



*Phranc: 'sensible shoes and an acoustic guitar'*

# PHRANCLY MY DEAR...

## PHRANC

LONDON T&C2

GIRLS' NIGHT out and it's going well. A few songs in, Phranc introduces herself to the audience, at least two-thirds of whom are Women In Comfortable Shoes, as "your average all-American Jewish lesbian folk-singer." Really? Now there's a surprise for any blind illiterates from the planet Zanussi who might have missed the dozen Sapphic references so far.

Even without partisan sisters screaming "get your tits out", Phranc knows how to win sympathy. Shared experience and self-deprecating jokes bring cheers of recognition for breezy beach-party ballads, lustful hymns to Martina Navratilova and a cautionary tale about the problems of bunk-ups in bunk-beds.

But then, the difficult bit. Our musclebound and crew-cut hostess rightly says real life can be sad as well as funny, but neglects to mention how much harder it is to make the sad bits entertaining. The inevitable anti-apartheid anthem (a contractual obligation at events like this?) says nothing new, while her humourless lecture on avoiding disabled parking spaces

stretches the importance of being earnest to absurd lengths.

A Dylan relic is sweetly rendered but just too damn obvious, raising the ugly spectre of Joan 'Totally Crap Forever' Baez. And since you take the predictable path, Phranc, I will too by comparing you to Ms Shocked: streetwise sass earns you more laughs, but Michelle could give you lessons in expanding and diversifying your sound.

An acoustic guitar is not morally superior to an electric one (or drums or brass or synthesizer), so why not be as open-minded musically as politically? How about some relevant, contemporary covers instead of stagnant standards?

But I mustn't magnify a hiccup into a vomit-coughing seizure. Phranc plays a warm and witty selection swinging from shoutalong sloganeering ('Female Mud Wrestlers') to robust melodic depth ('Dumb Hairdresser', 'Life Lover'). Acapella finale 'I Enjoy Being A Girl' leaves the sisters screaming for more even if it means missing dyke-drama *Prisoner: Cell Block H*. True devotion indeed.

Stephen Dalton