

## CLUB CORNER

## A Presentation Without Parallel

WHEN it comes to putting on their own Command Performance Blackpool and district concert secretaries seem almost as high-minded as their theatrical counterparts — the impresarios responsible for the resort's major shows — and the result is a programme which for polish and presentation is quite without parallel anywhere in the rapidly expanding empire of clubland.

In fact, if the majority of the participants had not borne in mind the golden rule "LEAVE 'EM WANTING and adhered strictly to schedule it might easily have been prolonged another hour.

## BEST EVER

SPACE does not permit of a detailed review of the many acts — the Gaytones (instrumental/vocal quartet from London), Colin Crompton (the Manchester comedian), Raymond (boy-vocalist from Coventry), Norman Collier (comedian from Hull), the Bradshaw Sisters (vocal duo from Rotherham), Doreen Beale (Leeds soprano), the Dutton Brothers (four vocal harmonists from Doncaster), Deric Dean (versatile from Rotherham), Ronnie Dukes and Ricky Lee (vocal and comedy from Rotherham) — all of whom well merited their inclusion in the best Clubland show I have yet seen in Blackpool.

## BACK-STAGE CREDITS

"WE are hoping to persuade the Duke of Edinburgh to come along to our next effort — it would be just his cup of tea", organiser Fred Swift confided.

For Fred and co-organiser Jack Parlar the Command is an arduous business but nevertheless, a labour of love.

And the same may be said for Blackpool's popular ex-football star, Stanley Mortensen who, as compere, wisecracked effectively between turns, and for Jack Rose, the honorary producer, whose expert direction is left nothing to want.

On last Friday's showing the Clubland Command has become one of the most interesting dates on the Blackpool entertainment calendar.

The 3,500 audience included the BBC's Barney Coleman and the Grade Office's Albert Knight and Sydney Grace. I understand that Colin Crompton and others in the show have reason to be happy about their interest.

## BRIEFLY

THE Layton, one of Blackpool's most popular clubs, severely damaged by fire. East Lanes favourite Jean Goulding allotted titular part in Accrington Arts forthcoming production of "The Blue Prince" (a new pantomime).

Stoke Education Committee given permission for 12-year-old Susan Hayward to sing with a band in clubs and dance halls providing safety orders for contravention of drink laws. . . . The Hy-Fy's Doncaster-based musical quartet featuring Barry Storr appearing at 10.15 and 11.15. Blackpool Brunswick next Sunday, February 4.

## CONDUCTIVE CONDITIONS

OF course, such a setting as the magnificent Empress Ballroom — where the Halle Orchestra plays when it visits Blackpool — a good stage, excellent acoustics, a full range of lighting effects, a top grade band, and a large, enthusiastic audience — all these things are conducive to capital performance. Probably the admission by one of the artists I spoke to — "I never worked better in my life" — might truly have come from the rest of the bill.

There was never a hitch. During the course of two days rehearsals, conducted by northern producer Jack Rose, the show was planned and timed to the minute. No hitch — but just the same it overran 45 minutes, which is not really a lot for a bill chockful of blazing talent.

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## I wonder?

WHAT Felix Aylmer, the Hon. Chairman of British Actors Equity, thought of being on the ATV show last Saturday in the old, old picture "The Rat"?

If Charlie Drake knows that a wealthy and cultured clubman, Leslie Slott, is one of his greatest admirers since seeing him at the Palladium?

How Cyril Dowler managed to get such a wonderful lineup of stars for the Water Rats show at Dudley Hippodrome on February 11? (Frankie Vaughan is flying from Denmark to be there) . . .

Who suggested me as the guest speaker for the Anglo-Jewish Society at Selby's Restaurant on February 13? (Hope it's a lucky date for them) . . .

Does Leslie Randall know that he has been described as another Reggie Parrell, a Milton Hayes, a Bob Benchley, and a modern George Fuller Golden? (As this

Dinner said that the G.O.W.R. had raised £400,000 for Charity since its foundation. It's nearer twice that amount.)

Ben paid a splendid tribute to the Lady Rattlings, but he was wrong when he said they were richer than the Water Rats. The Rat they call their "Cup of Kindness" is never kept full . . .

## 'Some of the People'

I COULDN'T help thinking of Phineas T. Barnum's famous edict, "You can fool some of the people, but you can't fool all of them," when I read Kenneth Bailey's report on the "exhaustive nationwide survey conducted by Odhams Press Research Division in The People."

Bruce Forsyth topped this poll with Cliff Michelmore second. "But a higher number of people found Forsyth boring or irritating, and he seemed to bore wealthy people most."

"Michelmore irritates younger people most and men more than women. He appears to be liked less than the poorer people are!" That's the sort of article it is!

Following on a list which includes Forsyth, Eric Sykes and Michael Medwin it reads: "The investigators then turned a searching eye on the big comedy shows and their stars" (My italics).

We are told that Tony Hancock remains the No. 1 Comic!

Why then doesn't he rate a mention in the viewers' preference list?

And Mr. Bailey reports that: "This popularity test revealed a big shock for the B.B.C. and Eamonn Andrews."

"One of the shows voted on was 'This Is Your Life' which is compered by Andrews. And the nationwide cross-section of all viewers was (this could not be said) 'less' if they never saw the show again."

Eamonn Andrews must be getting used to this sort of thing. It goes hand in hand with "Alas for Mr. Dimbleby" — he comes only fifth in our list of seven stars!

"Girls! — we've found the man you're longing to meet!" Barnum was right!

## STAGE PROMPTINGS

by

Georgie Wood

young man is not likely to have known any of these, my guess is that he is just Leslie Randall).

Did Jack Byfield, the pianist, really spend as much money on telephone calls as the difference in fares would have been when he was disembarked with cellist Reginald Kilbey from the American liner "United States" recently by Max Jaffa? . . . George Elrick tells me that the joke is — Their fares were being paid by Columbia Artists, the American company the Trio is playing for!

## Comment

TWO actors were discussing the Bernard Braden case. One said, "Just imagine he did all that work for nothing!" His companion sadly retorted, "Yes, but he WAS working!" . . .

The Hanne Swaffer Memorial Service at St. Martin's-in-the-Field could not have been better if Swaff had arranged it himself — But the reports on it would have been . . .

Ben Warriss interviewed by B.B.C. TV at the Rats Companions

## A NEW FACE

A NEW face to watch and a new voice to listen to seems to be the password of the present-day teenager. Judging from the reception that Johnnie St. George, billed as Mr. Fab, has received, whilst touring with the Tom E. Bradley pantomime "Jack and the Beanstalk", things should soon be moving for this young Londoner.

PETER KERR, clarinetist leader of the Clyde Valley Stompers, left his Zipcar at London's St. Pancras Station one day last week and took the train to Newcastle for a Tyne Tees TV date. When he returned he found that all his tyres had been slashed. His spare wheel? It was punctured on the M.1 the day before! The Clyde Valley Stompers are set to record for Southern TV's "Day By Day" on March 29. Dates are February 2 Rex Ballroom, Cambridge; (4) White Lion, Edgware; (5) The Refectory, Golders Green; (6) New Crown Hotel, Morden.

★ Another London 'break' for Scotland's Margo Henderson, who joins "The Black and White Minstrel" show at the Victoria Palace in May. Before that she has a cabaret stint for a month at the Hungaria Restaurant.



Johnnie St. George

At Hereford, Blythe and Barrow, audiences liked him, and at a local Workers' Playtime in Barrow scissorists were brandished for snips of his hair. Already a fan club is in operation, and a stay on Tyneside nifty offered.

Ossie Rae, who played Dame in the show, and who played a major part in the Shane Fenton career, has taken over Johnnie's management.

This week finds Johnnie and Ossie under the Jack Denham banner playing a week's cabaret at the Blue Tit Hotel, Clontarf, Nottingham.

## For All Age-Groups

The only professional entertainment given in Croxall with a Christmas atmosphere, was the one-night visit of Ballet Minerva which presented their own version of "Hansel and Gretel". Using taped music of Tchaikovsky and Dvorak — not the expected Humperdinck score.

Chief attraction to young people was the fact that the children were played by really young dancers, so that, as their mime told the story clearly, knowledge of technique was not needed by the audience. Margaret Cameron and Suzanne Sarova had the title roles and the really outstanding. Which was amusingly caricatured by Harold Foster. Praise must be given to the imaginative lighting by Edward Gaillard, director of the company.

## Don Valley

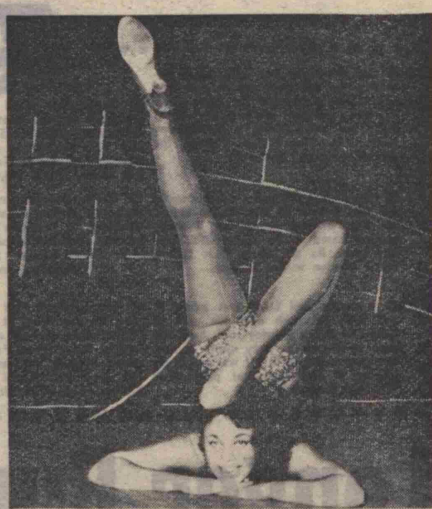
A PRINTER'S error in the letter from R. W. Swinson, General Secretary of the N.A.F., last week referred to the formation in Dorchester of the Don Valley Branch of the Variety Artists Association, which should have read "in Doncaster".

## Going Live

THE ABC cinema, Hull, goes live on February 18 when Cliff Richard and the Shadows supported by the Dallas Boys and the Two Tones, Patto, Crook, Treble Tones and Tony Marsh give two shows.

## HUMPH ON TV AND STEAM RADIO

HUMPHREY LYTTLETON and his band have an impressive lineup of radio and TV dates in coming weeks. On February 6 Humphreys contribute a contribution for the Radio Luxembourg show, "Stars On Wings" for future transmission. On February 17 he will be heard on the BBC Home Service programme, "In Town Today" discussing, with Richard Dingley, his 14 years as a band leader and his successes as a trumpet player, in pop and jazz. On March 17, the Lyttleton Band makes a return visit to the BBC Light Programme's "Trad Tapes". Says Patto, Crook, producer Eric Miller "we enjoyed



Jessie Carron, the clever contortionist-dancer, who has been attracting attention with her act in pantomime at Glasgow Empire. She was one of the artists who contributed to the cabaret at the successful Roosevelt Memorial (Polio) Ball in the Central Hotel, Glasgow.

## Terrifying?

WHILE on the subject of Sunday papers I feel I should confess to getting an awful fright when I saw a banner headline in the News of the World —

"I ACCUSE these types from Carlton House Terrace."

Thought I'd been found out along with others to whom Mrs. Chick serves tea — but it concerns our Foreign Office neighbours.

THOUGHTS ON READING THE STAGE YEAR BOOK FOR 1961.

"Crews Station ain't wot it used to be!"

"This Wee Georgie Wood will never let, look at Consul (the performing chimpanzee) he's not nearly the draw he once was."

"Glad we go to Nottingham on the tour, we need new baskets and lights."

"We did a rotten week, but we had 'A Royal Divorce' and Dr. Walford Bodie in opposition — well I ask you? — W. W. Kelly and Bodie!"

"That Shaun Glenville is doing all right — He's just bought a new house at Tooting called 'Twistledo'."

"Fred Sinclair and Gracie Whiteford are only booked for the next five years. I like to feel I'm fixed for at least 10 years ahead!"

"Mrs. Taylor in Clayton Street is the best address in Nelson — she

charges a guinea all-in but it's worth it to have the best!"

"The Variety Artists' Benevolent Fund distributes on an average between £25 and £30 in gifts and loans. There are 33 aged and infirm performers who are in receipt of grants amounting to nearly £10 a week."

"That talk about Harry Lauder being mean is just so much publicity — wouldn't surprise me if he got a knighthood since King Edward commanded him to give that private performance at Rufford Abbey."

## What 'Toucan' Do

This summer, John Wade will compe — and present "novelty spots" on the pier at Southsea, for Bunny Baron. With his wife, Elizabeth Gordon. John recently entertained at a function graced by the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Mayor of London, the Bishop of Southwark, and many other mayors and public figures.

John reports with a sigh of relief that his "toucan" duly selected the Lord Mayor's chosen playing card — as the famous poster puts it, it's wonderful what "toucan" do!

## Quote

"SHOW biz is badly in need of new leaders in Scotland. As the tv age develops, and more local stations start operations, attendances at vaude and legit houses slump. . . . Local incentive for staging live performance in theatres and concert halls is being stifled."

Gordon Irving, writing in 56th Anniversary Edition of New York "Variety".

## Disc Business

Over 400 guests attended the York Press Ball in the Georgian Assembly Rooms last Friday night, the theme of which was "Disc Business". Among the guests was John Leyton, top recording star, who was a member of the York Repertory Company before he found fame as a "pop" singer.

## International Jazz Spectacular

PAPA BLUE's Viking Jazz Band from Denmark tops the bill at the first International Jazz Spectacular to be held in Britain. It is fixed for February 28 at Wimbledon Palais and will feature many of Britain's top trad bands including Ken Colyer's Jazzmen, the Melbourne New Orleans Jazz Band, Micky Ashman's Ragtime Jazz Band and Ken Sim's Vintage Jazz Band.

This mammoth jazz shindig marks the opening of Papa Blue's tour of Britain. The Vikings, whose discs figure constantly in the best selling charts of Germany, Switzerland, Holland and Den-

mark, will spend 23 days in Britain.

Trombonist Papa will discuss his tour with Richard Dingley on the BBC programme "In Town Today". It will be recorded on February 28, the same day as the International Jazz Spectacular, for transmission on Saturday, March 3, in the Home Service at 12.30 p.m. Papa Blue's tour is being set up by the Lyn Dulton Agency.

## Now the Melbourne New Orleans Go East

THE Melbourne New Orleans Jazz Band, that friendly bunch of Australians who have taken Britain and Ireland by storm with their swing band of jazz, plan to continue their travels when their British visit ends in mid April.

After a short holiday, the band goes to Germany for a month of jazz club dates and then they will try to organise tours of Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Soviet Union.

The boys are particularly keen to go to Czechoslovakia in view of the highly successful visit by the Graeme Bell Band in 1947. The Melbourne New Orleans boys haven't decided whether to go back to Australia eventually or to settle in Britain permanently.