

# LIGHT ENTERTAINMENT LINES from LANCS. by JAMES HARTLEY

Life's just come full circle for Anton D. Petrov — 21 today — and if only some of the happy prospects associated with his lucky star rub off on to him, there's a good time coming from this talented son of Aries.

Anton — one time organist-entertainer with the Blackpool-based Victorians — has been settled in Ilfracombe for a matter of months, but — and despite the somewhat limited — thereabouts — he has been quick to make a name for himself. Already there have been four offers for his services in summer seasons; Billy Forrest and Pontin's both have him in mind; and, what intrigues him most of all, there's a chance of engagement in a ship's cabaret under the aegis of the Hubert Warren organisation. Young Petrov's mum, Aleta, an ex-entertainer showband performer, has been working with her son as drummer on some of his Devonshire gigs. Right now she is busy up-dating her variety speciality — paper-tearing, singing, dancing — in preparation for the forthcoming season. Her ex-partner, Ken Palmer — a single now — has also got something new up his sleeve, to be revealed when he rejoins Terry Cantor in Old Time Music Hall at Leeds City Varieties on May 11 for four weeks, and in the following summer season at Bridlington Spa, June 11 onward.

Barry Hopkins who was such a hit in "Music Hall at the Tower" at Blackpool a month ago has been wowing 'em at the Player's London in a new edition of "Late Joys." There's an ever open door for him whenever he wishes to go back, they told him, and in fact it is on the cards that he may return for a fortnight — with longer spots — this month. The new lad's diary is well filled with club and cabaret bookings, and his first record, "Love Ya, Want Ya, Need Ya," is selling like hot cakes. The chiefs at Pye who released the disc their new Spark label, say has come closest to being a hit of any record put out by their smaller companies. Young Hopkins has two more records to cut in the near future and the crystal-ball readers predict they're going to knock the charts for six!

Hedley Claxton is currently engaged finalising the line-up for his next Morecambe summer show, "Gaytime," the launch of which at the Palace on May 14, running through



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to October, with possible tour to follow. Certainly it looks good on paper: the principals — Colin Gage, top comic, Colin Robbins and Anjie Dean, one of the most versatile duos in the business, June Shand, a wonderful soprano, the new Voice of Wales, Lance Roberts — are notably experienced and polished, and with a backing of Dancing Debutantes, choreography by David Thornton, and the Maurice Page Music, this forthcoming nineteenth edition of Hedley's famous annual should be a highlight of the 1970 scene.

Jimmy Kennedy, now in his third year as arts manager for Pontin's, tells me there are still vacancies for resident artists — a tenor, female dancers and vocalists, and specialities — at his Blackpool camp. It's a 22-week season commencing May 16. Steve Allen, late Talk of the North, is Jim's new assistant, replacing Dave Cornell who is now organising seasonal entertainment at the new Blackpool 30, One Club.

### CLUB CORNER

SHOCKS awaited the Amazing Zareada and his aide-de-camp Johnny St. George on their return from Malta. Their newly-opened antiques-boutique, Bishara Auckland — a mine of old-world treasures which Johnny was to have managed — had been broken into and vandalised, and as a result of this expensive setback they've given up shopkeeping and are concentrating on revitalizing their unique stage-partnership which was found 10 years ago. Their success at the Madalena in Malta seems to have been quite fantastic. The clairvoyant last consulted was Maltese Prime Minister George Borg Oliver who entertained the duo at his palace for more than an hour. They have promised to do another "return" stint on the island when home commitments permit.

Incidentally, I should perhaps mention the appearance of Z. and J. had undergone an almost bizarre change since I last saw them in January. Frankly, they look more like a couple of unkempt, bearded leopards who broke the bank at Monte Carlo they used to resemble. (Please don't send money — this is not an appeal for charity.) The fact is, they are under orders to grow heavy beards and sideburns for their roles in a new film production, "The Boy and the Child," — stars: Lionel Jeffries, Bernard Cribben, Diana Sheridan — on which shooting begins at Keighley Yorkshire on May 1.

CLIFF JACKSON, sole survivor of that one-time favourite Staffs combo, the Gravediggers whom he fronted as vocal lead, is still chasing rainbows, still stage-struck, and more than ever determined to make the grade — at whatever cost! Guitar-singers are ten a penny — maybe — but few of them take their music as seriously as this blues specialist from Stoke. When his group broke up four years ago Cliff and organist Chris Under (teenagers both) worked their passage to the Continent and tackled the business in Spain and Portugal. Their early experience over there was unproblematic — "Competition is terrific, you've got to be good to win a hearing." Eventually Cliff's performing standards earned him a resident berth at a popular Spanish nightspot, El Grotto (Lou Waterman's place in Torremolinos) where he qualified for a subsequent three-year tour of clubs and cabarets as vocal-instrumental entertainer. Young Jackson — 22 now — is back home again, and positively rarin' to go. The lure of nine seasonal vacancies brought him to Blackpool last week where he filled spots at the North Pier, Cleveleys Queens, Huntsman, BAF, and made favourable impressions. Upon Jimmy Kennedy (Pontin's) and Roy Jackson (Leigh Garrick). I fancy he may be settling for a season at Pontin's.

THERE'S no more satisfying job in Clubland than the resident-compete, vows Alan Weston — and with 18 months officiating as such on the Manchester Scene to his credit, he should know. Former top-of-the-bill balladeer and bongo-bongo Alan has just settled in at Bill Kerfoot's Russell Club, in co. with organist Stan West and drummer Geoff Riley. By the way, Rowena, the ravishing Ceylonese beauty queen and model he courted for so long is now his wife — and they're the happiest couple in Withington.

## VARIETY at the SALFORD VICTORIA



NOSTALGIA for Salfordians and in infiltration from the four corners of Mancunia when Variety risen from the ashes last week and came alive in no uncertain manner.

Using only six principals, six girls, organ and percussion, MIKE PARKER whipped-up a very palatable soufflé when he presented the fast-moving BUNNY LEWIS show at the Victoria Theatre.

In two-and-a-half hours, not a weak moment, even on the first night, nothing to fault. For several artists, though established club and cabaret performers, this was their first time on a music hall stage; but no-one would ever have known.

Every act a super-duper. Quite pretentious production scenes were romped through with dazzling panache. From being comfortably full on Monday, by Friday it was standing room only and on Saturday they were turning 'em away.

Both TV and press gave wonderful support in pre-promotion and the end product fully justified their confidence.

Host, JACKIE CARLTON, still by far the best emcee-entertainer in the North-West, brought the audience to the boil in no time flat. BUNNY, an incorrigible always, trotted through a series of characterisations ranging from FLOPTRA, complete with a rather stiff-necked asp, to a minus-skirted refreshment attendant in second-night report with Madam Cartouche.

Laughing off her avoirdupois, deep-throated TERRY DAY showed just how the leading of chorus singing should really be done and JOHNNY MARTIN much impressed 'em with his impressions. JACKIE RICHMOND and his guitar gave their usual breezy and boisterous delivery and a minus-skirted refreshment attendant in second-night report with Madam Cartouche.

General Manager, NORMAN WILLIAMS, is to be congratulated on the front-of-house renovations, the more intricate decor being carried out by himself.

### MIDLANDS MIRROR SYD STARR

Best news of the week is that two Midlands Night Clubs which closed down eight months ago, are to re-open shortly. They are "The Forty Thieves," Coventry, and "The Castaways," Birmingham. Both clubs have been acquired by LEISURE ENTERPRISES LTD., a London-based group, who already operate clubs in Leicester, Nottingham, Doncaster, and Torquay. The clubs will be much as they were before, but it is thought that the more expensive type of acts will not be featured. As there are plenty of good artists available at fees that can be afforded, there should be no lack of good entertainment.

One of Birmingham's newer clubs, "Rebecca's" has an impressive line-up of artists booked for their April cabarets. These include MARSHA HUNT, "THE PLATINUMS," JAMES MORGAN, DUCKY, IKE AND TINA TURNER, PICKETY WITCH, JAMES KING, LOU CHRISTY, BOB AND ANDY, J. JACKSON, and MARCIA GRIFFITHS.

JOSEF LOCKE had a big reception at Solihull's Cresta Club and patrons are eagerly looking forward to the return visit of FRANKIE VAUGHAN, who always draws the crowd.

Had a pleasant surprise visit from my old friend DAVID CONWAY, who has just returned home after 18 months abroad. On his return from Australia he married the beautiful PAULINE, who was for nine years with ERIC ROSS's "Dazzle." Now the act is known as DAVID AND PAULINE CONWAY. David has gained much experience since working with "THE MONARCHS," and is now preparing for his summer season of 20 weeks with PETER CASSON, at Newquay. He is currently at The Pendennis Club, Falmouth.

Foleshill Social Club are presenting a series of Wednesday night shows. The first is headed by that colourful comedian JACKIE IRELAND, supported by THE NEWMAN BROTHERS, Leicester's popular duettists.

SID TURNER, mine host at Coventry's Three Spires Hotel, must be compensated on his presentations of big band and instrumental shows. Following the recent second appearance of GEORGE CHISHOLM were the 17-piece orchestra of JOHNNY LAMBE and star vocalist DAVID BRANDON from The Locarno. The orchestra gave the GLENN MILLER treatment to such favourites as "In the Mood," "Tuxedo Junction," and "Adios," and an excellent arrangement of "Little Brown Jug."

IDRIS BRAY, entertainments secretary of Coventry Housing Club is keeping up a high standard of artists for the club's concerts. Last week's star attraction was Doncaster comedian JOHNNY WILLETS, who is also a capable vocalist and guitarist. Resident backing group "THE FABULOUS GIBSONS" give first-rate entertainment with their excellent instrumental and vocals.

### HOT FROM SCOTLAND

ONE OF the bright hopes of live entertainment north of the Border is to be found in Bellfield Street in the East coast city of Dundee, where Dundee Corporation's new Whitehall Theatre is presenting worthwhile shows every week.

Stuart Pearce, the manager, tells me that this week's "Heather Mixture" features Jimmy Shand and his Band, together with singers George Cormack and Irene Sharp, and from TV's "Black and White" Show, the Scots-born entertainer Benny Farrow.

The Dundee Whitehall bills itself as "Scotland's most luxurious, warm and comfortable theatre." Manager Pearce tells me: "We seat 750, have first-class lighting and sound, and are a luxurious new theatre." The Whitehall has recently had a most successful tour of "Ballet for All" with dancers from the Royal Ballet company.

ALL OVER Scotland, from the far north to the south, cabaret acts are flourishing in hotels and restaurants. Not enough tribute is paid, I feel, to the hotel owners for keeping live entertainment to the fore in this way.

At Stirling they're starting something new this month when "Cabaret Show Date" gets under way in the Gordon Suite of the town's Station Hotel.

The producer, Herbert Christie, tells me: "Artists new to cabaret will be featured. To encourage teenagers interested in performing in a high-standard cabaret show, local business men have made generous offers in prizes."

In a vast scrap-heap of musical knicknacks and memories, loaned to me by Willie Walker, stage-manager at Glasgow Metropole, I came on an intriguing item from the late 1930's.

Roy Fox and his Band were topping the bill at Glasgow Empire, and warm ovations were going every night to a 14-year-old child crooner discovery, real name May McDevitt, stage name Mary Lee. She had just won a nationwide crooning contest run by Roy Fox.

Today that same little girl is Mary Milroy, wife of Jack Milroy, leading Scottish comedian. Show-business goes on!

## THE STAGE MUNICIPAL SUPPLEMENT

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An Annual Survey of  
MUNICIPAL  
ENTERTAINMENTS

## RENT COBS

Jimmy Hodge Jnr.

LAST AUTUMN Kent cabaret artist George Chaney went off to a house party where he was booked to play along with Alan Banister and the Beacons. Later that evening he was found lying with a battered head on a lawn.

For two months, George, of Newington, lay unconscious in The Brook Hospital, in London, just a thin line from death after a brain operation. Now he is back home again a physical and mental wreck; a shadow of the former happy-go-lucky guitar playing lad who performed in Kent's club throughout Kent.

He can remember nothing of that fateful night and as a result the police, after exhaustive inquiries, have shelved the case. Little consolation for George who has to exist with his parents' help on £4 a week.

revealed his sorry plight in my local newspaper, the Kent Evening Post — and little realised the floodgates that I was opening. Artists and bands and clubs all over the county rang me and wrote me wanting to help in some way.

One result was that last week the Rainham Mark Social Club gave over the premises for a marathon variety bill which I compared, to assist George Chaney; even the profits from the bar went to him.

It was a glittering night, with entertainers popping in to appear for a few moments before buzzing off to other engagements — it was almost impossible to have a running order. But the whole operation, organised in one five minute phone call to me from the Rainham Club went like clockwork.

Those who "popped" in and out included comedian Frankie Baker, pianist George Martin, vocalist Robert Bragg, vocal trio The Inner Trice, hotfoot from a high-class Midway Chamber of Commerce to do vocalists Pam Knott, Jan Talmay, Johnny Siesta, Tilly Rosemary Wilshire, soubrette Jackie Smith, The Mini-Lyns, The Phil Lee Combo (who copped all evening with their comers), Chas Butler, The Lee Three — an almost endless list.

Not one of these people came along with thought of reward or even a "plug" from me. But it is a story that had to be told. The Phil Lee Combo's special arrangement of "A Little Help from my Friends" was very appropriate. George Chaney, who is unlikely to be anywhere near fit for at least two years, needed it — and got it.

And it isn't finished yet. On April 23 Alan Banister and The Beacons with Tony Worrall and The Sovereigns will be staging a benefit dance for George at the same venue. Cabaret will include sinners Johnny — and Eric Garratt.

I HEAR from Harold Taylor the erstwhile comedian and musician that he has been re-booked with his own shows for Folkestone and Margate this summer yet on more. He has become so popular with holidaymakers in Kent that it wouldn't surprise me if he doesn't become a Man of Kent soon (or am I judging the Gun, Harold...?)

SAME TOWN but at the Woodlands Hotel cabaret is returning this week (from tonight) featuring The Minchellas and guest who, excuse me now, must pop into the woods, er, sorry, the Woodlands Adios...

But there is no doubt at all, whatsoever, that it is in the first category we find comedian Dennis Jones. This fast talking, quick witted young man scores on one of the biggest, facilities is crisp and well above average in originality. Secondly he has a flair in managing to adapt it to suit his audience. Then his timing is good too.

A return visit to the Leeds Area of Clubs recently proved that this particular Jones boy could become one of the biggest in Northern comedy during the 70's.

## YORKSHIRE RELISH

by James Towler

CHARITY SHOWS have come under the spotlight following a mix-up regarding a personal appearance at a Leeds W.M.C. Obviously the lines of communication between the organisers had become crossed — trust that the much loved and respected star at the centre of it all received the apology he deserved.

However, this is a useful opportunity to look into the question of charity shows. I'm not referring to those staged in large theatres featuring big names. Nor am I concerned about a show like The Stage Awards which is in aid of a show business charity and does much to enhance the status of the artists participating.

What does worry me are the ever increasing number of charity shows held in W.M.C.'s in which artists "give their services free" or else work for nominal expenses. Any artists who do give of these shows in a year, and many do more, is, in effect, doing a week's work without pay. Is this right? Especially for artists who are far away from the big money brackets. I think not.

No one should work for nothing. If the job is well done it should be rewarded accordingly. Then one has only to look a little further to see how unfair on the artist these shows can be. A club may donate its door takings to a charity. And a good bill will bring in the crowds and raise a tidy sum. This is nothing to the figure that will be taken over the bars.

Will the bar staff work for nothing? I doubt it. Will the brewery donate the extra profit from the increased sales at the show? Of course not. It is only the artist who is expected to take a cut. Frankly I think this can veer towards exploitation.

I'VE GOT to know a few ventriloquists dummies in my time and none better than Charles Bouchier. There's many a human who could learn from Master Charlie, especially when it comes to the question of smartness in apparel.

Something many people notice is his magnificent blue tie with its resplendent red, white and yellow crest. St. George and the Dragon. When out entertaining the troops on a C.S.E. tour in the Near East it came in for particular attention.

"I know where that tie came from," said the young lieutenant, "it's from The George and Dragon, Apperley Bridge, near Bradford." "That's right," replied Charlie, "Harry Birkett's place!" Even the normally immobile face of John Bouchier broke into a smile at that.

MIKE AND BERNIE WINTERS checked into Wakefield Theatre Club the other week with some of the best business since Christmas. A check-a-block car park full of Plaxtons and Duples, not to forget the stylish Moseley, was an indication that the coach parties were out in force.

And what did they see? A superb demonstration of the comedy double at its best. The material — traditional. The timing — spot on. The laughter — continuous. The boys simply couldn't put a foot wrong.

THERE ARE basically three types of acts. Those that get better. Those that get worse. And those that simply seem to stand still. Of the three groups the third is undoubtedly the largest, the second is the most depressing (and sometimes heart rendering) and the first the most rare.

But there is no doubt at all, whatsoever, that it is in the first category we find comedian Dennis Jones. This fast talking, quick witted young man scores on one of the biggest, facilities is crisp and well above average in originality. Secondly he has a flair in managing to adapt it to suit his audience. Then his timing is good too.

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