



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : Mortimer Dramatic Society  
Production : Keeping Down with the Joneses  
Date : Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2017  
Venue : St John's Hall - Mortimer  
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

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[Show Report](#)

If you are feeling a little down and in need of a jolly good laugh you could do no better than to be thoroughly entertained by Mortimer's production of Keeping Down with the Joneses. This was an excellent performance with some brilliantly funny characters. There was no weak link and they worked extremely well as team.

**Karen Dignan** – (Deirdre Jones) – This was a fine portrayal with clear audible dialogue which was well intonated. She had a great rapport with Geoffrey and worked extremely well with him and the other characters on stage. Her finest moment was when she almost flew across the stage to grab Joe in a romantic clinch and give him a lingering kiss.

**Sam Foad** – (Joe) – For me this was the standout performance of the evening. His timing was impeccable and the comedic value he brought to the plot was fantastic. I loved the way he laughed at his own quips inviting the audience to laugh with him. He cut a fine figure as he stripped down to his vest and you could understand why Deirdre was drawn to him! He had such an easy laid back manner and his dialogue followed this trend being energetic charismatic and expertly inflected.

**Darren Reed** – (Geoffrey Jones) – This was a well delineated character and I really liked the stages he underwent once trapped in the shelter; from it'll be alright to claustrophobia to anger to almost madness to resignation at the fact they really were running out of oxygen! This actor has an innate sense of comedy and this timing is first rate and this really enhanced his powerful dialogue. He had a wonderful rapport with Deidre and together their dialogue bounced along at a cracking pace. However his total rant at his mother in law in act 2 was absolutely hilarious and gave the audience a real belly laugh!

**Kim Antell** – (Grindle) – As the Swedish au pair this young lady was stunning. Her accent was superb and her dialogue lively and spirited. Her movement had a certain feline quality which suited her personality to a T. There was a great deal of teasingly good fun as she delivered in every aspect of her performance.

**Paula Stenson** – (Mrs Waynefleete) – This was a knockout performance; she was totally crackers! Having been told she was going on a cruise in order to get her into the bunker she encountered the engineer Joe and the captain the milkman! However she was convinced and they all went along with it. By using a walking stick it gave the impression of being older and infirm totally believable. Her deportment and gestures were dramatic yet serene and composed. Her imposing matter of fact dialogue was spot on for the character and her facial expressions suitably sharp and dour.

**James Burton Stewart** – (Michael Murphy) – What a delightfully hapless portrayal this was! He had the biggest smile ever and put a positive spin on every situation. His Irish accent was well maintained and enhanced his dynamic dialogue tremendously. Being mistaken for the captain by Mrs Waynelete was extremely well played and helped to forge an engaging relationship.

**Roger Holmes** – (Raymond Blake) – I really liked this characterisation of the pornographer neighbour; he reminded me greatly of Boycie (Only fools and horses)! His dialogue was delivered with good pace energy and intonation and his belief that he was a cut above the others came over fabulously.

**Kerry Thomas** – (Sonia Blake) – This sassy young lady gave a super performance with animated visuals and dialogue. Her movement was seductive and peppy and she used this to great effect when interacting with her fellow actors.

**Nick Pounder** – (PC Bobby Smith) – I like cameo roles they can quite often be more rewarding than the main principals. This was a strong performance played with a natural easy manner stereotypical of the English bobby! His dialogue was well delivered with a good sense of timing and an inordinate amount of humour.

**Tom Shorrock** – (Director) – This was a superb piece of theatre from an experienced director. It was such a funny play and he had ensured that the actors brought out every ounce of humour therein. He had worked on the dialogue so that timing was second nature to them and they were completely aware when the audience needed time to laugh before taking in the next bout of dialogue. Relationships had also been well thought through and worked exceedingly well. Staging and blocking were excellent with exits into the bathroom and bedroom intricately contrived. The pace he created throughout was exactly right and moved effortlessly through the varied antics. All in all this was a highly entertaining piece and the audience enjoyed every minute.

**John Bull** – (Stage Manager) – As always with a single set play the SM does not have a great deal to do; however that said this was a well-run stage by an experienced SM. He was on hand to ensure the cast manoeuvred the steps without cause for alarm and controlled the prosceniums with precise timing.

**Lawrence Picking** – (Producer) – This producer had obviously worked closely with all sides of the production team from director to stage lighting and sound. Everything came together famously running smoothly from start to finish.

**John Bull/Memebers** – (Set Design & Construction) – The set looked absolutely super with the yellow and black warning tape the dividing door and the kitchen counter. The steps leading up to the bunker door were not only sturdy but really looked the business and were easily manageable by all the cast. The shelves laden with canned items were great and added a touch of humour to the overall look.

**Amy Kimber** – (Wardrobe) – Ladies costumes were really striking especially Mrs Waynelete's. I liked the milkman's outfit Raymond's over the top smoking jacket and the policeman's uniform.

**Michelle Greatbanks** - (Props) – There were certainly a lot of props for this production and everyone was of the right era and its usage; the large door opening handle table chairs cards and settle. I remember so well having a phone just like the ones acquired for the play.

**Katja Hunt** - (Lighting) – This young lady really knows her stuff. This was a clever plot using colour to create atmosphere and depth in the underground bunker; and the desk was skilfully controlled.

**John Makeham** – (Sound) – The sound effects for this production were numerous and had been sourced to fit their use perfectly especially the explosion and closing of the bunker door. I was particularly impressed with toilet debacle and would like to know if you and lighting were working in perfect unison or whether you plotted the effects together and then cued them as one? Whichever it was totally brilliant. It was only the baby crying which did not appear to come from the source.

**Members of the Society** – (Front of House) – It was nice to be greeted by a Jean Chapman who was warm and friendly and looked after us showing us to our seats

Thank you

**Jet**

Jeanette Maskell - NODA Representative - London Region - Area 13