



Lenny is ooooookay....!

Business was "oooooooookay" at the Wyvern Theatre, Swindon, where both houses of "The Lenny Henry Crazy Show," presented by Stanley Sher, were a sell-out.

Appearing with the versatile "Tiswas" star in a show in which slapstick was the keynote were the eccentric Clive Webb, comedy double act, The Chuckle Brothers, and vocal duo Kith-N-Kin.

Now Stanley Sher is considering presenting a similar sort of zany show in the West End. He believes there is a big market for this type of entertainment.

Prior to his summer season with Cannon and Ball at the Britannia Pier, Great Yarmouth, Lenny Henry is recording a BBC TV series, "Three Of A Kind," with David Copperfield and Tracey Ullman.

He leaves "Tiswas" at the end of the current series but he hopes to continue his association with Chris Tarrant in a proposed late-night comedy show for ITV.

Henry immortalises his "oooooooookay" catchphrase

with his latest single, "The (Algeron Wants You To Say) O.K. Song," on the Jet label.

Wyvern marketing assistant, MARK BORKOWSKI (left), and STANLEY SHER adopted suitably bemused expressions when they joined LENNY HENRY (centre) for this backstage photograph with the "House Full" board.

More Light Entertainment News

New stars needed at the Night Out

Birthday concern to maintain success of one of Britain's top nightspots

BIRMINGHAM'S Night Out Theatre Restaurant has just celebrated its seventh birthday — and it is entering its eighth year as one of the most successful cabaret venues in the country.

But its success will only continue, warns the venue's general manager Paul Lillcrap, if some of British entertainment's biggest stars who are currently not playing the top clubs can be persuaded to join the cabaret circuit.

While many venues are reduced to opening only on three or four nights a week, the purpose-built THE Birmingham operation is pulling in near capacity audiences from Monday to Saturday.

This is largely due to a skilful and complex marketing operation, which nightly pulls in people from as far as 100 miles away.

"Of course we are delighted with the continuing success," Lillcrap told THE

STAGE. "But it is at a considerable price. The cost of marketing, as with the fees for tops of the bill, is continuing to escalate at an alarming rate."

"Yet to maintain our success the policy has to be extended, particularly when Birmingham and the West Midlands is one of the areas hardest hit by the recession."

"Advance bookings are good, right through into the summer — but they are in fact about 15,000 persons down than at the same time last year, which was our best-ever year," he said.

"People are now not booking until much nearer the show, which is nerve-racking for both artists and management."

Lillcrap's other main concern is the shortage of new artists available for large cabaret venues.

"It is vital that we get some of the names who don't currently play the cabaret circuit. Eventually audiences must tire of seeing the same names every year."

"Two very successful shows at the Night Out this year have been David Essex and Cilla Black, and I'd hope to capture more top British names like this, who don't regularly play the cabaret scene," Lillcrap explained.

"Cliff Richard, Dave Allen, Max Boyce, Leo Sayer and Elton John are the sort of stars I'd like to see at the Night Out — and our own research shows that this is what our audiences would like to see."

"But at the moment some of the names we want just aren't interested in cabaret venues. I can't understand why because at the Night Out our facilities match anywhere in the country."

The Night Out celebrated its seventh birthday by opening a new floor show, "Something in the Air".

Produced and choreographed by Jean Clarke, it is the most lavish ever staged at the theatre, and has received great acclaim from audiences.

The resident company of Frank Patterson, Dinsdale, the Roger Rae Orchestra, and the Night Out Dancers were recently joined by Scottish singers, Alison McGuinness, who makes a big impact in the new show.

Another "first" for the Night Out comes on June 9, when the finals of the "Miss Europe" contest will be staged there, and televised "live".

Among tops of the bill in the next few months are: The Stylistics, Little and Large, Cleo Laine and Johnny Dankworth, the Dooleys, Barron Knights, Ronnie Corbett, Martin St James, the Rockin' Berries (for a five-week summer season), the Drifters (with Johnny Moore), Marti Caine, Wall Street Crash, Grace Kennedy, Liquid Gold and Dick Emery.



PETER G. FOOT has sent out a spring tour of his perennially popular presentation "Stars of the Black and White Minstrels", featuring MARGARET SAVAGE (above), Dai Francis and Ted Darling, with Brooks Aehron and Ann Emery as guest artists. David Harper and his musicians provide the accompaniment.

This week the show can be seen at the King's, Southsea and another Southern date is at Bognor Regis Centre on April 28. Three Northern dates for charity, at the King's Hall, Ilkley (May 1), Royal Hall, Harrogate (2) and City Varieties, Leeds (3) will feature Bobby Crush in place of Brooks Aehron, who will have started a spring cruise on the QE2.

Kay joins Brig Theatre show

TAKING A break from fronting the Midlands group Touch of Velvet, singer impressionist, comedienne Kay Kennedy is joining the Cabaret Night Out show at Filley's Brig Theatre Bar for the season.

Alterations and improvements costing more than £20,000 will allow the Brig to offer 320 seats for an evening of family entertainment this summer.

The new show is being presented by puppeteer Nick Thomas, who has also engaged singer Ronnie Hilton and hypnotist Zarada. Thomas will be appearing in the show himself.

Thomas is also promoting a one-night Keith Harris show at Scarborough's Floral Hall on Spring Bank Holiday Monday with backing from singer Jacqui Scott, song-and-dance team Dream Machine, and entertainer Jon Conway.

Blackpool talent hunt launched

A MAJOR new talent hunt in Blackpool is the "first step in re-establishing the credibility of contests in the resort," claims co-organiser of the planned event, Mike Lourens.

"It is setting the wheels in motion for the biggest talent search that Blackpool has ever produced," says Lourens, who operates promotions company Interna-

tional Music and Leisure.

The talent hunt will take place in the resort's Yellow Submarine Cabaret Bar.

Lourens told THE STAGE: "For some years I had felt that most talent shows in the resort and elsewhere were simply being arranged as a cheap form of cabaret and with no real care for the acts involved or for what the events were doing for the town."

"Blackpool is the largest holiday

resort in Europe and famous throughout the world for its image and its talent yet there is no big, credible talent show which comes from it. It's ludicrous when you look around at some of the prizes being offered."

"One was giving away parcels of food — others offer the winner a miserly £50 — after competitors have slugged it through heats and semi-finals. What are those contests doing to promote new talent? Absolutely nothing, that's what."

With £1,000 prize money to launch the contest from Daniel Thwaites, the northern brewer which owns the Yellow Submarine, Lourens took his idea to the local Blackpool newspaper, the West Lancashire Evening Gazette.

Traditionally a keen supporter of local show business talent, the paper agreed to support the contest financially and editorially and it will now be known as "The Evening Gazette Star Trail".

"Star Trail" is planned to commence on Friday, May 1 with six weekly heats, two semi-finals and grand final. The total prize money will be in the region of £1,300 with the bulk of that being given away at the final.

Firm date fixed

SO SUCCESSFUL was the East Anglia showbiz community's first lunchtime get-together that a firm date has already been fixed for the event next year.

Around 100 artists, agents, managers, radio and TV presenters enjoyed a pleasant lunch at Norwich's Norwood Rooms, held on the anniversary of the memorial service for well-respected local entertainment figure, the late Chic Apple.

Now the lunch will be an annual event, with the next date on Thursday March 4, 1982.

Ice show stars

THE 45th edition of "Showtime On Ice" — Blackpool Pleasure Beach Company's holiday annual — will open July 4 and run till the end of October.

This year's star signings are Jacquie Harbord (twice world professional champion) and Andrew Bestwick, 1980 British Figure Skating champion.

Mark and Julie, and the Jackpots are among popular returnees, and the newcomers include Mary Chipperfield's champion chimps presented by David Hibbing, and making their British ice debut, illusionists Ricki and Roddi whose sensational act is climaxed by the materialisation of a caged wild jungle beast in the centre of the rink.

Glasgow circus

THE 1981-82 season of International Circus at the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, will open on December 8 and run to January 30 1982. Leading acts from Europe and North America are being booked.

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