

## The Arts

## Where's the magic?

## POP

Mis-Teeq

Hammersmith Apollo

Paul Clark

DESPITE persistent claims to the contrary Mis-Teeq are about as urban as morris dancing. A quick glance around the kindergarten crowd on the final leg of their first UK tour suggested that while junior popettes might buy it, they lack the genuine credence of their US contemporaries Destiny's Child.

They possess the raw materials — Sabrina is an assured vocalist, Alesha is a confident rapper and Sue-Elise is brilliant as “the other one” — but, for a band whose name suggests cabaret illusionists, it lacked any real magic.

The material, particularly in the first half of the set, suffered from a serious overdose of treble, creating some piercing upper frequencies which increasingly grated. The high-pitched assault on the ears was compounded by the discordant jarring of Sabrina's potent vocals and Alesha's barked ragga raps.

Changing from their glittery white bras into outfits rarely seen outside a line-dancing class resulted in a dramatic improvement. The succulent ballad Strawberrez, from recent album Eye Candy, enjoyed honeyed harmonies from the trio and a subtle acoustic arrangement from the band. Brian Dowling then camped it up during an impromptu appearance for the jiggy Can't Get It Back. “What are we gonna do with this one ladies?” purred Alesha suggestively. “Ask him if he has any straight friends,” should have come the reply.

Early hit One Night Stand, with its cello motif, was the first half of the crowd-pleasing encore and it inspired squeals of delight which were repeated for Scandalous. The strutting strings and siren punctuations make this by far their best single to date and the only thing in their arsenal they could fire at the American market they hope to crack.

“We're UK's finest,” they sang boastfully at one point but sadly it counts for very little over the pond.



Mis-Teeq: going down well with British popettes but without the genuine credence of Destiny's Child from across the Atlantic

## Grotesque Piccadilly circus heralds London's art boom

## EXHIBITION

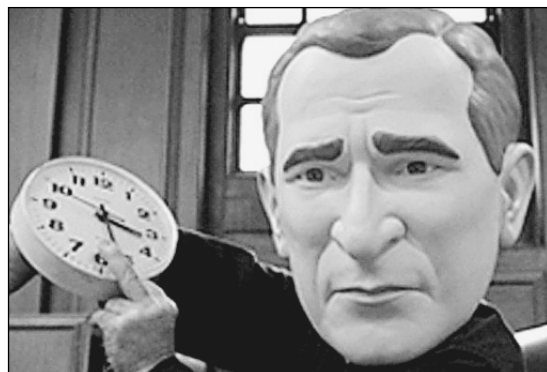
Paul McCarthy

Hauser &amp; Wirth, W1

Nick Hackworth

IT is odd that the sight of an aging American hippy fondling his greasy balls and using industrial quantities of HP Sauce to fake defecation should bear witness to the increasing strength of London as an international art centre, but it does. For this delicate scene is one of many to be savoured in videos made by Paul McCarthy to inaugurate the London branch of the Zurich gallery, Hauser & Wirth. This launch, along with that of several other important new galleries, and the appearance of the Frieze Art Fair, opening tomorrow, proves that London's art market and scene is expanding to rival that of New York.

The gallery has set up shop in a distinguished Edward Lutyns building in Piccadilly — until recently a bank — but has initially chosen not to play to the elegance of the interior, instead allowing McCarthy to



The man in the masks: Paul McCarthy as George W Bush in a scene from the artist's video, Piccadilly

turn it into something resembling a bomb-struck lunatic asylum.

McCarthy is, amusingly, internationally renowned for his championing of the aesthetic of the object in his obscene, carnivalesque performances. His enormous inflatable sculptures outside Tate Modern only hint at his true style, but here it is on full-frontal display. Amid a chaotic installation of debris from the old bank, he shows videos of performances in the Piccadilly gallery and a set of the space constructed in his LA studio.

McCarthy and three female assistants cavort, wearing huge masks, including likenesses of

the Queen Mother, George W Bush and Osama bin Laden. They crawl around, give birth to long, horrible sausage things, take off their clothes, paint each other, destroy props and liberally spray around the sauce in puerile and symbolic fashion. Though one should not look beyond the entertaining surface for meaning, it is appropriate work with which to open a gallery since, after all, art has its genesis when infantile homo sapiens brought hand from arse to face and, in abstract expressionist fashion, smeared.

● Until 20 December. Information: 020 7287 2300.

## A laughter trip around the world

## COMEDY

Dave Gorman

Corn Exchange, Brighton

Bruce Dessau

SOME go into comedy for fame, Dave Gorman must be in it for Air Miles. The Michael Palin of stand-up previously globetrotted in search of namesakes.

His latest tour de force is about being told to tour the world to meet 10 Googlewhacks — people whose websites are the only ones found when two words, say dork and turnspit, are keyed into the search engine. The result is a beautiful picaresque tale, overflowing with humour and heart.

In the hands of lesser talents this could feel like a self-indulgent lecture, complete with slides and extendable pointer. But Gorman is endearingly self-deprecating, breathlessly explaining how his utterly futile quest only came about as an expensive way of avoiding penning a grown-

up novel to legitimise his grown-up beard.

A series of freakish coincidences soon finds him playing table tennis with a Bostonian child before ping-ponging across continents. As if to prove that this is not the work of an overactive imagination, Gorman produces the relevant boarding cards, a banal touch that has a cumulative charm, portraying him as part trainspotter, part Dice Man.

After numerous scrapes, including a particularly bizarre episode about which the audience is sworn, Mousetrap-style, to secrecy, he pitches up in Australia, on the cusp of triumph. In a climax that outstrips Phileas Fogg at his most frantic, Gorman goes way beyond gags into something far more existential. Naturally, his book remains unwritten, but the Googlewhack Adventure has netted him a truly novel hit.

● Bloomsbury Theatre, 16 Nov and 15, 17-20 Dec. Information: 020 7388 8822. Apollo Hammersmith, 3 Dec. 0870 606 340.

## Dancers capture the feel of true freedom

## DANCE

Rosas

Sadler's Wells, EC1

Sarah Frater

“COME on,” you can almost hear her call, hands held high to beckon you on. “I'll race you to the end of the beach.”

Anna Teresa De Keersmaeker doesn't actually say that, she doesn't say anything, because the Belgian dance maker can evoke how you feel when you race full pelt, chasing to catch your best friend who then turns and chases you back, without props or sets and without saying a word.

Small Hands is a duet for De Keersmaeker and her long-time dancer Cynthia Loemij. The pair career on to the small, elliptical stage surrounded by an audience of dozens rather than the thousands normally crammed into Sadler's Wells. They're wearing jewelled evening dresses, hoiked around their waists like two runaways from a very grand ball. The posh frocks are soon discarded, leaving De Keersmaeker and Loemij naked except for the sheerest of shifts, breasts and body hair clearly visible.

The modified stage is the key to the piece. Being so close makes you feel as if you're doing the dancing. You literally move when they whoosh past, the thuds of their feet vibrating your seat, their breath almost dampening your face. You feel hot from the perspiration on their skin. And, golly, what pretty skin.

De Keersmaeker and Loemij look like two of the Three Graces, luminous in their dresses, serious and beguiling at the same time. Is there a girl-on-girl theme? Maybe. The piece is unequivocally sensuous, but then De Keersmaeker jackknifes your expectations, head butting the light fittings, and is that a cigarette she's rolling or a joint?

Small Hands has no conspicuous bravura, but has no less discipline or elegance for that. De Keersmaeker and Loemij run and smile, and then seem to sing the Purcell to themselves that accompanies the piece. They look like freedom feels. Go see.

● Until tomorrow. Information: 020 7863 8000. This is a Dance Umbrella event.