

LINES from LANCS by JAMES HARTLEY

Translated from the French, "The more things change the more they stay as they are" — and this might well be said of the BLACKPOOL CHRISTMAS SCENE.

True, the resort has no large-scale professional pantomime this year and the theatres are not putting on any special shows apart perhaps for the odd one-night stand. In fact, the nearest "live" traditional productions are **BARRIE STACEY'S "WIZARD OF OZ"** at the **LOWTHER PAVILION LYTHAM ST. ANNES**, **DUGGIE CHAPMAN'S "GOLDILOCKS"** with **JACK STOREY**, **JACKIE PALLO**, **ELI WOODS**, and **LINDA HOOKS** at **PRESTON CHARTER**, and **TRAFFORD-PARNELL'S "ALADDIN"** starring **KEN GOODWIN** at the **NEW THEATRE SOUTHPORT**. But this is not to imply that the entertainers are any less occupied

Scene set for Happy Christmas

than in more spectacular times when Blackpool could boast two or maybe three pantomimes running simultaneously. On the contrary it is true to say that more artists will be seen working hereabouts this Christmas than ever — even in the boom years of the music hall.

All the dozens of clubs and cabarets in and around the town have something better than usual to offer, involving, of course, musicians, groups, and individual artists, many of whom will be running around in their cars or taxis this weekend coping with four or five bookings per night.

Additionally some of the hotels and guest-houses and show-bars will be staging lavish attractions of their own. And, back from their Carib-

bean cruises, the landladies — bless 'em — not the least colourful, bronzed, and fit — some of them bursting out of their bras — will be pulling out all the stops in their endeavours to ensure a memorable Yuletide occasion for their guests.

The day when all it needed to satisfy the Blackpool customer was a gradely pint and a port-and-lemon for his better half is long gone. Today the most popular houses are those with scheduled live entertainment, music, and service with a smile. The idea, fostered by the clubs, is fast catching on at progressive local residential hotels, notably the town-centre **MELVILLE**, an outstanding example of how successfully it works.

Proprietors **EDDIE BERRY** and



● Johnnie St George — Blackpool favourite — singing star of the *Zaragoza* act.

JIM GARRETT are well known in showbiz circles — especially for their effective charity-raising efforts — and their we-never-close style establishment in **Adelaide Street**, is a favourite haunt of star entertainers whenever they're working the town. (I guess those potted shrimps guests rave about must have something to do with it!) Over the festive period (as it has been throughout the past three seasons) the place is booked solid. It has its own m.d. and entertainment director, **PHREDD**, a popular organist and arranger, and artists he has lined up to keep patrons happy during the Christmas/New Year celebrations include **MARCUS BARRON**, **GRIME** and **GRIMSHAW**, **PAT ROE**, **DAVE PARIS**, **TINA BROWN**, and **TINA JAMES**.

The better restaurants too are boarding the bandwagon. **TOM** and **SHEILA ARNOLD** came to appreciate the value of entertainment on the menu when they ran the neighbouring **RED ARROWS** restaurant **PILLING**, and now they've moved into Blackpool where their **MONA LISA** (incorporating the **CONCORDE ROOM**) has been quick to establish a reputation for first-class cuisine, fine wines — and musical cocktails. It's not only the gourmets who have taken **Mona** to their hearts, entertainment fans find the relaxed and informal atmosphere of this southside rendezvous — hosted by multi-talented **CAROL GRAY** (guitarist, danceuse, vocalist, commere) abetted by partner, keyboard-star **ALLAN DAVEY** at the **National**, ministering to popular demand — just the place for a good night out.

HARRY POPE and **NORMAN TEAL**, both instrumental artists of note in the variety world before they took a shine to the agency side, are chiefly responsible for booking the many acts (of numerical strength to man more than a dozen major pantomimes) doing the local rounds over the next 10 days or so.

As well as looking after several leading Blackpool workingmen's clubs including **LAYTON INSTITUTE**, Harry's burgeoning interests cover a vast northwest itinerary, from **Leyland** to **Carlisle**, and more than 30 sizeable venues including the famous **LEYLAND TIGER** (newly fortified with a late licence and presenting 10 star acts between now and New Year's Day), **MORECAMBE REGENCY**, **BARROW ENGINEERS**, **CARNFORTH RAILWAY**, **LANCASTER TRADES**, and **CARLISLE UNITED**.

Just as busy, Norman will be using 34 acts, **RICK LOMAS**, **PANCHO VILLA**, **ADRAN WALSH**, **TREVOR WALLIS**, **SEAN MCKENZIE** among them, performing a shuttle-service between some scores of local hotels, night-spots, and show-bars, **THE IMPERIAL**, **THE GAIETY**, **BUTLIN'S METROPOLE**, **THE TANGERINE**, and so on. "Talk about blood, sweat, and tears, I'm just ran off my feet — there's more

HOT FROM SCOTLAND

By John Moore

DEPUTISING FOR GORDON IRVING

With **GORDON IRVING** off with his wife to the sunny clime of South Africa to visit their architect son over Yuletide, news, views, gossip and grumbles from this land called Caledonia for this and the next four issues will be emanating from the Moore desk situated within half-a-mile of the cottage where **Scotia's National Bard**, **ROBERT BURNS**, was born at **Sylvan Alloway** near the bonnie town of **Ayr**.

ALLAN STEWART looks like being the pantomime discovery rave of season 1977-78 judging by the reception he got at the opening night of "CINDERELLA" at the **Glasgow Pavilion**.

Emimently mentionable in the stalls included the Pavilion "top brass" — chairman **M. DUMFRIES**, **BALLANTINE** and co-directors **JOHN G. CARSE** and **JIMMY DONALD**; panto casting director **PETER DE RANCE**, boss of the **Chalmers Word** agency; and **RENEE POPPLEWELL**, widow of former productions director **ERIC POPPLEWELL**.

Then there were singer **CALUM KENNEDY**, whose eldest daughter **FIONA KENNEDY** is in **Cinders**, and his other daughters: **GRACE CLARK** and **COLIN MURRAY**; **EILEEN KEAGAN**; **GRACE MCLEAN**, widow of former Pavilion summer blockbuster, comedian **LEX MCLEAN**; **GEORGE CORMACK** and **IRENE SHARP**; **LARRY MARSHALL** and his wife **KAY ROSE**; the **MCLEAN SISTERS** (**Pamela**, **Shirley** and **Melody**); dance man and producer **DANNY REGAN**; doyenne dance mistress **MAY MOXON**; dancer **GINTY MCLEAN**; **RUSSEL LANE**, who had just finished two daytime shows as panto baddie at **Ayr**; **Claire**; **BB**; radio light entertainment producer **BEN LYONS**; former Pavilion manager **WILLIE DOCHERTY**; actress **KATE MATHESON**, whose husband **RIKKI FULTON** is starring in "The Sleeping Beauty" just along the road at the **King's Theatre**; **ALEX FRUTIN**, who used to own the old **Metropole Theatre** of happy memory; **Glasgow** halls publicity man **CHRIS DAY** and his wife **ROSEMARY**. All the above names dropped were spotted before curtain-up between foyer and front stalls via the bar: so who did I miss?

work about than there ever was," vows this agent.

Star turns and highlights of Blackpool's Yuletide calendar: **DEWEK WAVE** groups at **Jenks**; **DEREK BATEY** at the **Talk of the Coast** Dec. 25/26; **JACK DIAMOND** ENTERTAINS at **Diamond's Place** Topping Street; **VARIETY/DISCO** at the **Squire**; **ROCKING VICARS** at the **Cleveys**; **BAVARIAN GALA** at **Tiffany's** Dec. 24; **LYNNE LAYNE** at the **Layton**; **HARVEY SEAGER** at the **Brunswick**; **JUNIOR JONSEN** at **Talk of the Coast**; **BARRY WYNHAM** at **Brun Grove**; **BERNIE FLINT** at the **Imperial** Dec. 31; **JOHNNY CLEVELAND**, **PANCHO VILLA**, **SWEET EMOTION**, **DAVID ST. JOHN** at the **Gaiety**.

So, all in all the scene is set for a very cosy, bright, and scintillating festivity... A HAPPY CHRISTMAS, FOLKS.

Actor **PAUL RHODES**, cast in the title role in "Jack and the Beanstalk" at the **Eden Court Theatre**, Inverness, really met with giant disaster at a rehearsal preceding the December 12 opening, when he finished up in hospital with two broken ankles. Paul was on the beanstalk ladder to his castle in the sky when the supporting wire snapped. He crashed to the stage (hitting wardrobe mistress **JO JACKSON** en route), tore through the trapdoor into the pit, fractured a pipe in the fire-fighting system and the spouting water created a fire hazard when it sprayed out over various electronic systems.

Paul's injury rules him out of the four-week run, but gives a break of a different kind to local actor **HARRY NICOLL**, promoted from principal chorus singer.

The **EDEN COURT** is having a hassle with Aberdeen's "The PRESS AND JOURNAL" daily newspaper over non-publication therein of crits. of one-night shows. Apparently, of necessity, **Eden Court** one-nighter reviews had appeared a day later than for Aberdeen shows, and hence were discontinued. The **Eden Court** management have taken the unusual step of asking its patrons to sign printed appeal forms to have the reviews reinstated. The paper says: "We feel that Inverness is being treated as an outpost."

Lady **DEIRDRA MURRAY**, widow of **Sir WILLIAM MURRAY**, 11th baronet of Ochtertyre who died not so long ago in tragic circumstances, has signed a one-year exclusive contract as resident vocalist at **Pipers nightclub** in **Edinburgh's West End**. She was previously known as folk-singer **DEE DEE WOODS**.

Canon **SYDNEY MACEWAN**, the Roman Catholic priest who was a world-famous tenor, making a rare public appearance at a **Glasgow University graduates' function**, admitted he never sings nowadays, even in private. "I'll be seventy on my next birthday, so I've had a pretty good run."

Canon **Macewan** was recently a candidate (unsuccessful) at the **Glasgow's "various" Rectorial Election**, and to help his campaign **GLEN DALY**, singer **ALASDAIR GILLIES**, comedians **ANDY CAMERON** and **CLEM DANE**, and the **MCLEAN SISTERS**, gave a lunch time concert in the men's Union building. Somebody recognised **Glen**, equally famous as singer and comedian, going in and said jokingly: "Are you a student coming out for a singer?" "No," replied "Mr Glasgow," "I'm a comic going in for a laugh!" **Birmingham** singer **LEIGH DOUGLAS**, who works the **Scottish cabaret scene** a lot, is currently winning new fans at the **Beach Ballroom**, **Aberdeen**, where he is likely to be until end-January. It's quite a change from last year when he was **Prince Charming** in "Cinderella" at **Bognor Regis**.

GERRY LEE — forty years a pantomime cat! — has written a new seasonal song, "May I wish you a happy New Year," and is looking for a try-out. He says he has sent copies to **MOIRA ANDERSON**, **JIMMY OGAN** and **BILLY CONNOLLY**, and will do the same for anyone else interested. Address is **Gerry Lee**, 39 **Gordon Road**, **Oundle**, **Peterborough**, **PE8 4LD**.

There just has to be loads and loads of things happening this festive season. So why not take a few minutes break from Christmas cards and DROP ME A LINE by **FIRST-CLASS MAIL** with your news and plans? The name is **JOHN MOORE** and the address is **20 WOODEND ROAD, ALLO-WAY, AYR, KA7 4QR**.

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