

## Transcending disability with outstanding ability

### DANCE

By **Ashling Duffield**

DID you see the legless dancer in Derry on Monday night?

It sounds like a sick Monty Pythonesque joke but anyone lucky enough to see David Toole dance will never ever forget it.

When Toole, a member of the London-based CandoCo Dance Company, first walked on stage on his hands — his huge muscular arms supporting his tiny legless torso and head — I felt strangely disquieted, and alarmed. I am ashamed to admit that initially I felt party to a freak show.

But in seconds Toole's outstanding ability made it impossible to focus on anyone else. His ability transcends his disability leaving the able-bodied dancers overshadowed by his power and presence.

In *To Please the Desert*, created by Jodi Falk for Kuldip Singh-Barmi and Toole, the two dancers perform mirror images of

each other. Toole supports Singh-Barmi's body as they weave over and through each other. His movements are magical, at times he moves with such grace it seems as though he is floating.

Candoco, a company of eight dancers, three of whom use wheelchairs, performed four works as part of Octoberfest. The company has an interesting use of space, distance and height. It has succeeded in transforming something as ungainly as a wheelchair into an integral part of the design.

The only other sequence which was memorable or noteworthy — *Christy Don't Leave So Soon* performed by the company's co-founders Adam Benjamin and Celeste Dandeker and Singh-Barmi — looked at the conflicting nature of love.

The dance, performed to Michael Hedges haunting music *Aerial Boundaries*, is breathtaking. Celeste, a former dancer with London Contemporary Dance abandons her wheelchair during the course of the work and is cradled and freed by the love of the two men.