

MUSIC STAGE

It was described as punk, post punk and even psychedelic

Leather Hampsters let-down leads to Crown of Thorns debut

WHAT DO YOU do if you run a rock club and your band of the week drops out?

Some places would probably let the audience in and tell them the bad news later on but in Barnett they do things differently. Or at least Keith Finch does. He ran a rock club for the Old Bull Arts Centre - the main aim of which was to raise funds for a new theatre.

When the Leather Hampsters (who?) cancelled he had to find a replacement line-up - fast. Together with friend Malcolm Mehner he phoned round and within days had a new band booked - featuring himself and Malcolm!

Not wanting to take too many chances, the ad hoc band appeared under the Leather Hampsters name, performed to an audience of 400, got three encores and decided to stay together.

From that surprising debut emerged Crown of Thorns, a band currently

headlining its own tour to promote its "World Radio" single on IRS.

Obviously the band's formation was not a total surprise. He and Mehner had "mucked about" together - but once that first date went well there was little stopping them.

There have been changes along the way but Crown of Thorns now seems consolidated with Mehner on vocals and lead guitar, Keith on keyboards and vocals, Ty Holden on bass and vocals and newcomer Mark Storr-Hoggins on drums and vocals.

Under the somewhat briefer name of "Oggi", Mark is also drummer with Peter and the Test Tube Babies as well as a former member of the Jungle.

"He's a busy person - on the few spare dates during our tour he's doing things all over the country," says Finch.

With the help of a £500 loan from a Barnett character who goes under the name of "Scottish Harry", the band

developed on the commitment the initial reception had given them and released a single, "Stuck In The World," on their own label, recorded in former Broughton Band member Steve Broughton's four track studio.

"It created a lot of interest," says Finch. "A record is a lot more impressive than a demo tape - it carries its own image which you can build on."

Crown of Thorns has been described as punk, post punk and even psychedelic. Finch says the band is "veering towards pop music with a more culty angle."

For collectors of minutiae - Keith Finch's mum was one of the original "Ovaltines" for the radio commercials and Ty Holder's girlfriend Erin, as well as being a member of Hot Gossip, is the daughter of Jerry Lordan who wrote Shadows hits "Apache" and "Wonderful Land." Holden's father was fifties rock and roll star Vince Taylor.

Have a nice day!

EX SOFT Cell member, Blackpool's David Ball, is hoping for renewed burst of chart success with his new band, Other People.

David was the quieter half of the electronic duo which shot to the chart top care of "Tainted Love," and subsequently produced a string of hits before splitting up last year.

Plenty has been heard from, by and about fellow Soft Cell member Marc Almond but David adopted a characteristically low profile until the emergence of Other People.

The group features David on synthesizers, bass, and tapes, Andy Astle on guitars and Gini Ball on vocals and violin. Clock DVA's Nick Sanderson guests on drums.

Other People's debut release is "Have a Nice Day" coupled with "Another Day, Another Dollar" - on the Arcadia label.

probably half a century to come, offer Shropshire residents a particularly relevant theatre experience in one of the last few theatres to be built and would acknowledge the use of the facilities by Shropshire residents."

It adds: "Such a contribution could be linked to special performances for Shropshire schoolchildren and adults visiting performances. Or it could be used to encourage the theatre management to engage in an "outreach" programme where permanent staff come into Shropshire with special performances, workshops and day schools.

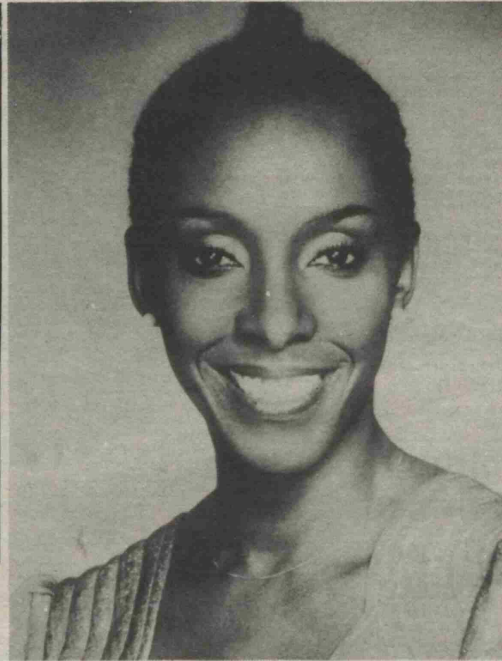
"Alternatively subsidised transport could be provided to enable people to visit the theatre."

Theatre is not dying, it is changing, says the report. It mentions specifically smaller touring companies like the R.A.T. Theatre in Newcastle who come into contact with theatre-goers of all types and whose total audience far exceeds repertory audiences.

Among recommendations accepted by the county council leisure committee are that moves should be made to establish a joint committee covering county and district councillors and West Midlands Arts to meet twice a year to plan an overall strategy for the arts in Shropshire, and work out financial responsibility.

West Midlands Arts, it is suggested, should consider the special needs of rural areas and develop a rural policy.

Other suggestions are that the cost of hiring schools and colleges should be provided for any organisation for one-off events, particularly when the event brings first class talent to Shropshire.



ELAINE DELMAR

After the Wizz

THE DAY after she concludes her run in "The Wiz" at the Lyric, Hammersmith on February 2, Elaine Delmar starts a tour for Jazz Services as one of Britain's leading jazz singers.

Opening at the Hazlitt, Maidstone on February 3, she goes on to Corner House Hotel, Newcastle (5), Leadmill, Sheffield (6), Band on the Wall, Manchester (7), Unity, Liverpool (8), Regis Centre, Bognor Regis (10), Old Vic Tavern, Nottingham (13), Stables,

Wavendon (15), Great Northern Hotel, Peterborough (16), Wolsey, Ipswich (17), Solent Suite, Southampton (19), Redcar Jazz Club, Bath (20), Wessex Hotel, Bournemouth (21) and Queen's Hotel, Cheltenham (22).

Accompanying her on all dates will be the Brian Dee Quartet featuring Duncan Lamont on tenor sax and flute. On bass and drums are Mario Castronari and Allan Ganley.

"Pres" at His Very Best - Lester Young (Mercury 6336 346)

Packaged from tapes made for Harry Lim's Keynote label, these 12 tracks, featuring a number of alternative takes, were recorded when Lester Young was in his second spell with the Count Basie Band and find him fronting a quartet, completed by Johnny Guarneri, Slam Stewart and Sid Catlett, and as part of the Kansas City Seven, with Basie himself on piano, and Buck Clayton and Dickie Wells forming the brass section. Almost immediately pre-bop, the numbers show the direction in which Young was heading and are perfect examples of a style which was simultaneously urgent and relaxed, yet consistently melodic. (Producer, Ed Michel).

CIVIC SCENE

Shropshire to share new Victoria theatre with Stoke

WITH A permanent live theatre in Shropshire unlikely to be built in the foreseeable future, the new Victoria at Stoke offers Shropshire people the opportunity for regular theatregoing.

And if Shropshire makes a capital contribution to the Victoria, the hope would be that the theatre could make special provision for Shropshire schoolchildren and adults visiting performances.

This is the conclusion of a detailed report prepared for councillors by a Shropshire County Council arts work-

ing party which suggests a minimum annual contribution to the arts of £52,000.

On theatre provision it says by 1990 around £250,000 a year is likely to be needed to support even the smallest repertory theatre.

"In these circumstances it must be faced that with so small a catchment area, lack of public support and difficulty of access, a permanent theatre in Shropshire is not possible," says the report.

It goes on: "Taking the new Victoria Theatre at Stoke as the current example, a one-off capital contribution in recognition of that theatre will, for

Swan launches "Coming of Age" appeal to raise cash for cost of alterations

"WE LOOK just like a '60's factory", says administrator Nick Hawkins, facing up to corrugated metal cladding which makes up of the front, outer wall of the Swan Theatre, Worcester.

But not for much longer, for the Swan has undergone an extension and refurbishment of its FOH area which includes a brand new brick and glass entrance opening into a much enlarged foyer and bar, with not a sheet of corrugated metal in sight.

"The extension will add 30 feet to the foyer and another 12 feet to the width of the bar" explained Hawkins, "and upstairs the extra width will improve the restaurant's kitchen and enable us to put in new toilets. The whole project should have a real impact on the public's enjoyment of an evening at the theatre and when people are paying up to £4.50 for a ticket you want to be able to offer them reasonable facilities as well as a good show."

The Swan was built in 1963-65 at a cost of £65,000 mainly raised by public subscription and savings were made

FOH when the money began to run out. Twenty years later the theatre has to raise close on £100,000 to bring the public amenities up to the standard which today's theatregoers have come to expect.

There's been a change too in the amount of time local theatres like the Swan remain open to the public and part of the foyer extension will include an "activities and reception room" where local clubs and associations can hold meetings and the theatre's sponsors entertain their guests. Divided

"We felt it was getting urgent to bring the theatre up to modern standards".

from the foyer by a sliding screen-door, this room can also be opened up to create a spacious multi-purpose exhibition area. "It's all part of our policy of making every part of the theatre a local amenity," said Nick Hawkins, "so that the building is used for many different purposes and is open to the public at least twelve hours a day".

But for a small (400 plus) producing theatre in a medium sized cathedral city £100,000 is a lot of money to find. The Swan has been lucky in one respect; their planning application went into the Arts Council 18 months ago, just in time to catch the last of the Housing the Arts grants, which set off their fund with £10,000.

Hereford and Worcester County Council matched this with a further £10,000 and the City Council have promised a similar figure from the proceeds of the City lottery. The theatre's own Supporters Club has donated £10,000 and there have substantial gifts from some local firms and charities.

But once again the Swan has to appeal to local people to support its plans and has launched a two year "Coming of Age Appeal" to raise £35,000.

"It's a terrible time to be fundraising but there's never a good time", says Hawkins "and we felt it was getting urgent to bring the theatre up to modern standards".

"But the real trouble will come" says Hawkins, "when the work is done. Once it's completed and in use people assume it's paid for but I anticipate having to go on fundraising for another year after that".

IN MEMORIAM

ZARAEDA,
died 25th December 1983 *CHRISTMAS DAY.*

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AND

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will be published in 'THE STAGE' on Thursday 10th January and 17th January 1985.

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