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Petit Mal

Queen Elizabeth Hall, London

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Lyn Gardner

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Away they go ... Petit Mal and the South Bank Centre

The trampoline is tipped upwards, as if it hasn't been used for a long time. Planks of wood and old tyres litter the stage. A young man picks up some wood and uses it as a crutch, his legs dragging uselessly behind him. Another knocks the crutch away, an act of casual destruction. It feels as if everyone is spoiling for a fight, and yet there is also something laid-back about this remarkable Finnish circus show. Like *Traces*, the French-Canadian personality circus hit, *Petit Mal* offers a group of youngsters hanging around, sometimes scrapping, sometimes watchful, often sullen and self-absorbed, but whose friendship and masculinity is constantly tested, defined and challenged in tiny physical explosions of prowess and failure, practicality and invention.

Petit Mal

Poole Lighthouse

Tonight. Then touring

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There are little fits of activity that are electric, wild and uncontrollable. A plank and a couple of tyres serve as a teeterboard, a vacation is conjured with an old palm tree, and at the end the trio of performers float above the debris in an improvised balloon.

I could have done without the pantomime horse and the Elvis impersonators, but I loved Rauli Kosonen's extraordinary trampolining – which has a desperate, emotional, Tigger-like quality, as if he'd like to bounce right out of his own life – and Petri Tuominen, who approaches the Chinese pole as if he has a personal grudge against it.

Every time this trio do something exhilarating, it is so undercut that it becomes the antithesis of the perfect drum-roll feat. Instead, it feels as if they represent a generation sifting through the rubble: sometimes getting it right, often getting it wrong, but determined to live their lives to the limit even as the world falls down around their ears.

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