This is more than 'just a radio play'

By HELEN MUSA

Stray Toasters devised by Splinters Theatre, facilitated by Patrick Troy, 8pm at Theatre 3 until Sunday. Amateur.

Who were Splinters kidding when they put it about that this was "just a radio play?" The full depth of Rep's stage is used, an exotic bed hangs from the ceiling, and at least 13 television sets reflect the action with images of faces, mechanical insects and toilet basins. It is highly visual.

Of course there are the trappings of Lux Radio Theatre, all too crudely effected as they may be. At times it is as well we can see the actors, for while this is Splinters at its most evocative and even metaphysical, this production falls short of articulating its themes.

The labyrinthine plot concerns serial killings of young boys and mums, with a joke about the family triangle becoming the family circle the ultimate philosophical payoff. A glamorous socialite, Dahlia, despatches the youngsters. A scientifically sound doctor drains off their essential juices and manipulates their DNA structure to his heart's delight. A lost boy longs to be "connected" and becomes so, electrically, in a sinister comment on the title *Stray Toasters*. All the while the hero, criminal psychologist Egon Rustemagik (David Branson) and his inner voice (David Unwin) seek the truth, horrible as it is.

But the plot gives little clue to the strengths of this production. The latter part of *Stray Toasters* is fully evocative of an industrial society gone mad.