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BARBU ELECTRO TRAD CABARET

Rating: 4.5

The Panama Club, Royal Croquet Club

Reviewed By David Russell

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It's a difficult gig these days for a circus to come to Adelaide with a new show. Fringe audiences are accustomed to high-calibre foreign acts – they've seen a lot of them – and they demand something different every time they step into a tent.

At its heart French Canadian **Barbu Electro Trad Cabaret** is a showcase of circus skills we have become familiar with, but the genius of these guys is that they've packaged it in a way that is so bizarre the audience never quite knows what on earth is going on.

Interspersed between incredibly elegant aerial hoop work, juggling, strong man tricks and bodies being flung about the stage, are men being towed by their beards, a sword swallowing two-headed 'mentalist', faux-sexual pole-dancing, beer-guts, and genitals exposed when it's least expected.

All this is set to a mesmerising live electro-trad soundtrack of haunting gallic hymns, supported by side-of-stage visuals of oil slicks, flowers and swarming insects that creates a surreal, unsettling mood.

The chaos and apparent drunkenness of it all leaves the front row feeling certain a burly, over-weight man is going to topple off stage and squash someone, and as the show progresses it becomes less about circus and more about having a darn good time. Highly recommended.

Barbu Electro Trad Cabaret continues at the Royal Croquet Club until Monday, March 14.