

Janice Perry at ChapterFitting up  
the frame

By IFAN PAYNE

IT is not easy to find a frame of reference within which to communicate a response to a performance by Janice Perry.

Partly this is because her act as a comedienne and singer is a unique and highly personal one.

Partly this is because American humour does not travel well to this country (any more than ours does to the United States) and also because as with many other visiting performers one does not know the changes caused to her programme by the current rules of the Musicians' Union.

Last night Janice Perry's show consisted of a sequence of songs strung together with a squint-eyed commentary on our society and politics.

Most of the songs were of the type "Janice Perry sings well-known singers," as another well-known singer might imitate or influence her.

Thus her most successful songs created within them their own theatre of the absurd, as when she sang a song she wrote for Bertolt Brecht to write for Maurice Chevalier.

This produced an extremely funny vision of Chevalier as he might be sung by Joel Grey in *Cabaret*.

**REVIEW**

At her best, she created a zany world in which chopping wood became a fashionable exercise for the poverty-stricken.

Stripped down to tee-shirt and shorts, she sang *Pumping Wood*, high-stress, high-tension aerobics for the very poor.

Radiation, getting "bombed," on the plane, and the inaccuracy of F-11's all provided her with good material which was well delivered.

But at heart her act seemed an anti-act, with wonderfully bad songs (all sung unaccompanied) and throwaway material.

Her act was the deliberate antithesis of slick showbiz, and had about it the quality of Anna Russell (about whom audiences could not be sure whether she deliberately sang out of tune).

Was Janice Perry deliberately quirky and offbeat or was there a reason why she could not use a backing tape?

And was her material uneven because she was so often pulling our leg about the nature of performance?

Either way, hearing Janice Perry sing Belinda Lee as Johnny Mathis was well worth a visit.