

# the guide

## New drama falls short but shows potential

WHODUNITS are commonplace in the world of amateur dramatics, but this original production by Moot House Players promised something different by billing itself as a 'who's doing it'.

The 'it' is the tabloid hounding and subsequent cyber-stalking of newly-elected Labour MP Angela Chichester.

Writer/director Michael Branwell's first original play raises interesting questions about the price 'celebrities' pay at the hands of the press and the unsavoury ethics of smearing those in the spotlight while hiding behind the veil of anonymity.

But these issues, serious as they are, sat uncomfortably next to the play's light-hearted, occasionally farcical tone and got bogged down in a quagmire of stilted dialogue and unnecessarily extended and indulgent scenes.

### review

#### THE NEW MP

Moot House Players, Moot Hall, Harlow

Set in the immediate aftermath of her election, unfortunate Angela is attacked from the moment she is elected to office. The miscarriage she suffers, brought on by the stress of the campaign, is splashed across fictional red-top the Daily Investigator and she is soon being damned if she does and damned if she doesn't.

Although the tabloid eventually publishes a front page apology for its actions, the campaign to bring her down then moves onto social networking sites, spearheaded by the venomous Hashtag Harry.

Angela is befriended by the Speaker of the House of Commons, Donald Turnley, who takes it upon himself to turn Poirot and unveil her mysterious cyber-stalker.

But although a clear thread took us from start to finish, the play often strayed off course at an odd tangent while certain scenes failed to work, most notably an over-extended one involving a TV repairman.

The cast certainly gave it their all, with Claire Quley a standout as the titular member for the fictional constituency of Coalhampton.

With some cutting and tweaks to the dialogue, *The New MP* has potential, but right now this is one candidate that would struggle to get elected.

Mark Fletcher