

YORKSHIRE RELISH

PHENOMENAL is perhaps the best way to describe the success of Ronnie Dukes and Rickie Lee.

Although they are something of a legend in South Yorkshire they are still comparatively unknown further afield. This in itself is strange because their offering, a blend of comedy and song, is so expertly staged that had someone told me they were the latest hit from the States, I would not have questioned that.

Seldom have I seen such a solid, professional performance. Ronnie, a genial, balding, round figure, contrasts perfectly with his wife Rickie—slim, slightly aloof and very easy on the eye.

This dynamic combination is given added strength from the support they receive from their own pianist and drummer, both first class men, to help give the act that extra something.

I understand moves are afoot to give them a wider and more national recognition. Certainly they are worth it. There are many artists of far less ability who have waded their way round the Sunday Night Palladium turntable.

As Roger Holmes, that shrewd judge of Northern Showbusiness put it "If you haven't seen Dukes and Lee, you haven't lived". So now you know!

"COME back and see us when you have a record in the Top Twenty and we'll be interested. This is no doubt a familiar sound to many groups seeking work. However, in the case of Sandra Browne and Her Boyfriends, it is somewhat short-sighted for they have a poten-

tial far in excess of the usual run of groups.

Professional for the past 2 years, Sandra, Brian, Paul, Tony and Duff all hail from Grimby. Recent seasons for Top Rank Ballrooms have provided them with much useful experience, and they are spending the summer season at Burtin's, Bognor Regis.

They have a smartly staged offering which covered both pops and standards, and included a novel rendering of 'Taboo' featuring some neat flute work from one of the boys. A little more production, plus more use of the male vocal backing, and this could become a very strong act indeed. All the more so when one hears in mind that, as a singer, Sandra is far better than many a solo artist.

Now that they have Dick Katz and the Harold Davidson Organisation behind them, I rate their chances for success as very good indeed.

CONFORMATIONISTS are not usually my cup of tea, but top marks to a young lady called Valerie, who manages to combine grace and movement to good effect.

A comedian, new to me, is Mike Newman. A pleasing approach, relaxed personality and a some good material—all qualities which should help this young trishman to make the grade.

Good to see and hear 'honky-tonk' Billie Wyner dispensing some really rousing tunes from the ivories. A great performer and personality.



David Levy (right), owner of La Dolce Vita, Newcastle upon Tyne, certainly makes his stars work for a living! Pressed into service are Joe Brown and Ethna Campbell.

NOTTS NOTES

By Val Terry

NOTTINGHAM'S public houses do not stand idly by and let the clubs stage all the live entertainment. On the contrary, the pubs offer a much greater variety of shows, especially during the week.

The city's two famous music halls—the Boulevard and the Albany, featured weekly artists at a salary of £6 when 5/- was a very acceptable fee for doing five spots at a Sunday night club.

Of recent years the Boulevard appears to be hard-pressed to present entertainment on two nights a week. The Albany, on the other hand, had a "face-lift" some years ago, and under the capable management of ex-artist Stan Ash, still continues to present an artist for a full Monday-to-Saturday week.

The Brewery records recall the appearances of George Formby senior, Vesta Tilley and Kitty Gilmore in the days of yore, and more recently ventriloquist Dennis Spicer.



Yvonne Lamonte

TATE'S GALLERY

THE South Wales Federation of Clubs Entertainments Secretaries—for the record, these are the employers—not that they have received several interested inquiries from Midlands agents since their formation.

"There is every possibility that we shall be forming proper club circuits in the very near future," said a spokesman. It is possible that the talk ran along these lines at Sunday's meeting at the Lewis Merthyr Institute, Porb.

The South Wales Artists' Association—for the record, these are the employees—have yet to make official representation to the secretaries about rates of pay—the particular contention which more than any other led to the founding of the association.

Federation view on the Association's claims: "Some South Wales solo artists are little better than public house 'turns'." Admittedly, there are sometimes complications with concert parties, but these are the sort of things that need to be sorted out around a table or over a nice friendly pint. Can't understand why the Artists' Association doesn't get in touch.

"THE VIC"—Cardiff's somewhat monosyllabic answer to the Liverpool "Cavern"—had a rave of an opening Tuesday before last. The Sons of Adam, who performed the opening rites, are now regular "rockmen" (distinct from "rockers") at the former Victoria Ballroom. The Mike Rodgers Combo are also well liked.

A BRAND new casino opens in A Bute Road, Cardiff. A former "rock" dance club brings roulette wheels and chemin tables. The scene is set for somebody to lose big money. But the word is the men won't the money really play are nowhere near the casino.

Cardiff now possesses a genuine floating poker game—sometimes played above a cafe in Newport Road, sometimes played above a garage in Penarth Road, sometimes played elsewhere. But that's where the money goes.

One man I know claims to have won £4,000 since Christmas.

NORTH EAST NIGHTS

by Alan H. Brown

with a little assistance from Joe . . .

WHATEVER happened to Pearl Foo, the exotic dancer from Hong Kong, who was billed to appear at Michael's Club, Newcastle, and whose picture I carried in this column last week?

A distraught Michael Michaelides complained sadly: "She just didn't turn up, so I had to rush another act in from London."

Which is a pity, because—from her photograph—Miss Foo seems a very pretty Pearl.

Brown's Bouquet—this week—goes to Mandy Rice-Davies for carrying on with her show despite demonstrations and a lot of opposition from people who never go to night-spots anyway.

I WAS infected on sight by Joe Brown's natural friendliness and effervescent personality. So were the audiences at La Dolce Vita last week, where he was appearing with The Bruvvers and recording artist Ethna Campbell in an extremely well-balanced programme.

Joe is an excellent guitarist who takes his music very seriously. Last Thursday he nipped up to Town to meet Segovia, of whom he is a great admirer. "Might even bring him back to play with The Bruvvers," he chorled before he left.

The presence of Joe Brown at La Dolce certainly brought out the younger element. He was very nervous prior to his opening on Monday: "My first cabaret, you know. Never played a night club before." And then, when Ethna Campbell came off: "How are they in front, love—all right?"

They were all right all right. They took him to their hearts. And The Bruvvers, which only goes to show how quickly a first-class, experienced artist can adapt to a new medium.

WITHIN a stones throw from the Albany, the Old General Hotel, and the excellently appointed concert room plays to capacity audiences at every show. Artists appear every Sunday noon, and Monday, Wednesday and Thursday nights, with Laurie, son of the licensee, a brilliant accompanist at the organ.

SAMUEL SMITH'S BREWERY have a half-dozen of their luxurious hotels dotted around the city and county, each equipped with concert-room facilities second to none. At one time it was thought that these would develop into a profitable circuit for both artists and brewers alike, but for some undiscernable reason, the entertainment policies have consistently been Stop-God-Stop.

The Grey Goose Hotel, at Gedling, in its earlier days almost a white elephant, now appears to be the firmest favourite, and although live entertainment is restricted to week-ends a capacity house is regularly assured.

If you see a stag show in Nottingham, the chances are that you will see Yvonne Lamonte, for she is the city's only artist who has so far ventured into the field of strip-tease. She is, however, a "stripper" with a difference. The act has a distinct element of comedy which endears her to the ladies as much as to the mature males, and, if the occasion demands, she can discard the strip act altogether and rely upon her undoubted vocal abilities to charm the audience with songs and, somewhat paradoxically, gorgeous gowns.

Miss Lamonte's appearances are more often than not in the Bradford and Leeds areas, and, of course, Manchester. She says that fellow-columnists James Towler and Andrew McLachlan will be made more than welcome if they care to catch the act.

What more could you ask for than that?

To prove my point, I pressed-gang him into helping me with my column this week.

JOE BROWN'S CONTRIBUTION

—What, me write? Blimey, mate, you're asking something! "Specially about Ethna Campbell, because we got off on the wrong foot right away. I thought she was Scottish and she thought I was a Liverpudlian!"

"Never mind, we have two things in common. We both sing and we both play guitar."

"But there the similarity ends. For a start, I'm a man and she's . . . well, she's gorgeous—I'd heard her records, of course, before I met her (my wife, Vicki, and the other two Breakaways backed both of them) and I thought she was strictly a pop singer."

"No such limits, though. In cabaret she sings like an angel—beautiful, beautiful ballads like 'Gues Who?' and 'Can't Help Lovin' That Man'—with a voice that could be top-patch Judy or Sarah or June Christie . . . but is still Ethna. What else can I say, except that she's heading straight for stardom? And quite right, too. Ta-ta!"

"P.S.—You know, I quite like this writing lark!"

BACK TO ME

ALTOGETHER, last week was quite a week. First off, I had some hectic days—and nights—with agent Alan Gale, who arrived from Kent to put on a show with Zarada and Johnny St. George. They were appearing at the Cavenish Club, Newcastle, and Wetherell's, Sunderland. Between them they present a completely entertaining—and mystifying—programme.

Later in the week, Philip Hindin (from Maurice Winnie, Associates) claimed some of my time. I lost him in the evening—but he was quite safe. He rolled up in the early hours of the morning with a police escort!

THE OTHER LONDON



Canadian beauty Donna London not only looks good, but sounds that way as well. Following an extensive Far Eastern Tour she is currently attracting rave notices in the North, having recently played weeks in Leeds, Huddersfield and Newcastle.

KENT COBS by Jimmy Hodge Jr.



Jimmy Hodge Jr.

ONLY seldom do we, here in Kent, have an opportunity of seeing big stars but it was afforded us on Saturday at the Assembly Hall, Tunbridge Wells, when those two great artists Miki and Griff topped the bill in a talent studded programme.

These two quietly dressed singers need little comment from me. They were great!

I would like to enlarge, however, on the performance of compere Alfredd Hughes, a tall blonde young man who handled what was a marathon show with sparkling deftness.

He shone particularly in his own "spot". His musical impersonations of Frankie Vaughan, Al Johnson and Maurice Chevalier were terrific. A faultless performer who can also produce gags in pretty well any dialect you care to name.

Alfredd is known very well in the North and in Kent clubs. He also appeared at the old Empire Theatre, Chatham, on numerous occasions.

I understand that his agents, Albemarle Booking Agency—who promoted this show—have some good things lined up for him.

Also appearing in the show were the Renegades, Sandra Finney, the Dominators, Dawn Wayne, Carlo and the Vincents, the Unfoursen, the Tri-Tones, the Corals, Colormas, the Brett Sisters, Carla Thorpe, the Challengers, Doreen Acack, the

Time Travellers, the Debonaires, John and the Vikings, the Continentals, the Strangers Five, Saints Incorporated, the Blue Eagles, and the Saphires.

As I said, this was a marathon!

A "WELCOME" to Kent Cobs' illustrious Jaskolino and his assistant Margaret, who have now settled down in South Devon where they are on the Torbay Holiday Camp circuit entertaining children, and in cabaret.

Before leaving for Devon, Jaskolino and Margaret were in a show for physically handicapped children at Romney Marsh, host, entertainer Derek Allaway tells me.

Writing from the Golden Sands Country Club, Derek, who is entertaining at this resort with his wife Barbara, says that singer Johnnie Rowlands is back at the St. Margaret's Bay Holiday Camp for another season, while "jovial" Bob Hatch is again at the Beach Holiday Centre.

"If you know of any artists who could help us at the end of September I would be pleased to hear from them for we shall be doing another show for handicapped folk down here," concludes Derek.

CLUBBING NOTES: At the United Services Club, Rainham, last Saturday were impresarios Lynn Reynolds, comedian Stan Crawford, with Kay Rosten on piano.

Following night at the Veteran's Club, Gillingham, was soprano Betty Schilling. Johnnie Rowlands did a cabaret spot for the annual dinner of the Temple Farm W.M.C. at Sirood.

APPEAL to Club committees—some of your amplification equipment is disgusting! Good artists are being made to sound like amateurs in some Kent clubs, merely because these clubs won't fork out on some decent microphones and amplifiers.

It just will not do—a nice shiny microphone that cost thirty bob is simply not good enough.

Again I cry: "Loosen those purse strings!"

Andrew McLachlan's Bradford Showcase

PERHAPS the most talented and versatile of all the local acts today are the Harmonica Rascals. They only turned professional in recent months—yet they're obviously destined to do very well for themselves.

The four boys tell me the existing group was formed four years ago. As well as being highly proficient with the instrument, their title suggests, a full length variety show stems from their talented fingertips, featuring knockabout comedy, novel record miming, and the singing of Terry Dale.

Now working a lot for Bobby Brown in the North-East, the Rascals have also been releasing.

CITY Band Club and East Ward Labour seem very group minded at the moment. Fred Pearson at East Ward admits, that unless he features a group, he just can't attract customers.

The standard of showmanship and entertainment value has been increased enormously by the beat groups, and to mention a few, Lee Chevin and the Riders, the Dominators, and the Tombs, are in the professional category.

Another group with a difference has emerged from the shadows, and with the inclusion of the plus a more imaginative approach could be an asset to bookers. Calling themselves the Student Syncretists, these young boys have a Trad Band to be proud of, in that all are good musicians.

MUCH criticism has been levelled at contracts issued by the Northern Counties Joint Union of Entertainment Secretaries. Artists claim these contracts are much too one-sided, in favour of the Council, whereby a club can cancel a contract held by an artist, without any reason, providing fourteen days' notice is given.

I do know of cases where this has taken place, more often than not Concert Secretaries have given alternative dates with the cancellation.

Also in defence of the concert secretary, he has his biggest headache when his artists fail to appear, without being forewarned. This is occurring more regularly of late. The only course open to him then is to report the matter to his Federation, who duly summon the artists to appear before them.

Failure to satisfy the Federation can mean suspension.

The Lyeum Cabaret Club is still going for the big names, and also introduces a splendid supporting bill. Appearing recently have been Bob Monkhouse, Mike and Bernie Winters and Stan Stennett.

HOLME WOOD TENANTS' SOCIAL usually offer good fare at their regular Thursday night houses. Jim Smith, more often books a real show for these occasions, but I don't suppose he would discourage first class artists who'd be interested in Holme Wood in town.

The Rev. Black

AND

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Many thanks to all Club Owners in the north for interest and faith in these boys, and for all Bookings received.

Enquiries are also welcome for 'THE STATESMEN' and 'MAUREN & THE PHABULOUS PHANTOMS' and other Northern groups represented by T.D.C. ENTERPRISES.