Lust for life - or life for lust

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● Raw Women & Cooked Men, food for thought

By DAVID KENNY

THE heart is the organ of desire. Discuss. Well that appears to be the premise behind Raw Women & Cooked Men, the Warehouse Theatre's latest production. Subtitled The Language Of Seduction, it pulls no punches and, as it suggests, hints at the art of the chase.

What starts off as a journey into pretentious art-form soon makes its intentions clearer with the six protagonists feeding off one another in a frenzy of lust and desire, like a base form of Blind Date.

The basis for this production is simple. Take six different characters from a dating agency — all of whom are looking for love (and anything else they mistake for the 'L' word) — and see if any of them are compatible.

Eroticism plays a large part but the central question is one of love and lust — how much are they entwined, an eternal puzzle that is not answered here, but then you are the only one who could possibly find a solution for yourself.

It's certainly powerful stuff and thought-provoking as it highlights the absurdities of contemporary erotic behaviour, most brilliantly portrayed in one scene by the Carmen Miranda lookalike who suggestively munches on a flake, mimicking *that* advert, with more than a little touch of irony.

The simulated sex is hysterical but not in the least bit vulgar. Scunthorpe man shouts: "Can I go on top now?" and proceeds to hang from the rafters in a fantastic display of sexual acrobatics.

The performers give their all, but how else could they act considering the subject matter? That makes the play. The make-up and stage design are striking and delightfully complement the profound movements (balletic if you will) of the cast.

Strange, surreal and a little perplexing, Raw Women & Cooked Men is a frazzled look at modern sexual behaviour with a twist. Don't go and see this if you are at all offended by the notion of sex, desire, eroticism — call it what you will — being tackled in the theatre. But if you are capable of dealing with the issues raised in a very off-kilter way then this will provide entertaining and stimulating art of a kind.

❑ **The Warehouse Theatre, Dingwall Road, Croydon. To April 6, Raw Women & Cooked Men. Tickets on 0181 680 4060.**

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