

LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

LINES from LANCES

by JAMES HARTLEY

WITH NEARLY a score of season shows scheduled to run until mid-October no wonder Blackpool can command the pick of Britain's top variety talent. Val Doonican, Mollie Anderson, Arthur Askey, John Hanson, Harry Worth, Charlie Cairoli, Sidney James, Andy Stewart, Freddy and the Dreamers, Peter Webster, Cilla Black, Johnny Ball, Roy Castle, Robert Earl, Mrs. Mills, Ray Bell, Jimmy Clidmore, Josef Locke—these are just some of the headliners who will be taking up residence at Vaudeville's Gold Coast capital this summer. They, and the settings in which they shine, are probably Blackpool's most valuable investment in the tourist trade.

Whatever the weather, visitors can be sure of non-stop indoor entertainment to be enjoyed at bargain price and in the most attractive surrounds. It doesn't need a currency curb on foreign travel to make Blackpool busy: the customers are already lined up. True, devaluation, rising prices, and that formidable *SET*, have so put up the cost of stocking the larger some landladies may have to "slim" their usual ample catering. Even so, bed-and-breakfast can still be had for as little as 15s. in well-furnished, hospitable guest houses, or, at the other end of the scale, for 45s. at the resort's most central hotel, the 100-year-old Clifton, and a few other similarly high-grade establishments on the prom.

LOW PRICE SHOWS

Entertainment is cheap. For 6s. it is possible to see a star-studded spectacular in luxurious conditions, enjoy a first-rate free cabaret show to follow, and round off the night with dancing to a top band—all under one roof. The range of entertainment is well high incredible—From Folies Bergere style strip-

tease at the Royal Pavilion, Sunday wrestling at the Tower, to nostalgic Dixieland fare, with three bands and "hot" jazz singers, at the Central Pier. In between are the vendors of top pops and ace comedians, an international cast in a superb ice show, and a wonderful lineup of circus acts from six countries. And the man who is perhaps the world's greatest genuine clairvoyant, Zarneda (it is authenticated that he predicted the assassination of Robert Kennedy and the resignation of General de Gaulle) is resident for the season at Sands, the resort's Las Vegas styled theatre-club.

Sixteen of Blackpool's biggest bars and hotels have been given a face-lift and equipped with full stage facilities to put on live entertainment. Most of them have resident organists and vocalists of considerable ability. Nightly throughout the season these acts, whose revenue comes from drinks sold at little more than standard prices, attract up to 20,000 visitors.

At the foot of the Blackpool rainbow there ought to be many crocks of gold for artists, and so there is for the principals, but the smaller fry outside the major shows the rewards are anything but generous. A good club act may command as little as £40 a week for six gruelling nights' work competing with the crash of bottles and the clink of beer glasses.

But many up-and-coming entertainers still find working on the fringe in Blackpool a good investment, an exciting experience for little money but an exciting adventure with the prospect of possibility of being "discovered" and transported overnight to the Big Time—like Bobby Bennett, recognised for star material by Jack Fallon when he saw him doing a spot last summer at the Gaiety Bar. The outcome was a seven-month season at London's Strand Showboat—and his current television series.

There's more gold for the resort in its entertainment houses than ever was to be found in its famous seven miles of sandy beach.

CLUB CORNER

MARRIAGE is a Many Splendored Thing, trumphet on the heart strings by disciples of the *Louie Hearts club*, is still high in the charts hereabouts and at least four of Blackpool's top club favourites hope to complete their own arrangements before they're much older.

Making the most of his remaining month of bachelordom is Cleveleys comic Johnny Ball (of BBC Play-school), who is to wed Julie Anderson (19-year-old sister of Annie Dean and just as charming) at Fleetwood on mid-summer's day—June 24. "I've fixed up the ceremony for early in the morning to

KITTY GILLOW

The One and Only Personality Male

Vac. on, with exceptions through GENUINE hold up of Summer Season and Misunderstandings. Thanking Duggie Chapman's OLD TIME MUSIC HALL Revue for 10 successful weeks (Th. dates) and Terry Cantor for offer of C.V. Leeds.

This: Wellington Pier, Gt. Yarmouth Next. P.A. 71 Liverpool Road, Formby, Near Liverpool. Phone 74564

THINKING

OF LEARNING TO DRIVE? A season in Blackpool means learning with the famous

BLACKPOOL

SCHOOL OF MOTORING 16 COOKSON STREET. Tel. 28254.

The School with the outstanding Test Pass Record. Proprietor: F. N. Nightman. Authorised by the Ministry of Transport to conduct driving lessons. Agency Bookings Welcomed

VARIETY and CABARET ARTISTS CARDS

3 line minimum 4s. 6d. per insertion. Each extra line: 1s. 3d. per insertion. £2 12s. 6d. per quarter, each extra line 15s. per quarter.

SIR JAMES ALDRICH Toastmaster to the nobility Phone: London 01-607 8628. VC

ERROL ARNE SINGER/GUITARIST/COMPOSER Phone 01-720 1728, or write P.O. Box No. 462, London, S.W.8

PETER CASSON "Hypnotic Fantasy" Clubs, etc, Phone Doncaster 68426

THE CHANDLERS Cabaret Group to "Brighten" your Evening All enquiries: Tel. Brentwood 6405

DANNY CLAYTON Speciality Comedian. 29, St. James Close, Rushden, Northants. Tel. Rushden 4127. VC

DELPHINE Y DOMINGO Exciting, Colourful Flamenco Cabaret. 83 Chudleigh Road, S.E.4. 01-690 2485-01-437 3108 (9.30-6.00 p.m. Mon.-Fri.)

FOR THE MINSTRELS



Sixteen years old ballerina Pauline Adams is going into the Black and White Minstrel Show but not until next year.

give showbiz guests ample time for their respective dates and allow Julie and me to start off on our all-too-brief honeymoon without undue delay," explained Johnny. Good timing was always one of his strong points!

But Eddie Martin—Blackpool's best-dressed and resident comper—has the first say. Ed met his match when he was introduced to assistant Lynn Worthington, an ABC dainty. D-Day is June 2—the place Waterloo Road Methodist—the hour, two p.m. "Try and make it—and we'd be happy to see as many professional pals as care to come," invited Eddie.

Bobby Bennett still has six days of freedom left before he leads Jeanette Dunford (programme-planner's assistant he met recently at Yorkshire Television studio) to the altar at Leeds St. Michael's on June 4. "Well, I just couldn't say no," he explained. "Besides I'm tired of drip-dry routines and baked beans."

My July date-list (so far) begins with Jean Bennett, petite lovely, famous for her high-speed rag-to-riches transformation and wide-ranging pop repertoire. Twenty-year-old Jean marries her handsome road-manager, Bill Hyde, at Chorley St. Peter's, July 2 at two p.m. "Marriage should solve an awful lot of professional problems—and Bill seems to know all the answers," confided Jean.

So be it! Keep a stiff upper lip lads, and show 'em who's boss from the start.

Incidentally there's another side to the Marriage Stakes that occasionally merits mention. Jimmy Wilson reminded me in Blackpool early last week when I found him, truly elated over the glad news that he had just become a father. Lynne, the pretty "Daily Mirror" girl he married after his triumph in the Knokke International Song Festival, had presented him with a cuddly bundle of joy—a boy to be christened Nicholas Charles. Alas, the anxiety and strain of expectancy played havoc with Jim's constitution and on the second night of his Teds-side tour he collapsed and was hospitalised for days at Middlesbrough before he was fit enough to move on to his next assignment at *Darlington Flamingo*.

The name of Hal Hose (Mersey-side agent in charge of bookings at New Brighton Grand) also figures in the June catalogue of proud papas. The new arrival, a boy, is to be christened Haydn Paul. "Another hungry mouth to provide for—but don't worry, my commission rates are unaffected," he assured me.

GOODBYE ALHAMBRA

By GORDON IRVING

A wet Saturday night in Glasgow, thousands by their firesides, but a packed, sentimental, happy crowd, filling every seat for the last night of Glasgow Alhambra at the 60-year-old theatre went out, rather embarrassingly, I felt, for its last-ever performance.

No curtain speeches, just a chuckling, school-girlish Cilla Black (not the right choice for a final night of a theatre with a great tradition) making homely cracks at the audience, holding them till forty minutes before midnight, and then saying: "Thank you, love—the lovely people!" "Auld Lang Syne," after her own sing-song of community, and when it does wend and West of Scotland folk filled out slowly, a few in tears, with a last look-round at the great theatre.

Now it's empty, and will stay as it is, I'm told, until some clear direction is made following the six months' preservation order by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

I felt that the new Lord Provost of Glasgow, who was present at the last night, could have gone on shaken Cilla by the hand, and said a few apt words. But then, as I say, the whole affair must have embarrassed everyone. Such a great theatre, and it has to go.

So it's farewell, it seems, to the Alhambra, Glasgow. Last Saturday the theatre went out quietly and not in the best of showmanship or taste. But I'm glad to say with graciousness. Maybe she was bowing to newer ideas to come.

One thing is for certain. Live theatre must come back. And when it does audiences will remember how the city of Glasgow let one of its finest institutions in such an embarrassingly weak farewell.

YORKSHIRE RELISH

by James Towler

I AM AN unashamed fan of TV's "Junior Showtime" and next month the programme returns to the City Varieties to round off the present series. And while the work at the studio has been full of interest I'm glad the show is going back to where it really belongs.

Clubland acts may not get the TV breaks they deserve (and top marks to Des O'Connor for doing much to put this right) but Yorkshire under sixteens have certainly beaten their mums and daddies on the network. As you like Sue Fisher, the Lever Sisters and Chris Walker were already established draws in clubland prior to their TV debut. As for Johnny Stewart's youngsters, Peter and Bernice—look out!

For head Thompson girl Pauline Adams this show will be the last simply because in "Junior Showtime" you're too old at sixteen. Not that Pauline need worry for, after taking her teaching certificate, she will be joining the Black and White Minstrels next year.

The big event for all concerned with the show is, of course, star Bobby Bennett's wedding next Wednesday. Missing from the celebrations will be my own particular favourite "Mr. Albert". He tells me that pressure of work will prevent him from attending. A pity for I had hoped to sit next to him!

LIKE FATHER? Like son? Well, there is little doubt that quite a lot of the Kaye son's good looks and gentility has rubbed off on to the shoulders of young Kaplan. True he hasn't the round proportions of Daddy Kaye but no doubt there's plenty of time for that.

Kaplan Kaye is an all-rounder who opened with a song to his own guitar accompaniment ("Don't You Believe In Magic?" it may have been called—a nice number any way)—before launching into a well worn story, the *Ena Sharples* heart beat one, which he told exceptionally well. There followed the song and dance man routine, then a number called "Rousers, Down!" some more fun leading to a rousing spot on the drums.

In cold print it doesn't look particularly startling. Yet, by projecting an affable personality Mr. Kaye manages to get his spot home far more effectively than most whose act is basically stronger.

THIS MUST obviously be my soporific season. After a writing week of the superb performance of Joan Bide we now have the sparkling Carol Sears. The last act I saw under the C. & I.U. regime at Gressbrough and one that couldn't be faulted.

This girl has a powerful yet crystal clear voice heard to brilliant effect in the contrasting "Love Is Where You Find It" and "Caterer" she latterly sung unaccompanied from the heart of the auditorium.

What put a seal on the act for me was the fact that she had dropped her comedy aside and told it straight. As well she might with a voice like that. Little wonder the party of fifty survivors wanted to buy her a bottle of champagne!

FOLLOWING colleague Peter Hepple's recent visit to the provinces I thought it was high time I took a peep at the metropolis, if only to see if there were any pointers as to which direction show business is going to move next. Frankly I don't enjoy the West End as much as I used to. A sign of old age perhaps. However it was nice to be greeted so warmly by George Flowers and the Raymond Revuebar staff, after a long absence. The Revuebar is, indeed, an althaus of respectability amid the rather garish Soho jungle. Why, chaps even take their wives to see Paul Raymond's shows! Even so I think I preferred it in its more vaudeville days, especially on Fridays when there was wrestling in the lounge. However the variety tradition does remain in the excellent magic and illusions of Graham Wilson and Hazel.

The Revuebar was a new date for me although I'd been there many years ago when it was the Pigalle. I was impressed with the Billy Petch floorshow with its strong system of principles led by the delightful Judy Collins, not to forget the very attractive line up of dancers.

This is the type of show that I feel could be more fully exploited in the North. For, like it or not, we are (with one or two exceptions) very slipshod when it comes to presentation and production.

I'M BECOMING a bit of an expert on Old Time Music Hall chairmen. First Charlie Chester then Derek Roy and now Terry Cantor doing the night at the Varieties in "A Night At The Varieties". Although each of them scored in their own way there's no doubt to my mind as to who looks the most prosperous. It's Terry Cantor whose beaming countenance is akin to that of a brewery director! I've also been impressed with Len Howe who's been leading the fun on stage. He made an instant impact on his first entry—so much for all those who say they need ten minutes to warm up. It's all of eighteen years since I last saw him at the Varieties, remember—"Mademoiselle From Armentieres"—Parlez-Vous? Len?

SWANN'S (low) DOWN

PROGRESSIVE Bournemouth continues to attract conference business right up to the commencement of the Summer Season almost upon us now, and this time more and more artists appearing for the large social programme planned each evening for the delegates.

The Union of Post Office Workers booked more artists than almost any other I've known with Vince Hill, Roy Castle, and the New Faces standing out for the top talents they possess.

Shows were divided between Pavilion, Ballroom and the Ocean Room, and more names were there like Trevor Little doing great stuff with the balloons, the colourful Delphine and Domingo, scintillating Jackie and Lynn, Sherry's Go-Go Girls, the Sid Fay Big Band, and yours truly having a ball in the complete spot.

GLAD TO be out at Hamworthy again, if only to be with that funny couple Duo de Mille, who are sending out an SOS for telephone books to tear in half; also on hand Leonard and Hughes, who were playing almost up to sailing time for the cruise leaving Southampton for the Sunny Mediterranean. This pair

were good value with music and impressions and got a marvellous hand. Completing the bill Jackie and Lynn, plus Harry Heatherley.

THAT PERT singer, Mavis Lane, came to the Skyways booked by Avon Entertainments; also at this Southampton venue, the Sinnermen and Sara with lively folk singing.

WITH THE Majestic now taken over by the Cumberland management, I was pleased to hear some of their plans for Cabaret for which they have such a first-class name. London agent Johnny Franks is doing all the booking, and among the acts already signed, the dynamic Sheila Monroe, Leoni Page and Frank Monroe.

Johnny was one time musical director at the Cumberland and really knows what their customers want.

My Summer Season is now under way at the Ocean Room, Bournemouth, with a happy collation of performers. Through this column we'd like to say thanks for all the congratulatory messages, and in return wish you all successful seasons.



JERRY JARDIN

(VOCOMICOP)

Thanks to Al Heath, Harry Royston, Ted Percival, "Jerry-the-Jester" and Friends for making '68 a great year. Now looking for a good '69. Enquiries: 01-385-8603 5A Archel Road, London, W.14

WILLIAM SHEARER

THE MIDGET SCOTTISH COMEDIAN

Single or Double Act, Sketches, etc.

for STAGE, SCREEN AND TELEVISION

OFFERS INVITED FOR IMMEDIATE WORK

P.A.: 16 Warbeck Road, London, W.12. Telephone: 01-743 6553

FREDDIE MACK EXTRAVAGANZA!!

Show managed by SIOUX RED INDIAN PRINCE HAROLD BUGSHIT H.B. FINANCE COMPANY 76 Shaftesbury Ave., London, W.1 Tel: 01-437 5312/7531

Sole Agency DUEL ARTISTES AGENCY LTD. Kassner House, 1 Westbourne Gdns., Porchester Road, London, W.2 Tel: 01-727 3087 Midland Representative: Peter Richardson (by arrangement with Duel)

SINGERS

Ex-recording artist interested in helping aspiring record stars to produce records, make use of my contacts and experience to get good results at minimum cost.

Box A 273, c/o "The Stage".

Are you getting the bird on your MOTOR INSURANCE?

We Welcome you

Whatever your age, occupation or driving history, we can arrange full cover on all types of car. Give us the full facts—we will give you a quotation.

HODGE MOTOR INSURANCE BROKERS LTD., 32 Windsor Place, Cardiff. Tel: 42577 (Ext. 489 or 492) 32 St. Nicholas Street, Bristol 1. Tel: 21279

Please send particulars of your Special Risk Motor Insurance Policy

Name

Address

Age

Occupation

Make & Model of Car

Please attach details of Accidents/Convictions.