

An enormous undertaking

CAMELOT CIVIC THEATRE

CAMELOT is an enormous undertaking for any group. For an amateur society to produce it must be a decision of some magnitude. I have been enthusing about Ray Jeffery's productions for the Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society for some time now. With Camelot they have scaled but never quite reached the peak which tantalisingly remained out of their sights for a whole evening.

The spectacle is there. It creaked a little on the second night of the already fully-booked run, but it was there. However, it all seemed to little purpose other than to impress. The story ran along one track and parallel to it but never quite touching it was the spectacle. The first half was rather long. All the many scene changes happened (and I do feel for those Trojans scurrying hither and thither behind the tabs) but the noise from behind (unavoidable, I know) during a tender scene

on stage made one wish that either the Civic was bigger, had a revolve, or that the group was presenting a different show.

The costumes were splendid; the many changes were managed with skill and the movement on stage was always impressive. The wedding ceremony, for example, although wordless, caught the splendour of the early Mediaeval scene. The many players swept in and out in magnificent array. The May scene was a riot of colour, dance and pageant. The second act opening number was punchy and virile as the knights prepared their swords. The jousting sequence, flamboyantly red and white and black, gripped with its intensity. But these were all moments; and moments don't always add up to a satisfying whole.

I was not all that happy with the leading players either. As Arthur, King of England, Ken Cooper started hesitantly, improved throughout the evening, but never had that all-commanding control of this enormous show which he should have had. Gay Jackson as Guenevere found it difficult to project her voice sufficiently over the large orchestra and Russ Watson never quite decided with which accent he was to play Lancelot. However, his singing voice was a delight to listen to, particularly *C'est Moi* and *If Ever I Would Leave You*.

Stan Parsons gave an engaging portrait of Pellinore and Stephen Kliskey as young Tom of Warwick almost stole the show with his assured and commanding speech towards the end. Alan Merrill mumbled rather ineffectually as Merlin but Angela Jenner made the most of the enigmatic *Morgan-le-Fey*.

In conclusion I would hate

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