

## SALFORD WELCOMES VARIETY REVIVAL

THERE are enterprising people around who still obstinately refuse to accept the moth-eaten theory that the music hall has had its day. Down Salford way just now one may find abundant evidence to justify their faith, and the all-out effort of some such stalwarts to keep the flag flying is meeting well-deserved encouragement.

It calls for craft and courage—plus money in the bank—to take over a theatre and launch a new show these days, and it seems that Philip Bernard Productions—principals Aubrey Phillips and Mike Arnold—backing the current Salford Victoria variety revival, are appropriately qualified.

To bring in Salford supporters, Bernards devised a balanced blend of old time and modern, and teamed up Hetty King, Billy Danvers, Billy Matchett, Roy Rolland, Pat Denver, Kay Butler and a line of pretty girls. These are the people responsible for the good business last week, and the show is now running in its second week.

Success so far is only the spur for new ventures for the Bernards. Next week they are presenting "Stars of the Blitz" with such names as Leon Cortez, Arthur English, Herschel Henlere, Zazareda, Kay on the Keys, and Johnny St. George.

"We're pleased the way things are going and hope to be able to announce new attractions for Salford in the near future," Mr. Phillips disclosed.

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"I'M relaxing on the beach, soaking in the sunshine, sucking a peach—it's great to be alive—wish you were here"—that was the unsetting message Roy Rolland received from his sister, Elsie, in Australia a few weeks ago, at a time when, apart from pantomime duty, his chief concern was for frozen pipes and his hot-water bottle.

Mouth-watering expectancy conjured up by Elsie's letter from Down Under is undoubtedly responsible for Roy's decision to retire from the stage and join his sister in sun-kissed Western Australia in the not-too-distant future. He will be sadly missed. Roy, formerly understudy for the late Arthur Lucan (Old Mother Riley), has more fans, young and old, than some of the international stars of entertainment. He's covered every angle—stage, film, tv and clubs.

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WHEN a thief pulls off just one more job, the news is rarely a matter for headlines; but reverse the roles, with a pickpocket for victim, and there's the novelty for you.

Therefore, and with profound regret, I must record that Mark Raffles, the professional "crackman," has been robbed. From his parked car, following an engagement at Jerry Harris's Piccadilly in Manchester the other night, were stolen two overcoats, a suit, a dress belonging to Mrs. Raffles, and a bag of precious pearls. The thief left Mark's performing dove. "But without the secret gadgets that were taken I can't do my act," confides their owner.

Oh, Mister Burglar, have a heart!

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## LINES FROM LANCS

BY JAMES HARTLEY

## Ace Escapologist



SINCE 1964 came in, the northern Press has carried frequent reports on the activities of Roy Rolland, 24-year-old, thrill-seeking protégé of escapologist star Murray.

In recent weeks, young Denver has on separate occasions earned headlines and pictures in the dailies and Sunday papers.

His latest notable score, published in the Press, was his opening in variety at Salford Victoria last week.

Suspended by crane, 100 feet above the city, buckled in a straightjacket, Paul freed himself in two minutes 18 seconds—12 seconds less than his hero, the great Houdini, 50 years ago.

Paul is due in Blackpool shortly, where he will be directing a new theatrical illusion at Olympia for Murray until the end of the summer season.



Roy Rolland—planning emigration.

## CLUB CORNER

## THE SMALL WORLD OF TONY DEXTER

A MAN of many parts is Yorkshire-born Tony Dexter. Since he left home at the age of 15—just nine years ago—he has earned his living as a commercial artist, magician, medical hypnotist, and writer. Now, thanks largely to the noted Welsh puppet-master Eric Bramall with whom he has been closely collaborating since 1958, Tony is a star puppeteer in his own right.

Under the aegis of Manchester agent Sonny Gross, for two weeks past Tony has been touring Manchester's popular night spots, scoring most effectively in the smaller ones where close working proved distinctly advantageous.

Young Dexter's multi-faceted presentation is a striking combination of fantasy, burlesque and satire. It is, in fact, a complete cabaret bill in miniature, featuring half-life-size marionettes—colourful caricatures which come alive at their master's command.

There's the Prima Donna, preposterously plump and grotesque, pointing a disparity between voice and appearance not uncommon on the opera stage.

No less biting is the Personality Pianist, deftly complete with silvery locks and syrupy smiles, wooing his lady fans with something more than musical virtuosity. Lampooning the Concert Violist, Tony unashamedly relies on burlesque when manipulating this, the most difficult of puppet instrumentalists; and then there's the Belly Dancer, going further than the most daring stripper, shedding the eighth veil.

Dexter's Dexter works in full view of his audience—the closer the better—so that they may understand intricacies of the manipulative skill which imparts animation to his "World of Little People."

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"THE eye is more important than the ear so far as club entertainment goes," opines Manchester College P.R.O. Jack Stebbing—and he is not alone in his belief. That's why northern club owners are crying out for British specialties, and as there aren't enough of them to meet the demand, they're giving serious thought to importing some more from abroad.

Last Thursday afternoon, a number of Manchester bookers met at the College to watch a film of foreign acts among them, the Casanova Barrios, Two Angels, Tolly, Trio Sylvestre, Gentleman Jack, Rudi Milanes, Brian Andre, Knie Chimps, chiefly circus types—who are willing to work in Britain.

Bill Sawyer (Universal Attractions, London) was present to represent the acts, describe them, and talk money. I believe he came to terms with Dennis Moss (Domino), Frank Tansey (Yew Tree), Leslie Lawrence (College). I don't think I'm breaking a confidence in revealing that these polished Continental performers are not asking the earth—rather less than the better British acts in some cases. Incidentally, I was told that we may soon be hearing of Mr. Sawyer's negotiations with Holland agents for swops of complete package shows.

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British trapeze stars—like Greco and the Voleros, and so on—are great favourites on the Continent.

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THE show-biz bug has bitten John and Barry good and hard. These Bradford boys, both in their early twenties, have sunk a small fortune acquiring the best equipment needed to put across their original vocal-harmonised self-accompanied song routines. They have an electronic organ of their own, up-to-the-minute amplification and stereophonic sound apparatus.

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## HOT from \*\*\* SCOTLAND

Gordon Irving reports

## Scots Singer-on-the-Ascent is Booked for Russia

SINGERS and comedians from Scotland certainly travel the world these days. Next to go a-travelling is Bill McCue, the singer, who'll be in Moscow later in the year. This former electrician from Lanarkshire is to tour Russia with the English Opera Group in September and October for their performances of Benjamin Britten's "Rape of Lucretia" and "Albert Herring."

They say, in fact, that 1964 may be a turning point in Bill's oratorio and opera career. For, later on, he is to sing in the Henry Wood annual performance of "The Messiah" in the Albert Hall.

Bill—his wife is Patricia Carrick, of Dumfries, a music teacher—not his first radio series in Scotland in 1962. Like David Hughes, Kenneth McKellar, Andy Stewart, Chic Murray and many more, it was Eddie Fraser, who gave him this first "break."

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STRIDING down Broadway this week went Scotland's minstrel-comedian, Andy Stewart, and his manager, Max Kay. They flew out on Sunday for a quick look-see and some business talks concerning Andy's 1965 tour of North America.

I hear Andy will play both Newcastle-on-Tyne and Liverpool in the autumn, following his summer season at H.M. Theatre, Aberdeen, where he opens on June 22. He'll be flying back to Bonnie Scotland this Sunday to prepare for his three new BBC-TV Spectaculars, which are to be seen on the new channel soon.

It was only on Saturday last, March 14, that Andy concluded his record-breaking winter season at Edinburgh's King's. What price his return to Glasgow King's come December?

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WELCOME variety, to the Odeon, Glasgow. The week of May 18 will see Frank Ifield topping a twice-nightly variety bill, and a new comedy show should be interesting now that there's no Glasgow Empire.

Supporting Frank at his Glasgow date will be the Dulais Boys, Arthur Worley, Patti Brooks and others.

Headache nights for the managers of the Edinburgh ABC Regatta, and Glasgow Odeon are, of course, April 29 and 30. The attraction: The Beatles.

## MORE MONEY FOR MANDY!

"COME over on the Sunside!" This was the invitation issued to MANDY RICE-DAVIES last week by ALEX WATSON, owner of the Blue Parrot at Sunside, near Newcastle, her ex-patriation from Turkey.

Announcing that she had been booked to appear in cabaret for a week in May, a spokesman for Mr. Watson added: "She will patter a little and sing a little—but nothing suggestive."

Retorted TONY PELTON, chairman of Newcastle Youth Watch Committee. "We urge the people of Tyne-side to boycott her performances. If they do, the Parrot might rock on its perch. Her fee is rumoured at £800!" A.H.B.

## B.M.H.S.

CLARKSON ROSE will be the speaker at the next meeting of the British Music Hall Society at the Garrick Hotel on Monday, March 23, at 8 p.m. He takes the place of Ada Reeve who is filming "Clarke's" subject: "Red Plush and Greasepaint."

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of the ship when the ship is crowded. The other items promised have to be insisted upon when you arrive, or they don't materialise and the cost of living is very high in relation to what one is paid after the currency manoeuvres. Also, one is paid on the eighth day.

The following quotation from the Leicester Club paper *Artiste* should interest many:

"The Leicester Entertainment Secretaries' Council wishes it to be known that rumours which have been engaged if booked through agents is entirely false. The policy of the Leicester Entertainment Secretaries' Council has always been, and still is, to book artists direct."

I know this is true (I happen to be in Leicester this week) but I believe there are occasions when an act is booked through an agent. Certainly, however, the Leicester Secretaries go to an immense amount of trouble to book artists and take their job very seriously indeed.

A booking at the Boot and Shoe Club by W. Fowkes is sure to result in a new raising an interest, armed with date-books.

## GLASGOW'S GO-AHEAD

GLASGOW has given the final go-ahead to entertainment in city public houses.

The magistrates, meeting at their licensing court, unanimously approved the scheme.

It will now be left to individual holders to make application to have singing by groups or by their customers.

Hitherto, both police and licensees have been against singing in Glasgow bars because they felt it might degenerate into party songs and trouble.

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THIS 'n' that: I hear that Pete Murray, the comper and disc jockey, will be a guest artist on the Thursday evening of the annual "Stars for Spastics" variety week in Glasgow, at the Ivy Garage, Vi Day and musician Alan Beale are new artists joining the resident company when "Bonnie Scotland" gives way to "Spring Show."

Changing programme weekly, at the Glasgow Metropole on March 30. Five weeks of variety begin on April 27. Calum Kennedy follows Les McLean at the Palladium Theatre, Edinburgh.

## Vacant Summer Season

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## V.A.F. Official News

by Melville Thomson

A COUPLE of "Achtungs!" The first is from Rovic and Babs who write enclosing a copy of a directive from the Swiss Government, the application of which could result in some delay to anyone going there to work.

"Each foreigner entering Switzerland for an employment, has to undergo a medical examination at the Border. The grant of a residential permit can only be given if the medical examination at the Border has been passed successfully."

Full details of the above regulations which only came into force on February 15, this year, are available to members from the VAF Office, and we must record our thanks to Rovic and Babs for letting us know about this most important restriction.

The other "Achtung!" comes in a roundabout way via *Solidarität*, the Austrian Organ of a number of Entertainers Unions who seem to work in pretty close harmony.

It quotes the West German *Das Organ* in its first issue of January 15. I understood that this periodical had ceased publication a few years ago, and am wondering about this new edition.

Artists are warned about taking up bookings through French agents for Dakar in French West Africa.

Payment is offered and made in francs at the old rate, which seems very generous until the time comes for conversion when one finds oneself actually getting currency exchange at the new rate.

Very generous free postage, hotels and meals are promised, but the passage can be in the smelly bowels