West End theatre has a proven capacity for survival. So it is unlikely to be bruised or even scratched by John Pick's *THE WEST END MISMANAGEMENT AND SNOBBERY*. West end survival (like Broadway survival) is based on the quality of its product. But very little is heard of the quality argument in this book which is based on the doubtful premise that it is the managers rather than the audience who determine the nature of our theatre. The west end is almost totally at the mercy of market forces and even a heavily subsidised theatre is the servant of its audiences (look at the way in which some of our National Theatre's runs have been shortened or lengthened recently). As a researcher John Pick has assembled some interesting information, but the conclusions that he draws are surprisingly polemical for an academic of his stature. If I thought he was being serious, I would reach for my worry beads while contemplating the future prospects for arts administrators and their audiences. But John Pick is a tongue-in-cheek cynic (have you read his delightfully funny 'Beginner's Dictionary for Ambitious Arts Bureaucrats?'). As a theatre administration educator, he knows the danger of pupils becoming disciples of their teacher. He knows that they need something to react against and he has certainly provided it in this book.

**THE OLD VIC REFURBISHED** is an essential addition to the bookshelf of anyone who responds to theatre architecture with a physical ding and a mental dong. The pictures are a delight, especially those in monochrome. And the writing team of D. F. Cheshire, Sean McCarthy and Hilary Norris record much more of the history than the mere quantity of their words would suggest. I am confident that everyone who reads Cue will wish to own the fifty pages of this book.

The glossary alone will stimulate a vast improvement in the performance of green-room lawyers.

**ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE** is the book of the television series. In deciding that the book "would have to stand or fall on its own merits, independent of the series itself, but complementing it and if possible counterpointing it", Ronald Harwood offers only a partial release from any necessity to comment on the programmes. And so I feel bound to say that I am finding it very difficult to sit back and enjoy his video for what it is — rather than keep thinking of the quite different approach that could have been made under the same title but using all the creative techniques available to historical reporting on television, particularly the rostrum camera. But that would have produced a relatively objective history, narrated by an invisible voice. What we have is a personal view by an omnipresent presenter who I find curiously unconvincing, although most of his arguments stand up reasonably well to retrospective analysis.

The television series is in thirteen episodes, so the book has thirteen chapters, and I read them on thirteen consecutive train journeys. But why did I keep looking out the window? Alas it was not because my thinking had been stimulated but because my concentration would not focus. Perhaps I'll try again after the end of the series: perhaps by then Ronald Harwood will have captured this member of his audience. Because if there is one thing that the book does make clear it is that its author appreciates the importance of the fragile chemistry which enables the audience to make that contribution without which no performance can occur.

---

**THE WEST END MISMANAGEMENT AND SNOBBERY** John Pick. John Offord Publications (City Arts Series) £7.95 (paperback) (UK).

**THE OLD VIC REFURBISHED**. D. F. Cheshire, Sean McCarthy & Hilary Norris. Published by The Old Vic Limited. £4.00 (paperback).
