



Fight for the female cause — but without the fire

**I've Got Nothing To Wear,
Monstrous Regiment,
Drum Theatre,
Plymouth.**

IT'S so long since I saw this company that I hope they'll forgive me for assuming that — like so many fringe groups — they had blazed their meteoric trail across the theatrical sky and either burned out or vanished into the void.

But up they pop once more. Formed in 1975 to challenge female stereotyping, they now bring a programme of sketches, stand-up comedy and songs — always a strong point with them — and here including torch, blues and a super folk protest number with guitar.

Flicker

I half expected a nail-studded bludgeon to counter socio-political oppression.

But here comes the shock. Hardly a flicker of outrageous militancy. Very little that was raunchy.

Nothing to discomfort the men in the audience — there were 14 of us, almost all chaperoned, and outnumbered 10 to one by women.

All or almost all the expected subjects came up.

They were mainly related to the mysteries and miseries of the body, and diets, romantic heroines, and natural childbirth, which did lend a somewhat old-hat air to the evening.

Analysis

Some items are, frankly, blunt-edged but that happens in every cabaret.

There was a clever and funny character analysis from shoes, a dozen of which were flung onto the stage in foodhardy response to the invitation.

And there was an exploration of the contents of a bathroom cabinet with a prize for the person who owned up to having the highest number of those listed.

The winner had 43, and the prize was a plastic bag for her to junk it all.

Position

One player regaled us about life upside down, from a most uncomfortable looking crab arch position.

And the sole male performer (the company shies away from using men) built up and played a musical number from notes randomly suggested by the audience.

Despite too much fiddling with microphones, the very talented quartet of Sally, Amanda, Michele and Matt provided an engaging non-stop 90 minutes, making points without stridency and, more important, giving a lot of pleasure.

But I'm afraid I missed their old fire.