

WE THREE QUEENS: REVIEWS

It's not often a critic gets a performance virtually for himself. But that's what I was treated to at Homo Promos' latest show, which is billed as "an Antidote to Christmas". It wasn't their fault. It was New Year's Eve, and damn cold outside, but the three performers (Eric Presland, Keith Bursnall and Toby Collins) struggled manfully (sorry, Eric, personally!) to put on a good show for a largely imaginary audience. The door-person assured me loyally that the house was usually packed.

They certainly deserved a decent crowd. The situation of this play-with-songs-cum-Xmas-cabaret is that three gay men are thrown together on Christmas day though they hardly know each other, marooned in a high-rise flat with no means of escape. The characters are vaguely familiar from previous shows by this enthusiastic company. Eric plays "Eric", a neurotic, rather naïf but lovable, politico; Keith plays "Keith", a sophisticated queen (played with considerable sang-froid in the circumstances); and Toby (who is a dab hand on the electric keyboard), plays "Toby", a slightly oafish, working-class leatherman (ie. The sexy one; those leathers *do* suit.)

Naturally they while away the passing hours – apart from the obligatory devouring and drinking – by playing games and singing songs. And some of the songs are very amusing, in the kind of style Noel Coward might have used had he been "out". The lyrics are often witty, though the music would benefit from being more harmonically adventurous. I particularly enjoyed "Putting on the Straights", a nice parody of "Putting on the Ritz" (an attempt at Astaire/Rogers-type dancing would make it even better) and "The Sisters' Boogie" in which Eric details his passion for a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence. There's also a clever sketch in which Mary (the original one) is trying, without much luck, to get a grant from the DSS.

By the second half one becomes quite fond of the characters and I rather enjoyed myself – even the community singing. There is a cheery set designed by Keith Bursnall and the second-half costumes add a touch of flair. I particularly liked the deliciously bad jokes, largely, for some reason, of a telephonic nature. ("I thought you said you were 0171?" – "He's on the cusp.") or, in the middle of a song about Gay Switchboard, "Can I use your Dictaphone?" – "No, use your finger like everybody else."

- Laurence Brown, *Capital Gay* 7th Jan 1993