

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

He's a going, going Goon

THEATRE

By BERWYN LEWIS

Farewell To Australia
Spike Milligan
accompanied by Gerard Kenny and Friends
Monday April 18 to April 30
8 pm
Her Majesty's Theatre

The mercurial Spike Milligan is back, goonery and laughter is alive and well and yes, there is life after Woy Woy.

After a series of false starts Spike starts up the show, visual radio complete with unmentionable sound effects, goon sounds and censors' bleeps and yet, as Spike says, even "lipreaders and the dyslectic will like it."

Gingerly he tests audience humour thresholds with his fine tuning and then he plunges everyone into the deep end of his joke pool.

Joke upon joke gets popped off the Milligan laughter production line. There are ambidextrous jokes, an unofficial unveiling of our Bob (as well as a gradual wrap-up of Peacock).

There's the incredible stream of goon accents (loved and feared by all radio fans). There are zipless jokes, disembowment jokes (Spike's version of the side splitter), jam roll vindaloo jokes, banana jokes and a series of false nose jobs which leaves the stage littered with noses and the audience howling and whooping with mirth.

Milligan knows how to push everyone's madness button and how to pack jokes into split seconds, faster than the speed of sound, faster than the flap of an ear.

He skips through songs (don't miss his body-rending version of "I left my . . . in San Francisco") accompanied by the warm and distinctive sound of Gerard Kenny, songwriter and pianist, and Friends on drum and bass.

Spike slips, quicksilver-fish style, through his infinity of characters in spinning bald pieces, a self-saluting digger's hat and Chinese Tam O'Shanter's.

And he deserves to be made poet laureate for the limerick.

His show streaks from one location to another. High-ranking German officers' toilets (with a whiff of

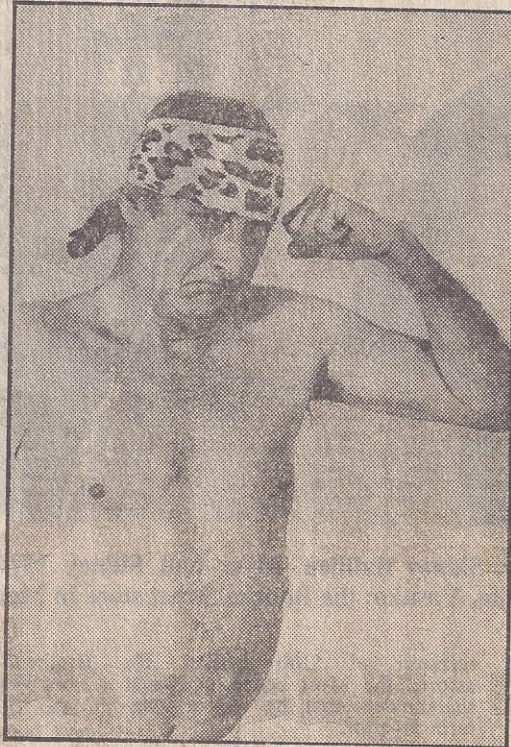
something in the air) to some of the biggest underwear change scenes ever mentioned on stage.

His goon-scape is peopled with ubiquitous porters, half Nelsons and hunchbacks.

This is Milligan at his three-dimensional best, out-gooning himself but sometimes leaving you wondering at his plethora of jock strap, dog-face-hat, lesbian and homosexual jokes. The only one who didn't cop it was the classic mother-in-law. Everyone else does regardless of race, sex, religion or closet proclivities.

Milligan leaves no joke unturned. He is maestro, Machiavelli and scallywag of laughter.

Nothing is sacred, or if it is Milligan hasn't yet heard of it. When he does . . . prepare to laugh, or squirm. His jokes are not all nice. He makes us laugh at ourselves.



Milligan . . . no joke unstoned.