

JEREMY NICHOLL



Flame thrower: A member of the five-strong No Fit State Circus getting a light for his cigarette from a flaming club thrown during the group's juggling act outside Cardiff city market. Street entertainment provides a light diversion for shoppers and can mean better business for retailers in towns and cities where busking is not discouraged, *Brian Morgan writes*. It also gives professional performers a chance to supplement meagre earnings early in their careers. The No Fit State Circus travel the UK performing for children and adults in schools, community centres and

nightclubs. But many thousands more will have seen their 20-minute act performed in public places. Cities like Leicester, Southampton, and Newcastle upon Tyne have hired them to provide a dash of colour in shopping precincts. John Paul, administrator of Arts Play Umbrella, which organises work for No Fit State Circus, says many cities are slow to appreciate street theatre. But it grows on the public once established. Cardiff's authorities have a relaxed attitude to what are now popular and familiar faces on the traffic-free precincts.

But Mr Paul says he regrets that many businessmen have yet to recognise the value of hiring companies of performers to counter the attractions of out of town shopping malls. The operators of the private shopping complexes are not so slow — they have already realised how entertainment draws the public.

And street performance can also provide income for otherwise unemployed youngsters. Those who venture onto the streets with guitar, violin or recorder can earn £40 or £50 for just a couple of hours of busking — if they are good enough.