

Light Entertainment News



'Racial storm' nightspot in licence fight

POLLYANNA'S, the Birmingham nightclub at the centre of racial storms, will have to fight to renew its drinks licence.

The white collar trade union, the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, has lodged an objection to its renewal, due at the annual sessions on April 4.

Don Groves, one of the union's divisional officers, said the union felt it needed to make its protest.

Weston Edwards, chairman and managing director of Genture Restaurants, which owns Pollyanna's, said he did not wish to comment on the matter.

In 1978 the Commission for Racial Equality ordered the club to stop discriminating against customers on racial grounds.

And last month the CRE obtained an injunction to prevent Edwards and Genture Restaurants from refusing admission to Sikhs because they could not comply with a "no headgear" rule.

● The legendary 'Big O', ROY ORBISON, returns to Britain after an absence of three years to embark on an extensive cabaret and concert tour.

Presented by Arthur Howes, the tour opens on March 21 at the Commodore International, Nottingham, followed by engagements at the Apollo Theatre, Manchester (March 22); Southport Theatre (March 23); Jollies, Stoke (March 26 for four days); ABC Theatre, Peterborough (March 30); Cesars Palace, Luton (March 31); Night Out, Birmingham (April 1-3); Winter Gardens, Bournemouth (April 4); Night Out, Birmingham (April 5); Spa Theatre, Bridlington (April 6); ABC Theatre, Blackpool (April 7); Blazer's, Windsor (April 9-10); Gaumont Theatre, Ipswich (April 11); Dome Theatre, Brighton (April 18); Municipal Theatre, London (April 19) and the Fairfield Hall, Croydon (April 21). More engagements may be added.

Whitfield fund

A MEMORIAL fund to David Whitfield has been opened, although it has not yet been decided how the money should be spent. Donations should be forwarded to Barbara Young, "Wynarth", Lancaster Road, Snyne, Lancaster.

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Producer launches social club crusade

PRODUCER Terry O'Rourke is launching a personal crusade to educate social club secretaries — and help provide more work for acts.

"I want to break the deadlock of one-act shows and bingo and educate the concert secretaries," he told THE STAGE. "So many acts can't get work, but the social clubs can afford to stage well-produced shows featuring a large bill." He believes that the social club

scene is a huge and largely unexploited market. And he hopes to put more acts into these venues.

"It could be the salvation of the light entertainment profession," he claims. One club which has taken advantage of O'Rourke's skills for three years now is South London's Tooting Conservative Club, where he produces about eight shows a year. With tickets at about £3.50 his shows normally sell out within 24 hours of being announced.

His next show at the club, on March 4, will feature Valentino and Sheba, Tony Cross, Chris Lloyd, Lorraine Graham, Jeff Stevenson, and Russ Pinder.

O'Rourke keeps a large number of acts in mind when producing his shows, but is always on the look-out for talent.

"I look for top class vocalists, instrumentalists, magic and other speciality acts, and a variety of comedians."

Scottish nightspot up for sale —ASKING PRICE £¼ MILLION

By our reporting staff

ONE OF Scotland's foremost nightspots, McTavish's at Bo'ness, is up for sale at around £250,000. Economic factors, the increased rate of VAT and personal reasons are behind the decision.

The news must come as a severe blow to artists and audiences alike. Central Scotland is starved of venues which provide the full restaurant/dancing/top cabaret package.

Since brothers Jeremy and James Inglis took over the venue a year ago, they have staged top quality cabaret acts on average three to four nights a week. The Dooleys were a recent sell-out for a three-night season; other acts to appear in recent months have included Guy's 'n' Dolls, Denise Nolan, Patti Boulaye, Sydney Devine and Lulu. Now high artists' fees are hitting the club.

Says director Bill Matthews: "I'm not blaming anyone,

but fees for top artists are expensive. But if we put on less well-known acts they don't attract the audiences — especially here in Scotland.

"VAT is fairly crippling," he continued. "It was quite a jump from eight per cent to 15 per cent, and it is very difficult to recoup. It is a tax on turnover, not on profit."

The club, which has an annual turnover of £550,000, is superbly equipped, both as a restaurant and a cabaret venue. A purchaser would be able to begin operating immediately.

Matthews said that there is a large public for the kind of package provided by McTavish's. In Scotland, civic theatres are an alternative to the clubs, but they do not fulfil the same function as the clubs. Scotland's other major venues are the social clubs.

Acts have been booked to appear at McTavish's until the end of March; they include Gary Glitter, Vince Hill, and the Drifters.

When the 500-seater venue is sold, the Inglis brothers will concentrate on their restaurants in the tourist towns of the west coast of Scotland, where they occasionally stage folk-oriented acts.

WAKEFIELD THEATRE CLUB £100,000 REFURBISHMENTS

WAKEFIELD THEATRE CLUB reopens on February 25 following a seven-week closure during which time owner Steve Bartle has spent £100,000 on refurbishments.

Two new dance floors have been constructed towards the rear of the building; the ceiling has been altered as have the dressing rooms, offices and the VIP lounge, new carpeting has been laid and a new lighting console installed.

Freddie Starr had been lined up to kick off the new-look club, although this has yet to be confirmed following his non-appearance at a number of dates recently.

Other acts booked for the club include the Nolans, the Krankies, the Hollies, Iris Williams, Paul Daniels,

the Dooleys, Martin St. James, Jim Davidson, the Barron Knights, Brotherhood of Man, Showaddywaddy, Danny La Rue, Black Abbot, the Grumbleweeds and the Three Degrees.

Top Yorkshire DJ Mick McGinley has signed a 12-month contract with the club, and a vocal/instrumental group or a comedian will provide part of the early evening entertainment, interspersed with disco dancing, before the star of the show appears at an earlier time of 11pm.

Those who wish to enjoy late night disco dancing only will be charged a reduced admission fee.

There will be a "Search for a Disco Dancer 1980" contest with a grand final on March 29 with cash prizes and trophies for winners.

Another Liverpool venue closes

FOLLOWING AN unsuccessful struggle to attract sufficient business over the past 12 months, another Liverpool nightspot has closed its doors.

The Coconut Grove, in Tuebrook, which opened in 1973, blamed a disastrous lack of Christmas trade for its troubles. Liverpool accountant Frank Taylor has been appointed liquidator.

Many top artists had appeared at 'the Grove' over the years, and the club was once very popular and noted for its Hawaiian Feasts and hula dancers. Efforts are now being made to sell the lease.

David Soul tour

ACTOR-TURNED SINGER David Soul — best known for his role as Hutch in the TV cops saga, "Starsky and Hutch" — is to tour the UK from March 15.

He enjoyed instant success when he decided to launch himself as a pop singer, and in 1977-78 he was biggest selling artist in the UK when he became the first performer since the Beatles to sell more than a million copies of a record. In just one year, he hit the number one singles slot twice, with other releases going to numbers two, four and five.

His British tour opens at the Congress Theatre, Eastbourne and includes dates at 12 other major venues, including London's Rainbow Theatre on March 23. The last date is at the City Hall, Hull on March 30.

Corner cabaret

SCARBOROUGH Corporation's night-spot The Corner opens its summer season cabaret nights on June 16 with entertainment from singer Frank Terenzi, backed by the music of Frank James.

Over at Filley, the 350 seat Sun Lounge will feature variety starring mind reader Zarada, family party nights, and local bands and choirs on Sundays.

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