

Hammat

By PETER HEPPLE

AT LEAST one of the big autumn changes at which I hinted the other week has come about with the sale of the Tolani Brothers' group of clubs, restaurants and banqueting rooms occupying a block between Wardour Street and Rupert Street. These comprise Tolani's Restaurant, Tolani's Banqueting Rooms, the Santa Lucia Restaurant, the Van Gogh Bar, the Kam Fong Chinese Club (not yet opened) and, of most interest to this paper, the Latin Quarter Theatre Restaurant.

The new directors are all young London Italians — Nino Polledri, Renzo Rapacioli and a link with the previous management, Peter Tolani, Jr., who is the son of John Tolani, director of the Latin Quarter for 14 years. Their plans are not as yet formulated and obviously for the time being things will stay pretty much as they are, although last week they did include an added Motor Show attraction at the Latin Quarter in the person of Peter Maxwell, who did a special 1.15 show with his habitual huge success. And as the producers of the current "Cabaret Time", James Verner and John Barber, were on hand when I met the new directors in the Latin Quarter's Lantro Bar last week, it seems safe to say that they will continue to be associated with the shows here.

The Kam Fong, by the way, will definitely open within a couple of weeks or so and will be under Chinese direction, with Eastern food, music and artists. In fact, it is expressly designed for London's growing Chinese community and although Europeans will naturally be welcome they are likely to find themselves in the minority.

WHAT, you might ask after reading my story about the Gargoyles last week, is Jimmy Jacobs doing these days? Well, he is in fact still doing what he has been engaged in for several years — directing and starring in the cabaret at the popular and long-established Dean Street club. "So please," says Jimmy, "ignore all reports to the contrary."

Actually, Jimmy is doing rather more than just running the Gargoyles, as though this were not enough for most of us. This Christmas he is venturing into pantomime production on two sides — one as a performer, the other as an impresario. At the Cliffs Pavilion, Southend, he co-stars with Arthur English to form a strong comedy team in "The Sleeping Beauty", and in partnership with Barry Simons he is presenting "Puss in Boots", starring Guy Mitchell, at the big ABC Theatre in Stockton and Chester.

Then there is news of his garage next door to the Gargoyles, which he originally bought because he could not park his Rolls outside the club. His parking problem is likely to recur now, because he has leased the garage to a film processing company. "And don't forget either," reminds Jimmy, "that I still own the only burnt-out theatre in the country, at Hastings."

In addition to Jimmy, the current Gargoyles cabaret comprises Sodino Hernandez, who has been there for several weeks and is seizing the chance to include a full quota of verbal comedy as well as his always amusing visual specialties, the Oriental Gypsies; and a bevy of unclad lovelies headed by the sublime Janet Montana. Rev. Terry and the Nitespots and accompanying Trio are also in residence during the early part of the evening, playing in the lounge.

ALL EYES this week will be focused on one of the most interesting entertainment experiments of the decade — the entry of the giant Watney Mann brewing concern into the nightclub business. The Rainbow Room will be the name given to each of the six projected venues, the first of which, at the King Alfred, Bellingham, is already in operation.

This week sees the opening of the second in the well-known North London landmark, Manor House, and the two acts engaged each week will be doubling between the two, with an early show around 9 and the second going on about 11. There will be a midnight closure except on Fridays and Saturdays, when proceedings will cease at 2 a.m.

First artists to try this across-the-river double are Jon Tremaine and the singing duo Natasha and Harvey, trail-blazers for such a Decca Webster and that most distinctive of all entertainers Jake Thackray. The band set-up is the Brett Dalton Four, late of the Latin Quarter, at Bellingham, and the Cliff Sands Trio, formerly at the Bestcellar, at Manor House.

Strangely enough, Keith Ayison, Noel Gay broker in charge of acts for the Rainbow Rooms, is well acquainted with both of them, for he has played the King Alfred and Manor House many times in his other capacity of Avo Ayison, trombonist with the Bob Wallis Storyville Jazzmen.

THERE HAS been precious little comedy around the West End in recent weeks but the situation was to an extent rectified at the Astor last week when Syd and Eddie blew into town with one of the most hilarious acts I have seen this year. Northern audiences need no reminding that Syd is a singer, respected and deadpan, while Eddie is rofud and extremely loquacious. What they do is not especially

original and indeed in its mixture of impressions, songs and slapstick is reminiscent of several other comedy duos. But already we can discern the makings of an individual style which I believe is going to make them very big within the next year or two, not only in this country but possibly overseas, for they possess visual appeal and adopt a freewheeling approach comparable to the best American teams.

If memory serves, Cherry Roland was something of a film starlet a few short years ago. But now, guided by the go-ahead Hammat office in Manchester, she has developed into a pop singer of considerable potential. She is backed by a three-man group called the Explosion, whose pounding accompaniment combines with Cherry's good looks and voice to form a prodigious attraction.



JIMMY JACOBS

'RAISING KANE' AMONG LONDON'S W.M. CLUBS

By Tommy Kane

Springtime, always noted for giving flower to wonderful things, excelled itself this year. It produced, for entertainment-lovers, three attractive young singing sisters in Kathy, Christine, and Elaine Hope; teenagers now heralded by this column as its "newcomer find of the year". In his enthusiasm, compère Cliff Davis suggested they henceforth be called "the fabulous Hope Sisters". And while, methinks, it is still early days yet for that title, a touch of luck added to what they offer by way of harmony and presentation will surely see these (in paid entertainment since April) youngsters up there with the best of them. So remember what the man said—"The Hope Sisters."

On the same show was another talented teenager in Laurie Parks. In addition to some fine trumpeting numbers Laurie also tickled the vibraphone and ended his act with a tremendous "Posthorn Gallop". On Posthorn, naturally—in which accompanying band and audience joined in with gusto. Very entertaining is this youngster who, apart from playing dates all over the country since his long summer season at Folkestone, is now rehearsing for panto alongside Tommy Trinder, at Lewisham.

Bill-toppers of this show were those female impersonators who rightly rank among the foremost in this line in southern clubs. Roy Alvis and Danny O'Dell. Their great strength lies in their ability to be extremely versatile in their visual offering without having to resort to that unacceptable depth in comedy—failing of so many others! Brilliant and uproarious again on this night were the two Kane car-pushers, had everyone raising the roof while assuring themselves that "Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die." Roy and Danny, too, are panto-bound this winter.

Accompanying the show (no, a successful part of the show) were the residents... The Quintones Variety Band, featuring accordion, trombone, banjo (uke?), double bass, drums, and personality; funnyman compère Cliff Davis; pianist Cyril Smith, which leaves me with the club and my "club-man find of the year"—Eric Pieri. Together with his band of enthusiastic helpers at Belle Grove Social, Eric has transformed the small, antiquated, concert hall into something more like a miniature variety theatre. And for his latest Thursday show, with seats numbered and sold via programmes at four shillings per head and with waitress service instead of the usual mob at a bar, the hall was packed with adults and youngsters present for but one reason—to enjoy a night of entertainment in their own club.

Also promising to be a variety cracker is the November 5 grand opening night show at the Waterman's Arms in dockland. The line-up includes The Mandell Bros., The Hope Sisters, Danny Silver Trio, Carol Scott, Dave Meadows, Jackie Dennis—and I must confess, in stepping from the shadows, that I have twisted the arm of Charlie Smithers, who in turn has agreed to come along to introduce the artists "for the good of the cause". (Thanks, Chas!)

BRAVO BLACKPOOL!

Monday's brilliant area show

Blackpool has launched more stars than ever were spotted by Jodrell Bank—it is safe to say that even this show Mecca of the North never had a brighter galaxy in one theatre than was seen scintillating at THE STAGE Club Acts of the Year (Blackpool edition) in the Winter Gardens Pavilion last Monday.

Thunderous and prolonged applause from an expectant and enthusiastic audience was ample testimony to the quality of the performance built on the shoulders of the four hundred and odd which had applied. Even the Panel GEOFF LAWRENCE (BBC Radio), JOHN STEVENSON (the Daily Mail), JEFF YATES (Yorkshire Television), NORMAN TEAL (Top Rank), CANON C. E. YOUNG (the theatre chaplain), SERG GANJOU (VAF), BARNEY COLEMAN (BBC Television) and JAMES HARTLEY (theatre) were so impressed with the quality of the show that they seemed to hold the special atmosphere of the occasion.

In the cold print of the programme the bill might have seemed a little over-loaded but in the actuality the singers were so different in voice, material and style that they represented a splendid variety. Take two contrasts, both with strong native roots. Young heart-breaker JIMMY RISH as the shillelagh with much of that weapon's punch, tickled the pops with such infectious zest that his small stature seemed to swell to ten feet tall. He dominated, and his rich tones with plenty holding, Wales nurtured straight balladist LANCE ROBERTS product of the Eisteddfodau and the famous valley choir. From him the pure ringing Welsh tone was heard at its loveliest best in that Puccini gem "Nessun Dorma".

BALANCED SINGERS

Again, balance Venezuela trained, and greatly experienced in cabaret, with PETER KNIGHT. Sailing Raphael's powerful presentation of song ballads was a sly wit and lots of charm. Equally, but differently talented was the young knight, some of the audience may not have realised the handicap which affects Peter Knight, blind from birth, yet whose voice radiates happiness, as, on Monday, he used it to bring top twenty favourites to full life.

Out of the multi-racial bag came Maori born JUNIOR JENSEN, late of the H-QUINS, possessed of a power house voice which, self backed by an exciting samba, guitar rhythm, evoked tumultuous re-action.

INSTRUMENTAL RICHES

Elegantly groomed, with a captivating elfin charm, BEVERLY RANDALL used her good looks to give emphasis to delectably natural renderings of pop-happy favours.

The show was rich in instrumentalism and GUY HOLLOWAY and PAT opening the show put the customers in a receptive mood with their multi-instrumental-vocal-comedy mélange. Later in the bill Scotland's accordion virtuoso LAWRIE ADAM, suitably kilted, wowed with superbly fingered squeeze-box and coppers and cascading comedy patter.

Ukelele expert WENDY KING, daughter of former variety star STANLEY KING who now manages her, proved hereditary talent is no fiction. Confident, most personable and with a fine rounded voice, she set a cracking pace.

Probably the most attractively dressed act on the bill, PHIL & JACKIE ROBINSON got a top band for their immaculate presentation of guitar backed close vocal harmony.



One of the heroes of the evening, prodigious and prestigious VIC EMERSON at the organ.

Escapologist PAUL DENVER and CARL graphically demonstrated that top security goals could be vulnerable; they baffled the audience and indeed they have on occasion light heartedly baffled the police!

LESTER & SMART with their 'cod' vocal instrumental got rib-cracking laughter. Such gales of it as halted their performance time and again. Another mystifier ZARADEA, mind reader, clairvoyant and astrologer (impressively presented by JOHNNIE ST. GEORGE) gave ample evidence of his amazing powers. Without recourse to that hypnotism of which he is a master, he held the audience literally spellbound.

All the acts owed much to compère EDDIE MARTIN's well conceived continuity and introductory build-ups—he is quite a singer too. And they would also acknowledge their great indebtedness to VIC EMERSON, the prodigious young organist, who assisted by drummer BARRY MCCULLOUGH supplied glove light accompaniment that clearly inferred the merit of the arduous day-long rehearsal that preceded certain.

TERRY CANTOR'S production smooth, well paced and imaginative was everything that such a show deserved and his inspiring influence was a tremendous asset throughout the entire proceedings.



Alderman A. E. STUART, J.P., Mayor of Blackpool, hands diploma to RAPHAEL LAMAS, REG SWINSON is on the right.

NEXT WEEK

Story and Pictures Tyne-Tees and Southern Area Shows — and Manchester Palace Gala Bill Names

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FOR Blackpool Grand Theatre audiences a big transition—from last week's "Rebecca" to this week's old time music hall which, under the grand-style chairmanship of Duggie Chapman, got off to a tumultuous start last night.

It was almost a packed house from orchestra stalls to gallery, which seemed to suggest that even if the music halls have nearly all gone over to bingo or been demolished, the tradition of over 100 years lives on.

Around names like George Formby, Florrie Forde, Vera Tilley, George Elliott, Arthur Tracey and others this revue weaves a magic spell, that is all the better for its unabashed sentimentality and its proud salutes to the greats of yesteryear.

We can even make allowances for the fact that the comedy is often not original. For that is what shows like

this are all about—a deep delve into the past with the expertise of the present.

First-rate

There is dancing by Ronnie Parnell and Marie Ashton music and some of the "naughty minnies" from Montelli and June, and a plentiful helping of comedy from Danny O'Dea, Duggie Chapman, and other members of the company.

The spotlights shone particularly brightly on Billy Wells, the original Danny La Rue—his Sophie Tucker is a sheer delight—singer of a lovely and talented song of D'Arny Carte Opera renown, Jean Barrington, and on Tom Howard, a simply first-rate impressionist at the piano.

Miss Joan Pendleton provides another note of versatility, and Mr George Whittaker leads the entire production from a theatre organ in the orchestra pit.

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