



'Allo 'Allo

by Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft

Company

René	John Fenner
Edith	Anne Bennett
Yvette	Emily Morris
Mimi	Dawn Morris
Michelle	Karen Shayler
Colonel	Phil Quinn
Captain Bertorelli	James Wolstenholme
Herr Flick	Michael Seeley
Helga	Jill Laurie
Gruber/Airman	Jason Havard
Leclerc/Airman	Geoff Bennett
Crabtree	Harry Sanders
Pianist	Rachel Havard
General	Ron Austin
Peasants	Lynda Le Long, Anne Wood, Steven Laurie
Director	Wendy Anderson
Stage manager	Sue Wilkinson
Properties	Tricia Spelman
Wardrobe	Margaret Shepherd
Lighting and sound	Loft Technical Team
Set design	Tim Eden
Set construction	Loft Construction Team
Press and publicity	Helen Ashbourne
Front of House photographs	Simon Cook
Theatre technician	Tim Elmore

The action of the play takes place in and around the Café René in the village of Nouvieu in occupied France during the Second World War.

There will be one interval of 20 minutes.

Acknowledgements:

Painting of the Fallen Madonna by Rachel Havard
Special thanks to the Talisman Theatre, Kenilworth, for the loan of various props and costumes





Say 'Allo to René

By Kerry Beadling

Allo 'Allo, The Loft Theatre, Leamington, until July 22. Running time: 2hrs 15mins

LISTEN very carefully - I shall say this only once: classic British sitcom 'Allo 'Allo was brought brilliantly to life last night.

Everyone wants the Fallen Madonna with the Big Boobies while randy café owner René is being pressurised by the Gestapo, the Resistance and the occupying Germans, not to mention his two waitresses Mimi and Yvette and his wife Edith, as news comes that Hitler is coming to town.

The attention to detail was spot on with René (John Fenner) and Edith (Anne Bennett) looking strikingly similar to their television counterparts, as was the set of the café.

All the accents and catchphrases were rolled out with precision - the English policeman Crabtree (Harry Sanders) saying "good moaning", the sleazy Italian Captain Bertorelli's (James Wolstenholme) "what a mistaka to maka" and Leclerc's (Geoff Bennett) rubbish disguises with the obligatory "it is I, Leclerc".

Although it could have seemed dated the tight script and performances keep it moving quick enough to stop that happening.

The end of the second show started to drag slightly but that was a small point. Special mention should be made of Madame Edith's showstopping singing and Michael Seeley's cross-dressing Herr Flick. Definitely worth a look.

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REVIEW: 'ALLO 'ALLO, LOFT THEATRE, LEAMINGTON

Fast-paced comic dialogue, double-entendres and saucy antics are essential ingredients for a production of classic television series 'Allo 'Allo.

And the Loft Theatre delivered them all with a formidable cast and some excellent acting, reproducing the antics of the motley crew of German soldiers, members of the resistance movement, naughty waitresses and even naughtier café owner René.

The latter was played by John Fenner, who looked spookily identical to on-screen original Gorden Kaye, and delivered his lines with the same professional ease.

Other notable performances came from Michael Seeley as leather-clad Gestapo henchman Herr Flick, oozing repressed eroticism, and Karen Shaylor as resistance fighter Michelle who delivered the classic quip "I shall say dis only once," with aplomb.

The play is a saucy romp and the one-liners come thick and fast, so fast in fact, there is barely time to pause let alone laugh before the next line hits you.

Anyone who remembers the television series knows that this is a show which pokes fun at the Germans, the French and the English.

Harry Saunders has the difficult and not always successful job of playing Crabtree, the ridiculous English spy trying to convince the Germans he is a French policeman, even though he cannot speak the language.

But the show, and the play, also pokes fun at gender stereotypes.

René's long suffering and aged wife Edith, played with real steel by Anne Bennett, is constantly rejected in favour of more nubile French totty.

This is where the play leaves an uncomfortable taste because despite a wonderful cast, this kind of comedy not only laughs at, but also reinforces the disturbing truth of women long past their sell-by-date in the eyes of a modern society.

7/10



Go over the top or you are shot!

ONE of the most endearing and enduring memories of Les Dawson's act was his marvellously discordant piano player. The funny point was he had to have the ability to play the instrument extremely well in order for it to sound so awful.

The same can be said about bear-to-the-bones humour such as Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft's jewel in the nation's comedic diadem 'Allo! 'Allo! which ran on BBC1 from 1982 for a decade. At its peak the war time spoof was watched by 16 million viewers and was sold to 70 countries.

Its comedy fed from the trough of national stereotypes, double entendres, rampant sexism and excess schoolboy "sausage" humour. After all, anyone can walk into a pub and get a laugh by saying "sausage" - it's a funny word. "Spaghetti Bolognese" would probably not garner the same response.

To play such puerile comedy as 'Allo! 'Allo! effectively you have to be extremely accomplished with the ability to mug humbly and overact shamelessly. There is no halfway house - over the top or you are shot.

Unfortunately the Loft Theatre Company chose the wrong piece with which to end their 2005/2006 season. The Leamington-based troupe attracts high quality performers but they seemed too shy to slip into scenery-chewing.

The show, which was first released to amateurs in 1986, was full of chuckles but it was guilty of becoming a mere impersonation of a national treasure which even the most humourless found difficult to watch without keeping a straight face.

I was desperate to laugh out loud at director Wendy Anderson's production but the timing was poor and the coordination of exits and entrances was sometimes clumsy. The "sausage" word kept me sniggering, I smiled mildly at Crabtree's ludicrous broken French/English as delivered by Loft stalwart Harry Sanders and the farting 'blow-up' Hitler sketch was a gem.

It was an entertaining enough evening though, held together superbly by John Fenner as the incorrigible René, a character preserved for all time on television by Gorden Kaye.

I'm afraid the rest just made up the numbers, although the John Cleese lookalike James Wolstenholme as Captain Bertorelli deserves a mention in dispatches as does the set design of Tim Eden.

'Allo! 'Allo! runs at the Loft Theatre tonight (Thursday), tomorrow (Friday) and Saturday with curtain-up at 7.45pm. There is also a 2.30pm matinee on Saturday.

Dean Bartram