

CATCH THIS COURSES

ZIPPO'S ACADEMY OF CIRCUS ARTS

ZACA, 174 Stockbridge Road, Winchester, Hampshire. SO22 6BW Tel. (01962) 877600
www.community.co.uk/zippo

Unique travelling Circus School, places limited, intensive 6-month apprenticeship in *everything*, with real-life performance experience built-in. This year's course runs May 1-Oct.31 (pagan special!) and the last audition session is in Zippo's tent at Blackheath, London on April 9. Ring David Hibling on 07050 282624 to be in on it. Full whack fees are £1750 but you can get Student Loans and Training for Work funding, enquire to ZACA.

Short Courses

Extra 'summer school' training from mid-July to end August. Ring for details.

CIRCOMEDIA

Academy of Circus Arts & Physical Theatre, Bristol. Unit 14, The Old School House, Kingswood Foundation, Britannia Road, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 2DB. Enquiries for classes on 0117 947 7042 or write 43 Kingsway Avenue Kingswood Bristol BS15 2AN.

Based in the refurbished premises of a Victorian school in its own grounds, Circomedia offers professional training with particular emphasis on the integration of technique training with performance, attracting students from Japan, Sweden, America and Europe, as well as Britain on to their One Year Intensive and 11 Week Foundation Courses.

Full-Time Professional Training Courses 1998

foundation/introductory courses

One Year Foundation:

Acro, Aerial, Equilibratics & manipulation; Body Work - movement organisation, body conditioning, contemporary dance & mime techniques; Performance training - play, impro, mask, audience contact, clown, buffoon, mask, storytelling, devising, choreographing, etc. Plus study (history, anatomy, marketing & career development). All ends up with grand final show, a chance to join the *Circomedia* touring company - and an RSA Diploma in Circus Skills & Physical Theatre. Entry by audition/workshop (meaning it's a good day out even if you don't get in) during Spring/Summer - get details now! Course Sep.28-Jun.25 1999, fee £3650 in 4 instalments.

Three Month Introductory Course

Introduction to the basics of the 1-year course
Sep.28-Dec.18 Fee £1400

short courses

Summer School

Mid-Aug. to Mid-Sep. Dates & fee tbc.

weekly classes

Juggling with Gentleman Juggler Rod Laver, with added opportunities for a crack at Uni, RolaBola, Stilts. Equipment available. Every Wednesday 7-9 £2.50. Ring Rod on 0117 977 3028.

Acro-balance with Jörg Helms: Tuesdays 7-8.30. Pyramids, groups, doubles. Ring Jörg on 0117 985 5087.

Circus Maniacs - Kids Club

Age 10+, beginner or developing. Call Jackie, 0117 947 7042 or Marc, 0117 951 7306 Hand-balancing, Web & straps, Stilts, Uni, Static Trapeze, and of course juggling. Mostly Saturdays & Sundays. Available in all sorts of combinations at every level (and price) from basic skills & skills-sharing to specialist programmes in individual skills or everything! Call them for fees and lengthy list of other benefits.

Circus Maniacs sessions for adults!

Get in now for next term! Mon.-Wed. evenings & Sun.

Trapeze, Web Rope & Chinese straps, tight wire, stilts, hand balancing, unicycle and juggling. The latter two are skills-shares. At the mo' you can do the lot (4 evenings and all Sunday) for £350 (concs.£300) a term. Ffi. call 0117 947 7042.

THE CIRCUS SPACE

Shoreditch Power Station - Coronet Street, Hackney, London N1 6HD, tel. 0171 613 4141. Near Old Street (Northern Line)
Lovely space, fantastic equipment, top tutors &

visitors.

Contact them for leaflets & details & more on their constantly-developing courses. What we know is listed but we know too that there's always something new going on...

Full-Time Professional Training Courses

2-year BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (Circus) A-level equivalent - accredited qualification through East Berkshire College. Course starts every September

Currently free for under-19s from UK/CE, £800 a year otherwise (recommended up to mid-20s) - NB fees are in the process of revision.

All the essentials and a lot more including acro, aerial, theatrical, manipulation, movement, equilibratics, production, performance, devising, administration... With extensive performance opportunities, world-class tutors & workshops, and rather a good product at the end, it seems. Call 0171 729 3142 for full course brochure.

Weekly Classes

Adults:

Trampoline, Tumbling (all levels) Acro-balance, Tumbling, Juggling (Tues. 6.30-8.30, Sun.7-10 - plus Uni & Tightwire available but not taught - £3), Tightwire, Static Trapeze (any day, evenings, plus one-on-one weekday afternoons, £21), Flying Trapeze - Petit Volant or Hi-Fly (every evening) including sessions with Pauline Palacy, Swinging Trapeze, Doubles Trapeze, Cloudswing, Cradle, Web, Corde Lisse.

Kids After-School Classes:

Monday (age 7-9, £55), Tuesday (age 10-12 £55), Thursday (12+ £50). Discounts for Income Support & local neighbourhood kids.

...and...

Gerry Flanagan's acclaimed *Clown - Adventures in Play* course. Specialist courses, practice space most afternoons & Sundays, space & equipment for hire, unforgettable kids' parties and loads more. Why not drop in to the Circus Festival in April and see what they got.

You name it - they probably have a go at it sometime!

SKYLIGHT

Circus Arts Training Education Performance, Broadwater Centre, Smith Street, Rochdale OL16 1HE

Tel. 01706 50676 Tel./fax 01706 713638

Book early to secure places!

Open courses

Mar.7.8 Teeter Board with Roger Robinson (Acrobats Unlimited) 1-5, £25 per day.

Mar.14 Stage Fighting with Phil Harris 11-5, £15

Mar.21,22 Aerial Days with Deb Pope, Corde Lisse, web, static trapeze. Experience necessary. 11-5, £25 per day.

Mar.28 Display Fireworks with Dave Chadwick of *PaBoom!* 11-5, £27 inc. materials.

Mar.tbc. Performance/Presentation with Emile Wolk, international director gets your act together, £65.

Regular sessions

Adult Circus Skills, Mondays fortnightly 7-9

Youth Circus 10-16 Wednesdays 4-5.30

Youth Trapeze Thursdays 4-5.30

ISCAYP Youth Circus 14+ Thursdays 6-8

Trapeze Skill Share Fridays 2-5

Acro Skill Share TBA.

GREENTOP COMMUNITY CIRCUS CENTRE

Greentop Circus Centre, Saint Thomas Church, Holywell Rd., Brightside, Sheffield S9 1BE tel./fax 0114 281 8350.

Classes in Yoga, jazz dance, mime, mask, acrobalance, tumbling, juggling, rope-work, aerial and technical skills. Write for a leaflet on courses and to join the mailing list.

Regular Workshops:

Tuesdays 7-9 Adult juggling - serious skills for all abilities £2.50

Thursdays 6-7 Mime techniques from Lecoq and Decroux with Brett Jackson (when he's about) £2

Contact them for (extensive!) Weekly Classes programme including Acrobalance/physical fooling, equilibratics, trampoline, aerial.

NORWICH CIRCUS CENTRE

c/o 172 Jex Road, Norwich NR5 8XH, 01603 740011, E-Mail ncccf@netcom.co.uk

Regular sessions

Weekly Acro sessions with Mark Digby & Cosmo Hardy, Thursdays 6pm., £5

followed by:

weekly skills-swap 7.30-9.30, £2 a time
call to check

weekend course

Apr.4&5 Trapeze Weekend with members of 'Fruit Troupe'. Numbers restricted to 8 a day, so to know if there's any space left ring them *now*. £20 per day, both days possible.

Children's Circus Festival

Jun.15-21 - courses for local schools all day, Fool-hardy Folk show every evening. Details & dates tbc.

COSMOS

Cosmos Jugglers 24 Grange Street, York YO1 4BH 01904 654355,

ajj3@york.ac.uk, www.semiyen.demon.co.uk

Residential fire/UV/everything training

The unique holiday option: take two of the country's most experienced performers (Anna & Jim Semlyen), a couple of utterly fab locations (dedicated holiday/course centres in luvverly pretty corners of the country), blend with a couple of dozen circus-ites of all standards, beginners to performers through the medium of workshop/practice/tuition sessions in juggling, clubswinging, pole spinning, fire, UV, human pyramidology etc. etc., and a participants' cabaret, the acclaimed Cosmos Black Light Show, UV playroom, not to mention food, board, and all the facilities of the centres themselves, which you get at a cheaper price than those who stay there regularly. A'n'J are so scrupulous about finance that they've broken down the figures below into what *they* take and what the centres get, all underlining the jolly good value it all is.

May 11-16 Laurieston Hall, Castle Douglas, Dumfries, Scotland.

Adults £196 (centre £126, Cosmos £70), Concs. £130 (c£83, c£47); kids 9-11 half-price, 12-16 three-quarters; camping discount £11(full)/£7(conc.), costs kept down by rota for cooking, wooding, etc., free extras like sauna, loch swimming, woodland walks, bar & ceilidh. Please book if poss. by Apr.20: £25 deposit to Cosmos.

Aug.28-31 Lower Shaw Farm, near Swindon, Wiltshire.

Adults £99 (c£66, c£33), campers £15 discount, concs. by negotiation with centre, 9-16s £79 (c£44, c£35), Non-res £78 (c£45, c£33). Deposit of one third to Lower Shaw Farm, Old Shaw Lane, Shaw, Swindon, Wiltshire SN5 9PJ 01793 771080, swindonlifest@isfarm.globalnet.co.uk.

May 28-31 1999 Monkton Wyld Court, Charmouth, Dorset

Prices tbc. 01297 560342

monktonwyldcourt@btinternet.com

One-Offs

Kit Summers - Juggling with Finesse

Kit's renowned workshops (if even Phillip Dammer found them useful, you will too) are back in Europe for the summer. The one date fixed so far is

Aug.1/2 EJC site (before the convention)

but he's looking to do others. Anyone interested in setting one up and benefitting financially as well as jugglerially should get in touch with Kit at 3538 West 12th Street, Trainer, PA 19061-5301, USA, fax +610 485 4444, KitSummers@Juno.com

Dave Finnegan - Juggling for Success

Jul.17-19, nr. Las Vegas US.

If you're thinking of going to the IJA Vegas convention you might like to hang on a couple of days after for an insight & introduction to the famous Finnegan teaching methods. \$195 inc. acco. & some meals. Ffi. Juggling for Success, 1 Sportime Way, Atlanta, GA 30340 USA +1 800 523 1776 262

CATCH THIS UNIS

4TH BRITISH UNICYCLE CONVENTION

GLOUCESTER, AUGUST

This is not really a review of the convention - as co-organiser it would be impossible for me to tell you much about anything other than what happened at registration, how much people enjoyed the Treasure Hunt, and how many tunes the megaphone played. I only found time to enter and lose one race, and to make a brief appearance in the first rounds of the out-of-the-hat hockey and basketball tournaments.

One of my unicycles, however, fared much better - taking part in several track events, gaining second place in the 400m with the help of Roger Davies; participating in the beginners workshop with several wannabe riders. Then, leaving me all day Sunday, it went on to be a star player in DM's computer experiments workshop, followed by the MUni challenge, then several of the other events such as the jousting tournament, obstacle course, Mr/Ms Uni-Universe competition, and the slow races.

Yes, it was an action-packed weekend, marred only by the low attendance - where were you all? Even the customary British rain on the Sunday did not stop people entering some of the outdoor events, although some competitions did have to be moved indoors, and slotted in between the finals of the jousting, hockey and basketball. Also, perhaps more unfortunately, some events did get cancelled altogether due to lack of time caused by the weather.

Overall though, judging by the reports on the internet, and the numerous phone calls, letters and flowers received by both myself and Geoff, the people who did attend thoroughly enjoyed themselves and the events they entered or watched.

My thanks go to all who helped out over the weekend (which I think covers the majority of attendees), and in particular the following people deserve a mention:-

Steve for writing and running a superb Treasure Hunt. Pam, Ian, Fiona, Andy, Ellie, Tom, Billy, Mel, Max, Heyes, Russell, Heather, Leo, and Caroline for cleaning, setting up, and

dismantling the site. Pam and Amanda for being excellent timekeepers. Nick Richard, and Rocketman for taking control of the tournaments. Josh for helping me sort out the winners. Everyone who posed for and/or spoke to the media. James Plungers for autographing my Catch (!), Danny for single-handedly organising and completing the marathon. Trevor for bringing his own fan-club. Silvia for giving me a Winners Rosette. Rob Stone for being so many people. Max and Heyes for demonstration their ability to eat cheese and sell toilet rolls (shame the portaloos ran out on Sunday night!)

I would like to address a couple of points raised at the business meeting and after the event:-

1. It was all very serious and competitive. Compared to the World Unicycle Convention, we British are still very laid-back in our attitude to unicycling, and many people entering some of the events we staged had never tried them before. The 'serious' hockey tournament will always be just that - *serious*, which is why we also chose to run *out-of-the-hat* tournaments aimed more at the fun/beginner/intermediate unicyclists. Unfortunately, due to the lack of attendees, most people were able to play in both, thus scuppering our plans to hold the matches simultaneously in the hall and tennis courts. Also, a lot of the fun events were due to take place outside on the Sunday, but were rained off.

2. There weren't enough workshops. We had hoped to hold a lot more, but, workshops - like conventions themselves - are run by unicyclists for unicyclists. There was gum on the notice boards asking for people to run workshops, or indicate workshops they wanted to participate in. We did our best to oblige, but at the end of the day, it's your convention - if you don't help the organisers they can't help you. Having said that, the beginners workshop on Saturday proved very popular, and would have been repeated - along with a few others originally planned on the Sunday, had the rain not reared its unordered head. (This is not an attempt on how many times I can blame the weather, it's all true - honest).

3. Why were a lot of events held on Friday afternoon before I got there? Well, the promotional information did state that the convention started at midday on Friday, and included a time-table of events which ran fairly well to time - give or take the customary hour or two.

4. Why weren't there more people there? A very good point, well presented, to which I do not know the answer. We sent information to every unicyclist we knew, and even more that we didn't know. We put information on the internet, in *The Catch*, and in *Kaskade*, and we also gave out over 100 leaflets in Nottingham. What else could we possibly have done?

Due to lack of numbers, we were also struggling financially, and would like to thank everyone who supported us by:- buying an excessive amount of raffle tickets and T-shirts (Stuart Carter - we love you!); Everyone who paid over the odds for some very strange but useful(?) items in the impromptu auction; and Peter Haworth's Mum for her kind donation.

Inspired by the convention, and also to raise more funds to cover the loss, we are hoping to hold some other unicycle events in the near future - watch this space for more details. Also there are a few T-shirts left for anyone who can't be bothered to wash the one(s) they bought at the convention, and details of the video will be released soon.

Once again, thanks to all of you who attended and made it the success that it was.

All "wanna buy a t-shirt?" Close

Results:

Too many to reproduce the lot, but all the speed stuff seems to divide up between (roughly in order) Michel Arets, Roger Davies, Max Lovius & Leo White, tho' only the latter was in the winning relay team who beat the one with the other 3 in, which proves something. Max also won a lot of the silly ones, James Bentley won the 'Slow Riding - Giraffe' category, which has to be the silliest of the lot, and Silvia de Beer is not only Ladies' Open Champion but also Ms Uni Universe (senior). Ali was second but she didn't tell you that...

Catch this ~ unicycle

Catch this ~ unicycle

30

CHOPWELL WOODS OPEN MUNI RACE

JULY

12 riders turned out, notably Roger Davis, Max Lovius, Paul & Sarah Selby, plus eight other Mountains including one eight year old.

Pashley had donated two T-shirts for the winners. Most of us knew at least one of these would go to Roger Davis (the current world 1500m Unicycle race champ) so the battle was really on for the other one. The course was mapped with signs on significant corners, the riders were instructed "if you don't see a sign then don't turn". During the race we realised that a group of kids had removed two of the signs, luckily this did not cause too much of a problem. The weather was just about perfect, blazing blue skies and just a slight breeze.

Off they went. The beginning of the

race was a very slight but fairly long (!) mile and a half up hill and they slowly spaced out as they disappeared into the woodlands [know the feeling -d]. Most of the course was on forest roads and access tracks, so it was not too hard going, two weeks of sunshine having dried the surface out, still slightly damp but definitely not sticky.

19 minutes later Roger Davis came belting down to the finish line; the last mile being a steep downhill, he was pedalling just about as fast as possible, right on the edge of overbalancing but somehow managing to keep going. 200 metres behind him followed Paul Selby, his entire body soaked in sweat - boy did he look glad it was over. Max Lovius was next, as he approached the finish line he fell, landing on his feet he jumped over the ribbon and his MUni tumbled under... a fine way to complete a ride.

Sarah Selby, first female to finish, was a good 5 minutes behind, commenting that for most of the race it had not felt like she was racing as the first three had disappeared far ahead and those behind her were out of sight also. 3.2 miles alone is a hard ride.

The others came in over the next 10 minutes, Chris, 13 years old, had managed to ride most of the way with his saddle on backwards until his pedals unscrewed themselves and of course he fell. Younger brother Michael, 8 years old, riding a 20 inch as fast as his legs could manage, came in 2nd last, he beat one rider, Jenny. He was really happy, she was not.

Thanx to Duncan Castling for assisting in the organisation of the Friends of Chopwell Woods Open Day, and to Pashley for supplying prizes.

Mini Mansell



PEAK EXPERIENCES

All this MUni stuff is all very well, but we just got a letter from Thierry Bouché from France, president of MTT Sensations, the group for Monocycle Tout Terrain, don't you know, and his speciality is doing real mountains on them. This summer he did a little tour in the Alps covering 160km in 60 hours and 17500m of the up-and-down

business; he also holds a record for a 5500m descent on Aconcagua in the Andes (Argentina). Some of you might have met him at the Guildford World Uni Convention or the '96 Euro Juggling Convention. And the project for '98 - a little hill called Mont Blanc, all 4807m of it. Mad he might be, but the view is worth it, as this photo shows...

CATCH THIS ~ UNICYCLE

CATCH THIS ~ UNICYCLE

Conspiracy

London International Mime Festival /
Circus Space, January.

It was a full house and the audience was eager. **Conspiracy**, Britain's answer to the sugar-sweet commercialism of *Cirque du Soleil*, are artists who have been developing their own eclectic mix of club and circus in the UK for the past 5 years.

Conspiracy construct an atmosphere of strangeness. Alien creatures who inhabit the air with a triple trapeze act of sculptured beauty, the earthbound and blinded character of **Flick** and the naive charm and humour of the **Stretch People** whose eccentric dance was nearly as wonderful as Wilson & Keppel. There were the disc detectives and their surreal stakeout with guns and records; both **Ben Richter** and **Luke Wilson** (who recently completed the *Circus Space* BTEC course) created very different but equally mesmerizing manipulation routines.

Conspiracy made some wonderful images and atmospheres by inventive use of the circus skills and references from contemporary culture. The beginning of the show with characters sliding danger-



A conspiracy to entertain. Pic: Sam Mahayni.

ously fast from above, the use of video and live performance, strong individual performances and the integration of the DJ and his turntables give Conspiracy a unique quality. If at times the pace was a little slow and the piece a little unsure,

this was the first night and the company, who receive no subsidy, proved by their work and the response of the audience that BritCirc has the artists and the ideas.

Deb Pope

Circus Ronaldo

London International Mime Festival, January

The missing link between Trad. Circus & Circus Theatre, this rather fabulous family show (both senses) from Belgium has been tenting round Europe for generations - pity they were in a hall here, perhaps, tho' they quickly made us feel we were back in the Big Top, and it was January...

Theatrically speaking, what this style of show does is to take the clown figures back out of make-up whilst retaining the classic characters: the pompous one who thinks he's in charge, the incompetent one who always has to have a go too, the tatterdemalion who's really the best of the lot, and so on. As my learned friends on the broadsheet papers probably pointed out (I read it somewhere, anyway) these are *Commedia dell'Arte* staples, from which sprang the traditional clown characters, or they all came from the same creative primal

custard-pie, depending on your theory. Like some of the newer continental shows (*Baroque*, *Plume*, etc.), freeing yourself from the make-up frees up some other possibilities and seems to help make the interaction between characters more fluid; though they didn't stretch the personae as far as a pure clown show (something like *Licedei* or even *Marceline & Silvestre*) has the time to do, you did feel some sense of development, and the running gag frameworks (eg. the way in which all the men want to be taken seriously as circus "artiste") worked better than such a basic piece of clown business generally does even in the best trad. shows.

Skills-wise, well, they had plenty, including a twist on the collapsible bicycle that I haven't seen before and some more-risky-than-usual *RolaBola* business - substituting a suitcase for the board, then stacking three rollers into something rather precarious. They also use an old fakir-style walking on swords routine which I didn't think to see outside

a history book or museum. Aerial and equilibratics of the classic/trad. kind were pretty unavoidable and pretty good too, and even if the inclusion of some bits (eg. the shooting) was a bit of a mystery (why? I mean), they covered most of the bases you could have thought of, usually with variations like their cheeky volunteer-baiting in the knife-throwing act, which could have come straight off the street.

At the same time 'arty' and traditional - I haven't seen enough continental shows to know (I haven't seen enough continental shows full stop) how mainstream they are - to me this represented something of an 'alternative tradition', very useful when it feels like the very letter of Trad. Brit Style is to be adhered to in certain circles like it was Holy Writ. The Mime Festival has always brought great shows to London, the fact that they've got it on is usually recommendation enough, and this was another: an education and a great night out.

Steve Henwood

Chalon Dans La Rue

Chalon-sur-Saône, France, July

Really, I wasn't going to go this year (cf. adventures elsewhere in this magazine including madness in Italian castle). But, really, couldn't bear not to... It's such a good festival! So friendly from the Camping to the *Comedien*, so well arranged from the Cave to the Festival Offices, and so stuffed with goodies from corner to corner of the city.

I guess the organisers thought it too hard to follow the Big Shows of '97's 10th birthday - this year it looked more as though there was an emphasis on new or underexposed acts, not all of whom, inevitably, were up to the stellar standards of the past. But, like a little girl of my acquaintance, when they were good they were very very good...

Let's hear it for the totally unexpected, the nowhere-else-but...: Puppet shows popping out of blank shuttered windows, the 'Caresseur Public' dispensing heartfelt hugs, the MC announcing you as some unlikely foreign digni-

tary as you enter the bar, the 3-seater cinema in a car - or the nights at *The Abbatoir* where the crowd are as crazed as the acts...

In truth, some of the best shows were variations on themes you'll have seen before: *Karnavire*'s mountaineers scaling the fountain, A and P's ultra-detailed ostrich riders, *Thé à la Rue* taking the 'make the public act' into situation comedy, *MST*'s so-cool so-French dressing-gowned street band. Some of the twists remained acts of near-genius all the same - *Le Grand Bonheur*'s dance piece in a giant version of those snowstorm novelties, the car loaded with profiteroles following the marriage skit, the lecture paralleling the symbolism of Mickey Mouse and Michelangelo, *Cachahuète* unveiling a giant penis in front of the Cathedral (next year's show, apparently - I tremble to think how...)

The 'higher art' edge included the mighty *Footsbarn* taking on Molière with a wonderful procession, the strange multicoloured delirium of Argentina's *Teatro del Silencio*, and the utterly inexplicable *Skenée* show (full marks for getting it on, anyway), plus a host of heavily symbolic shows featuring Gar-

goyles, Unicorns or a scaffolding globe. Perhaps you'd have been happier with *Wurre Wurre*'s immaculate non-sequiturs, *Compagnie International Alligator*'s manic Gameshow of Life or *Duc le Juke*'s unsettling mechanical pop personality.

I know what got to me the most - the irresponsibly big shows! *Groupe F*, fearless pyromaniacs, improvised music and twenty-foot bursts of flame - best seen from within the display area - some hoisted on great cranes, the whole immaculate and powered on sheer adrenaline. Never in Britain, I fear. And, never to be seen at another festival, the return of Chalon's closing night spectacular - and we do mean *spectacular*: well over 100 costumed performers, dozens of monumental metal animals, bagpipes and oildrum-bashers, all in procession round the city - then three different styles of orchestra at once with heavy fire-power pyro in the main square, once again putting any fireworks I've seen in Blighty deep in the shade.

Even the stuff you know about, they do it different here. A Festival like no other.

Steve Henwood

BK European Snakeboard Pro-Tour

London, July

Sixty of the world's top riders competed, including a powerful contingent from Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Spain, an invitation team from the States, and the ten best riders from the UK. Names included World Champion **Rob Nye** (US) (forced to retire early through injury); **Ingo Fohre** (Germany), the leading rider on the Pro-tour; and **Anja Kurz** the top female rider in the world. There were three main events: Vert - a massive 12ft high

half-pipe, Street - over a series of ramps and rails, and Air & Style, where riders perform freestyle tricks over a funbox similar to snowboarding.

Anja Kurz confirmed her domination of the women's tour with an amazing display on the Vert and in the other events, winning all three. The men's competition was far closer. The Vert was ruled by the German riders: Illa Broomberger, just 15, taking first place with Sebastian Hoffman a close second. The UK and American riders were more at home on the Street course and the Air & Style, taking ten of the sixteen finalist places. America's Andi Cass won the Street and Britain's Iain Calvert came in third in both the Street and the Air & Style.

The Air & Style is where Snakeboarding excels over all other street skating type sports, and went off with riders hitting 540's, switch 720's, rodeo flips and palm airs to name and confuse you with just a few. This was serious riding at its best, with the winner **Max Maier** producing a clean 10ft high front flip, which was mind-stopping!

The best skate park in London, no serious injuries, over £2,000 of prize money and the winners heading for the States and the World Championships in December, the event confirmed the status of Snakeboarding in the world of Alternative Extreme Sports.

Wanna know more? Try our mates at SBUK Ltd: Tel 0181 960 0555

Kate the Sk8

Halifax International Busking Festival

Halifax, Canada, August

With a reputation as one of the best busking festivals in the world, Halifax has again proved it. This year over 30 acts from 6 different countries took to the streets: juggling, theatre, comedy, tricks, music, and much more; each performer unique in their own way.

Back again was Scotland's **Mark Segal**, winner of last year's *People's Choice* award and again a crowd favourite with his *Ladder Walk Of Death*. He stands balanced on an eight-foot ladder and then proceeds to walk it over the body of a volunteer with just inches to spare - he is the only one in the world to perform this. Also returning were the **Raspyini Brothers** who delighted the crowd with many tricks and skills. **Junkyard Symphony** came back for half of the festival, bringing only recycled materials (including a kitchen sink), and amazing audiences with their music. Other returnees included Australian musical act **Brother**, who as usual drew crowds of screaming girls, dance master **Flattop**, Britain's "oobie, doobie, woah, woah, woah" **Famos Bramwells** (confused? just see his performance), and one of Halifax's own, magician **Stephen Elve**.

Among the new faces, Brighton's **Invisible Men** have a refreshingly different style of street performing. Armed with a

trunk full of props, Woody & Dave were able to mimic just about anybody that was anywhere near them. When you see them make sure you're not wearing anything embarrassing! They also do a strait-jacket escape, instant sex-change (you need to see the show!), and other theatrical feats. They are magnificent to watch

and are no doubt going to go very far [friends of yours, then? -d].

London's **Steve Rawlings** was also new to the Halifax waterfront. He seemed to try just about everything possible, furniture juggling, balancing a child in a chair, and bone china plate juggling, which he always managed to pull off. Almost always, anyway! - another crowd favourite.

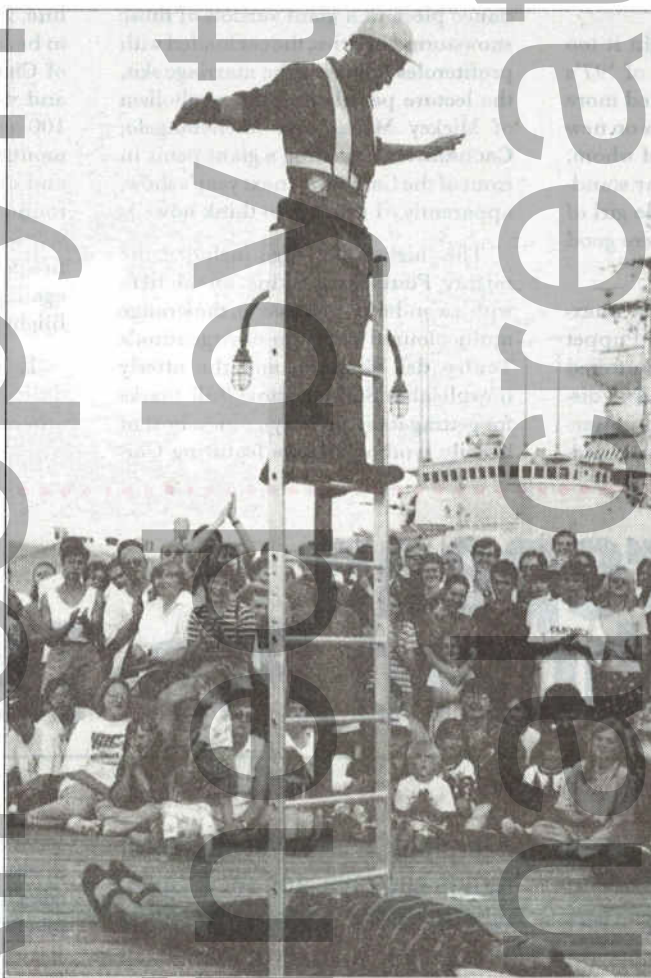
Another new face was **The Jim Show** from Boston. A more traditional style of street performing, Jim too was willing to juggle just about anything you asked him to, children to cameras. His stick-to-it attitude pulled him through and he always had the crowd on his side.

Others included England's **Casablanca Steps**, performing music from the twenties and thirties, Scotland's **Flipside**, reunited after three years just to do this festival, Montreal's **Tawny Ross**, armed with a whip and good aim, Vancouver's musical comedy

master **Todd Butler**, Nova Scotian hypnotist **Kirk McNeil**, and Ottawa's **Extreme Freestyle Team** who brought biking, skateboarding, and in-line skating to the streets.

The 11-day festival was certainly a success and next year's festival will no doubt be even better.

Jenny Ward



Mark Segal's window cleaner express service in action.

On the Face of it

«Pof!», bless 'er, wrote us a piece about the FACE face-painters' association, but, er, we'd already done it! Luckily for all concerned, she followed it with a discursive discourse on the perils (there just had to be perils) of pursuing face-painting as a job, which was far more entertaining anyway. Just sit still and we guarantee you're going to like it.

Professional Organisation? Jolly good idea, says I. OK, so it might put someone's mum's nose out of joint, but organisers can go ahead secure in the knowledge that the person they employ will adhere to a strict code of conduct, have proper insurance, and, moreover, be able to paint to a standard guaranteed to impress the punters.

Having had one of my own pitches nicked by a rank amateur with crayons (she sneered, distastefully), I feel that some kind of quality control is a good thing. Impressing the paying public, whatever you do, is notoriously difficult, and the cretin with the crayons is a bit of a double edged sword. On the one hand, I am sometimes asked to replace Cretin-the-Clown's often indelible handiwork and replace it with my own, but conversely I just as frequently hear "No, yer can't! You've 'ad it done once and it wasn't any good!"

Trouble is, the best, the very best that most folk expect, isn't all that wonderful. A laminated copy of a well-known face painting book from which they select a picture to be slavishly copied onto the front of the sprog's head seems to be about the norm - which shows a worrying lack of any original thought on all sides. Worse still, if there is no such book in evidence, many parents actually display classic signs of distress!

I used to keep photographs - a sort of 'rogue's gallery' - of some of the faces I particularly liked, but as the designs were altered to suit a child's face shape or colouring, or simply evolved, many parents complained that I "hadn't done it right", so I stopped bothering. They were unable to comprehend that my designs are just that, my designs, and asked how I remembered them without a book. Also, as I had a poster listing 36 designs, but decorated with only a dozen or so photos, some parents refused to

allow their kids to choose a face which was not so illustrated since they felt it probably wasn't very good.

Actually, "is it any good?" - or more accurately, "Izzirennny goo?" is a question I am asked quite often. I think it must be OK to be quite rude to face painters. In fact, despite the phenomenally huge poster displaying the service, the price, and the designs available, I am constantly asked "Djerafter pay?", "Owma chizzit?" and "Wha' can I/he/she/they 'ave?" Everyone at the FACE convention seemed to have suffered similarly, (which made me feel better, at least), and one guy said he never uses a poster any longer. He just tells the kids that if he can paint it, they can have it, and expects them to use their imagination thereafter.

Encouraging TV-dependent couch-potatoes to use imagination is an uphill struggle and no mistake! Bitter experience taught most painters not to offer TV superheroes as an option - but what, for some kids, does that leave? Many cannot read accurately - or even "accrately" as it seems to have evolved. They see 'lion' and read "Loy-on King", ignore the tigers until next time Disney decide to push The Jungle Book, and are amazed to find that "Draclea fayee" equals 'vampire'. I had to position words carefully on my second attempt at producing a poster to prevent kids and parents hyphenating at will (that's a nice way of saying 'illiterately') since I couldn't always invent something to fit what they imagined they'd read. (Hey, I'm not completely unpleasant). Mind you some of the 'incidental' faces made up in this way were worth the extra brainwork, and it is nice to have to think about what you're doing sometimes.

Every so often - about once every blue moon or so - a kid will turn up with clear fresh ideas of his/her own, and I love it when that happens. It's so good to have a challenge! Having spent eight weeks as a freelance dauber at Birmingham-on-Sea coastal resort caravan-sites social clubs I know, without the merest smidgen of a doubt, how rarely this happens.

It is fun - and funny - though. Kids are funny. OK, so they think keeping still is the same thing as St. Vitus' Dance, and asking them to look up usually results in the child studying its kneecaps, (or launching itself backwards with great force) but they're still learning to be whole people, and still see magic in the mundane. One day they'll be crusty and cynical like the rest of us, but just now, they're quite a lot of fun.

If you think you want to work with criminals like children, make darn sure you know what you're getting into. Be prepared for them to wait until you're painting some really fine detail before they pummel you on the elbows saying "Ly-dee, Ly-dee, Owma chissit?", and if they're very little, they won't remember the answer for more than about half a minute. You will need baby-wipes and other snot / candyfloss / ketchup removal accoutrements, and will need to repeat yourself often. You will also need a towel to wrap the child in - ostensibly to keep them clean, tho' the technique I use is not dissimilar to that used by vets when dealing with a recalcitrant moggy. (And you will need to repeat yourself often). In fact, after humour, patience and a loop tape (saves breath), the ability to wield a brush with reasonable competence is possibly not top of the list.

Beware the parents though. Not only do you get the usual proportion of dull, unimaginative and just plain rude ones - you will also find the ones looking for a free crèche. "E'll awright wi' you, won't 'e?" said one mother plonking a suspiciously squishy-sounding chavi on my chair, "only I got to pop to (children's clothes store) cos 'e's wee'd isself."

And finally, having spent the whole of last issue's piece slagging off my previous employer, I was amused to learn that his two sons, pissed off with no pay and shite conditions, left the family show and are now happily ensconced at Dicky Chips. Now that's what I call scarpering!

HAND-OUT CULTURE

The Circus Symposium brought together a who's-who of national figures from our artform. Naturally the conversation turned to money. Steve Henwood wonders if that's the best place to start or finish the conversation. What with us having been off the streets for a while, there's considerable hindsight involved here, and the debate has doubtless moved on, but he insisted.

Back in the summer I was fortunate to be invited to the first Circus Symposium. The Great and the Good (and the very good and one or two approaching Genius) were gathered to kick some ideas about the ballpark in the presence of some Men from the Ministry (nice chaps from the *Arts Council*) - a bit like a similar gathering on the subject of Street Theatre a month or so earlier - a Good Sign, looks like our arts are being taken seriously, or at least it looks as though the Arts Council has realised *there's a lot they don't know*, in a wise Socratic manner.

Little wonder, then, that although a lot was discussed, the desirable bedfellows of Arts and Lottery funding kept coming up. Personally, I'm glad the Arts Councils themselves didn't rise to the barbs or the bait. Of course projects were discussed that would do us all a lot of good and of course *The Catch* wants a lottery grant as much as anyone else we know, but I believed them, and it's only reinforced by the last six months or so, that there's already too much grant-dependency in the Arts World, and that it's growing alarmingly. Certain performers, especially those with a crossover potential for artforms that have traditionally attracted serious sponsorship (dance, for one) seem to look no further than the next arts officer, and their horizons are somewhat limited as a result, for all the talk of cross-pollinating artforms. Others at the symposium said as much, and I'm certain our cousins in the traditional circus world (which also is moving towards greater dialogue) would laugh at us. For an artform that manages to be both commercial and subversive, even sometimes now, to form an orderly queue at the Paymasters' window is, at the very least, undignified. The attitude that persists in 'High' (ha

ha) Art forms, new cheque = new work = new season is not going to help us do anything save fill a few more arts centre gigs. Artists who have grasped that problem at the thorny centre range from the club-culture centred Mamaloucos & Co. (aka. *Higher than the Sun, Conspiracy*, etc.) to the *Gandini Project*, about as High Art as juggling gets.

By this point, some of those who were at the meeting will (I hope) be reaching for their pens - most of the major conclusions of the meeting involved some funding commitment, and I'm trying to make out the opposite. OK. See if I can get out of this one before the waterfall.

The main results of the conference were to call for further exchange of opinions, more mutual aid; it's started, we at *The Catch* would like to be part of it, and nobody would be ruined by a bit of cash for enabling purposes. Let alone us. The sensible point was made time and time again that while there is plenty of 'basic' training available, and plenty of skilled hobbyists as a result, outstanding talent still has to go (eg.) to France for higher-level training, and to a European or Canadian Circus to use it.

There was a call for the establishment of a *National Circus Company* to act as a proper flagship for these arts in the country. Aside from the obvious fears expressed by, for example, *Swamp Circus*, that this would undermine companies already struggling to survive on tour, *The Catch* thinks this too can only be a good idea: if handled properly (which means special attention to who runs it and from where) and if it doesn't become a 'Royal National Theatre of Circus'. The only jobs for life there are in Arts are for administrators (OK., and for teachers): Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Bob Dylan - they didn't have one and neither need you.

Look at France (well, everyone else did). The major contributions to our arts cross-channel come not from state-subsidised groups (I've seen enough high-concept poor-quality work in Chalon already) but from support for institutions (the

circus schools, the festivals), from 'invisible' support such as the relaxed regulations re. 'signing on' and unemployment benefit for performers, and from the encouragement (and funds) given to municipalities and arts festivals to book these events at a serious commercial price. In effect: highly-trained artists are allowed the time to develop something special, which they then have to go out and sell to an audience. This produces work that is intelligent, spectacularly-skilled, and for the most part populist whilst avoiding lowest-common-denominator stuff (the effect of the solely commercial regime over here).

The odd big-money blockbuster does no harm, of course: me, I loved *'Game Over'*. [Archaos show developed & debuted with considerable Government funding support-d] it pushes the envelope, rather than just waiting for it to pop through the door... This, if anything, is what the flagship national group should concentrate on, and I know some of the proponents of the idea could be happy with that - those who aren't learned their art in the wrong schools. Throw serious money at it for three years, maybe five. Then maybe it could survive on the real-life gig circuit. Or maybe everyone goes home again with what they've learned, and the audiences, thus stimulated, go out looking for what they've already got (or could have).

It's like John B said last issue - the question is less about the amount of money, but how it is spent. Every penny spent on enabling, networking, shop-windowing, multiplies itself five-fold (that lets *The Catch* off the hook then...).

Otherwise don't be like the Saturday Night saddoes - don't wait for the Lottery.

Oh yes, and Keep Talking.

Thanks to *The Circus Symposium*, hope I get invited again. Thanks also to *LIFT* for the wonderful shows I saw the same time - keep your ears open for what they do next time!

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 J Arno (secretary)
 221 Webb Rise, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 5QQ

EJA - EUROPEAN JUGGLING ASSOCIATION
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diababble

"He just said he was going round the corner for a box of matches and a can of paraffin. He didn't come back for six months. Thing is, I could have told him the juggling shop had been closed for the last year," Petite former fashion model and part-time telephone chatline dominatrix Mrs Flo Blow (28) told our reporter yesterday morning over a cup of tea in the palatial kitchen of her 19th Century terraced home, shortly before expelling us on the spurious grounds that we had no idea how to fix her washing machine. The matter is before the Press Complaints Commission.

"Is that any way to treat us? It's the kids I'm concerned about. I mean, he never was much of a moral influence on them, but it was sort of comforting to them to know he was there. And then, all of a sudden, he wasn't. His only communication was the series of garden gnomes he stole from premises throughout the south-east of England and would post back to us. I think it was a joke he'd read about in a magazine. He was always looking for cute ideas to borrow, and I suppose the gnomes were a way of putting that into concrete form.

All the while we were talking, the subject *for is that the object?* - grammar Ed. Jol of our discussions, Mr DA Blow, known to his friends as Dennis, disgraced former magazine editor and international *bon viveur*, was ensconced in the shed at the bottom of the couple's luxury 0.02 hectare garden. With as little notice as his departure, he had returned one wet March morning. Mrs Blow has still not decided whether she will allow him back into the family home, and all our attempts to interview him would have spoiled the story. Anyway all we could hear from the 10'x10' shed was the repeated sound of a heavy object hitting the ground and a spinning bicycle wheel.

"I blame his showbiz friends. They were thoroughly bad for him, even though of course they shunned his company as often as they could. Every week we'd hear about one or another of them jetting off to Nepal, New Zealand, Walthamstow, and all Dennis got to do was read their letters. Now he's returned he's just behaving like a cartoon character - having parties with hundreds of young people in his shed and subsisting entirely on lager. I really don't know what to do with him."

What should Mrs. Blow do, readers? We're instituting a *Daily Catch* [daily? surely some mistake] vote to let you the public have their say, and we'll publish the result of your votes on the front page, shopping channel, everything else you'd expect a responsible publication to do, and see if the Minister for Wingeing can dodge the issue then, eh?

A voting slip, cunningly headed *Catch* Questionnaire, is enclosed on a separate piece of paper with this issue. Return it by May 1st and make your voices heard in this, the moral scandal of the decade. Can you live with your conscience if you don't?

Inevitably there is a serious side to this, however much we might want to laugh off the problem. Our latest disappearance has a lot to do with the time the various *Catch* core personnel have had to spend on the magazine recently, but equally it reflects changes in the economics around the matters we cover.

While on one side we've seen the number of specialist juggling retailers, for example, drastically decrease from the peak in the early years of our publication, the number of working groups in the New Circus & Street/Outdoor Performance field, and their audiences, have increased just as rapidly. It is not going to be economically viable to produce the magazine as it is for much longer, but there's undoubtedly as much of a readership for the information and issues that we cover as ever before, and potentially far more.

Like lots of other people we've got applications for grants and loans and it could be you in all over the place, and like lots of people in a similar position, the chaps with the purses on strings and the serious money to give or lend want some assurance that all our potential readers don't reside in the land of wishful thinking - they want us to do some market research. Which is where you come in. You're our market, and so are the people you know who don't buy this magazine, but read it, or might do; the people at the events you go to or organise, the people you hope to attract to them, the people you might try to sell a piece of equipment, service or performance to, even the people you wished you met more of more often. If we get this right we'll have a better, more informative and wider reaching *Catch* rather than none at all, which is definitely preferable. We hope you agree.

Fill in the form, fill in a photocopy too if there's more than one of you, send it back to us by May 1st. It'll help us avoid more scenes like the above, and you *know* that's a good idea...

diabolo

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Boo to the Boosers

I have recently returned from the Bristol Juggling Convention, which I have been to every year since 1990. As usual, it was just right, fun, relaxed, inspirational and supportive.

I was saddened and upset at the Renegade show to hear some pretty aggressive booing in the audience when a certain juggler appeared on the stage. I have nothing against a good heckle - in fact it can be amusing and help the show along - but this was negative and uncalled-for. Surely an audience of fellow jugglers is usually full of good vibes and sympathy? I was not alone in feeling this: a lot of the other 'old timers' were likewise upset.

Having got that off my chest, the compère and all the acts and the juggler concerned coped very well with a potentially difficult audience, and it was quickly forgotten. A big thank you to John & Geraldine for yet another perfect 10 days, we look forward to next year.

*Netti
Cardiganshire*

Sometimes people get stuck into patterns based on in-jokes they don't even understand, and if this is the juggler we think, he's been the victim of those attitudes before. But, as you say, he's big enough to take it, and Renegade is, as we all know, the home of the heckler, and long may it continue. Who else thinks piss-taking is only funny when they're doing it?

Down Under Sideways

The Juggler's Rest (where they don't) is going really well and on November 25th we celebrate our 2nd birthday... Pity we won't actually be there, but our partner in crime Ferg will make sure it's a grand do. I know it's too late [you don't know how much too late, mate - d] to invite all the jugglers in the world to attend via your next issue, but there's always next year... besides, we only have 20 beds.

We recently featured on a NZ travel show (one of the most popular shows on TV there) called *Anset New Zealand's Time Of Your Life*. This brought in a huge response from your average (is there such a thing?) Kiwi family, who are booking in for a few days and trying out things they never even dreamed of. Juggling is still growing in NZ/Oz and is a long way from peaking.

During December, January, February and March, we are getting a lot of street performers popping in for a look round... and staying on... and on... and on. Our guests get some wonderful entertainment. And we sit back, relax, and drink, and drink...

Robert Nelson, the infamous Butterfly Man, popped in for an afternoon, just

for a look, and popped out again 10 days later! ...went away and popped in for another 7 days. Nick Nickolas pops down when he can and... well the list goes on. No name-dropping intended, but just trying to show what a different kind of place we have going. People shouldn't be put off by its 'backpackers' title. This is home!! A good place to try out some new ideas in an intimate atmosphere. People either loved Robert's characters... or were scared!!

We are still storing equipment, getting people work when we can and we now have a huge frame tent (which the Flying Dutchmen came by through very



dubious means... but no tales told here) which people can borrow... Free. Go Bush after a hectic month of festivals.

A lovely thing is starting to happen, we get a lot of arty farty (oops) people through, and they are turning their skills to making juggling-related works of art for us. In the background of the photo of me balancing Jake, you can see a mosaic work created by a German girl. Took her 10 days - and she paid every night! Also various pottery works and a beautiful painting of Ferg's old Beards Practise deluxe short handles! Our visitors' book is full of wonderful cartoons - one by Denmark's top cartoonists... whoever he is. Do you get the picture, people? Can you tell we are a little proud of our juggling haven? Very. It took us six years to realise a dream. 'Be careful what you set your heart on... You'll get it.' Anon.

Mr & Mrs Sideways? Glad you asked. We came to the UK try and get some work up for next year, festivals and such. Pauline is an occupational therapist and is doing some locum work, but when we go back to New Zealand we are turning full time with our act. Very scary giving up a secure \$47,000/year, but we will eat less

and try and make ends meet somehow. Are you bored yet?

Thanks for listening. And send anyone our way, pop in for a cuppa, but be warned - time stands still at our place. You could get stuck.

*Gary, Pauline & Jake Nevin
aka Mr & Mrs Sideways*

Another free advert. You must owe us a month's B&B by now, Gary. Astute readers will have noticed that we probably got this letter some months ago, but, er, the Mail Clippers must have been slow or something. Don't mention that it was posted in England...

...Then two come along at once...

I'm sure it's not just me who thinks the entire Corby/Cambridge thing is stupid. Having two regional conventions on the same day within miles of each other seems like slightly bad timing. Apparently Cambridge 'cater for a different group of people than Corby'. Aren't we all there to have a good time, try and thieve a trick or two, meet up with friends we haven't seen in months and perhaps (just perhaps) throw things in the air? How different can you get?

I can only assume that either one will end up running at half their potential or that one will place the other firmly in debt.

Shame on both of you for approaching what we all know and love with such a grizzly attitude.

PS. Why do globalls break so bloody often?

Anna xxx

Burning Question

Does anyone recommend the new *Fire Water* for fire breathing, or is it still as dodgy as the last stuff?

*Dave (Russ & Dave)
Cheesy Grin & Co.
Bristol*

*Surely we don't have to wait three years for the next *Catch* fire special to answer this one - any theories out there?*

Miraculous Appearance

So, it finally happened. Just when all thoughts of bright red lights whizzing through the air above my head had faded, like the career of a sacked minister left scowling on the back benches, what just arrived on my doorstep but five new *Astroballs*! And they all work too - don't you just love a happy ending.

Many thanks

PS Any chance of another issue of the *Catch* appearing soon?

*Angus I Lamond
Wormit, Fife, Scotland*

Think positive and anything could happen...

An (Illegal) Alien Writes

Hello to everyone at The Catch, it's Crumpefrogweasel, Ratweasel, Trumpetfrogfish or whatever else I like to call myself, writing here. I guess Rumpelstiltskin is my most popular name by now. A preconceived name, but a hard one to get rid of.

I went to the Torino Juggling Convention. It was very enjoyable. I will try to go

to the next big European convention if I'm still around.

It's a pity I can't

go to the one in

Bristol but I guess

I'm silly to get

booted out of the

UK for exactly

the same reason

I got kicked

out the first time. The

suspicion of under-

the-table

jestering

[ssss! what a villain! -d]. Crikey my life is like a comedy of errors.

I got back to Zurich straight after the Torino Juggling Convention had finished and on the same night a car drove over my unicycle, the second unicycle I've had that a car has driven over. I also lost a unicycle whilst hitch hiking in Wales just before I went to Ireland.

Anyway I better go very soon. Only five minutes to go.

I would very much like to do some work in the UK someday as a nonsensical pixie but I'm not very good at business. I guess I could come

back to England before I go back to Australia, but the only way is if I get some fair dinkum work-permit work. I can't get a 2 year working visa as an entertainer. I can go back to the UK again as a general tourist if I go back to Australia and sort out all the paperwork. I can go back to the UK again without going back to Australia but I have to get some real work which requires a work permit. I would like to go to next year's convention in Edinburgh and the Edinburgh 52nd Festival & also the Glastonbury 27th Festival. Maybe I could attempt to do a 24 hour non stop jestering show at the Glastonbury Festival. Also it would be good to go to Nottingham and Bristol conventions.

Sean Goodfellow

c/o Bahnhof Str.23, Oberrieden, ZH
8942, Switzerland

Anonymous Hype Dept.

Who is hiding whose light under a bushel? And why?

Having had the occasion to watch this

season's Zippo's Circus several times, I am puzzled to know why the juggler who appears twice in the first half of the show is not even mentioned in the programme, is unannounced, and on top of this performs his stunningly beautiful routine with a very good but distracting UV act. Finishing with 5-club back-crosses he does not even take a call!

Since I have never before seen such grace and technical skill in the flesh, I feel that his juggling, including 3 & 5 clubs with everything from floaters (no spin), singles, doubles, triples, high triples, and the aforementioned back-crosses, needs some recognition. Does anyone know his name? Please someone, enlighten us

*A bemused but admiring fellow-juggler
Romford*

When the author is just as anonymous as the juggler, I'm inclined to suspect the ego crime that dare not speak its name - self-praise. Or a bad case of wanna-be-in-your-pants. The letter being typed, I suspect one of our regular mysterioso maniacs (even tho' both the postmark and the act are wrong for Snakeyships) but we're printing it in the cause of getting at least one person out there squirming in embarrassment. Always worth it.

EuroStar Star

Is Harrow & Wealdstone's stiltwalking juggler the first person to juggle under water?

This summer Len Brownsell took his car to France by the Shuttle through the Channel Tunnel. Half way across he took out his juggling balls and juggled them under the sea, 330 feet beneath the waves.

The way must still be open for someone to juggle all the way across, from tunnel entrance to tunnel exit. Either by Shuttle or Eurostar.

When I told Len and a few others that I intended writing to *The Catch* about this, I was told that juggling in the Channel Tunnel had already been done. This may lead to some interesting correspondence, but Len's feat will probably be the first record.

*Norman Blackburn
Harrow*

Hi Norman - thanks for the cuttings. Done my garden no end of good...

French Without Cheers

Polly, Jack and I have now been here for nearly six months. Life is v. laid back since it's too hot to do most things during the day. Scenery is great, food fresh & tasty, and the pool a necessity.

Last night I went and saw a circus in the village, and intended to review it for *Catch*, but to be honest the standard

Write to:

Diabolo

Catch's Cradle,

c/o

**Moorledge
Farm Cottage,**

Knowle Hill,

Chew Magna,

Bristol

BS18 8TL

was so poor that I thought it wasn't worth the bother. I was going to stay after the show but I was too embarrassed - I mean what can you say - "...and tell me Claude, how many weeks have you been in the circus?" Anyway I could do a small piece on the crappier side of small touring tired, circus in France if you like!

*Tony Webber
Estreacastaux, France*

That reminds me...

Uuuh - stop me if I've told this one before, but... We don't run convention reports, apart from sometimes the National/Euro/World level, because even though every convention is different, all the reports end up sounding the same. We'll run a report of a show or other event if it tells us something interesting about acts we haven't featured before, rather than just listing who appeared; we always appreciate knowing that an event was good so we can be nice about it when it happens again; we'll print a letter about anything; but we have to be selective - *Catch Out* is too full already. This also means that we don't always have room for all the unsolicited event reviews we get, the ones we asked for get priority. It is, however, always a pleasure to discover someone new we can ask to review events, so don't give up sending stuff in. Is that confusing enough?

Likewise (but for different reasons) we don't print poetry: The editor only likes it if it's got difficult words, Goddesses or very soppy/sexy bits in. How come WB Yeats sneaked in a couple of issues ago I don't know, I looked and he's not even a subscriber. But this is why we churlishly ignored the nice one we were sent by Sarah O'Donnell of Shrewsbury and will probably ignore yours too no matter how good it is. "Pearls before Swine," repeat after me...

diabolo

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Contact Jo or Will, 01232 236007

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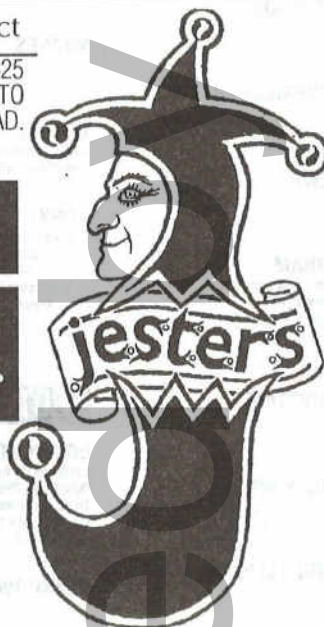
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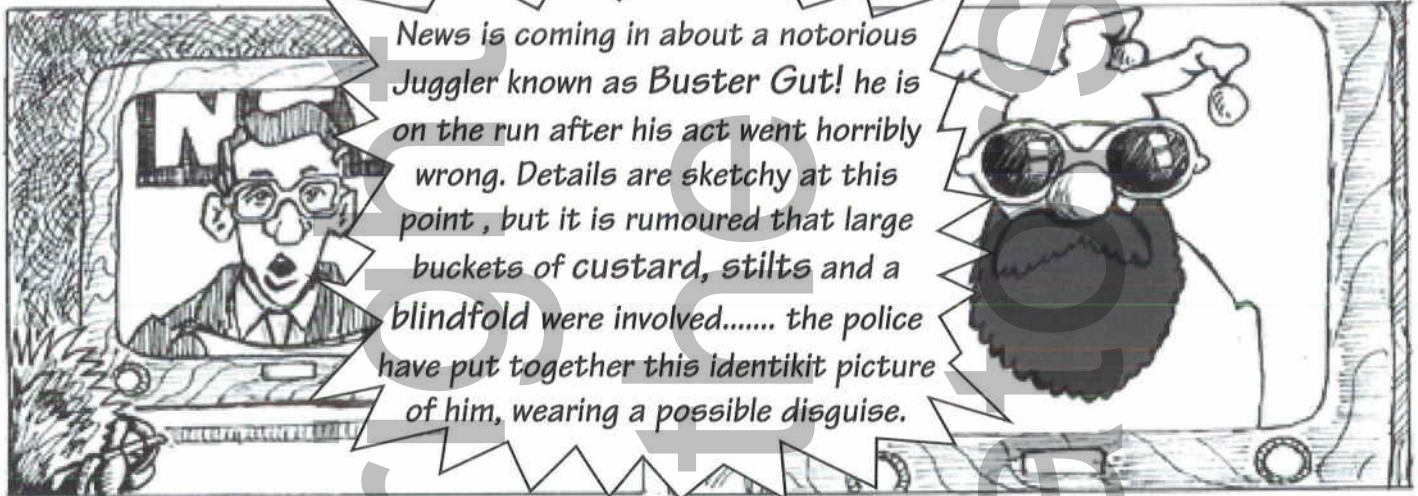
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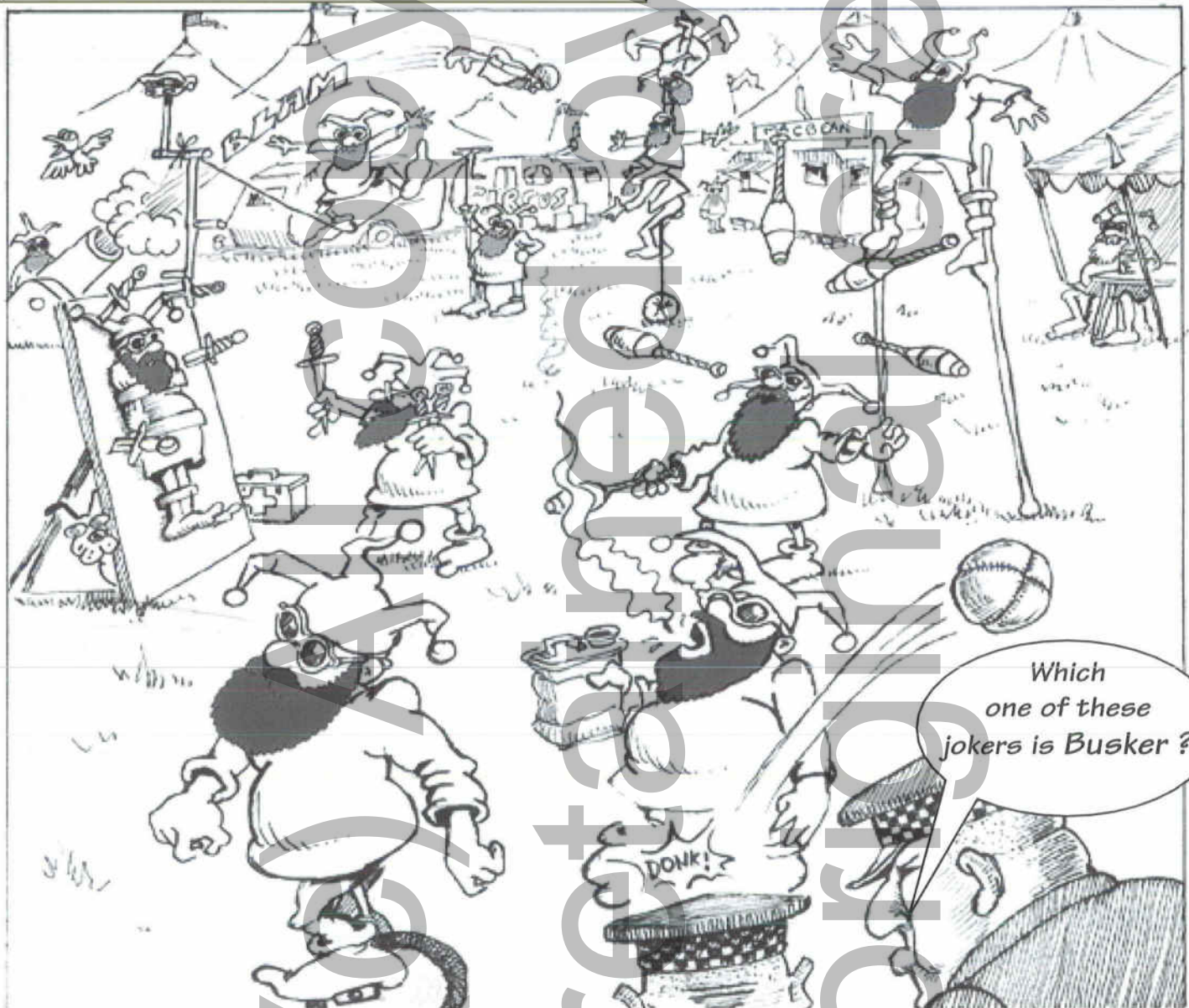
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WHERE'S BUSKER?



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