

A goonful of Spike's factory

"THANK YOU for that diabolic applause," says Spike Milligan, for my money the funniest man in the world, and tumbles head over heels into a display of wit that is unique.

The one-man funny factory commands a laugh on every line — although piercing squawk or dissipated shuffle will replace a line — in a show that, I suspect, is largely ad-libbed.

His humour relies on puns, satire, silly limericks, corny jokes, black humour, general blathering and labouring points a step further than the ridiculous. Gooning, obviously, is the only word to describe this weird display.

THEATRE

John Michell
Spike Milligan
Colosseum

The show bounds along at an insane pace and is guaranteed to transport one into a realm of mirth that is seldom encountered in any other comedian.

Looking fit and tanned, Milligan gives a performance which audiences will never forget. Neither, unfortunately, will other comedians — so you'd better pop over to the Colosseum one evening and hear it all the first time round.

What amazed me was how

Milligan controls the show. That morass of off-beat and shatteringly funny humour seems, to some extent, intricately planned. The boards are littered with props — mallet, blackboard, dummies, hats — and even the microphones are placed so that his energetic act will be heard no matter where Milligan finds himself on the stage.

The wine he sips between turns is cooled in a fire bucket. Yet Milligan keeps a tight reign on the chaotic buffoonery and ensures the audience that, no matter how hectic the show may become, they will get more than their money's worth.

Milligan takes regular breaks, handing the microphone to Ashley Parker, a startlingly good young singer and guitarist. Johannesburg has not heard enough of this rock balladeer who forces charisma into every word he sings.

I trust that it will not be too long before Parker takes top billing himself.

The first half of the programme has loads of talent but little magic. Hollander Nol Klinkhamer, another regular on our stages, backs the show with his quartet. He has a strong leaning toward jazz and I would have liked to hear more of his group making their own music.

Gary and Spider open the show with their blend of folk and country music and a brand of base humour that somehow remains compelling. They, too, have been around a while and their performance is professional and polished.

Newcomer Anna Raven has a strong, clear voice and a repertoire that includes everyone's favourites and some of her own compositions. She accompanies herself on guitar and is an adept pianist, while able to communicate her warming energy.

Supporting programmes are sometimes dreary; this one isn't too bad. But Milligan is brilliant. I haven't laughed so much since — well, since last time he was in town.