



BY
VAL TERRY

During the past few weeks — nay, months — the plight of the cabaret clubs, as is gloomily forecast by those who have interpreted the effects of the new gaming laws and formed the conclusion that the bottom will drop out of show business, has become an all-consuming topic of conversation in the profession. So much so, that I have actually had artists, depending on their own money (even long-distance calls, no less) to ask me my own opinion of the situation. I'm flattered! I hadn't thought my opinions counted for very much on subjects I excel in, and least of all on a matter which I have no doubt will pass me by without a ripple on the water.



BUT let me assert at the outset that I have every sympathy with a man who sees his source of livelihood adversely affected, and more especially if it is a government regulation which it is beyond his powers to circumnavigate. I have the same trouble when attempting to avoid stamping my N.H.I. card and convincing the Inland Revenue that I operated at a loss last year. I know just how the club owner feels when he talks of losing £50,000 because I felt just as sick when I was £50 short on a week of South Wales W.M. clubs which (in theory) was going to solve all my financial problems for at least a fortnight.

I think, in a way, it's even worse for me than the club owner. After all, he'll only lose £50,000 once, whereas if the present machinations in clubland persist I am liable to

The Chairman of Equity's Nottingham Branch talks out loud . . .

THE THOUGHTS OF CHAIRMAN VAL

Are artists being brainwashed to accept salary cuts?

lose £50 quite frequently, and I long ago gave up the idea of expecting to draw as much at the end of the week as I thought I was going to get at the beginning.

But I don't worry the CABARET CLUBS FEDERATION with my problems. In any case, the cabaret clubs are a cut above the working men's clubs which it has been my lot to suffer (and they to suffer me) for so many years. Apart from a four minute spot on "Opportunity Knocks" (which enables the artist to put "ITV" on his letter-headings) I've always believed that the cabaret clubs were the pinnacle of Success — usually reserved for glamorous female vocalists in provocative gowns and unmatched hair-pieces. The thought has crossed my mind, uncharitably perhaps, that if the ranks of provocative female vocalists were reduced through a decline in the amount of work available to them, the standards of entertainment in the profession would not be noticeably lowered. But that is by the by.

If I say that the possibility of my never working a cabaret club again leaves me somewhat cold, I don't want it

thought I'm suffering from SOUR GRAPES. The fact of the matter is that it is more by luck than good judgement if half-a-dozen such weeks come my way in the course of a year, and I can't honestly say they're "plum" bookings, at that. Invariably I am offered the minimum acceptable fee (with murmured apologies, but business isn't so good) and a closer look at the contract reveals I've to do the full seven nights. This precludes the possibility of Sunday night in a W.M. club where the fee will be at least a third of the amount I'm getting for the whole week. Not only that, but I'm convinced there is a conspiracy afoot to keep my cabaret-club money at an artificial low. All my colleagues who either precede me, or follow me, in such places are on a lot more money than me.

I know that's true because they always delight in telling me how much THEY got.

Now it may well be that I'm the only living artist who will not be affected by the impending demise of cabaret clubs. I strongly suspect there are many others, but if it is not so and I am alone, then so be it. I must confess that I may miss the opportunity for a few weeks residence in other parts of the country, which I regard as a social and geographical change for the better, but I shall not be financially the poorer. I could even be in pocket!

But somehow I have a feeling that the cabaret clubs are NOT going to go out of business. For the life of me I

can't imagine hard-headed proprietors closing the doors on a capital investment of probably several thousands of pounds. They would have us believe that, but for what purpose escapes me unless it is to court our sympathy for the cause. Which is rather like asking the mouse to mourn for the cat. I think it more than likely that a revision of profits on drinks and meals will enable our lords and masters to keep the wolf from the door whilst retaining an element of live cabaret.

It could be that we are being brain-washed for a cut in salaries, but this still won't affect me — I'm already as low as they can get. But come to think of it, at my money they might be glad to get me. I could even be in demand! So it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, isn't it?



Where does Webbington get its clientele?

by ALLAN WELLS

"Where do the people come from?" This question has me many times during 1969, by artists appearing at the Club, a question probably prompted by the Club's location.

Situated at the foot of Crooks Peak, overlooking the lovely Loxton Vale, the Webbington must appear

THERE LAST WEEK



● MIKE & BERNIE WINTERS, a fabulously successful week at Webbington ending on Saturday last.

to those visiting us for the first time "out in the wilds," but looking through any of the club windows beautiful farming country is visible surrounded by majestic hills, with farmhouses dotted here and there.

Despite this impression, Webbington lies approximately 2½ miles west of the main Exeter road, Weston-s-Mare is 6 miles away, and there is easy access to Bristol and the rest of Somerset. Recently work has commenced on the extension to the M5 Motorway which passes our front door.

So where do the people come

from? They come from all over the place. We at Webbington believe because we offer the sort of entertainment they want.

We have established an enviable reputation for our ability to entertain. The Club amenities are exceptional—Star cabaret, cocktail bars, ballroom and bars, television lounges, banqueting room, weekly film shows. We also cater for that special occasion—wedding receptions, all kinds of anniversary celebrations or just that quiet evening for two.

All these amenities contribute to the club's popularity, but it is undoubtedly the Cabaret which draws the large crowds. We can surely boast this to be the "best in the West." Artists appearing during 1969 included BOB MONKHOUSE, JIMMY EDWARDS, P. J. PROBY, VINCE EAGER, THE ROCKIN' BERRIES, THE PAPER DOLLS, THE PLATTERS, THE DRIFTERS, THE SWINGING BLUE JEANS, ZAREADA and JOHNNY ST. GEORGE. ACKER BILK and THE PARAMOUNT JAZZ BAND, KENNY BALL and many others. Last week it was the fabulous MIKE AND BERNIE WINTERS and shortly CLIVE LEA and the ROCKIN' BERRIES. It would surely be surprising if people did not come from way off to see such a star-studded Cabaret.

Cabaret success is indeed indicated by the need to extend our Ballroom. The purpose of this was to increase the seating capacity to 700, and to provide patrons with dining facilities during the Cabaret. It has proved a huge success.

Artists are introduced by our very able compere Tony Harding, who is also a fine vocalist. He is now in his second year at the Club. Music for both Cabaret and dancing is provided by the very talented JOE MORELLI TRIO, comprising COLIN on Hammond Organ, GEORGE drum and ROGER tenor sax. They took over on January 4, and since then have made themselves extremely popular with every-

● ALAN WELLS (nearest waiter), boss of the Webbington, with engineers from the adjacent M5 motorway.

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