

## **HANGING AROUND THE AMAZING BLAZE BIRGE**

When aerial star Blaze Birge isn't busy polishing her dancing skills, creating graphics, making costumes or working on rigging, you might find her hanging around inside the Cole Bros. Circus Big Top. Upside down.

After graduating from Eckerd College, where she majored in philosophy and dance, Blaze chose to follow her passion, the circus, to England where she trained as a trapezist with Zippo's Academy of Circus Arts, and later performed with Zippo's Circus on the double trapeze. A nearly fatal fall put her partner in the hospital for eight months. Blaze survived with even greater determination to continue her circus career, envisioning not only mastery of aerial arts in her future, but bringing more theatrical elements to the performance.

Blaze performs a tightly choreographed and dangerous routine with partner David Jones, a solo trapezist in his own right, on the tandem trapeze. Her slight frame belies her strength; their act begins with the inverted Blaze on the trapeze holding David as he performs below.

High above center ring as the featured attraction on the aerial chiffons, Blaze intricately wraps herself in the silken fabric then executes a breathtaking series of twists, turns and drops that leaves the audience—and her fellow performers—gasping in awe of her courage and skill.

Blaze admits that her work requires superb conditioning, but claims an aerialist's most significant attribute is self-confidence: "You have to be able to trust yourself when you're hanging thirty feet in the air."