

## LINES from LANCS.

by JAMES HARTLEY

THIS must be a wonderful break for you," Reg "Unknown to Millions" Thompson was greeted when he dropped in to take over a major spot in "Holiday Starline" at Blackpool ABC. All showbiz-minded Blackpudians believe that a plum part in one of the resort's top shows is nothing short of a bonanza—but for the sake of keeping the record straight I should mention that basking in the limelight on the North-West Gold Coast is no innovation for Reg. Some of us can't forget him as the hep young speller whose gift of the gab helped to launch Tommy Steele into orbit in a memorable Harold Fielding matinee season at the old Palace Varieties. And it's not so long since he appeared notably well with the Black and White Minstrels at the Opera House for a summer. It could be that this latest stint wherein he emerged a worthy substitute for Jimmy Marshall (promoted to London Palladium) may prove to be the Third Time Lucky break for Mrs. Thompson's favourite son.

DEREK ROY, another of this season's surprise-finishers (he took over for Mike Yarwood in the Mike and Bernie Wintners' edition of "Show Time" at North Pier) has lost none of his magic, though it does seem a while since we last sampled his talents in long-run Blackpool season epics. His absence in South Africa where he is now a well-established broadcaster known from coast to coast as "Dear Doctor Roy" accounts for that. Roy has club fixtures in the West Country before he returns to Cape Town to embark on a "personals" round of African army camps, and to record one or more series for his vast radio following over there. But he's still backing Britain strongly enough to have signed up to play a lead part in Bunny Baron's "Aladdin" at Lewisham over the Christmas/New Year season.

DESPITE long and unswerving allegiance to live entertainment I might think twice about incurring much more than 100 miles a night to see even the most glamorous theatrical production. But Ray "Young In Heart" Welch is a different matter. He is a comedian of altogether sterner stuff and during the last four months she has made the 500-mile round trip, London-Blackpool and back, every Tuesday since 18. That's what's in all to feast her eyes on her pin-up lad, Ken Dodd in "The Big Show" at the Opera House. "Diddy Ray" (Dodd's pet name for this sweet old dear—reckon she's over 70 though she admits only to "21 and a diddy-bit") one-time dresser to the late Kate Carnegy, is now a cleaner at Westminster Abbey choir school. She has been worshipping the Nabob of Knottish from a seat in the stalls since 1961—and has seen every production in which he has starred from Liverpool to London, Bournemouth to Blackpool. Ken thinks the world of her: "Such loyalty is overwhelming," he told me.

ONE of the most relaxed songsters in the business, albeit one of Britain's most dynamic entertainers—to wit, Vince Hill. Throughout the summer, in the Tommy Cooper Show at Blackpool Winter Gardens Pavilion, Vince has been scoring unerringly, selling like hot cakes. And, believe me, he can still, and will, go much further, for he's fresh, sincere, and vitalised with the urge to stay up top. Record-wise there's a new LP, "You Forgot to Remember" (a 14-tracker) coming out in time to tempt Father Christmas, and although this lad's propensity to guard against over-exposure, he will nevertheless be seen guesting in imminent TV spectacles with Mike Yarwood, Billy Cotton, and Harry Corbett. A four-week run-around of the Australian Scene (with one-man-band, secretary, road-manager Ernie Dunstall) starts in Sydney November 11, but Vince will be back in time to rehearse for pantomime, "Dick Whittington" (in the titular role) opening Sheffield Lyceum December 24. Truly a great life—if you can stick the pace.

## CLUB CORNER

I HAVE watched Zarada, the clairvoyant, in a variety of engagements over the past six years and the more I have seen of him, the more impressed I have been with his uncanny extra-sensory perception.

People whom I have personally known to be complete strangers to him have joined him on stage and within seconds he has been telling them things which they thought only known to themselves. Eminent politicians, financial magnates, troubled businessmen, the police—all have been among the many who have consulted him—and found enlightenment.

In the 20 weeks resident season he has just ended at Blackpool Sands Casino, the amazing Zarada has consolidated his already great reputation. Tens of thousands of visitors to the resort have gone away marvelling at his wonderful insight—which, incidentally, is displayed in a very showmanlike fashion—and now there can scarcely be a corner of the country where his name is not known.

He has accepted a return contract for Sands next year, meanwhile he is about to commence a clubs tour of the major towns and cities from Cardiff to Edinburgh. There's an offer of a two-month season in Canada followed by a fortnight in the States he would very much like to accept—if he can fit it in. Zarada knows his game and should be able to confidently forecast for himself an even more prosperous future.

★ ★ ★



THE name of Zarada is invariably linked with Johnnie St. George, the debonair young man who presents him. Johnnie, of course, is an artist in his own right, a balladeer of rare calibre—a modestly following, seemingly content always to take a back seat. So he came to Blackpool specifically to introduce the mind-reader—he does talk like a book—and as his required. Then one night early during the season he agreed to stand in for an indisposed vocal headliner. And his offering of a handful of songs—impeccably delivered in a style that combines some of the characteristics and tonal qualities of Tony Bennett, Johnny Mathis, and Dean Martin—sparked off such enthusiasm among the regulars, pulled business to the regular, Geoffrey Gardner (manager) rewarded him with bill-top status for several subsequent weeks. The story has gone round—the world's rapid elevation has stirred interest among the resident people. Negotiations are already afoot and it seems certain there's promotion just round the corner—though Johnnie and his boss both realise it may well mean dissolution of their six years' old association. And that is not a pleasant thought.

BLACKBURN has just about quadrupled business this year at CABARLOT Clifton and a perspicacious manager in Peter Bard (a Fortes graduate) is going all out to consolidate the happy result. Expansion, possible extensions, and top line artists figure in his plans to keep this town-centre luxury hotel well in the forefront. Among recent attractions Austria's presentation proved notably successful. Arresting publicity plus exquisite pictures of this charming Austrian lass, with promise of exciting Arabian dances and spectacular costumes, pulled business two hours before she was due on. And it was only the men who came to ooh and aah—a reputed £2,000 wardrobe is irresistible bait for the ladies, and now haunting Mexican and Spanish folk songs (the warbler is self-accompanied on guitar) are anyone's cup of tea. Come again Austria.

## MODEST JOHNNIE



JOHNNIE ST. GEORGE—a brilliant artist in his own right—but modest with it as they say up North.

## LEICESTER SCENE

by Arthur Kirby

AFTER much speculation the Entertainment Secretaries' Council has now released details of the year's entertainment programme of the year, the "Command Performance". The club chosen to stage this mammoth attraction is the Belgrave Liberal Club in Melton Road. Artists taking part include the Russ Cleveland Sound, Mike Dennett and Chick, Durkin and James, Audrey Graham, Christina Mitchell, Harry Parker and Barry Young and Les Girls.

The last-named act, incidentally, is the only local act on the bill and will surely wind up a great year for Barry Young, a year which began disastrously when his former partner decided to call it a day and Barry found himself without "Les Girls", and had to start again almost from scratch. How well he and the girls succeeded is obvious from his inclusion in the show which will be held on Friday, November 29. Tickets can be obtained from most entertainment secretaries, price 3/-.

WITH more and more professional acts coming our way it was inevitable that the standard of accompaniment would have to rise to meet the challenge, and rise it has certainly done. No artist need fear that the act will be spoiled by indifferent backing these days.

Take the following clubs for instance: Belgrave Liberal (Frank Wickens and his quartet), North Evington (Kathleen Boonham), Scrafto Valley (Peter Hayward), Boot and Shoe (Stanley Calvert), Beaumont WMC (Gordon Smith), West End WMC (Ron Spares), Birstall Social Club (Geoff Goodhall), Braunstone WMC (Ernest Wrighton Brown) Latimer (Graham Walsh), New Parks (Bob Kaye), Leicester (Jack Dwyer), Manchester WMC (Ceil P. Arns), all these accompanists, whether on piano or organ are a credit to their respective clubs.

It's true that many acts would like to see a drummer included at some of these clubs, but this will surely come in time. The facts are that most clubs are paying out more now for entertainment than they ever did previously and such extras will just have to wait a bit longer.

THERE is general feeling in the city that B.B.C. Radio Leicester is not treating the club population with the respect it deserves.

The only air-space devoted to club news is one 10-minute spot every Sunday morning. Out of this goes seven minutes sports news, leaving three minutes for a fast run-down on the preceding week's shows.

For a city which boasts that one-third of the population is a WMC Club member, this is preposterous.

A promise made some months ago that a recording would be made of a "Shop Window" has not been kept. It looks on the face of it that local radio couldn't care less about club news.

THE new L.A.O.B. Club was officially opened the other day. Interested acts should write to the new entertainment secretary Tommy Carton, c/o L.A.O.B. WMC, Madras Road, Leicester.

SEEN RECENTLY: Carol Ann Jones (great talent), the Voyagers (three youngsters who can sing in four languages), Tony Lawrence (a good singer with a touch of comedy), Glen Dale (formerly with the Fortunes, now a great solo act), Reg Guest Trio (always a treat to listen to), Bobby Knolly (comes in the Normandy Collier/Bobby Pattinson class), Ricky and Shirley Young (never give a bad performance), the Internationals Showband (a Coventry group with a difference), Vince Eager (former pop idol who is still tops in my book).

## MUSIC HALL MISCELLANY

By ELLIS ASHTON

RICHARD GOLDEN, though he will not see his three score years and ten again certainly gets about. He represented the British Music Hall Society at the Fourth International Congress of Circus Fans held in Barcelona. A surprising number of the natives speak English, and plied Richard with questions about Music Hall. Though he has not told me so himself, I understand he was quite a hit and proved an able ambassador for British show business.

Member David Barnes, Secretary of the Circus Fans Association, spoke on the world problems of the Circus, and his plithy comments made a great impact on delegates from many nations.

Member John Fisher is the latest to break into print with "John Fisher's Magic Book" published by Frederick Muller, which sets out to educate the ordinary man to become the complete entertainer. John, as a teenager, represented Great Britain in the International Magic Show staged at the annual convention of the International Brotherhood of Magicians. My recent reference in these notes to the Players Theatre moved John Roan to write from Leicester to say that recently he visited London, but was unable to find the theatre in Villiers Street. This is understandable if you are looking for a conventional type of building. The Players is, however, actually a converted railway arch, which is perhaps the very reason that it is standing and as popular as it is a century ago.

I must point out, however, that it is a club, and you need to be a member or to know one to gain admission. Membership is a wonderful investment, and I've taken many a happy party there, my only regret being that my own activities prevent my regular attendance.

And speaking of railway arches, John Lodwick, a great stage reader and buyer (the two don't necessarily go hand in hand), found little success when searching for the remains of the Canterbury, the very first Music Hall, in Westminster Bridge Road. This was reached by a long arch, still to be seen, with the way covered in mosaic. The site of the Hall is now used as a car park, though surveyor John Earl tried hard to prevent demolition of the historic remains. Tommy Evans, who lives near me in Islington, is trying to find the site of the Essex Music Hall, apparently near Collins. Despite my research I had no luck. Can anybody help us?

Do keep us posted with news at 1 King Henry Street, N.16 (01-254 4209).

## BRADFORD SHOWCASE

By Andrew McLachlan

WITH such fierce competition between the variety and theatre clubs in the West Riding, and more due to be opened, one wonders how the W.M. Clubs continue to thrive in face of such strong opposition.

True, star attractions are more liable to encourage large and small couch parties in mid-week, but the hard core of entertainment at the W.M. Clubs round this way is centred mainly on Saturdays and Sundays. Bingo, dances, with the odd special concert are the order of the day and this caters for the majority of members who use the concert hall during the week.

Executive members of various clubs in the city, however, see no immediate danger to their bar sales from the power game men.

THE Lyceum Rainbow Club appears to be holding its own, and since the venue was the very first in the area to introduce the stars, that policy remains.

I called the other week when the tap-happy Clark Brothers topped the bill, an act with the fastest and most intricate routines in the business. I thought the patter was a little lengthy at times but who can blame the boys for having a breather between sequences that sap the energy. Also on the bill was comedian Tony Dowling whose spot I just missed following a mad dash from Keighley. Last week the Lyceum featured Freddy and the Dreamers with the Linacre Brothers in support.

LOCAL comic, Harry Foster, a fast patter man if ever there was, and who I consider to have some of the most original material in clubland, tells me he is to appear at the new Keighley V.C. show, where impressionist Peter Goodwright tops. A firm favourite with Bradford clubbers since his spell with the Tomboys, local group now permanently resident in the United States, Harry is equally at home as a balladeer and his rich tenor voice is used as an integral part of his show.

## Julie Fisher

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