

May 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 1982.

SEE HOW THEY RUN

by Philip King

Cast:
 Ida, a Maid..... ELSPETH DALES
 Miss Skillon..... ROBIN PIETTE
 The Reverend Lionel Toop..... TOM ATKINSON
 Penelope Toop, his wife..... HELEN ASHBOURNE
 Lance-Corporal Clive Winton..... RICHARD MOORE
 The Intruder..... JOHN FENNER
 The Bishop of Lax..... JOHN DILLAM
 The Reverend Arthur Humphrey..... ERIC F. ABBOTT
 Sergeant Towers..... RICHARD BAKER

Directed by DENZIL PUGH

Stage Manager..... Nick Welch
 Deputy Stage Manager..... Annette Shearer
 Assistant Stage Managers..... Fay Dillam, David Babbington, Rob Browton, Christine Weaver, Roz Weaver.
 Properties..... Sue Hamilton, Anne Wood, Ann Richardson
 Lighting Design..... Mike Crisswell
 Lighting Operators..... Ken Enston
 Sound recorded by..... Richard Pemberton, Phil Crisswell
 Sound Operators..... Andrew Bayliss, Jean-Pierre Kuenzler
 Wardrobe..... Madeline Gorrell
 Photographs..... Mike Lee, Martin Savage

The music in this production was all recorded in 1943.

Programme cover design by Ronald Welch.

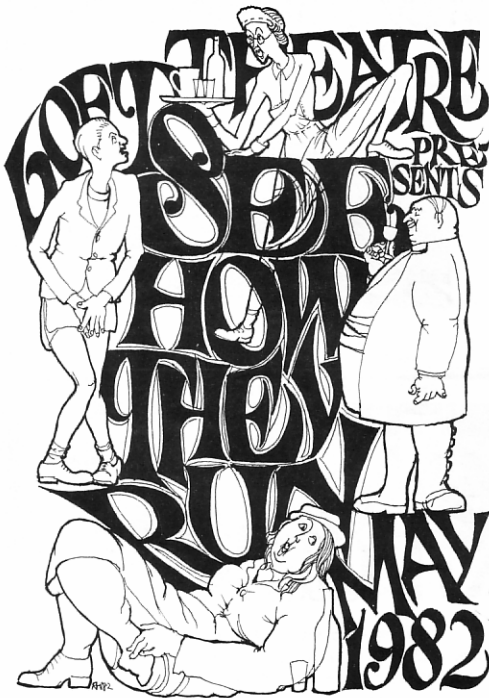
There are two intervals of 15 minutes.

Curtain down approximately 9.50 p.m.

The action of the play takes place in the Hall at the Vicarage, Merton-cum-Middlewick, in 1943.

Act I An afternoon in September
 Act II The same night
 Act III A few minutes after Act II

NO SMOKING IN THE AUDITORIUM



So daft yet so brilliant

See How They Run
 Loft Theatre,
 Leamington.

Philip King's delight-fully silly farce has been polished to perfection for this outstandingly good production.

The result is the most amusing show I've seen anywhere this season, a blend of daff lines and split-second timing that left the first-night audience in stitches. Set in a country parish during the last war, it's the tale of a vicar's vivacious wife who meets up with an old flame and plans an innocent but secret night out.

Who should stumble on the scheme but the old spinster who fancies the vicar? Add a couple of bemused clerics, a manic military policeman and a dim maid

and the scene is set for non-stop hilarity. Denzil Pugh's production must be the result of sheer hard graft. Yet the precision is achieved without losing any of the play's light-weight froth — the cast obviously love it. Helen Ashbourne and Tom Atkinson are delightful foils for each other as the vicar and his wife. Elspeth Dales turns the maid's role into a star part and the ineptie Miss Skillon, as played by Robin Piette, is an object lesson in the art of acting drunk. It's a strong and well-cast production. Eric F. Abbott deserves a special mention as the harmless utterly bemused Rev. Humphrey. The show runs until May 29. Don't miss it.

PETER RHODES.

Unfrocted clergy on the razzle

SEE HOW THEY RUN — Loft Theatre, Leamington, until May 29.

THERE'S something about vicars that gets people rolling in the aisles.

Pop one or more people into a dog-collar and the effect is that everyone barks with laughter.

At least, that was the assumption when this Forties farce was written. And it's an enormous tribute to the standard of acting here that it can still be entertaining today.

It exists in a Second World Wartime world of frock-coated bishops, flowered settees, maids and the

THEATRE

acceptability of slight madness.

There's a frustrated spinster and men in all-enveloping underwear chasing each other through french windows.

You can't get much cornerier than that. But you'd also have to go a long way to find a better production.

The plot is flimsy in the extreme; but such is the quality of the performance, direction and set that you can easily forget you know exactly what's coming next.

The flighty former-actress wife of the village vicar finds herself first on the town with an old man friend disguised as a vicar, and then the hostage of a highly-strung German, also dressed as a vicar.

Add an influx of genuine local clergy and you're guaranteed mistaken identity ad infinitum.

The success of the show owes much to a first-class performance by Helen Ashbourne as Mrs Toop the vicar's wife. She is gorgeously extravagant without going over the Toop.

More smashing portrayals also make you forget you're watching amateurs — notably from Richard Moore as the visiting friend, Elspeth Dales as the maid and from Eric F. Abbott, doing a gem of a job as the spidery old Rev. Arthur Humphrey.

Julie Hanson

Another runaway Loft success

IT'S all a bit hectic really.

That's because the plot of See How They Run at the Loft Theatre revolves around a severe case of mistaken identity. Some people seemed to find the resulting chaos slightly confusing but it's all terribly simple really. I'll explain.

Scene: Sunny England 1943 when the enemy was the Hun and no one was quite sure where Argentina was let alone the Falklands. Hall of the vicarage at Merton-cum-Middlewick, warm muffins for tea. Get the picture? Good. Action.

Vicar's wife Penelope Toop (Helen Ashbourne oozing talent) is having a bit of an argy-bargy with local ratbag Miss Skillon (Robin Piette doing the Lady Bracknell bit). They're certain not to get on because she's a former

actress. Penelope that is, not Miss Skillon. Pay attention. Vicar, Lionel Toop (Tom Atkinson) doing a Derek Nimmo without the stutter) pops out and an old friend of Penny's drops in.

Problem is that the old friend (splendidly played by Richard Moore) is also a soldier and the local high spots are out of bounds... quick change into vicar's spare suit.

Meanwhile a POW (John Fenner complete with hilarious accent) escapes from a nearby camp, socks the vicar, the real vicar that is, and... surprise, surprise, changes into his clothes.

With the vicar count already standing at three another one turns up. Eric Abbott making the very most of the part. All are soon outraged by a visiting Bishop (John Dillam).

With more dog collars around than there are at Cruis the fun really starts. But though fast and furious it is also controlled and humorous with Elspeth Dales as Ida the yokel maid holding it all together marvelously.

All quite easy really. Can't see what all the fuss was about. Oh, you don't follow? Let me go over it again.

To put it more simply, it's another Loft success. — Brian Richardson.



*Seeing double, or rather quadruple in the Loft Theatre's comedy See How They Run is Penelope (Helen Ashbourne), Eric Abbott, Richard Moore, John Fenner and Tom Atkinson are four of the vicars who crop up in Philip King's hilarious play which ends its run tonight and tomorrow.

