

'PERSONALITY GIRL'



PERSONALITY songstress PEGGY RAY has recently concluded a short provincial club tour.

GOOD in putting over a 'point' number, she is even better with a song which has plenty of 'go' in it.

SHE returns shortly for another visit to Germany while a further South Africa tour is under negotiation.

YORKSHIRE RELISH

by James Towler

"WHAT a terrific act," said a beaming George Binns the other evening. Exactly my sentiments, too, for he was referring to the fabulous singing foursome The Chariots.

Their harmony singing is amongst the finest I've come across. Indeed, I'm not the first to describe them as "The Ink Spots Up To Date."

Although they have played the West End, it is in the provinces that the boys have hit the big time. "The North has been very good to us," they say. One might add that The Chariots have been a tonic to every club they have played, attracting far more business than many an established TV or record name.

Christmas week saw them doubling with Greasborough and Doncaster Scala, where, I'm reliably informed, they look like breaking their own house record. Something that will give Mr. Jackson much pleasure.

Owen Hammond has them down for another stint at Bradford Lyceum in February, after which they are off for another German season.

TO be accomplished at one job is something of an achievement. However, to be equally accomplished at four could be something of an embarrassment at times.

For an example of how to get round this, one could do no better than watch that talented young New Zealander Peter Crago.

A good pianist, with a wide range from the classics to the Twist, and a pleasing singer are qualities strong enough to build a good act. However, not content with this, Peter is also an accomplished tap dancer—fine. Then, to cap it all, we have a first-class crooner as well.

How all this is blended together has to be seen to be believed. The final leap from the top of the raised piano to the floor is among the strongest finale's I have ever seen.

CHRISTMAS and New Year festivities always mean good business for clubs of all types, and this season has been no exception. In South Yorkshire, The Chariots, already mentioned above,

PUPPETS

by CHARLES TRENTHAM

"HOW to Make a Pop Singer from a Puppet Kit" is described, with patterns, by Bob Pelham in the latest issue of his "Puppet News," in response to "many requests for pop groups like The Beatles and The Shadows."

Mr. Pelham, as the "Puppet," organised for his young puppet-readers a playwrighting competition, which was won by a young Chinese boy, William Ue, of Singapore, the prize-winning piece being called "The Legend of the Golden Lotus."

The "Puppets" are active letter-writers, and a selection of their letters is given in the latest "News," correspondents being all over the globe, including Edmonton, Winnipeg, Ontario, Canada, New York, California, Canberra, Australia, and South Africa.

They have given performances in aid of "Freedom From Hunger," UNICEF and the Sunflower Children's Homes. They often seek pen-friends.

STAFF-SEE SINGERS

It Was The Year of The Great Girls

'Nightbeat' By Peter Hepple

THIS being the time of year when everybody who has a platform of some kind is seized with the notion of "summing up", "taking stock" and "predicting", may I just put in my two cents worth?

On the whole, 1963 was an excellent year for London cabaret, with more places and many more new faces. Looking back through the year, it might appear that I never see a bad act, but strangely enough this is generally true. London night club and restaurant owners seldom take a gamble on the unknown and if by any chance an artist opens on a Monday and does not come up to standard, it is pretty certain that he, she or they will be out by Tuesday.

A harsh word, agreed, but it does ensure that West End cabaret is of exceptionally high quality—and there are many more cases than I can think where the boss keeps an artist like in spite of audience indifference.

To me, 1964 will be the year of the great girl singers. Some of our Nightbeat discoveries, for instance Kathy Kirby and Jackie Trent, are on the way to more profitable if not greater things. Others, such as Rosemary Carroll, Debbie Lee and Joy Marshall, may find 1964 the year of opportunity. My musical high-spots have all been provided by the girls, notably Annie Ross, Stevie Wonder, La Rosa, Chris Rayburn, Blondell Cooper, Jenny Johnson, and, from the pubs, Kim Cordell.

The boys? Outstanding has been the development of Gtly Marshall, who by this time next year could be in the international class. And a personal favourite of mine is the superbly relaxed, always swinging and just married Kenny Day.

As for comedy, it is still terribly hard to make people laugh after midnight. But Bob Monkhouse, Ray Martine and the brilliantly inventive Peter Reeves have managed it, and these two pillars of the West End, Davy Kaye, at the Embassy, and Danny La Rue, at Winston's, consistently do it, the latter assisted of course by Toni Palmer, Valerie Walsh, Barry Cryer et al.

Myself, I look back with pleasure on the American comedians, especially Irwin Corey and Jerry Stiller and Anne Mearns at the Establishment, Jimmy Casanova at the Astor and Jimmy Caesar at the Celebrite, all of whom should return and be seen by a much wider and wider-audience public.

To conclude, a few miscellaneous bouquets for those not mentioned above.

To the Talk of The Town—London's premier showplace—and thanks especially for Shirley Bassey, Ford and Hines and Dolores Gray.

To the Savoy—still the classiest spot, even if Juliette Greco and Amalia Rodrigues did not meet with true appreciation there.

To Paul Raymond—a showman who has created a real showroom out of the Celebrite and has inherited the mantle of chief importer of American acts.

To the Miff Smith Orchestra—the most swinging band in the West End and one which has done much to make the Celebrite a success.

Young David Conway, who had his early grounding in Coventry Clubs, is now firmly established with "The Three Monarchs" and appears in Puss in Boots at Birmingham Hippodrome. Since joining the act he has toured Sweden and Africa.

Another young Coventry artist who has made the grade is Patricia Lancaster, who is appearing in "Run Again Whittaker" at Nottingham's Theatre Royal.

Magicians, ventriloquists and clowns have been kept busy at the magical parties held in Midland Clubs, over the holidays, and many more artists were engaged at old people's gatherings.

To Maria Manville—the astonishing unknown whose season at the Edmundo Ros Club during the summer introduced us to a performer with a warmth and emotional appeal unparalleled in 1963.

To David Harding and Tommy Seymour—I can think of the West End without them now.

IN the realms of magic and mystery the man who produces doves, billiard balls or lighted candles excites our admiration for his skill at sleight-of-hand. After all, he must keep them somewhere. For the man who rummages in our minds, however, admiration is tempered with a little foreboding, for who knows what he might drag to the surface?

As on the previous occasions I have seen him, the act of Koran, now at Quaglin's, left me with the feeling of utter and complete perplexity. How can a man ask three separate people to pick a card, a number between one and a thousand and a word from a dictionary and tell them what they have chosen without going anywhere near them? How can the same man get six sealed envelopes to yield their secrets?

It is, I suppose, all very simple when you know how, but even mind reading fades into insignificance beside what Koran rightly and not immodestly describes as "a modern miracle", one which is, moreover, on the physical plane. This consists of the linking-together of three rings borrowed from members of the audience.

Could be, however, that his parting shot is the most miraculous of all, for instead of writing the words in the sealed envelope on his blackboard, Koran starts one diner per evening by giving the answer via a mirror, fast recorder. When the occult joins hands with science it is a terrible combination indeed!

THE thorough policy at the Edmundo Ros Club continues apace with "Fiesta", which features Frank Coda in the midst of six dancers and three showgirls per video, costumed and choreographed by, yes, you've guessed it—David Harding and Tommy Seymour. The latter's here is appropriately Latin and the South Seas brings us in contact with the languorous Tamouré.

A further unexpected touch is provided by guest artist Dina, a fragile little beauty from India. This girl's graceful *salam* does not preface a recital of folk melodies but a saucy number about the Folies Bergere and that tropical ditty about the "House of Bamboo". Band-leader Beverley Inglem's nips in to assist in the requiem for the South Seas brings us in contact with the languorous Tamouré.

Although Edmundo's is not what I would call a comedy room, Tony Hendra and Nick Ullett do very nicely with their slick and slightly sick humour. This pair, by the way, must be the only comics to adopt the fully ecumenical approach, as their material is based on real incidents from both Old and New Testaments and Anglican and Roman rites.

FROM THE DEAD

By SYD STARR

AS I recently prophesied, Cabaret is catching on in Coventry. The newly opened "Berkeley Restaurant" is now presenting Dancing and Cabaret every weekend, and "The Elite Club" continues to feature Cabaret on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Last week's artists included Noel and Mavis Massey, Eddie Harbin, Tina Day, and "Rondal" and Jeanne. Quite an array of top talent!

Christmas entertainment was also presented at Sutton Coldfield's "La Reserve". "The Barn" at Hockley Heath, La Terrasse Restaurant, Chateau Impney, Droitwich, The Regent Hotel, Puss in Boots at The Wellcome Hotel, Stratford-on-Avon, and Chesford Grange, Kenilworth.

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HARRY SECOMBE—THE TALK OF NEW YORK

SELDOM have I encountered such enthusiasm as I met in New York for Harry Secombe. His "Mr. Pickwick" record is the disc many people asked for as a Christmas gift. At the Friars Club some friends of Milton Berle were prophesying that when my friend Harry reaches Broadway eventually, he will enjoy the same sort of rave notices and show-stopping ovation as those given to Tessie O'Shea in "The Girl who came to Supper" for those marvellous Cockney numbers by Noel Coward.

The "Two-Ton" girl has made an impact such as New Yorkers haven't seen any British performer accorded since 1924 when Jack Buchanan, Bea Lillie and Gertrude Lawrence were so sensationally successful in an American revue.

Tessie did a terrific job on December 22 when she appeared on the Ed Sullivan show which is networked throughout the nation. She has been given a return date on this programme in the middle of January—but I expect to be home before then... and tell King Rat Ted Ray how proud she is of the cable she got from The Grand Order of Water Rats.

ROY CASTLE—ASTOUNDS AMERICA
NORAH HOWARD, so well remembered as a Cochran revue star of the Thirties and her husband, Stuart Ross, of Ross and Grayson, the well-known piano act, gave a party for me, where the talk was mostly about Roy Castle astounding America in his TV appearances, principally on the Garry Moore show. He is always so different and unbelievably better every time.

This is another British favourite who is all set for a Broadway show. Peter Glenville directed "Dylan", Sir Alec Guinness stars in it. I hadn't opened in New York before I left for Hollywood, but it got rave notices at the New York Haven Theatre by-out state, and is expected to be a hit in what has been, so far, a season of box-office disappointments.

REGRET I have not been able to answer your many kind letters and telegrams. Will see to it on my return...

MARK LEDDY, the brainy agent for the Ed Sullivan Show, congratulates Denis Spicer on his T. V. success and sends many good wishes to all the British boys who have been so much to the success of the show...

So that's the end of the letters from America, and it's a good place to wish you all a perfect 1964.

Do You Do It?" and threw in a few dancing steps for good measure—much to the surprise of my wife Janet, who's a real professional in the terpsichorean sphere.

There was no performance of "Babes In The Wood" on New Year's Eve—the theatre was required for an annual event—and it enabled me to have the evening free.

As a Scot, the arrival of another year is of special significance to me. It is a time to be with the family and Janet and I travelled down to Surrey to see my mother. Unfortunately, she is in hospital, but it didn't interfere with the traditional New Year's Eve custom of my giving her a piece of coal in return for some shortcake.

What lies ahead for me after pantomime ends on January 4? Well, my immediate task will be to make another record. Then I will start looking forward to my summer season.

PAT AZA ASKS ARE YOU STILL IN THE BUSINESS ?

THEN WHY NOT SAY SO? IT WON'T COST YOU A FORTUNE

GIVE ME

A

RING SOMETIME

TEMPLE BAR 5213