

## LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT

### Lines from LANCES

by JAMES HARLEY

MAMMAL MAGIC is the theme of the latest attraction to hit Blackpool — the Dolphin Show, flown direct from Johannesburg by the Boswell-Wilkie Circus of South Africa and presented by Len Smith. Pronto and Sinbad, performing dolphins, are its stars appearing six times daily in the 1,000-seat open-air theatre at Central Station Car Park.

With a little written persuasion from Janet and Erik Nordh, their trainers, these giant porpoises — 10 ft. from snout to tail, scaling 550 lbs. apiece — engage in spectacular acrobatic capers: racing, hurdle-jumping, terpsichorean tricks, bell-ringing and ball-play in a huge water-filled tank 32 feet across. Such manoeuvres may be minimal matters for mammals but for holiday audiences they add up to novel entertainment.

OUT OF SIGHT, out of mind. Well, no — not so far as Dave Gray and Gail are concerned anyway. It's true they are over 12,000 miles from London, in Australia where they've been engaged for over six months past, appearing in the big television spectaculars (the Muppet Show, Graham Kennedy, Bert Newton shows, etc.) as well as doing the theatre-club-house rounds — but they've remembered to write and ask me to pass on greetings and wish all their friends embarking on summer seasons all they wish themselves.

Despite some homesickness and nostalgic yearnings for their home in St. Anne's they have decided to continue making hay while the sun shines and have accepted a six-month contract extension. "Oh and Jimmy, don't get the idea that because so many of those acts you used to write about — Kish and Valaire, Paul and Joan Sharatt, Ron Parry, and so on — have not been seen for ages in the STAGE club that they have left the business. They're working here, many of them — and thriving — most of 'em," says Dave.

WHILE MANY of Blackpool's bill-toppers enjoy their off-duty leisure in the sumptuous villas, luxury flats, or five-star hotel accommodation rented for the season, Zazara prefers his "humble" caravan in the country. Humble indeed! The 36-ft. long house-on-wheels in the garden setting at nearby Poulton has been taken over by the manager, Johnny St. George (the vocalist) is a miniature mansion embodying office-cum-lounge, kitchen and bar. Spacious — richly furnished and carpeted, replete with every labour-saving device, plus electric and gas cooking etc. — it is every inch a home from home.

As well as maintaining his reputation as an amazing mind-reader, in Blackpool for his second season, Zazara also qualifies for a sub-title — chief extraordinaire. He's certainly the best Yorkshire pudding maker outside Yorkshire. "I'll lay odds on that. As I said Johnny is Z's manager, and — believe it or not — Z is John's manager. And a sound working arrangement it has proved to be.

ENGAGED in the pleasant process of fortifying the inner man at Yates' Blackpool, the meat and steakhouse the other day, Russ Hamilton looked forward to fresh conquests and breaking new ground. The ace-songsmith has

uprooted himself from Butlin's Metropole, the Blackpool hotel-camp where he has been an entertainment-manager for the past three years, to take on a similar appointment for the same firm at Minehead Theatre Club. Russ has a fascinating new song on his mind — a follow-up theme to his million-selling "We Will Make Love", and is hoping for Dick James's verdict on the NSC. Russ's partner, Jimmy and Linda Nove, formerly of Butlin's Brighton, have succeeded Russ at Blackpool.

## CLUB CORNER

"LIVE FOR THE DAY", the popular maxim Peter Huggitt is fond of airing, makes good sense with the steadily mounting numbers of supporters for whom Your Father's Mustache (Cherry Tree Gardens Hotel, Blackpool) — the American-styled hostelry Peter manages — is a regular part of call. The place has that extra something called atmosphere, authentically old time, with ringing banjos, full-throated songsters and boisterous comics, in accompaniment to slick bar and table service operated by an army of straw-hatted waiters.

Non-stop entertainment is well varied; the bandstand is manned by capable professional musicians. Murray Black, Sid Crowe, Michael Ponto, Pete Huggitt, Jim Cordwell, Robin Taverner, revelling in pop, dixieland and ragtime ritals. Occasionally the lights are lowered for the screening of one of the old Laurel and Hardy or Charlie Chaplin two-reelers.

Your Father's Mustache — where the time of your life is right under your nose and the secret of instant-mustachios is yours for the asking — is a place where, as Leslie Crowther is one of the celebrities the management hope to welcome at the Gala Charity Fete in aid of St. Anne's next month.

TWELVE MONTHS' hard experience — nine years of seasonal appointments in Blackpool — the Huntsman and Central Pier Dixieland — and touring the northern nightclubs, have transformed the Scots-born Triads from a commonplace vocal/instrumental outfit into one of the most polished trifos of the kind in the business. Tom Waite (lead-vocalist), Jim Crossan (accordion-organist), Matt Duncan (guitar), personable youngsters in harmony, have acquired the all-conquering approach.

THE SENATORS, another dedicated team of go-go boys are now firmly established high up the Blackpool popularity charts. A recent set-back in the fall-out of lead-singer Doug O'Connor has been expertly remedied by Christian Almond, the new look-me-over kid (a great dresser) who believes the Hit Parade belongs to him and obviously knows it like the back of his hand. Organist Mike Carew has his big moments too — his improvisations are often strikingly original. The band also includes a guitarist, Brian Finn and Dave Nicholls share credits for rich rhythmic embellishments that inject sparkle into every performance.

I WONDER if that break Lances singer/rumpeter Gordon Barrie has been praying for since his debut in Manchester. Clubland 10 years ago is just round the corner. He was warbling at Wakefield the other night when an ace spotter popped in and was sufficiently impressed by his performance to suggest a recording. With a 30-piece orchestra and the Michael Sammes Singers backing him, Capt. Barrie has just his first disc, "Marta", coupled with his own "Save Me". Very likeable, too.

## V.G.S.

ON TUESDAY of last week the members played for the GRAY SHELTON BOWL and Capt. Captain also played for the Past Captains Cup.

In London at Finchley the winner was JOHIE RISCOE with a very excellent 70 nett. DEL DENSTER was a close second with a nett 73. In the Province the winning card came from BOB PEARSON at Rhuddlan with a nett 69, one over the S.S.S. of the course. Brokeley ALFIE was in second place with a 72. Bob and Johnnie will have to play their final for the two seats at the end of the Season.

On Tuesday next the members will be at Finchley to play for the WILL FYFFE BOWL and the following Tuesday the Captain's Prize will be played for at Fulwell.

## FRIENDS AND AGENTS



Every picture tells a story—this one proves that agents and managers can be personal friends for many years. PAT and TONY FIELDING, featured in the centre of the picture, are the proprietors of the YAMS, Jersey, and celebrating their 25th anniversary of cabaret with their best friends MAUREN and BILLY FORREST on either side at the Golden Sands Hotel, Jersey.

## YORKSHIRE RELISH

by James Fowler

GUY MITCHELL, a fit young-looking 42, must rank as something of a phenomenon on the current entertainment scene. A fustige from the 78 r.p.m. era and big time variety of the fifties, the number of times he topped the Palladium has never been beaten by a fellow American and he has taken to provincial cabaret as a duck takes to water.

His voice, though it may possibly lack the power of some of our present day chart toppers, makes pleasing listening indeed, especially as a host of those Bob Merrill numbers ("Sparrow" in the forefront). "Truly, Truly Fair", "She Wears Red Feathers" etc.) provide the bulk of his material.

So there we have a fine singer putting over some exceptionally good numbers. But wait a moment. We've hardly scratched the surface of the Mitchell appeal. For, and make no mistake about this, his grip and command of the audience is outstanding. Professionalism? Yes, this has a lot to do with it. However there's more to that than that. Basically I believe the major reason for his success lies in his personality. His performance is one of integrity. He never attempts anything that is beyond him yet always remains in complete command of the situation. He even allowed himself to be conned into singing "Danny Boy". But most of all there is the lasting impression that (and I apologise in advance for the pun) he's a "helluva nice guy".

Certainly it's a long time since I've seen a Leeds Ace of Clubs audience show so much warmth and enthusiasm to a performer.

RE-APPROPRIATE time for two artists who've been tipped by this column in the past. Petite blonde personality singer Norma Leon has made much progress since I first saw her not long after she had thrown in her job as Brian Tattersall's secretary.

She is ideal cabaret material who works her audience well. I was particularly impressed with her "Twenties" selection which had a "theatrical" depth about it yet never lost the intimacy essential in successful cabaret.

Following Norma on the same Wakefield. Kon-Tiki bill, was Winston. The resonance of his light baritone voice is only surpassed by his self-assured yet never over-confident projection. This gives a stamp of authority and quality to everything he tackles.

Of his numbers "My Way" drew the loudest applause while an impressive "Phoenix" and "That Old Feeling" registered strongly with this critic.

NEW TO ME are The Selmas. They are not, as the name might suggest, a specialty but three attractive Irish colleens, who, along with their brother, provide one of the nicest vocal spots to come my way for some time.

They introduce some very good harmonies, particularly in "Summer Time" while an up tempo treatment completely re-vitalised "Danny Boy".

This act strikes me as a very sound proposition. Indeed, with three sisters like that, I guess the boy must be very popular! With most thought on staging and production the Selmas could make big strides in the none-too-distant future.

IN THIS game one is often mistaken for someone else. Agent, Manager, C.I.D. (must be the size 11 shoes) and, on one occasion, Dave Bent! But the greatest accolade of all came the other evening in the Wakefield Theatre Club when one of the ladies behind the bar asked me: "Are you Mr. Albert?"

HARRY SCOBEM'S visit to Batley Variety Club proved to be just what clubland needed. Harry's fun and zest for life are guaranteed to raise the most dampened of spirits. But there was more to it

## IT'S MAGIC

by PETER WARLOCK

### WILL NORMAN DIES

ON TUESDAY last, Will Norman, clown extraordinary, juggler and magician collapsed and died. The funeral was at Leicester.

Will, who had played most of the international circuits with his august juggling act was always to be found at magical conventions wherever the venue. We shall always have happy memories of the times during the last war when both of us were in uniform and stationed only a few miles apart. These occasions saw us in many service shows that were much to the liking of the troops.

For many years, Will was responsible for the clown ensemble that had become part and parcel of the "Children's Playtime" show at the British Ring Convention. Already he was booked for this year's convention at Scarborough and his absence will be so much regretted by every conventioneer.

We know that every reader will join me in expressing our condolences to his nearest and dearest on this, so sad occasion.

### IN THE NEWS

#### ABROAD

HAROLD TAYLOR back from a cruise of some seven European countries has during the trip been able to meet up with many fellow magicians and entertainers. In the Danish newspaper, Politiken there is a splendid photograph showing Harold in company with Henri and Ann Alakazam. This couple are considered to be one of the most successful magic acts in Scandinavia and apart from their many travels into countries other than their native one of Denmark have appeared on television networks in Sweden, and Germany where only a few days ago, they appeared for the tenth time on West Deutsche Rundfunk at Cologne.

Harold also had the opportunity of seeing our own Johnny Hart at the Schumann Circus in Copenhagen where this great British magical export has top billing and has had rave reviews from the Danish papers.

Also at the Tivoli Variete Leonard Sachs the man who during his appearances as chairman of Those Were The Days has introduced so many magic acts with a B.B.C. company.

than that so far as I was concerned. Harry proved that it is still possible for a singer to use the microphone without resorting to the curse of over-simplification.

Nice also to see Johnny Franz leading the resident Tony Cervi Orchestra from the keyboard. Johnny was enjoying a working holiday away from his desk at Philips Records. To both Harry and Johnny one final message. Please come back—soon!

## FROM THE BRUM CLUBS

By Brian Doyle

### THE SHOCK CLOSURES

THE TIME has come for our cabaret stars to take a long close look at themselves before they join the limbo of antiquaria with the music halls of yesterday. A feeling of profound shock was caused by our two top clubs, THE CASTAWAYS and the recently opened PENGUIN CLUB both closing their doors within a week.

Both of these clubs, in no way whatsoever connected, directly attribute their closure to exorbitant fees being charged by artists.

I have been present at these two clubs when they have been packed to capacity due, undoubtedly, to the drawing power of the star attraction. There are still excellent cabaret acts around but, it would appear that unless they have passed through their TV baptism, their drawing power is limited.

When will our stars realise that BBC and the commercial channels with their unlimited funds can pay the fees asked, and in some cases these artists can quote their own terms?

This does not obtain in the flesh and blood world of live cabaret entertainment and seems to me in every sense, a classic example of changing the shadow for the substance.

Statistics show that the average Midland worker earns £20 to £25 per week, so vast sums of money have just not around to be spent on entertainment, and Midland folk are choosy, canny and like to get value for money. An evening out at a cabaret club is not a weekly event, but it could be if stars reduced their fees, which would mean a corresponding reduction in all

departments to the clubgoer.

It all boils down to the simple fact that the time has come for a complete reappraisal of the situation. Some time ago the legitimate stage had a change of policy and introduced a state of plays of the "angry young men" school. This meant that established playwrights, Emlyn Williams, J. B. Priestley and others who had been the backbone of repertory companies were relegated, albeit only temporarily, to the background. Admittedly some of these avant garde plays were, and still are, arrant rubbish. But the up and coming playwrights had made their point.

In a similar way, could not the club entertainer come into his own? What a wonderful opportunity. We have amongst this genre stars who could hold their own in any company, but as one of my fellow clubbists asked last week, "What have they to do to get on the television? Sudden success will not go to their heads and they certainly have enough common sense not to prize themselves out of business."

I am not by any means knocking these artists, heaven forbid that I should. They are the masters of their profession, and their reputations are world wide and deservedly so. But to me, the closing of these two fabulous clubs and the direct and indirect unemployment caused must be explained somehow. Both John Reeve and Jon Kirkbright have given Birmingham a standard of entertainment previously unknown in this city, surroundings that could not have been equalled anywhere in the country. In the many thousands of Midland folk who I am sure are, like myself left, just wondering.

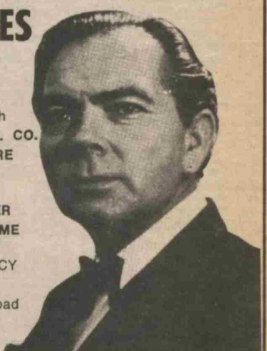
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