

LANES from

by JAMES HARTLEY

SHEILA BUXTON has long been recognised as a first-class singer and reliable artist. I personally regard her as one of the most under-rated cabaret entertainers of our time, with few equals in her line.

She will never amount to opposition for Shirley Bassey or Ella Fitzgerald though she does possess a considerable tonal talent—but it's her personality, so warm, fresh as champagne, and all-embracing, that matters most. And she uses it, in exactly the right media—like her own off-beat versions of *It's A Wonderful World* and *If I Were A Rich Girl*—to hold rapt attention throughout her 40-minute routine.

That shimmering gown of multi-coloured sequins (not the brain-child of some celebrated Continental couturier—she paid a cool £200 for it in a Hong Kong fashion-house) does something for her. But, above all, it's split-second timing emphasising an element of freshness in even the most casual moments of the act—with spot-on support from pianist Brian Fitzgerald—that adds the finishing touch of CLASS. Sheila's a Lanes lass, having from the Gracie Fields Dora Bryan country and heading the same way—up top!

IN Manchester 12 hours before they were due to embark on their first British tour season, at Blackpool Tower Ocean, John and Alex of the County Set (two boys and girl combo) made the shocking discovery that their entire wardrobe (mazy stage suits, casual wear, sundries—the lot!) were missing—stolen from the van into which they'd packed them the night before, in readiness for a smart getaway. What a start to a day that should have been the happiest of their lives. But, as always, trouble shared is trouble halved, and, in fact, under the calming influence of Blackpool, entertainers manager Bernard Crabtree to whom they reported their predicament, it magically vanished. He prescribed the temporary solution: Ocean s.m. Tommy Hutton's local knowledge enabled them to secure essential stage gear, while m.d. Teddy Clarke worked wonders compiling skeleton arrangements in time for curtain-up. The opening performance went without a hitch. (It's that sort of co-operation artists have in mind when they confide—"it's a pleasure to work for the Tower people"). The County Set—Patsy from Plymouth, Alex from Inverness, John from South Africa—all twentyish, good-looking, and with-it, have a lively and distinctive vocal/instrumental harmony presentation tailor-made for holiday audiences. Their manager, Harry Rawden, vows they will make the grade. He made precisely the same prophecy about the Manor Hi-Quint and the Castaways when he introduced them in Blackpool—and he was right.

★ ★ ★
THEY'VE allotted a place on the stage to the Don Phillips Music, backing "Star Show '68" in the new theatre on Central Pier Blackpool and the innovation is completely justified by results. It seems more and more that the work of the resident m.d.'s—Larry Macklin, Jack Ansell, Paul Burnett, Morris MacLean, Tommy Jones, Don Phillips, Ivor Emery, Ernest Freedom, Les Bennetts, and the rarely mentioned others whose contributions are the very salt in the stew—is gaining fairer recognition. With the ever increasing influence of non-stop broadcasting, the resourceful m.d. with know-how to keep pace with development and produce fashionable sound subject to the dictates of the soloist, is a man with a future.

Young Phillips (writer of "Concerto in Jazz" and many more hits, whose rags-to-riches story began in a Malda Vale pub when the late Lawrie Wright heard him ticking the ivories) is currently engaged on what may turn out to be his major opus. In collaboration with a playwright, he is writing a full-length musical tentatively titled "Piccadilly Lights"—which accounts for much of his week-day appearances. On Sundays he's usually far away from Blackpool, on a one-nighter with say Joan Regan, Kathy Kirby, or another of the stars who value his glove-right accompaniment. When's his day off? I must enquire.

CLUB CORNER

IF it's adequately publicised and propitiously programmed—not at the end of the show when the customers are fidgety, heavy-eyed, and drifting off home—nothing captures club crowds more than music. And touring northern theatre mobs, with sonorous and playful buffing kidology ever conceived by the old masters, Mandrake has been proving just that since he returned from abroad. He wowed 'em at Ratley Variety, Manchester Talk of the North, Barnsley Ba-Ba (et al) and re-bookings all the way testify to the pulling power of a presentation that is unique in may aspects. For instance, what expert employs another expert to safeguard his invulnerability? Mandrake, of course—Maskar (a famous spell-binder in his own right) has been assisting him since February.

And the so glamorous Marcelle—impervious to sword thrusts, adept at levitation—is an integral part of the act too. By the way, Maskar is leaving this month to be married, and to resume solo activities—Gordon Mules, 29-year-old Welshman, will take over. . . . Two highly contracted mystery-men figure conspicuously in the late-night line-up. Johnny Heaton presents at Blackpool Sands next Sunday and week—the bill-topping resident Zaneada whose amazing performances are the talk of the town; and Vaddell (self-styled Britain's youngest illusionist) with promise of incredible additions to his spectacular Bird Fantasy, and the ravishing Jayne to assist in the process of blinding us with science.

★ ★ ★
WELL known Blackpool way for his effective public-relations work, Charles Carlton-Smith is now in charge of the Nordic Country Club East Molesey (Hampton Court) where live entertainment is and increasingly popular feature. Artists are welcome at any time and if you should need to try out your act for the London agents, facilities are yours for the asking. (Phone Molesey 6961).

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at present.
She's in Spain.

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YORKSHIRE RELISH

by James Towler

UNLIKE so many of their contemporaries, the Peddlers are content to follow their own path, playing and singing the music they like in a manner that suits them. I doubt if there is any other presentation in the country which gives such an individualistic interpretation to its work.

In cabaret their impact is quite uncanny. What at first seems like a succession of numbers is, in fact, ten minutes or so, the atmosphere becomes quite electric.

And in addition to being able to acknowledge the undoubted musical skill of the boys the audience is also treated to a delightful cameo of high camp humour which, in itself, is something of a masterpiece. At a time when almost everything one sees has become so stereotyped, the Peddlers prove that even in this day and age it is possible to be musically adventurous and commercial at the same time.

★ ★ ★
ANOTHER act that keeps well clear of the usual run of cabaret are the Birds 'n' Bees. This duo of twins came to the fore via Hughie and have more than proved worthy of the opportunities placed their way.

This act scores so strongly for two reasons. Firstly because the participants are good singers with some particularly interesting harmonies. Secondly because they have been well produced.

It is the stage movements, changes of costume and the overall polish that really lift this presentation into something so much better than "second best". Already the girls and boys give that gloss to their work which should keep them on the international scene for many years to come.

★ ★ ★
I HAVE in the past described Josef Locke an "elder statesman" of show business—and a very distinguished one at that. Nephew Brendan Locke passes muster as a "junior minister" of promise. Say someone in the Richard Marsh category.

As is inevitable much of Brendan's work is something of a commercial for his uncle although this should not be held against him. After all, I guess people were taking Kathleen home long before Joe came on the scene.

★ ★ ★
MEMO to all impressionists: Please don't tell us you're taking off. If you are good we'll know. If not, we'll have fun guessing!

★ ★ ★
THE BYSTANDERS impressed me as being one of the better groups who, if they landed a hit record, would be a national name in no time. With a distinct leaning to the Beachy, they build up to the terrific rock finale, complete with flashing lights and explosions, is excellent.

★ ★ ★
THERE are times when one feels distinctly out of one's depth. And while I'm only too happy to view and review, I hope constructively, I'm afraid this one construes me. When it comes to Spanish dancing and singing I'm completely lost. In spite of this I found the *Compania Escudero* a very interesting diversion to the normal run of cabaret. Three girls, a principal boy, dancer plus guitarist *Peter Rameri* and singer dancer *Sandra Escudero* made up an exceptionally colourful company, the colour being emphasised by several costume changes.

Perhaps the Wakefield Kon-Tike Club will be able to claim a grant from the Arts Council for staging the show. Perhaps they'll give me one so I can go on a course and learn a little more of what it's all about. Or maybe colleague Peter Henrole, who is something of an aficionado they tell me, will explain in words of one syllable (English, please) what makes a zapateado and when to yell ole.

V.G.S

ALTHOUGH London had a very wet day for the L.G.U. Competition on Tuesday of last week, the Provincials must have been much better off according to the scores returned. At the winners was *JOHNNY LAMONTE* with a net 70 from 8 Handicap, out in 40 home in 38, very good golf considering the dreadful rain.

STEVE MERRICK was second with 71 and *TOM HARRISON* and *CRAIG DOUGLAS* equal third with 73.

In the Provincials, *RAY FERNANDES* was the winner by one shot from *GEOFF SANDERS*, they both played at Parkstone. S.S.S. 70. Ray finished with a net 66 from a 7 handicap, out in 36 home in 37.

Sanders spoiled his chances with two sixes and a seven all on five Boney holes otherwise his card showed perfect golf.

BOB PEARSON was also three under at Rhuddlan S.S.S. 65 where he returned a net 65.

On Tuesday next the members will be playing a Stapleford Competition for the BILLY BLEACH CUP at Fulwell and the following week they are back at Finchley to play for the TOM ARNOLD BOY.

Owing to the lack of members engaged in the Blackpool area the annual match against St. Anne's Old Links fixed for Sunday, August 25, has had to be cancelled.

It is hoped that the match will take place in 1969 on the corresponding date.

MUSIC HALL MISCELLANY

By ELLIS ASHTON

RARELY have I heard a more eloquent plea for supporting live entertainment than that made by *Jimmy Wheeler*. The occasion was at the brand new Pontin's Camp at Camber, Sussex. This huge complex, catering for more than 4,000 campers, is run by show business personalities *Sidney Cook* and *Ian Matthews*, and includes indoor swimming pools, ballrooms, cinema, etc. It is a veritable city in itself, and *Sidney* and *Ian* have a policy of booking big names, which is paying off handsomely.

In a fleeting visit I caught the incredible *Rahnee Mottie*, with her fire-eating, belly-dancing, and other feats including lying on a bed of nails with a 15-stone gent standing on her dainty midriff.

Jimmy Wheeler was in another packed room, and though he has been in the business for nearly 55 years his delivery was as forthright as ever.

I was here that *Jimmy* urged the audience to help keep Variety alive, and if the response was anything to go by then we have no more need to worry.

The British Music Hall Society is bursting at the seams again. *Jack Gough*, the organiser of the International Circus Clowns' Club has now moved to 3 Foxcombe Drive, Tilehurst, Reading (Reading 2631) and *Alan Peters* of Variety Aces' Entertainment Club, which does so much good work for charity, is now at 57a Sundom Road, Church Lane, Charlton, S.E.7.

Drury Lane's genial manager, *George Hoare*, member of a music hall family, is one of our members, and enthusiast *Jack Waters*, now head of programme service for the new London Weekend Television, started at this famous house before touring the hall as the complete entertainer.

Our youngest member, *Julie Fisher*, will be seen, all being well, on "Opportunity Knocks" on August 14, and we are confident that she will prove that the art of male impersonation is far from dead. Anyway, our address is still 1 King Henry Street, N.16 (01-254 4209). Do keep us posted.

BRADFORD SHOWCASE

By Andrew McLachlan

THE seventh annual Big Show will be presented as usual at St. George's Hall on October 8 and 9. Organising Secretary *Dick Bolton*, tells me he has engaged the popular *Westminster* to star once again and local all-rounders *Kenny Noble* and *Anita* will have a strong spot on the bill catering for all tastes. Talking to Mr. Bolton last week, he mentioned the desire for a top girl vocalist to complete the show. He can be contacted at Warp Dancers Social Club, 10 Worthington Street, Bradford.

All proceeds from St. George's Hall and subsidiary concerts are donated as always, to the Bradford Branch for Mentally Handicapped Children.

★ ★ ★
MY paragraph re the acute shortage of competent organisers in this district, led to complaints from my postman about his overweight bag, and nearly also from Yours Truly, who had a constant buzzing in both eardrums from an over-worked telephone. Many thanks for all enquiries, but the most influential person to contact in this department is *Kenneth Priestley*, 20 Mayo Crescent, Bradford 5, and his number is 32199.

★ ★ ★
FRANK ALMAIRES, District Secretary of the Northern Joint Council, a body that controls entertainment and entertainers in the hundreds of clubs affiliated to it, wishes to express his gratitude to the multitude of organisations and individuals who contributed so generously to his recent testimonial fund.

Frank has already thanked those concerned by way of the local press and the club journal, but he has so many friends throughout the country that he asked me to remark on this tangible tribute for his services to clubland in general.

THE PIP WELSH FOURSOME



wish to thank

all at Beverley Artists, South Shields, all at C.B.S., Burnley, Danny Durkin, Middlesbrough, Peter Doherty, Beverley Artists, South Wales.

Trevor Meredith, Mount Hill Entertainments, South Wales, Don Carroll, Grimsby, Don Holden, Hull, Fred Screeton, Manchester.

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wish to thank
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Also thanks to *Reginald Williams* for a wonderful week at The Ashton Court Country Club.

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Steve Martin

wishes to thank

MR JIM MUIR

of the

Sunshine Hotel, Jersey

who has kindly agreed to release him from his show owing to a severe attack of laryngitis

STEVE hopes to be able to resume work from August 7th onwards, and would welcome offers for weekly bookings from this date

Steve Martin, 197A Kirkway, Alkington, Middleton, Lancs.
Tel: Middleton 6828