

British Theatre Guide

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The Circus of Horrors

Whitley Bay Playhouse and touring
(2006)

The show begins where the young, virginal Reagan has a nightmare. She then wakes up and finds that she is in the nightmare. She is initiated into the Circus of Horrors by having her throat slit by Dr Haze, the circus master, a rather dishy Alan Rickman look-alike. She then turns into a vampire (as you do), is strapped to a spinning wheel and has knives thrown at her. Things then begin to get a little weird.

The Whitley Bay Playhouse audience watched in what can only be described as a mixture of shock, horror and stunned amazement as the circus acts performed. It was almost as entertaining to watch the expressions on people's faces. Most I would say were staunch *Circus of Horrors* fans who knew all the characters well and what to expect, but many, like me, sat in shocked silence for the first few minutes. Not for long though! By the time us prudes had been squirted with blood a couple of times, the smoke screen had cleared and the rather fabulous live rock and roll band got underway we were clapping and singing along with the best of them.

The first act to perform, with the help of two rather hesitant members of the audience, was Gary Stretch, who proceeded to pull the surplus skin from his neck over his head. This was quickly followed, with no attempt whatsoever to link (how could they?), by two incredibly bendy contortionists, the female being wheeled onto the stage in a very small bottle and the male doing a very good *Exorcist* style human crab.

These were followed by acrobats, trapeze artists and limbo dancers, who at one point managed to limbo under a flaming pole balanced on two beer bottles, and then a woman was suspended from the ceiling by her hair (ouch).

Oh there's something for everyone: from leather clad pole dancing nurses to a very crude midget, who at one point proceeded to hump a Hoover and then eat a light bulb, although not at the same time - because that would just be silly?

The men are all freaks, the women are all gorgeous, in a sort of *Zombie Dawn of the Dead* meets *Anne Summers* kind of way. The language is strong, the acts bizarre and raunchy. Clap, tap and be merry, but don't take your grandma with you!

"The Circus of Horrors" is giving two more performances today at The Whitley Bay Playhouse, 10th Feb, 2006 at 6pm and 9pm before continuing on its national tour.

Reviewer: [Diane Kennedy](#)