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THE INDEPENDENT

Pick of the day: Club Monkey

After years spent laughing at their country on the alternative cabaret and art rock circuits, maybe Japanese musical satire duo The Frank Chickens is an idea that has finally found its time. Now that Channel 4 has turned the inscrutably daft ritual of Japanese Sumo wrestling into as familiar art object of couch-potato curiosity as darts, snooker, pro-celebrity sheepdog trials and carpet bowls, there is at last the possibility of Kazuko Hohki and Atsako Kamura's tacky national self-parody finding popular recognition. Sushi, sake, samurai and Sumo – British audience' xenophobias is primed and waiting. So what better for the Chickens to break out of the cult audience ghetto than by staging Club Monkey, a hybrid show that draws on elements of pantomime, fantasy, kabuki theatre, rock musical and cabaret comedy. Based on the Chinese legend of the Monkey King, the story – mortuary-dwelling monkey people mobilising the souls of the dead for revolutionary ends – packs a hard political punch. Sparkling music and loopy pigin English humour; plus gender bending, anti-sexism, anti-colonialism and – not a single lapsed Blue Peter star in the cast.