

NIGHTBEAT

BY
PETER HEPPLE

IT is no secret that Max Bygraves is one of the most popular artists ever presented at the Talk of the Town, and he can be relied upon to fill London's largest cabaret room with the same ease that he brings to theatres. Seeing him once again in action at the Talk reminds us how very few artists this country possesses who are entertainers in the fullest and truest sense of the word. There are probably better singers than Max, as good comedians, certainly better jugglers and impressionists, but there is virtually nobody but nobody — who can transfix an audience in the Bygraves manner.

His latest act is a case of something old, something new, something borrowed and a little bit that is blue — certainly bluer than we usually get at this family niterie. But here again the Bygraves charm ensures that nobody takes offence, apart from which some of his gags are the brightest and funniest heard in a long while.

He has a gloriously hammy opening number, a hoke striptease act and a string of old favourites, including "Tulips from Amsterdam" and "Hands". Plus a version of "Hello Dolly" which is milked for all it is worth, gets three reprises and could probably get a dozen more—"I was in bed when they told me you were still applauding". At the piano he has his old stalwart Bob Dixon and a young lad named Jim joins him in one of his best numbers, "Dear Heart". A particularly nice thought on press night from Max was a tribute in words and music to one of our colleagues, Ross Shepherd of "The People", retiring this week after 40 years devoted reporting of London's entertainment scene.

THERE are at least signs that many folk groups are evolving towards entertainment, and in the forefront of this movement are the Harbour Lites, at present at Quaglin's and the Allegro.

This is a vastly improved trio, although their billing of "New Zealand's leading folk group" is a little misleading on two counts. First because it now consists of two New Zealanders and an Australian, Sydney-born Graeme McClaren, a former Black and White Minstrel. Graeme joined the two Johns, Ross and Mercer, a few weeks ago when a previous colleague left.

Secondly, most of their numbers are folk-influenced rather than the genuine article, even though their Maori war chants are authentic enough, especially if one is sitting within grinning range. A promi-

nent place in the act is reserved for their latest recording, a Lennon and McCartney composition called "Run For Your Life".

JOHN AND PAUL provide the J connection with another folk unit currently eyeing the cabaret scene, in which they should do well. This is the Frugal Sound, recorders of "Norwegian Wood" and recently back from the Belgian Folk and Blues Festival at Antwerp.

This trio of two boys and a girl is one of the most impressive I have heard, partly because of their professional outlook, partly because they kick up a heck of a beat. In addition, the girl member, Rosalind Rankin, has both looks and a fine voice.

Guitarist Brian Stein has a particularly interesting background, in that he not only has previous experience with a group called the Five Teens in his native South Africa, but has spent 18 months as a paratrooper in the Israeli Army.

Harry Isaacs' folk sessions at the Marquee, where I saw the Frugal Sound, are unearthing some distinctive talent. Nearly as satis-



Penny Nichols. Great Night Spot favourite.

fying musically as the Frugal Sound, but lacking their polished presentation, are the New Harvesters, a trio of youngsters from Roehampton, with a fine eclectic repertoire which encompasses bluegrass numbers, sea shanties, Scottish and Jewish songs and a few socio-political songs such as Paul Simon's strangely haunting "A Most Peculiar Man".

PROUD possessor of a 3 a.m. licence, Mr. Simon (his full name is Greek and unpronounceable) is the West End's latest entrant to the late-night entertainment scene at his pleasant Sphinx Club in Beak Street.



MAX

An old-established club which has hitherto catered very much for the professional man, meaning chartered accountants and the like, the Sphinx's previous show business connection has been spasmodic; a beat group here, a jazz trio there, and there a belly dancer or two. Now, however, Spain meets the Middle East in Solo via a fiery ensemble known as the Quartetto Morouno Espanol, who burst into action two or three times per evening with exhausting sessions of flamenco.

Having discovered that his chartered accountants are usually ready for bed by 12, Mr. Simon thinks that his club might offer a happy haven to show people after midnight, sentiments with which I agree, for he offers eating and drinking for a pound or so, and dancing to the Pharos.

POTSHOTS FROM PUBLAND.

Ray Donn of the Pegasus, Stoke Newington, now almost a relative of mine (his cousin is engaged to my wife's cousin), pressing on with his plans for the June 7 pub spectacular at the Scala Theatre. Latest count—getting on for 20 acts, . . . Barney Slatery's orange and black Chinese restaurant at the Deurgan bringing a welcome touch of la dolce vita to Homerton. In the adjacent four-ale bar, Beany Ward, back in town for a spell before taking off for Northern cabaret again, is tearing them up with his great songs and impressions routine. . . . Bobby Breen and Josephine Stahl, great singers both and not unknown in the West End, now swinging away four nights a week at the Red Lion, Westminster Bridge Road, with Brian Wales' lads. . . . A place to visit at the week-ends, the Adam and Eve in Peckham High Street, where Frank Dunn is resident compleat. . . . Pub and club favourite and great character Teddy Morter thrilled to bits when gifted with a gold watch by the management of the Brewery Tap, Barking, where he has entertained regularly for the past five years. At the same time they gave him an extension of contract.

Merseyside Movements

AFTER being kicked around a bit—literally!—Jedd Winters has repaired his broken ankle and resumed work on the club and cabaret circuit. Jedd has recently linked up with well-known Merseyside song-writer, Tommy McCoy, and recorded, "Darling, till we meet" on Cavern records.

ONE of Merseyside's top comics, Dod Lann, has had to turn down for domestic reasons a Channel Islands and continental summer tour this summer. Still, it's good news for the clubs, where this popular and successful artist is always in demand.

ANOTHER change of name, from Mack to Kaye. Joe McGuffie, male part of the one-time Crestas Duo, who became a soloist on the impending addition to the family, started off as Joey Mack but is now billed as Joey Kaye. Joe has developed a good refreshingly funny solo act and is enjoying deserved success. Still, club audiences miss the lovely Kathleen.

BACK with the girls, Marie Rose is doing well under Billy Scott. Ernie McGee management with week-long stints at the Plantation, Chester, Blackpool Casino and other spots and lovely slim soprano, Diana Dee, apart from club and cabaret bookings round the north-west, was featured with comedy-vocalist Jimmy Markey in a charity show at the new Dunlop club, Walton.

FOLLOWING Kirby British Legion Club's annual stag-night last month the girls of the club are going to town this month with a night of their own, even doing their own booking. Rumour has it that this will include a "male striptease".

A NEW £25,000 prefabricated club building is being opened by Kirby Liberal Association in the summer. It will include a games room, concert hall and lounge, will be open every night and will include once-weekly variety.

VOCALIST-entertainer Mabel Thompson went from the proverbial bomb at the local football team's presentation dance at Aintree Conservative Club recently. Also providing cabaret spots were the Moon-glows Trio.

AUDITIONS are becoming the order of the day for many Merseyside clubs lately and latest to be reported are the Sunday shows at Birkenhead Dockers' Club, Bessborough Road. At Stanley Social club auditions are held every Wednesday with the annual Butlin Talent trail in the offing.

RICHARD SWIFT

FROM THE MIDLANDS

BY SYD STARR

WHEN a club has been entertained starved for over two years, it is perhaps only to be expected that it will take time to get the members concert minded again, after a prolonged "Bingo Only" policy. So I must give a big bouquet to that "Breezy Brumie", George Raymond, for the way he "slayed 'em" at Edgewick Trades Hall Club last week. George is well known for his pantomime dame parts, and "Old Time" comedy spots, and more recently in "Crossroads" the Midland produced A.T.V. serial.

THE new concert hall at Coombe Social Club, Binley, Coventry was officially opened on Easter Saturday. The concert hall is the second in the City to be built on "stilts", with undercroft car parking. The opening of this club now brings the total of clubs up to 30—a great achievement for a great City.

IN a recent article I mentioned seeing a very good Scottish artist, who for some reason or other would not give me his name. The mystery is now cleared—he is Justin Gregor, who until a few months ago was a constable on the Nuneaton Police Force. Attired in full Highland Dress he has a nice line in Scottish songs and humour should find his way into the majority of Midland Clubs, and eventually further afield—"Lang may your lum reek" Justin.

OBVIOUSLY, I cannot reply to all the letters I receive through the post, but to those artists who have written me regarding the clubs that might co-operate in working a weekend circuit, I suggest they write: Lythalls Lane Social Club, Lythalls Lane; The R.A.O.B. Club, Foleshill Road, Foleshill Social Club, Foleshill Road, and The Housing Social Club, rear of Foleshill Fire Station, Foleshill Road. Also in close proximity are Bell Green W.M. Club, Rosebery Avenue; Edgewick Trades Hall Club, Cross Road, The Unicorn Club, Holbrook Lane, and Hen Lane Social Club, Beacon Road, all in Coventry, and within a five minutes car journey from each other, I trust that this information will satisfy many of my correspondents.

ALTHOUGH surrounded by debris and scaffolding, "The Elite Club" is carrying on the good work with full week cabaret. Last

week "The Highlights", a young instrumental and singing team added fresh laurels to their list of successes, and currently members are enjoying the performances of the sensational Ukrainian Cossacks. With the music of The Dennis Kelly Trio and performing companions Peter Cunningham and Danny Martin, a happy evening is always assured.

All items of Midland interest are welcomed at 39 Lythalls Lane, Coventry. Phone: Coventry 88038.



Julie Rogers—a great Midlands favourite. She looks good, moves well and sings like a lark.

MAX NESBITT

MAX NESBITT, the music hall comedian and song writer, has died in London aged 63.

With his brother Harry, he topped the bills all over Britain, the continent and America.

Max and Harry Nesbitt came to London from South Africa 30 years ago almost unknown and made their U.K. debut at the old Paragon in the Mile End Road. They were such a success there that within a short time they were bill-toppers at the London Coliseum at the other end of town.

Max leaves a widow and two daughters.

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