

## LINES FROM LANCS: By James Hartley

IF the good name of "Holiday Startime" relies upon the say-so of the invited audience of Blackpool landladies and local bigwigs who packed the new ABC at the opening performance last Friday night, there are not likely to be many empty seats during the season's run. This immaculate Albert J. Knight production, scintillating with talents symbolic of that which is distinctive and desirable in fashionable entertainment, belongs to the golden couch category.

"Holiday Startime" is beamed at the family audience and has a measure of something, for every taste with extra special concessions to Hit Parade devotees of all ages. Frank Field caps the bill and, with an infectious yodel and a memorable head-toss, he acquits himself right melodiously in a series of re-styled oldies and some less seasoned media.

In her first major summer show role Kathy Kirby offering pleasing reminders of her "Stars and Garters" triumphs and recent record successes, also comes well up to expectations, and the whole musical structure of the production owes a deal to the influence of conductor Johnny Hawkins and his impeccable orchestra.

Among the strong supporting company, Neville King, an up-and-coming ventriloquist, earns special mention. His routines—including the one involving an invisible model which nearly drowns in a beer mug—are uniquely funny. As well as his own special spots of racy humour Ted Rogers complies expertly, neatly linking the acts and wittily introducing personalities.

The Reindrops, vocal harmonists, shine in impressions of competitive groups, best of which is a carbon-copy take-off of Freddie and the Dreamers.

A swinging team from Italy, the Modern Jazz Dancers exemplify grace, style, and spot timing; the Sensational Medifreds have a spectacular line in juggling and acrobatics. Lending ornamentation and impact at many points the Pamela Davis Girls and the Dancing Boys have been well drilled and all their contributions are skilfully discharged.

### FLYING START

ANOTHER hummingbird the Charlie Drake Show (a Maurice Fourner production) got off to a flying start at the Queen's last Saturday night. Right from the first lift of the conductor's baton the merry pace is set and never falters until the final drop of the curtain.

Charlie Drake played his first major Blackpool date at the North Pier Pavilion five years ago, and he has ranked among the resort's first favourites ever since. Quite the most hardworking member of the company, he spares nothing of energy and effort to consolidate his reputation as one of the cleverest, knockabout stars ever to grace a Blackpool stage.

All his material is first-class, but he earns the biggest hands for his balloon-busting epic, and a rib-tickling take-off of a famous sister act.

The multi-talented Clark Brothers from Philadelphia are substantial scorers in this brisk-paced show. Their dancing routines—tap, soft-shoe, shake, and calypso—are all well conceived and their vocal offerings refreshingly original. Outstanding too are the Square Pegs, an up-and-coming vocal-harmony team, new to Blackpool. To well chosen pops they give sincerity, freshness, and four fine voices—they have what it takes.

Good-looking Marian Davies has the solo singing spot, and with a widely-ranging selection—from pops to opera—she fills it most assuredly. Sheila Holt and Tom Gillis shine in graceful dance routines; the Sensational Skylons perform thrilling turns dancing routines; and, as well as closely co-operating with Charlie in the sketches, Albert and Les Ward present a most diverting instrumental specialty.

The show has first-class support in Tessa Davees, Vicky Mitchell and the Eight Charlies—plus consistently sound backing from Jack Rankin and his orchestra.



The X-Calibres — an up and coming Northern Beat Group.

This week is rather special at the famous Mersey pub, Tracey Lee, the Australian impersonator; Zarzuela, and Johnny St. George, share the bill.

That is not the end of this success story. On the upper floor of the hotel there's a huge ballroom and banquet hall which until now has been exclusively reserved for private parties. Manager Heywood wants to bring it into regular use with a supper licence and late-night cabaret—in effect, separate and distinct shows from the current upstairs and downstairs floor. The innovation should make the Mersey quite unique among the top pubs in the North.



Kathy Kirby and Frank Field at the ABC Theatre, Blackpool, where they are resident in "Holiday Startime" for the summer season.

## CLUB CORNER

MOST artists of my acquaintance are more prone to criticising clubs than complimenting them, so it comes as a refreshing change to hear from songstress Stella Lester that: "This is it, at last — a luxurious hotel, rich foods, generous hospitality, and thoroughly appreciative audiences..." And from popster Tina Stewart: "The place is lavish, décor out of this world, the food wonderful, and I'm treated like a princess."

I have to admit that this unusual enthusiasm is not directed at Manchester establishments but in fact, Danish ones, respectively the Landsoldaten in Frederica, and the Hallen in Aarhus, where the girls are appearing in cabarets.

Denmark! A bit off the beaten track — out of your range? Not at all. Foreign agents responsible for Scandinavian bookings—and some English agents—are due at Manchester College Club on July 6 to offer contracts to suitable acts who fancy a spell abroad. Parker Enterprises of London in association with Leslie Lawrence are arranging for a mammoth audition show (from two p.m. until midnight) especially for their benefit.

All types of acts will be welcomed, and for coloured artists who are in short supply in the Scandinavian countries, there is a pressing invitation to come along and find out if this could be the opportunity for which they have long been waiting.

CONSIDERING that Bruce Russell has lived in Manchester for only a couple of years or so, his popularity is rather remarkable — and he doesn't play for United.

No: it's the appeal of his well-groomed, toned, and discriminate choice of songs allied to a pleasing personality, that make this 27-year-old son of Barbados a much sought after club entertainer.

It is four years now since Russell, imbued with the spirit of adventure, joined the merchant navy and sailed from the West Indies. But 12 months as a deck-hand rapidly dispelled all the romantic illusions he had previously held for Pop-Eye and bell-bottoms, and helped him decide that life aboard the lugger was not for him. True he made a bit at ship's concerts with the crew by whom he was tipped off to head for Manchester and try his luck in the clubs.

Fortune favours the brave — and good singers too! Sure enough, Bruce clicked!

## 'POSH' PARS By Ken Reed

PATRONS of the Kit Kat, Hunstanton, got quite a surprise last week when a seemingly full-blooded black, complete with flowing black robes, shortly beard and dark glasses, entered, took a seat at a table, ordered a small brown ale and focussed his attention on the cabaret.

He was introduced to me as Sheikh Abdul Singh—but imagine my surprise when he addressed me in a broad Norfolk accent. The fact is, the visitor was none other than King's Lynn fire-eater Mike Taylor.

"Mike, who bills himself as the 'human flame-thrower'—he claims he can blow a flame over 16 feet long, tells me he thinks he is the only bearded fire-eater in the business."

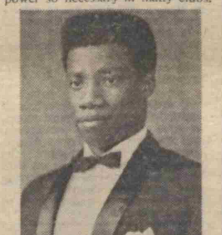
"I wear the beard for effect," he said. "But it did get me into trouble once. It caught light!" A tattooist by trade, the 27-year-old Mike hopes to take up full-time professional status with his fire-eating show, which includes a little glass-eating and turning himself into a human pin-cushion. There should be plenty of scope for him this summer at galas and fetes.

MAKING their first appearance in the Peterborough area, last week was that swinging vocal duo

ACCORDING to London's Ernie Walton (recently in the North) his new-type £750 accordion has advantages over the electronic organ in that as well as affording scope for reproducing various orchestral voices it incorporates for the first time a slide effect to facilitate glissando and portamento effects, and of course is much more easily portable.

Ernie is an accomplished performer on this latest electronic model. I was present at a Manchester club when his exciting renditions of "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" and "Dizzy Fingers" stopped a "Stag" show—and that, believe me, is no mean feat.

I may be wrong, but I cannot imagine Mr. Walton's new wonder machine generally superseding the electronic organ. Accordion and organ playing are different techniques, and the latter has the greater power so necessary in many clubs.



Bruce Russell

NEWS of Manchester singer Joe Saxon who was seriously injured when a wall collapsed and he was buried up to his neck in the ruins, is that he is making excellent progress.

NEW names are in demand at the Starlight Room in Wigan, a popular night spot where the audiences rate as "the best".

MANCHESTER songster Steve Martin has changed his name to Steve Mason to avoid clashes with ex-Lou Preager, recording vocalist. Steve Martin, now doing the club rounds.

"CLOSE your eyes and he sounds more like Sinatra than Sinatra does!" 'tis said of Peter James, complete vocalist at Swinton's 'Vishing Well, J.H.

## 'POSH' PARS By Ken Reed

from Doncaster, the Darrell Brothers. They shared the bill with me at the official opening of a new civic centre at Wittering, Nr. Peterborough.

Peter and Colin (they really are brothers) served up just the right sort of music and song for a very mixed audience. They will be summer seasoning at Skegness this year.

TALENT competitions seem to be the trend around Peterborough's "we lay on music" inns and taverns just lately. Latest landlord to stage a talent show is George Rate of The Black Horse, Baston, with the result that he is packing 'em in every Friday night.

The show is very ably backed by local and district drinking places want action with their ale.

GRIMSBY agent Don Carroll tells me that he has booked French cabaret artiste Michele, of Carnation Street fame, to do a tour of the Grimsby clubs. He has also lined up Roy Stevens, the "whispering" pianist entertainer for a tour there.

## Hot From Scotland: Gordon Irving Reporting

## IT MUST BE SUMMER... THE SHOWS KICK-OFF

SUMMER suns may not be a-glowing, but at least all the summer shows are opening. This week-end sees at least six in Scotland—with five clashing with first-nights at Rothsay, Girvan, Largs, Aberdeen, and Leven, and Arbroath kicking-off on Sunday.

I'm sure the Sunday night opening might be tried more. Noticeably, the shows are stronger in acts this season, and much will depend on whether the customers come to the resorts instead of heading up and towards the Costa Brava and other tourist- and English-tea areas. Luckily, the typhoid scare has vanished from Aberdeen, so all's clear for the Scottish minstrel Andy Stewart to

make 'em forget their hibernation up there. Largs has Clark and Murray, John Dumbart and Joe Gordon, and Arbroath has David Kinnaird, Benny Garcia and Frank Carson. Meanwhile, Edinburgh King's looks set for the merry tinkle of the box-office as the city holiday-makers and residents pile in (advance booking is up by 50 per cent on last year) to laugh at Rikki Fulton and Jack Milroy, and be entertained by the Hedley Ward Trio, Fay Lennox, opera singer Charles O'Byrne, singer-dancer Tony Adams and other bright people.

## LEICESTER SCENE

### A Fortnightly Report by Arthur Kirby

SO many clubs—so little talent. That's the criticism that is fast becoming a headache for entertainment committees here in Leicester. Is it justified? Is there really a shortage of bright new acts?

My own view is that there is plenty of undiscovered talent but many concert secretaries are here to take a chance on unknown aspiring artists.

Several young hopefuls have complained to me that auditions are a waste of time because all they get is "don't call us—we'll call you," and that's usually the end of the line.

If show business is going to survive in Leicester, we need a few starmakers with an eye for talent and an urge to gamble.

I'm not usually impressed by juvenile acts, they're either too precocious or too awkward. Someone who is not guilty of either characteristic is 14-year-old Susanne Miller. She recently came second in the Leicester section of the Butlin £1,000 talent competition, losing by only half a point. This dedicated young lady had a lot of time and a lot of talent, both of which should provide an irresistible combination.

Young David Delima is another young man to watch, he goes on improving with every performance. A coloured singer, he has that rare feeling for a song that seems to come instinctively to members of his race.

David Gibson, a locally-born singer, is only 17 years old but I predict for him a very big future.

Appearing recently at the Railwaymen's Club in East Park Road, he showed a range and power usually associated with singers of more maturity. This young man should never go short of bookings.



David Gibson

PAYING a brief visit to the Sunnyside Club at Cleethorpes, I was delighted to meet the sweetheart of Northern cabaret, Pam Peters. She soon had her audience acting like pigeons in Trafalgar Square, not only begging for every crumb but always eager for more. Leicester audiences may have to wait a long time for the delectable Miss Peters. First, she comes three months to Portugal, then a session of recordings for the American disc market. Lucky old U.S.A.

BEAT groups are still the big attraction at most clubs these nights. The Phantoms, a Nuneaton combination, are proving that you can't keep a good beat down. They have a young drummer right in the Dave Clark mould and included in their programme are numbers by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Freddie and the Dreamers, and almost all the big band favourites. No wonder their date book is almost full.

FORTY years in show business and still getting lots of applause, that's the proud record of Doris Colledge, Leicester's own Tessie O'Shea. Not only that, her concert secretaries all vote her the most co-operative artist on the books. True music hall will never die but there are a few stars in Doris to keep the tradition alive.

ANY variety acts keen to join a package show for Germany? Then the man to contact is Scotsman Billy Crotchet, the musical clown, who is back home in Edinburgh from world travelling.

"I'm taking a Scots package show over to Germany," he tells me, "and if you know of any good acts, ask them to drop me a line."

Next year Billy returns to New Zealand and Australia, where he recently completed his second tour.

I also managed to get to Suva, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bangkok, Calcutta, Bombay and Rangoon. It is all night-club work in these places. A lot of British acts are playing them."

On Monday, June 22, Billy opens in an ice-show at the Granville Theatre, Ramsgate, before playing the month of September in Dublin. He gets around.



AN amusing moment at a rehearsal of the new summer show, "Meet the Fletchers", which opens at the Grand Theatre, Girvan, on the first of July, this week-end.

Jimmy Fletcher, the comedian, is seen (centre) with his wife, Helen Rae, who helps to "feed" him, and his male foil, Jimmy Duncan.

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