

**HOT MIKADO - Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society at the Civic
Theatre (27th sept- 3rd Oct) 2003**

'Hot Mikado' is a jazz adaptation of the Gilbert and Sullivan classic operetta 'The Mikado' but in a thirties style setting. This show opened to a stage brilliantly lit in the red and purple colours of Japan and as soon as the chorus appeared it was obvious that this was going to be a highly colourful and energetic piece, not so much HOT as sizzling! This version has a lively swing score and gave opportunities to the cast to reveal their talents in a totally different style of music from more usual musical scores. The audience began to guess that they were in for a great time as soon as Yum-Yum (Christie Booth), Pitti-Sing (Claire McGeough) and Peep-Bo (Karen Kelleher) the 'Three Little Maids From School', delivered their song in swinging Andrews Sisters-style that brought the whole production to life. The evening however, belonged to Katisha (Kirstie Wooldridge) who, from the moment of her first appearance, was a knockout. This statuesque girl with a big voice sang her songs with all the depth and soul that the gospel renditions intended, and her comedy duet with Ko-Ko had the audience wildly appreciative. Ko-Ko (Patrick Tucker) himself had many excellent moments and was a great foil for the evil Katisha who was never 'gentle' with him, his version of 'Tit-Willow' being reminiscent of another comic character, Arthur Askey. Fine performances were given by Yum-Yum (Christie Booth) and Nanki-Poo (Nick Court), these young voices giving the modern sound so necessary to this adaptation. The director, Jeremy Tustin, made ambitious use of the chorus who danced every big number, and all tapped their way through an energetic song with the splendid Mikado (Paul Tarrant), the concentration on some of the faces told a tale of how hard they must have worked to get it right! So, a really 'feel good' evening at the theatre, and so difficult to write this review about an amateur performance that by normal standards should contain some adverse critical opinion. However, it would be churlish to make petty criticism for the sake of doing so, and I am confident that anyone who was in the audience on the Friday night as I was, would agree with me.

Cheryl Rogers