

**THEATRE ROYAL**  
**Jane Ellison**

THERE is a primeval prejudice among men that women, in proportion to their attractiveness, are unable to raise a laugh from even the corniest joke in the gag book. How surprising, then, to see last night's fog-ridden audience at the Theatre Royal, Stratford, actually guffawing at jokes performed by glamorous women in satin boiler-suits. Your incredulity will increase if I add that all the jokes were "feminist" in spirit and delivered by Monstrous Regiment in their new cabaret, *Floorshow*.

Monstrous Regiment is a company of nine women and two men with a reputation for concern about the women's movement. *Floorshow*, exploring aspects of working women, proved that women can entertain and amuse without resorting to winsomeness or aggression to gain attention.

There is a warmth and attractive strength about Chris Bowler, Gillian Hanna and Mary McCusker which I have seen few women achieve on stage.

I did feel, however, that Monstrous Regiment were struggling against the unfair odds of poor staging and poor material.

The show's four writers, who included Caryl Churchill, seemed unhappily obsessed with the wretchedness of factory life and the dignity of manual labour. Somewhat blandly they listed the shame of being whistled at in the street by lascivious men as the ultimate indignity of a working woman's life.

There is, I readily admit, much to be said about the domestic frustrations of those who stick labels on cans of processed peas. But lyrics like "Then the social worker came round: she said I needed more facilities" filled me with such despair that I stopped listening to the rest of the song.

EVENING STANDARD, THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 1978

**Time Out** DEC. 1977

'Floor Show' a cabaret by Caryl Churchill, Bryony Lavery, Michèle Wandor, David Bradford, presented by Monstrous Regiment.

Monstrous Regiment, the two-year-old women's company, have produced a dazzling cabaret, *Floorshow* is glamorous, funny, feminist and aimed at a "shop floor, mop-floor" audience. With writers Caryl Churchill, Bryony Lavery and Michèle Wandor, the five women and two men company have tackled the most sexist of theatrical forms, cabaret, and their most potent sketches are where this succeeds best. Full marks to Mary McCusker's superb opening turn where she regales the audience with the idea of being a housewife: "How you like to be married to a house?" and Roger Allan's wickedly funny and satirical Dr Foster nursery rhyme medley. I also liked Gill Hanna's tale of the lady bus-driver, Chris Bowler's perfectly-timed "What happens when a girl walks down a street?" and Helen Glavin's dirty telephone-call. In its time, this cabaret should have the same double-edged success as *Rock Follies*. (Ann McFeran).

**Theatre Royal**  
**'Floorshow'**

By HAROLD ATKINS

"FLOORSHOW" is an amusing cabaret at the Theatre Royal, Stratford E., so it cannot be expected to put very seriously or logically its proselytizing Women's Lib theme that women are hard done to in all sorts of jobs, from the shop floor to the kitchen sink.

Its flamboyant colours and noisily brilliant beat music appealed to a young audience more for the originality of the Monstrous Regiment touring group — two men and five women — than for its argument.

Clad in strong reds, greens and blues — one man had sequined braces — this unusual company, partly pierrot, partly pop genre, partly band, sang and played into a half-dozen microphones with tumbling rhythms and electronic accessories. The girls appeared to be against both domesticity at home and unworthy jobs outside and held the view that men were not worth much.

Gillian Hanna sang a funny shopping song about a woman with bags chasing a bus. Mary McCusker had some of the Scottish charm of the youthful Renée Houston in her exchanges with Clive Russell. There were songs and sketches about running houses, trade union troubles and sex discrimination.

Roger Allan had his own peculiar eccentric turn with a guitar that could be developed more succinctly, and he and Josefina Cupido, at the drums, gave some of the best of the notable jazz. It was altogether a lively do.

Four authors were responsible — Caryl Churchill, Michèle Wandor, Bryony Lavery and David Bradford who directed, and the music was by Helen Glavin, Josefina Cupido and Roger Allan.

The Daily Telegraph, Thursday, January 19, 1978

**theatre**

**FLOORSHOW**

by Monstrous Regiment  
Theatre Group

Monstrous Regiment's revue *Floorshow* demonstrates a shift in subject, time and format, away from historical topics such as the Paris Commune, and witchcraft (dealt with in a chronicle-play form), to the subject of the sexual division of labour now (treated in revue style). This form is a neat one to choose, as it allows for lots of good strong songs with sophisticated rock backing, a dazzling light-surrounded mirror-backdrop, running gags, glittery costumes, plenty of jokes—the ideological pill was well sugared.

Not only sexist ideas around work were attacked by using the revue form, the very form of traditionally male-dominated humour was shown up in the spotlights. We saw women acting as compères and cracking bitterly funny jokes, and men talking about their own sexism; women refusing to act the ventriloquist's dummy, and men singing

about stereotypical nursery rhymes and minding the baby. All credit not only to the highly professional and skilled performers, both players and musicians, but also to the women script-writers.

I did find the revue slightly over-long for the material it contained, and I also found it slightly idealistic in seeming to suggest that the antagonisms around the sexual division of labour at work outside and inside the home can be laughed at and contained within a male-female dialogue; the feminist struggle is surely more messy, violent and complex than that. Still, the fact that this problem exists indicates how Monstrous Regiment have begun to tackle the problem of writing plays that give men equal parts as protagonists.

However, the men's low-key approach in this show, compared with the women's verve and brilliance, isn't necessarily the way to show support for women, since it creates a slight tension. One example of this was the fact that the women wore the shiny satin costumes while the men and the woman drummer did not; why couldn't they all have glittered?

These reservations apart, it's

a slick, highly competent show, which I am sure will get audiences laughing and thinking. Catch it while you can; the company is touring the country with the show.

Michele Roberts

Dec 16th New Hall, City University, Islington. 8pm. *FLOORSHOW* (Org. by Vietnam Hospital Campaign)  
Dec 17th 18th Hampstead Town Hall, Haverstock Hill, *FLOORSHOW*, 7.30pm.  
Jan 17th-21st Theatre Royal, Stratford East *FLOORSHOW* (Contact theatre for time).  
Jan 23rd-25th St Lukes College, Exeter. Kiss & Kill. Jan 26th-28th Bristol Arts Centre —Kiss & Kill

**SPARE RIB**  
**JAN. 1978**