

# the guide

>>what's on

## Players shine in a life or death dilemma

### REVIEW

**Whose Life is It Anyway?**  
**Moot House Players, Moot Hall**

EVEN more relevant now than when it was first performed, Moot House Players' latest production had audience members debating furiously during the interval.

*Whose Life Is It Anyway?* asks tough questions and offers no easy answers. Who should decide if a life is worth living – the medical experts who are committed to preserving life at all cost, or the paralysed patient who looks to the future with dread?

Is a wish to die a symptom of insanity as Dr Emerson

believes, or a rational choice as Claire Harrison maintains? And what about the finances? She is, after all, occupying a costly critical care bed.

An accident has left Claire paralysed from the neck down. Claire Quley captured the bitterness of an intelligent, witty woman who is determined to hold on to her anger, the only thing in her life she can control.

Brian Clark, who was for a number of years a member of Moot House Players, wrote the play for television in 1972. Since then it has been an award-winning stage play and a successful film. MHP are the first amateur drama group to present this updated version of the work, and they made the

most of the opportunity with a production that crackled with tension.

The moral dilemmas of the play are all the more real because the characters are rounded and believable. Ros Barron's Sister Anderson is efficient and dutiful, but understanding and affection lie beneath her uniform. Dr Emerson, played by Michael Rees, cracks bad-taste jokes with his patient and respects her intellect even while he opposes her wishes.

As well as some black hospital humour there is also a hint of hospital romance provided by the orderly, John (Matthew Truman), and trainee nurse Kay (Kerry Rowland).

Can life be a fate worse than

death? In her summing up the judge, played by Jenny Southwell, quotes recent real-life cases before giving her decision.

Judging by the conversations overheard during the interval, these cases evoke strong feelings. When Claire asks for "the same compassion that would be used to put an injured animal out of its misery", it's impossible not to be moved.

This is a compassionate play. The characters, although flawed, struggle to do the right thing. No easy answers indeed, but some fine performances and an outstanding script made this a memorable production.

Jane Gyamfi-Sarkodie

### HARLOW PLAYHOUSE

Thursday (May 26) featuring acclaimed clarinettist and saxophonist John Crocker, talented young trombone star Graham Hughes, piano wizard Colin Bray, bass ace Keith Donald and local legend John Petters on drums. The gig starts at 8pm and tickets cost £10 from 01406 365731.

### GATEHOUSE ARTS West Gate, Harlow

>>art The town centre art gallery opens up its studios to the public this weekend as resident artists give an insight into the creative process between 11am and 5pm on Saturday and Sunday. A new exhibition of stone and wood carvings also opens at the gallery on Saturday and will run until June 11, while would-be sculptors can learn more about the craft at the first of three free lunchtime sculpture lectures on Tuesday at 12.45pm.