

SHOWTIME



Zany Spike 'captures' Durban

"This is Durban, let us pray," says Spike Milligan, and the packed Playhouse would have gone down on its knees to this zany comedian if only there had been enough room between the seats.

He stood centre stage surrounded by a weird assortment of inanimate props, his white hair blowing in the wind created by two whirling fans, looking like a shipwrecked mariner who's mislaid his albatross among the flotsam.

● Spike Milligan . . . his timing is masterly.

THE ENTERTAINMENT: "Spke Milligan" (Playhouse, Durban)

THE ENTERTAINERS: Spike Milligan, Ashley Parker, Gary and Spider, Anna Raven and Nol Klinkhamer.

THE IMPRESARIOS: Quibell Brothers.

But he hadn't mislaid his wit, masterly timing, ethnic jokes (News item: Two taxis collided in a street in Edinburgh and 50 Scotsmen were injured) and his rifle drill which would have had Rommel and Mussolini so helpless with laughter that they wouldn't have been able to fight back.

Durban surrendered with

shrieks of laughter and Milligan, an old campaigner, pressed home every advantage. Great fun.

Giving him a rest between bouts of wrestling out of a wagoneer's felt hat or punching his frustration-dummy, Ashley Parker steamed through songs like the Trans-Canadian Express, railroading through

good heavy material with sparks flying and his strident voice (a cross between Dillon and Richard Harris) shaking the musical hills of convention.

Anna Raven's husky vibrato was suited to her Country and Cat Stevens selections but she leaves little clear-edged memory behind

her. Gary and Spider are up to their usual form, but The Citizen should claim a percentage of the proceeds of good comic acts these days. It's provided some of the best topical jokes I've heard in years, so after G and S have finished with Jaws II, prepare for Citizen II.

Splendid to have Nol Klinkhamer's fine musicianship and talented group as musical backing, but he should play up more when the foil for Spike's chunky humour.