

Issue 202 Spring 2019

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From the Editor's Desk

Firstly, as this is the first issue for 2019, I do hope everyone reading this had an enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

One of the most interesting parts of *Memory Lane* is the readers' letters section "In your own write". For the last few issues, we have expanded this section of the magazine to include a "query corner". For queries, we endeavour to answer them if we have the necessary information on file, or otherwise offer them to the readership and to our contributors to reply in the following issue. I am always pleased to receive letters and queries for inclusion. This is the part of *Memory Lane* where you can also express your views and give us your news. Please use e-mail as this is the preferred method of communication.

Finally, we have had a few people asking the relevance of the number printed above your name on the envelope in which your copy of *Memory Lane* is sent. This is, in fact, the last issue covered by your current subscription. So if you see "204" printed, it means you have paid for issues up to and including Issue 204. So it is easy for you to keep track of your subscription.

I do hope you enjoy this edition of *Memory Lane* and look forward to seeing a goodly number of you on our Guided Walk in May.

Ray Pallett

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New CDs



As heard by



Editor's Choice

PHYLLIS ROBINS - MY BLUEBIRD'S SINGING THE BLUES MLMCD077

What Are You Thinking About Baby?; Sweet and Lovely (PM); I Don't Know Why (CDB); Mad About The Boy (JH); Black Eyed Susan Brown (MT); My Bluebird's Singing The Blues (MT); I Raised My Hat (MT); Makin' Conversation (HH); I'm Hitchin My Wagon To You; Nasty Man (CCO); Nobody Loves a Fairy When She's Forty; The Girl With the Dreamy Eyes; March Winds and April Showers; Dancing With My Shadow; I Like the Way You Say Goodnight (with Leslie Holmes); Honey Coloured Moon ; My First Thrill; Love Is Good For Anything That Ails You (O); It's A Hap, Hap, Happy Day; Over the Rainbow; Chatterbox; Oh! Johnny; Sing For Your Supper; No Souvenirs; The Parting of the Ways, unknown orchestra (aircheck).



Key: All tracks are Phyllis Robins Solos, apart from: CCO, Casani Club Orchestra; CDB, Cunard Dance Band; HH, Henry Hall; JH, Jack Hylton; MT, Madame Tussauds Dance Orchestra; O, Orlando; PM, Percival Mackey.

Phyllis Robins was one of those artistes of the 1930s who had both looks and personality. On record labels she was sometimes billed as "comedienne". On this CD there is just one comedy or novelty song, which is the one about a forty-year-old fairy. All tracks on this CD are sides which Phyllis

recorded as vocalist with a dance band or titles she recorded as a soloist. Her voice has been described as sultry which is an apt description as is demonstrated by a number of tracks, perhaps most notably the wonderful title track with Stanley Barnett directing the

Madame Tussauds Dance Orchestra, a band which had a reputation for some hot playing. This CD is certainly great listening with the original 78s cleaned up by Dave Cooper to produce a sound which aims to deliver all the sound recorded on the original discs. The last track is most interesting as it is an aircheck unmistakably with Phyllis singing with an unknown dance band, a song recorded by no other British band. I know you will enjoy this CD! **PW**

AL BOWLLY'S TRAVELS AND OTHER RARITIES VOLUME 1 MLMCD076

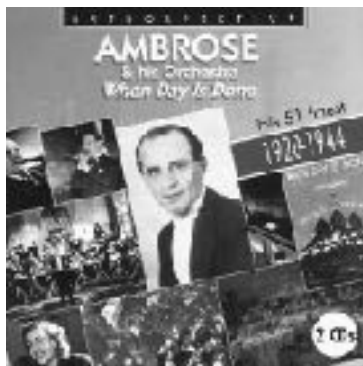
Ray Noble *My Song Goes Round The World*; **Ferrachini's Hawaiian Band:** *Cuban Love Song*; **Roy Fox:** *'Neath The Spell Of Monte Carlo*; **NMDO:** *Belle Of Barcelona*; **Radio Melody Boys:** *A Japanese Dream* (duet w. Les Allen); **Linn Milford:** *An Old Italian Love Song*; **Arthur Lally:** *My Sunny Monterey*; **NMDO:** *When It's Sunset On The Nile*; **Felix Mendelssohn:** *The Blackpool Walk*; **Scott-Wood Accordion Quartet** *Pale Volga Moon*; **NMDO:** *Pied Piper Of Hamelin*; **Deauville Dance Band:** *Rio De Janeiro*; **Monia Liter:** *Little Dutch Mill*; **Ray Noble:** *That Lovely Night In Budapest*; **Rhythm Maniacs:** *In London On A Night Like This*; **NMDO:** *That's Somerset*; *Violin In Vienna**; **Ray Noble:** *Lady Of Madrid*; **Maurice Winnick;** *My Capri Serenade*; **Ray Noble:** *Paris In The Spring*; *I'm Alone In Athlone**; *Because I Love You**; **George Carhart:** *Sunny Disposish*; **Ray Noble:** *The Old Covered Bridge* *Solo.

Al Bowllly must have been one of the most travelled singers in Britain at the time. He undertook the mammoth tour from his home in South Africa, through Africa, India the Far East then to France and Germany before arriving in Britain in 1928 after which he toured the country and visited Ireland and America. So a CD recognising this, through the titles of the songs he recorded is, I think, a great idea. Here, we hear Al with a variety of accompaniments ranging from jazz

bands in Berlin, a variety of British dance bands, an accordion band, a Hawaiian-sounding group and a pianist. In addition, the last three solo tracks are in the way of a bonus as they have not previously been on CD before. So buy this CD and hear Al in the widest-variety of settings and with the widest variety of material. **PW**

AMBROSE "WHEN DAY IS DONE" RETROSPECTIVE RTS 4338

CD ONE: *Happy Days Are Here Again* (Lou Abelardo); *Sunshine* (Whispering Jack Smith); *Singapore Sorrows*; *If I Had You* (EG); *Cryin' for the*



Carolines (SB); *'Leven Thirty Saturday Night* (SB); *The "Free and Easy"* (SB); *The Peanut Vendor* (SB); *I'm Thru with Love* (Ella Logan & SB); *Me!* (SB); *Home* (SB); *She Didn't Say "Yes"* (SB); *The Sun Has Got His Hat On* (SB); *The Clouds Will Soon Roll By* (EC); *Sweet Muchacha* (SB); *Let's Put Out the Lights and Go to Sleep* (Anona Winn & SB); *How Deep is the Ocean?* (SB); *Lazybones* (SB); *It's the Talk of the Town* (EC); *Who's Been Polishing the Sun?* (RS); *The Continental*; *Embassy Stomp*; *I'm on a See-Saw* (SB); *Hors d'Oeuvres*; *Big Ben is Saying "Goodnight"* (SB)

CD TWO: *Streamline Strut; Maracas; B'Wanga; Anything Goes (SB); I'll Never Say "Never Again" Again (CB); Copenhagen; She's a Latin from Manhattan (Jack Cooper); Limehouse Blues; The Piccolino; Night Ride; Wood and Ivory; Hick Stomp; Escapada; Champagne Cocktail; Cotton Pickers' Congregation; Caravan; Deep Henderson; Moonlight on the Waterfall (VL); Message from Mars; Two Sleepy People (VL & DD); Blue Skies Are Round the Corner (DD); My Prayer (DD); I'm in Love for the Last Time (VL); I Don't Want to Walk Without You, Baby (AS); Lili Marlene (AS); When Day is Done (SB & RS)*

Vocals: AS – Anne Shelton; C B – Connee Boswell; DD – Denny Dennis; EC – Elsie Carlisle; RS - The Rhythm Sisters SB – Sam Browne; VL- Vera Lynn

This generous 51-track compilation traces the peaks of Ambrose' recording career from 1928 to 1944, and many will be familiar to Memory Lane readers. It brings to three the number of double CDs devoted to Ambrose, the other two being *Living Era* (2004) and *Avid* (2009). All three overlap one another, and this latest one clearly derives from the first, the 49 tracks of which have been augmented by "Sunshine" and "She Didn't Say 'Yes'". That said, it only duplicates eleven of the tracks in the *Avid* set. Ambrose has stood the test of time as the foremost bandleader in Britain, and his original recordings have long been collectors items. Sound quality is quite outstanding, and this latest twofer can be recommended whole-heartedly. **BMC**

IRVING FAZOLA "MY INSPIRATION" RETROSPECTIVE RTR 4337

*My Inspiration**; **Ben Pollack:** *Song of the Islands; Jimtown Blues; Alice Blue*

Gown; Sharkey Bonano: High Society; Seger Ellis: Shivery Stomp; Musical Maniacs: Down by the Old Mill Stream; Pagan Love Song; Glenn Miller: Humoresque; The Skaters' Waltz in Springtime; Hindustan+; Mournin' Blues+; Jess Stacy: Breeze, Blow My Baby Back to Me: Clarinet Blues; Spain+; Sympathy*; Speakeasy*; Muggsy Spanier: Can't We Be Friends?; Hesitating Blues; Irving Fazola: Someday, Sweetheart; Sweet Lorraine; Mostly Faz; Jazz Me Blues; Ostrich Walk; Bluin' the Blues; Farewell Blues.*

* Bob Crosby; + Bob-Cats

New Orleans born clarinetist Irving Fazola worked locally until 1935, and his playing was steeped in that city's tradition, and influenced particularly by Jimmie Noone. He began recording during the swing era, with the sort of elegant delivery associated with Goodman and Shaw. His longest stint, with Bob Crosby, is well represented here, as are the two mid-forties sessions he led back in the crescent city. There's a nice balance between big band and small group recordings, the latter showing off his Dixieland flavoured playing to great advantage. **BMC**

TOM CLINES AND HIS MUSIC "WASN'T IT NICE?" (RIVERMONT BSW-1169)

Ev'ry Day Away From You; Sweetheart's Holiday; I'm Disappointed in You; Perhaps; Time Will Tell; M i s s Wonderful; Somebody Mighty Like You; So Sympathetic; Until Love Comes Along; Alone with My Dreams; It



Must Be You; The "Free and Easy" (2 takes); For You; Any Time's the Time to Fall in Love; Wasn't It Nice?; Be Careful with Those Eyes; You Darlin'; You for Me; Just a Little Closer; Bye Bye Blues; I'm Needin' You; What's the Use of Living Without Love?; Why Have You Forgotten Waikiki; (You Were Only) Passing Time with Me

Tom Clines became one of the bands in Bert Lown's stable after Rudy Vallee had bolted. Given that his instrumentation lacked a brass section, being based on reeds and strings, it seems safe to assume that he catered for society functions, rather than collegiate occasions. That's borne out by these recordings, which span a period of just over a year, from August 1929 to September 1930, and feature the laid-back vocals of Jack Carney. But the *raison d'être* for this reissue is Adrian Rollini, that giant of the bass saxophone, who augmented the recording sessions from early 1930. His presence makes itself felt from track 9 onwards, and elevates the standard of performance considerably. This is another de luxe production from Rivermont, which offers clarity of restoration, and a copiously illustrated 30-page booklet, in which Randy Skretvedt outlines the background to the band and the recordings. **BMC**

JEANETTE MacDONALD & NELSON EDDY (RETROSPECTIVE RTR 4336)

*Rose Marie: Indian Love Call**; *Rose Marie+*; *Naughty Marietta: Ah, Sweet Mystery of Life**; *I'm Falling in Love with Someone+*; *Beyond the Blue Horizon\$*; *Love Me Tonight: Isn't it Romantic? +*; *The Merry Widow: Villalied\$*; *The Night is Young: When I Grow Too Old to Dream+*; *Maytime: Will*

*You Remember?**; *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny*FS*; *Farewell to Dreams**; *The Song of Love**; ***The Girl of the Golden West: Senorita*FS***; *Who Are We to Say? *FS*; ***Sweethearts: Sweetheart Waltz*FS***; *Little Grey Home in the West*FS*; ***New Moon: Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise+***; *One Kiss\$*; *Wanting You*FS*; *Lover, Come Back to Me*FS*; ***Bitter Sweet; I'll See You Again*FS***; *Dear Little Café*FS*; ***I Married an Angel: I Married an Angel+***; *Spring is Here*FS*.

Key: * duet; + Nelson Eddy; \$ Jeanette MacDonald; FS- film soundtrack



This CD is based on the films that MacDonald and Eddy made together, plus three earlier Macdonald films made before the partnership was established. As Ray Crick points out in his extensive liner note, only four of their five recorded duets were issued on 78s, but all are included here. A

further ten have been added, using film soundtracks as the source, and the remaining nine tracks are solos. Most of their films were set in the past, and the sense of nostalgia was reflected in the choice of songs, which drew heavily on the Viennese tradition. Sound quality is excellent, and this can be recommended wholeheartedly. **BMC**

CHARLIE SHAVERS: "DECIDEDLY" - RETROSPECTIVE RTS 4340

CD 1: *Undecided (CS/RB)*; *Nice Work if You Can Get It (CT, v MS)*; *Apex Blues (JN)*; *Melancholy (JD)*; *Pastel Blue; Undecided; Anitra's Dance; Sweet Georgia Brown (JK)*; *Swing Brother, Swing (BH)*; *Rose Room; Blues Petite (JK)*; *Mood Indigo; What is This Thing* *Called*

Love? (SB); *Rosetta* (CS); *You're Driving Me Crazy* (TK); *My Man* (CS); *Swinging on Central* (HH); *At the Fat Man's* (TD); *That's Rich* (BR, v EF); *Stardust*; *Perdido* (LH); *The Hucklebuck* (TD); *East of the Sun* (BH); *Cotton Tail* (FP)

CD 2: *Coronation Hop* (GK); *Cool Blues*; *Embraceable You* (JATP); *Dark Eyes*; *Dawn on the Desert*; *Story of the Jazz Trumpet* (CS); *Ill Wind*; *Memories of You*; *The Man I Love*; *I Got Rhythm*; *Summertime* (SO); *Blue Stompin'* (HCS); *Girl of My Dreams*; *September in the Rain*; *All of Me*; *Makin' Whoopee*; *Russian Lullaby*; *You've Changed*; *It's All Right with Me*; *I'm a Fool to Want You*; *The Best Things in Life Are Free*; *You're My Everything* (CS/RB)

KEY: BH – Billie Holiday; BR – Buddy Rich; CS – Charlie Shavers; CT – Claude Thornhill; EF – Ella Fitzgerald; FP – Flip Phillips; GK – Gene Krupa; HCS – Hal “Cornbread” Singer; HH – Herbie Haymer; JATP – Jazz at the Philharmonic; JD – Johnny Dodds; JK – John Kirby; JN – Jimmie Noone; LH – Lionel Hampton; MS – Maxine Sullivan; RB – Ray Bryant; SB – Sidney Bechet; SO – Sy Oliver; TD – Tommy Dorsey; TK – The Keynoters

Charlie Shavers showed great technical fluency on the trumpet, which enabled him to improvise across a wide dynamic range, and included complete control in high register passages. He was also a skilled arranger and composer, as demonstrated when, after a very short apprenticeship with Tiny Bradshaw and Lucky Millinder, he joined John Kirby's group at the Onyx Club in 1937, and fashioned its approach into a distinctive style of chamber jazz. From 1944 he played intermittently with Tommy Dorsey, but was much in demand for studio sessions also, going on to lead his own small groups. This compilation is up to the label's usual high standard, but the six Onyx Club sides were also included in Retrospective's earlier reissue

dedicated to John Kirby (reviewed in ML 197). **BMC**

NEW ORLEANS RHYTHM KINGS: COMPLETE RECORDINGS 1922-1925 (RIVERMONT BSW-1170)



CD 1: *Eccentric*; *Farewell Blues*; *Discontented Blues*; *Bugle Call Blues*; *Panama*; *Tiger Rag*; *Livery Stable Blues*; *Oriental*; *Sweet Loving Man**; *That's a Plenty**; *Shimmeshawabble**; *Weary Blues*; *Da Da Strain*; *Wolverine Blues**; *Maple Leaf Rag*; *Tin Roof Blues+*

CD 2: *Sobbin' Blues\$*; *Marguerite*; *Angry**; *Clarinet Marmalade\$**; *Mr. Jelly Lord\$**; *London Blues\$*; *Milenberg Joys\$**; *Mad*; *Baby*; *I Never Knew What a Girl Could Do*; *She's Crying for Me Blues*; *Golden Leaf Strut*; *She's Crying for Me**; *Everybody Loves Somebody Blues**

Key: \$Jelly Roll Morton (piano); * 2 takes; +3 takes

The NORK was a seminal early twenties white band, hearing which influenced the young Bix Beiderbecke, and whose recordings inspired the Austin High School Gang. It was pivotal in the transition from a New Orleans to a Chicago style of jazz, the band's relaxed approach contrasting favourably with the staccato playing associated with their predecessors the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Their complete output is

presented here, including all extant alternate takes, two of the sessions being noteworthy for the involvement of Jelly Roll Morton. It is difficult to do justice to the quality of the remastering, which has achieved a clarity of sound that I can only describe as luminescent. The front line has always stood out, but never more so than now, whilst each constituent element of the rhythm section is clearly delineated. The NORK was a dynamic band, which drew the young Chicagoans to it like a magnet, and this reissue should appeal to established collectors, and attract a new generation of enthusiasts. Buy it now, while you can.

BMC

In Short

Lost West End Revues (Stage Door Records Stage 9058) is a two-CD set with the sub-title 'A Unique Collection of Recordings from London's Forgotten Revues 1940-1962'. A glance at the performers on the 51 tracks suggested I was in for a treat -. Hermione Gingold, Joyce Grenfell, Anthony Newley, Beatrice Lillie, Florence Desmond, Noel Coward and Evelyn Laye are just a few of the names that caught my eye. Most of the tracks seem to be from original cast recordings but there are some notable cover versions by stars such as Anne Shelton and Matt Munro. The sound quality can't be faulted and the glossy insert brochure is a welcome bonus.

AP

American Dance Bands (Greenhorn GH 0235) provides 20 tracks of mainly well known US bands of late 'twenties, early 'thirties vintage and is an ideal 'starter' for anyone who wants to dip their toes into the water of pre-swing American music. Numbers from Don Vorhees, Vincent Lopez, George Olsen,

Paul Specht, Noble Sissle, Fred Rich, Boyd Senter, Rudy Vallee, Ben Selvin and Ted Weems combine to provide a juicy taste of quality American dance music. On top of this we have Andy Kirk and his Twelve Clouds of Joy with *Cloudy*, and Joe Venuti with *Hiawatha's Lullaby*, both providing a little extra sophistication. There are a few bands operating under pseudonyms of which The Rounders may be Harry Reser, Sam Lanin as La Palina Broadcasters and Ben Selvin as The Broadway Nitelites. The latter features one of the few female vocalists included, Vaughn de Leath, singing *I Wanna Be Loved By You*. The transfers have left some surface noise but this all adds to the atmosphere. **AP**

Pleasure Mad – Live recordings from Mike Durham's Classic Jazz Party 2017

A delightful 2 CD set of recordings, spanning the depth of hot jazz. All the recordings were taken live from the

party, and all tracks have a wonderful spontaneity to them. The songs come from a diverse set list: Luis Russell, King Oliver, young Benny Goodman, Fletcher Henderson 1923-24, Jabbo

Smith, 100 years

of the ODJB and Bennie Moten. Each song has been lovingly recreated by musicians from around the world who live and breathe this music. For those who aren't fortunate enough to experience the magic of this jazz party, these live recordings put you right on the front row to experience it first hand. Cost: £16, shipping included. Obtainable from <https://whitleybayjazzfest.com/>, click on "highlights CD". **JH**



The Story of THE BBC DANCE ORCHESTRA

directed by **HENRY HALL**

A major new series for Memory Lane by
Peter Wallace



PART 2 – HALL MARKS 1933-1934

Henry himself had some successes as a composer. In 1933, he had a big hit with *Oh! Johanna*, with words supplied by Margery Lawrence, the wife of his former boss at LMS Hotels, Sir Arthur Towle. Margery was a successful novelist and short-story author who had supplied the lyrics to Henry's *Come Ye Back To Bonnie Scotland* and *Here's To The Next Time*. Henry, of course, recorded *Oh! Johanna*, with vocal by Les Allen, but Jack Payne, Roy Fox, Sid Roy, Ray Noble and others committed their versions of the lively number to wax.

There were many highlights for Henry in 1933 including the Radiolympia appearance and his trip to America, both in the summer. The Radio Exhibition at Olympia in London (15th - 24th of August) was the first real opportunity for the general public to see the BBC band in action. Henry featured

Hiawatha's Lullaby, *I Cover The Waterfront*, *Five-Fifteen*, and other familiar items in the live shows in the BBC theatre, which had a capacity of 2,700. During their final performance, Columbia made a recording which was issued as *Henry Hall Calling* (Col. CB 660). The audience reaction on the recording was typical of each appearance at Olympia. The Belfast News-Letter on 22nd August commented on the "almost breath-taking popularity of Henry Hall and his BBC Dance Orchestra". It continued, "every listener remembers the storm of abuse which was hurled at the new dance combination when it first came on the air. Now, apparently, it has been taken to listeners' hearts and anyone who listened to the variety relays from the broadcasting theatre last week must have been impressed by the reception which the audiences accorded it."

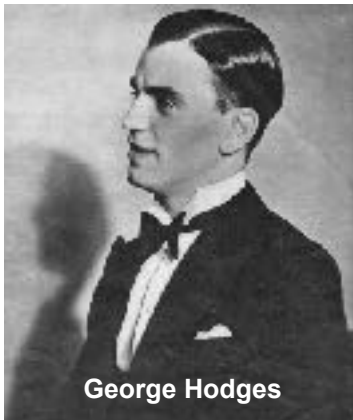


After the success of Olympia, the orchestra broadcast for a week under the direction of Burton Gillis before they all went off on their annual holiday of a fortnight's duration. Henry was absent from the studio because he had sailed on the *Aquitania* on 26th August for a much-heralded working trip to America, where he hoped to learn from latest developments in dance music on that side of the Atlantic. Outside bands were brought in to cover the 5.15 broadcasts for a six-week period in Henry's absence, including that of Jack Payne who filled in for a week at a time slot he knew very well indeed.

Henry did not return greatly enthused from his trip as he felt he hadn't learnt much apart from the "value of tempo in programme building. There are now no awkward waits between items in the programmes. In order to secure unbroken sequence, I have given up announcing all the items myself," Henry explained, "so that George Hodges is able to speak into the microphone the second my stick comes down". As a rule, at that time, Henry only announced the first and last titles, and of course became famous for the phrase "This IS Henry Hall speaking". This came about after a trip to America when the BBC Dance Orchestra in London was announced as being "directed by Henry Hall" when in fact the bandleader was travelling across the Atlantic home. It caused a stir in the press and when Henry returned to the studio, he emphasised the fact he was

there – and it stuck with him for the rest of his career.

George Hodges, who was Henry's manager, began announcing during Henry's trip to America, if not before, and was regularly used in this capacity from that point on during broadcasts. George would remain as manager after both left the BBC in 1937, and in fact stayed with the Guv'nor until 1953. Henry returned home on the *Berengaria* on 14th September and on the last day of the month presented a programme called *My American Tour* in which he described his experiences listening to American bands and playing the latest dance tunes from the other side of the Atlantic. A recording with the same title was cut by Columbia in October, but never issued.



A female vocalist was added to the BBC Dance Orchestra in September. Phyllis Robins was provisionally engaged by the BBC for one month and made her radio debut with the orchestra on Monday 25th September 1933 as well as recording *It's The Talk Of The Town* on the very same day. That initial four-week contract was extended until the 3rd of February 1934, during which time Phyllis recorded just a few titles such as *Snowball*, *When You Were The Girl On The Scooter*, and *I Took My Harp To A Party*. That last-named title had originally been selected for Len Bermon to sing, but on the day of its recording Len was

full of cold and Phyllis was asked to step in and sing it. This turned out to be the perfect choice as she enjoyed great success with it. After completing the contract, Phyllis went on a six-week variety tour, but returned and stayed until June 1934.

Henry, like his predecessor at the BBC, Jack Payne, tried to encourage British songwriters and it was reported that more than 40% of the tunes he played were home-grown. During 1933 he had an average of 248 new compositions sent to him each week. That amounted to more than 12,500 in the year; but fewer than 1% were of any use.

Julien Vedey reviewed Henry's composition *Five-Fifteen* in the November 1933 edition of *Rhythm*, writing "You will like the precision of the saxes and the original chord building in trills starting with violin and finishing up tutti. This is more like Ellington than anything else and is excellently presented. *Egypt* - Henry Hall plays it exceedingly well". However, in the following month in the same publication, Vedey, had nothing good to say about the band. In the ten titles in front of him he couldn't find one decent arrangement. The lengthy review was full of criticism, "Hear the strings make a mistake in *Experiment*. Only a slipshod attitude or a



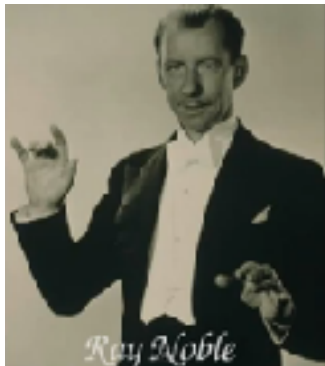
Radio National PHYLIS ROBINS Peter Cook

deaf ear could have passed it for sale. Even Les Allen is beginning to sing without any inspiration whatsoever. This sounds like a home made arrangement". It was actually the work of Phil Cardew. Henry's first-trumpet, Frank Wilson, was writing regularly for *Rhythm* at the time and must have been unhappy with such virulent criticism. Vedey had somewhat of a change of tone in the next edition of the magazine, writing that *The Day You Came Along*, arranged by Arthur

Lally, was a "nice record" with an arrangement "more interesting than those (Hall) he has been using of late. Particularly nice is the introduction and lead-in to the vocal chorus on strings". Perhaps it is fitting at this point to note that when Vedey wrote about Henry in his book on bandleaders almost two decades later, he conceded, "If Hall's policy of a predominant melody has been successful from his own point of view, and indeed it has, then it must be agreed that he has done more towards popularizing the current hits of the day and turning them into world hits than any other maestro."

Radio Magazine in February 1934 considered Henry's popularity and commented, "...the majority of listeners are of the suburban type, they are not night-lifting West-Enders and in catering for the suburbs Henry Hall shows the wisdom of knowing that the West End is

not England – it isn't even London.” In the same month Henry recorded arguably his most delightful composition as well as his biggest hit song, *It's Time To Say Goodnight*. The title was inspired by the words of a mother at a children's party attended by Henry and his son Mike. Kate Gibson supplied the lyrics and Henry recorded the number, with an arrangement by Ben Frankel, for Columbia on 15th February 1934. Ray Noble also recorded a fine version on HMV, with, what Henry described in his autobiography as “a first-class vocal by Al Bowilly.” Ray featured the song in broadcasts when he was in America, including an occasion when Henry was on a visit to New York and present in the studio.



1934 also saw the introduction of the legendary Guest Nights which Henry regarded as the greatest idea of his career. It was a new programme format where famous stars of stage, concert hall and screen were invited to broadcast with the Orchestra and exchange a few words with the bandleader. On 17th March, Lupino Lane and June recorded with the BBC Dance Orchestra and it occurred to Henry that inviting them and others to the BBC studios that night would make an interesting programme. It was around the second anniversary of Henry's first broadcast with the radio band. The list of guests over the years included Tommy Handley, Stanley Holloway, Larry Adler, Tallulah

Bankhead, Jessie Matthews, Jack Buchanan, the Mills Brothers, Binnie Hale, Alberta Hunter, and the casts of many West End shows. Although the Guest Nights were replaced by Henry Hall's Hour in 1935, Henry revived them at the beginning of the war and they became a fixture of radio and TV schedules over the two decades which followed.

To mark the second anniversary of his BBC band, Henry brought back to the studio Val Rosing, Richard Matthews and Jack Phillips, who had been original members of the Orchestra. *Hall Marks* was broadcast on 15th March 1934 on the National Programme, and included the Orchestra's popular successes including

Teddy Bear's Picnic, Round The Marble Arch, Six Bells Stampede, and I Lost My Heart In Heidelberg. Prior to the broadcast, Henry hosted a dinner at the Langham Hotel to which all participants in the programme were invited.

On Sunday 8th May, Henry and the BBC Dance Orchestra appeared at the Royal Variety Performance minus Frank Wilson, who, for religious reasons, refused to play dance music on the Sabbath. In fact, towards the end of 1935, Frank left the orchestra - and the profession - much to Henry's regret, to join a religious order. Max Goldberg, from the Ambrose Orchestra, was Frank's substitute for the Command Performance, and saw a familiar figure at the piano as former Ambrose stalwart, Bert Read, had joined the BBC Orchestra a month earlier. Henry chose

Savage Serenade, *Lullaby In Blue*, and his *Sweethearts of Yesterday* Selection for that special evening at the Palladium.

Kitty Masters, who Henry had heard singing with Harry Leader, joined the band on 7th June and sang on average twice per broadcast until the band's summer holiday.

A reporter from *Radio Magazine* was present at a recording session at Hampstead from 11am until 12.30pm and reported in the June edition

"Henry conducts in a grey sleeveless pullover, and it is only when he stops actually wielding the baton that he stops smoking cigarettes...over and over again they play, then Henry says he thinks they might make the record. Officials rush here and there; heavy curtains are drawn. George Hodges looks apprehensively at the band and inquiringly at his chief. Then the band plays. And how it plays!" Later in the day the reporter viewed preparations for the 5.15 broadcast:

"Two or three times the programme is run through, then Henry gives the boys a break...Everything is ready: Henry's ever-reliable and Falstaff-looking porter, "Fatty", has seen to the arranging of the instruments and the laying out of the music. There are five minutes to spare when Henry walks into the studio and glances keenly to the left and right. The band look at him, too, and know that he

is thinking of the three new numbers. He knows that they know what he expects of them, and then for the next minute they wait for the transmission signal. Hodges announces – his voice so like that of Henry himself – and so on to the air the band goes once again."



Sir John Reith, the BBC's formidable Director General, banned the broadcasting of the popular song *Love Thy Neighbour*, from the Bing Crosby film *We're Not Dressing*, because of the Biblical phrase which he considered irreverent. The BBC band had already committed the

song to wax on 7th June and it was duly released by Columbia. This wasn't the end of the matter as a front-page article in the *Daily Express* of 27th March 1936, headed *Henry Hall Broadcasts Banned Song*, drew attention to the fact that the song had been included in a 45-minute dance programme, featuring the songs of Gordon and Revel. An *Express* journalist had contacted Henry after the broadcast on the previous evening and the bandleader said he had forgotten about the ban on the song. In retrospect it appears odd that the band parts had not been stamped "do not broadcast". The original singer of the song, Les Allen, was no longer with the band, though other members had been around at the time and could have brought it to the Guv'nor's attention. We can only speculate as to Henry's "amnesia", but he must have liked the song as he recorded it again after leaving the BBC as part of his medley *Hall Marks* in 1938.

Charles “Gerry” Fitzgerald was engaged to deputise for Les Allen who went to Canada for a holiday, and Gerry made his debut on the Guest Night of 14th July. He seems to have been engaged for several weeks but never recorded with the orchestra or appeared on the stage with them. Les was certainly back for the Palladium engagement.

The BBC Dance Orchestra topped the bill at the London Palladium from 30th July until 4th August 1934; the first regular stage engagement by the band, excluding the Radiolympia appearances. The fee was £500 for the week and the band were contracted to perform for 25 minutes at each of 14 performances. *The Stage* noted that “crazy would almost describe the warmth of their reception”. The critic wrote that one of the most popular pieces was a medley which opened with *My Song Goes ‘Round The World* and allowed the soloists to shine. The Orchestra also featured *The Very Thought Of You*, *Memphis By Mornin’*, *It’s Time To Say Goodnight* and the medley *Sweethearts of Yesterday*. Perhaps the best received item was *Little Man, You’ve Had A Busy Day* sung by Kitty Masters. During the interval, Henry conducted the Palladium’s resident orchestra through his own arrangement of *Love Tales*.

R h y t h m magazine reported,

Henry “opened to a colossal ovation, and was compelled to make a speech...There was no clowning or show-technique... (Henry) dressed flawlessly in a very Saville Row tail suit, looking extremely dignified and, most important of all, very English. I think I can safely say that he is about the only dance band leader who is not affected by extremes of Americanism, cockneyism, or other manifestations of propinquity! He was very much himself; very natural, and very sincere.” A recording of the band’s broadcast on Friday 3rd August from the Palladium is preserved in the BBC sound archive. This was relayed at 7.30pm, but the BBC Dance Orchestra had already fulfilled their lunchtime broadcast at 12.30pm and delivered their 5.15pm programme before heading to the theatre that day.

The BBC band had continued with their 5.15 broadcasts during the Palladium engagement and on Tuesday 31st July had a guest in the studio – Carrie Jacobs-Bond, composer of *I Love You Truly*, which Henry duly played. Miss

Carrie-Bond, one of the most successful female songwriters of the early 20th Century, played another of her compositions, *The End of a Perfect Day*, at the piano.



Carrie Jacobs-Bond

The bands of Percival Mackey, Reginald Foresythe, The Barnstormers, Harry Leader, Joe Loss, Tommy Kinsman, Billy

Mason, Terry Mack, Dare Lea, Rudolph Dunbar and Don Sesta all filled in for the BBC Orchestra at 5.15 while Henry and his musicians were otherwise engaged at Radiolympia. Les Allen and Kitty Masters were featured with Henry and his boys at the Radio Exhibition at Olympia, which opened on 16th August. The final day of that year's Radiolympia was Saturday 25th August and the Orchestra broadcast in the evening as part of the final programme from Olympia. In fact, they gave three performances at the Radio Exhibition that day. They then rushed to their BBC studio for Henry Hall's Guest Night in which Ray Noble and Al Bowlly were introduced prior to their departure to work in the USA. Al sang the Noble song *It's All Forgotten Now* with the BBC Dance Orchestra; after which Henry said "On behalf of listeners, my boys and myself, let me offer best wishes for a tremendous success and best of luck." On the following day Henry and members of the Orchestra were guests at the wedding of Bert Read and Minnie Spotswood at Edmonton Parish Church. A reported three thousand people came to see members of the band, and iron railings at the church were broken down as the crowds surged forward. There was no doubting the continuing popularity of Henry's band.

The Orchestra went on holiday from the 3rd to the 18th of September. Les Allen had already decided to leave the BBC and go on the halls. Violinist Cyril Hellier would also leave the band to join Allen's new variety act. Although Les made his last recordings with the Orchestra on 28th August, newspaper reports show that Les was still featured in broadcasts with the Orchestra into

October; which I assume was the end point of Les's contract with the BBC. In his last broadcast as a member of the BBC Dance Orchestra, Henry asked Les to sing the first song he heard him do, *The Old Kitchen Kettle*, and Les then chose *Love Will Find A Way* from *Maid of the Mountains*. Henry then played the piano as Les sang *It's Time To Say Goodnight*.

Les Allen was succeeded as principal vocalist with Henry's Orchestra by Dan Donovan, who had been with Debroy Somers since 1930. Dan also joined the saxophone section on baritone. At the same time Charlie Price, from Sydney Lipton's Band, replaced Arthur Williams on second trumpet, and also joined the vocal line-up. Dan and Charlie started broadcasting with Henry on September 18th



Dan Donovan

after the band returned from their annual break, but their contracts had come into effect on 25th August. In November, *Radio Pictorial* reported, "Listeners have given Dan Donovan a warm reception. Nearly everyone applauds Henry Hall's choice of vocalist..." Dan was sometimes part of the vocal trio featured on both broadcasts and records; the other two members being Charlie Price and Jack Halsall. Burton Gillis was usually the third member of the trio rather than Dan.

TO BE CONTINUED

Caught in the Web

Brian Willey reviews this quarter's Online News



New Year greetings to all as we look back to last September and the Mystery Photo of that month, eventually revealed as Patrick Waddington, (pictured right) a distinguished actor who could also sing, pictured right.



Born in 1901 within the environs of York, his father had a theatrical connection as lessee of the York Theatre Royal, and his grandfather owned a factory that made pianos, so it was a relatively affluent family. Patrick was educated at Gresham's School, Holt, and with his school amateur dramatic activities, plus his family's theatre affiliation, he was drawn to the stage at an early age. During his time at Oxford University he was elected Secretary of its Dramatic Society and, upon leaving Oxford in 1924, joined the Birmingham Repertory Company.

Having had some spasmodic singing tuition he developed into a pleasant light baritone and, as noted by Rust and Forbes, during 1930 he cut almost two dozen sides singing current popular dance songs with Harry Bidgood's 'Broadcasters' for the Broadcast label. Surprisingly however, there is no mention in his autobiography of making these recordings! At the same time, Ivor

Novello had personally introduced Patrick to HMV, where he signed a five-year exclusive recording contract and newly recorded Ivor's 1921 song *And Her Mother Came Too*. He then joined the piano duo of Peggy Cochran and Anne de Nys as the vocal element in a cabaret act 'That Certain Trio', which became much in demand, and also recorded for HMV.

Broadcasting was a familiar medium for Patrick – in 1927 he worked as an announcer for the BBC at Savoy Hill. In 1931, having added singing to his accomplishments, he frequently sang in broadcast musical comedies and, in 1933, Carroll Gibbons invited him to join his Radio Normandy Sunday series. It all helped to popularize him as a radio personality.

Mid-1934 saw him cast in Terence Rattigan's play, 'French Without Tears', to be staged on New York's Broadway and he duly departed from Southampton aboard 'SS Manhattan', returning to the UK in February 1935.

Patrick Waddington continued to build on his thespian reputation through WW2 when he enrolled in the RAF, becoming an administrator with the ultimate rank of Squadron Leader. Post-war he successfully returned to life on

stage, film, radio, and now TV, which in 1968, included appearances in two early episodes of 'Dad's Army'. Throughout his life he had remained a bachelor and, eventually retiring to York, he died on 4th February 1987, aged 86.

The Mary Evans Picture Library frequently displays collections on the web, and I was attracted by a feature showing a 1931 picture of London's Monseigneur Restaurant (shown below), the name being familiar as the Piccadilly venue featuring the dance bands of Roy Fox (1931/32) and Lew Stone (1932/34). (Permission to reproduce by kind permission © *Illustrated London News/Mary Evans Picture Library*. A large colour print is available via www.prints-online.com). In

the picture, a cabaret act is on the dance floor but, when dancing was in progress, the band were seated within the proscenium arch, leaving the floor clear for dancing couples. The Monseigneur was one of the first London restaurants to possess air conditioning, but despite its grandeur, its existence was brief. Merely a few years later the premises became a News Cinema.



The 95th anniversary of the publication of 'The Radio Times' occurred on September

28th. It first appeared in 1923 priced at just two old pence – equivalent now to about 50p. Throughout the years there have been 18 editors, the most notable within the musical genre being Eric Maschwitz, from 1927 to 1933 – several years ahead of *Goodnight Vienna*. The



magazine is the world's oldest TV and radio listings periodical. During the 1950s, its sales were in the region of 8.8 million. Rival magazines and the rise of the internet and on-screen channel guides have since considerably reduced RT's sales, which currently stand at 577,000.



The clues for the October Mystery picture revealed a lovely but unfamiliar face, that of a 1930s vocalist Dawn Davis. Her life was more complex than the mere task of just identifying her photograph! She is the subject of a separate feature to be found on page 22.

News came from Australia in early November, reporting the death of Alan Dean at the age of 94. He will no doubt be remembered here as a founder member of the vocal group, The Keynotes. Born in London's East Ham in 1924, his career as a singer took him through a multitude of dance bands. He was 16 when Harry Roy took him on, then Ambrose, Oscar Rabin, Harry Leader, Frank Weir and many more. He also created his own band which starred Ronnie Scott on tenor sax, and then later co-founded the Keynotes with Johnnie Johnston. Alan was invited to the USA by George Shearing and later emigrated there. An occasion to visit Australia revealed he liked it there and, in 1958, he emigrated yet again and settled in Sydney, where he



remained for the rest of his life. Working in TV and variety shows he additionally worked in Melbourne and was highly regarded in both cities.

Jeff Bolton's web site 'Music and Radio' regularly shows attractive collages of singing stars of various genres and periods, and Dan Donovan, (pictured below) a true star of the 1930s dance band world, was featured during October. Dan, born in Grangetown, Cardiff, in 1901, began his early musical life learning to play the saxophone and singing with the local church choir. Despite commencing his working life apprenticed to the motor engineering trade, music remained a great temptation which, in 1928, led him to forming his own 5-piece band. Eager to know more about the professional music industry he later took a trip to London and, by a series of coincidences, auditioned for Debroy Somers, who gave him a job singing with his band, and so began the career of a lifetime. He made his first record in April 1930 and, through Debroy Somers' generosity, was allowed to record with many other bands including Mantovani, Charlie Kunz, Oscar Rabin, Jay Wilbur, etc., which greatly added to his popularity.

In September 1934 he joined Henry Hall's BBC Dance Orchestra, to play baritone saxophone and become a vocalist. He made about 120 recordings with Henry, finally leaving in 1937 to form his own 8-piece band in the Lansdowne House restaurant. 1939 found him broadcasting

in Holland and narrowly escaping from the impending Nazi invasion. Upon his return to Britain he went into the show 'The Little Dog Laughed' at the London Palladium and when it closed he joined the RAF and established a small band with newly conscripted musicians. Post-war he resumed his successful career in the radio shows 'Welsh Rarebit' and 'When Day is Done' then, finally retiring from show business, he ran a few pubs in Cardiff while happily looking back on a brilliant career as a hugely prolific broadcaster and, having made around 500 records, also a recording star. Dan Donovan died in Cardiff, aged 85, on 6th December, 1986.

The November Mystery photo duly arrived courtesy of John Wright, who is certainly finding an interesting selection of stars from the Golden Age. The provocative young lady was revealed as Doreen Villiers – who shares her name with a vintage motorcycle – well that was a clue! Her career was relatively brief, but nevertheless eventful. She was a Londoner, born in Hackney on the 23rd January 1923 and, in April 1940, became a Carroll Levis Discovery. She first broadcast with pianist Reginald Williams' Futurists Dance Quartet in July 1941 and then joined Billy Ternent, who had been evacuated to Bristol with the BBC Variety Department. Later in that year the Harry Parry Sextet and Radio Rhythm Club benefitted by her presence as she toured with the show, often in duet with Benny Lee.



Doreen Villiers

Then came the really big change – Geraldo, whom she joined in March 1942. Scores of broadcasts and recordings became a regular commitment, with late night dance band shows, ENSA concerts, Break For Music entertainments – it was a constant routine.

The Geraldo band and vocalists also toured the Middle East and European war zones. It was a nine-week trip, and visited and entertained in Cairo, Alexandria, Palestine and Persia. The return trip entailed further troop concerts in Italy and Gibraltar, and a scare occurred during the flight to Italy. Their twin-engine aircraft, probably a Douglas Dakota DC-3, suffered an engine failure during the journey. It could maintain flight with a single engine if the payload was reduced so, very regretfully, the passengers' luggage had to be jettisoned. A heart-breaking requirement surely,

with no change of clothes for the rest of the tour!

Doreen Villiers' personal life was complex. In February 1944, at the age of 21, she married Kenneth Wakley, an American Airforce pilot who was sadly killed in action just seven months later. She left Geraldo in December 1944, married another American serviceman, Theodor Martin, and, when he was due to return home, left with him and settled in Ohio. Doreen never went back to a show business career, eventually remarried twice more, and died in Guernsey County, Ohio, on 26th November 1995, aged 72.

Dawn Davis

Brian Willey looks at the life and times of the 1930s vocalist

Dawn Davis was the subject of last September's Mystery Photo in the British Dance Bands group website. Their regular monthly picture quiz often brought forth an unfamiliar face, and this was certainly one of them!

Born early on Christmas Day in 1913, she was very factually christened Christine Noel Dawn Davis. By the early 1930s she had developed into a fine vocalist and became much in demand on the stage variety circuit, often billed as 'Vaudeville's Queen of the Microphone.'

During 1933 she sang in four 'Baird Process' television programmes, billed as singing Syncopated Songs and, in later years, her presence in many other radio shows became sufficiently prolific for her to be labelled 'The Star of 100 broadcasts.' However, very little is known of her private life – other than her hobby as an ace at the dart board!

Dawn recorded for Ray Noble in 1933, singing Mack Gordon and Harry Revel's song, *When You Were The Girl On The Scooter (And I Was The Boy On The Bike)* as a duet with Al Bowlly. Joining Charlie Kunz at the Casani Club in the spring of 1934, she cut around 20 tracks with him before touring with Oscar Rabin's Romany Band, and then making two records for Harry Leader at the end of that year. For a short while in the late 1930s she teamed up with Len Bermon – previously a drummer and vocalist with Henry Hall's BBC Dance Orchestra – and they became a duo under the odd title of 'The Racketeers of Romance'. In 1941 a stage band titled, 'Dawn Davis and her Master Swingers' appeared, the personnel comprising key men from the

late Teddy Joyce's band, but apparently it was not a success and all parted by mutual consent two months later. In the early war years Dawn continued as a solo broadcasting artist and regularly topping the bill in the variety circuits around the country until the end of 1942 - and then she suddenly disappeared, and throughout 1943, news about her ceased to exist.

She reappeared in 1944 as if nothing had happened, and took part in 'Workers' Playtime' shows and a number of new programmes titled, 'I'll Play to You', singing with organist Reginald

Porter-Brown and Felton Rapley at the piano, all introduced by Sandy Macpherson. 1946 was busy, taking part





in a lavish radio show titled 'Harmony Hall' with a cast of 14 and singing with Percival Mackey's Orchestra. For all other broadcasts her own act had changed to a different presentation, for she had then teamed up with guitarist Eddie Gurey and pianist Julien Oakley, and the trio broadcast on a number of occasions in 'Music Hall' and 'Variety Bandbox'. Well, she certainly can't be faulted for not trying out ideas! The trio made its final appearance on 16th January 1947 in a 'Workers' Playtime' at the Industrial Co-op Society in Kettering, and then Dawn was back to her solo stage variety artist routine which satisfactorily carried her through 1947 and '48 – and then suddenly, no news once more.

In August 1949 it was revealed that she had taken a voyage to Australia, with her arrival in Sydney registered as Miss Dawn Davis and young son, Philip Davis. From this fact we could conjecture that perhaps young Philip's birth was the reason for her year off work in 1943. Her Nottingham agent, Jimmy Haynes, was unaware of the Australian visit, so no

professional bookings had been made. However, if it was just a holiday it was a long one, because Dawn did not return to the UK until 1955, and then hoping to resume work, in 1956, she sought an audition for BBC Television – no longer the 'Baird Process' of course – and sadly failed it.

What work she did from then on, we may never know, but sadly, after such a magnificent early life, it cannot have been anything to do with show business. She lived in various areas – Beckenham in Kent, Ruislip in Middlesex, and then a return to Kent, this time to Bromley, where she eventually died in September 1996, aged 83.

Her son, Philip, if alive and well, would now be in his mid-70s and may possibly read these words. I would be delighted to hear from him!



Len Bermon who, with Dawn Davis formed the Racketeers of Romance

FRED DOUGLAS

(1885 – 1955)

The jobbing singer-entertainer

By Hector Hill



If asked to name a vocalist who recorded with (amongst others) Wag Abbey, Billy Cotton, Stan Greening, Henry Hall, Albert Ketelby, Arthur Lally, Joe Loss, Percival Mackey, Oscar Rabin, the Savoy Hotel Orpheans, George Scott Wood, Nat Star, Hal Swain, Jay Whidden and Jay Wilbur, would Fred Douglas have come to mind? His distinctive recorded voice conveys a man experienced in stage-craft. The internet has little about him; photographs are few; and his biography in *This England's Second Book of British Dance Bands* (2001) is just forty-six-words, and twenty-seven of those are bandleaders' names.

The fourth of six surviving children, he was born on 18th April 1885 at 89 Pratt Street Camden Town; and baptised on 28th June. Father, Arthur Bruce

Clifton, was a house painter from Leeds; mother, Jane Elizabeth née Jobling, from Newcastle. With their first child, Emily, they had moved to London in the late 1870s.

'Arthur Edwin Clifton' is the name on Fred's birth and baptism documents; but, when twenty-five, he wrote 'Arthur Edward Clifton, Music Hall Artiste' in neat backward-sloping script below his mother's details on their 1911 census form. On leaving school he worked briefly as a printer or painter's assistant (the document is unclear – probably it was 'painter' assisting father). By August 1902, aged seventeen, he was 'Fred Douglas humorist' with the Clifford Essex Pierrots, touring south coast resorts. In the summer of



1905 he toured with Miss Ines Howard's Company as a humorous actor, 'working hard and successfully to keep the audience in good humour'. By early 1906 he was a variety 'turn'; and when at the New Parthenon in Liverpool *The Era* reported him to be 'a comedian and mimic with many good points'. His bill-matter, the descriptive remark below artistes' names on posters and programmes, was (with my apologies) 'The Versatile Coon' (1910), 'The Famous Chocolate Coon' (1912), 'The Popular Coon Impersonator' (1914), and 'The Versatile Coon Impressionist' (1917). Of his June 1926 performance at the Pavilion in Liverpool *The Stage* wrote 'The Coon character studies of Fred Douglas possess merit'. Such routines were in his repertoire into the 1930s.

Around the time he entered show business, there already was an Arthur Clifton actor and an Arthur Clifton 'the unique swell comedian'. Also confusing the research, when he launched himself as Fred Douglas, a sixty-strong African-

American troupe came to London to perform the musical *In Dahomey* at the Shaftesbury theatre in 1903 and on tour in 1904. One of the troupe was a Fred Douglas, who went into partnership with a Will Garland and toured *Trip to Coontown* in 1908.

Fred married Winifred Thomson in Fulham around May 1913. They had two sons: Leslie D Clifton, 1st May 1914; and Philip N Clifton, 1st August 1919. Leslie became the bandleader Leslie Douglas. Fred was not in the armed forces in World War One. He can be traced working in theatres, halls and recording studios during the conflict.

From 11th November 1913 to 10th November 1914 he cut thirty-three sides for the Gramophone Co Ltd. They were issued on seventeen 10 inch records, priced 1/1. By early 1915 he had begun his long association with Regal, the Columbia Graphophone Company's cheaper label. According to Rust, from October 1920 to November 1936 Fred recorded with thirty-one dance bands for



Stan Greening's Band at Columbia

twenty-seven labels. This is but part of his discography, since Rust catalogued only dance music, omitting Fred's many other solo and duo recordings. Years after Fred's recording prime, in May 1941's *The Gramophone*, Herbert Ridout (Columbia's former publicist) reported Fred had confirmed 'no fewer than thirty-three aliases' and pointed out that Ridout had coined many of them. Ridout claimed Fred used a different delivery style for each alias, and wrote: 'Such a unique record of singing names surely calls for recognition, so here is the list under which he sang. On Regal he was Fred Douglas in popular ballads, F W Ramsey in chorus songs and tongue-twisters, Fred Murray in semi-ballads, Frank Terry in coon songs, Harry Vernon in musical comedy hits, Frank Greene in Jack Buchanan's songs, Charles Vernon in recitations, Fred Barmy in "potty" songs with Billy Cotton's band, Tom Gilbert in popular songs, and in duets as one of the Barmy Brothers, the Two Gilberts, Barmy and Buck, Fred and Harry, and the Two Duggies - the other being his son Leslie Douglas... On Columbia he sang as Stewart Morton and Harry Glen... This does not exhaust his adventures in nomenclature, for under other names he sang later on Parlophone, Sterno, Imperial, Decca, Broadcast, Filmophone, Goodson, Durium, World-Echo, and Dominion records.'

The other half of The Two Gilberts was Lionel Rothery (1922-24), Harry Cove (1924-28) and Leslie Rome

(1928-31). Except for the odd private function, The Two Gilberts seem not to have performed publicly: indeed Leslie Rome toured with a Connie Leonard. In November 1931 Fred and Rome recorded with Harry Bidgood on Broadcast; and there is a Broadcast-Super-Twelve by 'Fred and Leslie Gilbert comedians' recorded in January 1932. Fred was a significant performer for Regal. He contributed eight of the thirty-four sides in their November 1925 advertised releases. Regal's 1926 catalogue lists two hundred and five sides by him: one hundred and five as The Two Gilberts; seventy-eight as Fred Douglas; ten as Tom Gilbert; seven as F W Ramsey; three as Frank Terry; one as Fred Murray; and one as Harry Vernon. If solo on only one side, the reverse was usually The Two Gilberts, or Regal paired him with sides by a few named tenors. Reviewing a Regal in *The*

Gramophone of September 1928, 'TM' declared Fred to be 'one of the best of the music-hall comedians who sing for the gramophone'.

The Barmy Brothers with George Buck was an early 1930s duo; famous for *Ain't It Grand To Be Bloomin' Well Dead* (MR-559).

They became Barmy and Buck on Regal Zonophone.

Their first release, the rhyming-slang *Up the Apples and Pears* and *Fiddler Joe* (MR-856), was hailed as a 'first rate low comedy record' by the *Yorkshire Post* in April 1933. Ted Lewis and Bertha Willmott each recorded duets with Fred on Regal Zonophone in 1935. Bertha joined him and son Leslie on British



Homophone Co Ltd's Sterno and Solex labels in 1933 and 1934.

Fred was on the radio from its early days. He partnered Harry Elliott in *Turned Up*, a two-man show on the eight month old 6BM-Bournemouth in June 1924. They were back there in July with *Plantation Songs*, then *Ten Minutes in Coon Land*, and an unspecified programme in September. He migrated to the National Programme and did many light entertainment and variety shows (one as Fred Barmy 'Descriptive Vocalist' on 1st December 1932); and presented some programmes of themed records. In 1934 he appeared in seven Henry Hall broadcasts, partnering song-writer Harry Tilsley. Fred's radio career lasted until September 1950: of which more later.

He features in television history. Just after 11 pm on 22nd August 1932, with face and hands blacked-up and wearing a light hat, check shirt and light-toned trousers, he performed in the very first BBC experimental television broadcast, which used Baird's thirty vertical lines mechanical scanning system. His co-artists were vocalists Betty Bolton and Betty Astell, and comedienne Louie Freear. The TV studio was improvised in the art-deco dance-band Radio Studio BB in the sub-basement of the recently-opened Broadcasting House. One newspaper mentioned Fred juggling; another commented that the 'blacking' obscured his facial details on the receiving sets.

Fred Douglas in a Baird TV experiment



Throughout 1932 and 1933, he performed frequently in studio BB doing: *Song and Dance*; *Pantomime Songs*; *Clown Songs*; and *Duets*. One duo was with nineteen year-old son Leslie singing *Hill-billy Songs and Spirituals*. The half-hour broadcasts were at 11 pm after radio had closed, when the experiment could use the transmitters. On 17th January 1933 Fred was the Cat and the Cook in *Dick Whittington*, with music by 'Mr Harry Bidgood's Instrumental Quartet'; and he was in *Cinderella* on 27th December 1933. In February 1934



Studio BB was returned to its intended radio use; and Baird's equipment was moved to 16 Portland Place; where Fred apparently did not perform. This low-definition experiment ended in September 1935. The Alexandra Palace 'high definition' ones began in November 1936.

In a stage career lasting until 1953, Fred was a 'turn' in variety shows,

Fred (right) and Bill Campbell (left)



Fred Douglas

revues, summer shows and cine-variety. In the latter he was the live act before the silent films; and was doing it as early as 1912. He was not a West End performer or a bill-topper; and his appearances before the late-1930s were in lower-rank theatres. From early 1919 he performed in variety as 'Stewart Morton' with a 'clever lady' assistant doing 'coon studies'. As Fred Douglas, in 1920 he toured in *Busybodies*, *the Show with the Vim*. In 1925 he toured with *The Q's*, a concert-party; and *The Stage* declared '(he) is a splendid baritone and his Coon studies are artistic'. In December 1925 he was with *The Q's* in revue in Worthing, doing comedy, 'coon-work', and singing. The *Worthing Herald* referred to him as 'Stewart Morton, a fine basso, of gramophone record fame'. In 1926 and 1927 he toured in the revue *Stuff and Nonsense*. 1928 saw a series of cine-variety appearances such as in September at the Stoll Picture Theatre in Bedminster which billed *Fred Douglas and assistant in Coon Studies* at 5:20 and 7:55 pm, each just fifteen minutes before the films. The assistant was billed as

'Joyce' for the March appearances at the Gaiety in Belfast; 'a cinema for the lower end of the market' according to Culture Northern Ireland. In 1929 he did a week at each of the fourteen cinemas of the United Picture Theatres circuit around London. For the 1930 summer season, he was with the *Jacks and Jills* pierrot troupe at the Beach Pavilion Great Yarmouth. In March 1935, he advertised for work in the 'Wanted Engagements - Variety Artists' column in *The Stage* as 'Fred Douglas, the original television croon (sic) and hill-billy singer' who could also produce and stage-direct. 18 Manor Road, Wallington, Surrey was his address. He later moved house along that road.

Like many entertainers, Fred performed at private functions for well-heeled associations, Masonic lodges and the like. The troupes assembled for some of those evenings could involve several significant names.

Fred never recorded with Marius B Winter's band, but was their vocalist in a 1931 Pathéphone short film. Lean, with sharp facial features, he sang *A Farmyard Symphony* whilst dressed as a bewhiskered old country-character

Fred, left, with Marius B. Winter



beyond his forty-six years. Available at BritishPathe.com, it is a glimpse of Fred the stage performer. Otherwise, he seems not to have had a film career.

His career changed in late 1938 when, aged fifty-three, he joined a troupe supporting 'Big' Bill Campbell, a Canadian who had already achieved radio and (Columbia) record success with his Rocky Mountaineers. They toured the major variety theatres with a 'second-half' show. Initially called *Way Out West*, then *Rocky Mountain Rhythm*, it was revived annually. They also had a popular radio show, first called *Hill-Billy Round Up*, then *The Cabin In The Hills*, then *Big Bill's Prairie Round Up*. It aired from September 1938 to September 1950, and its catch-phrases (principally 'Mighty Fine') were lampooned in *ITMA*. The radio show's format was exploited in the stage show. Fred played 'Buck Douglas an Old Cow Puncher' who sang 'prairie songs', and was billed (and even signed autographs) as Buck Douglas. *The Stage* reviewer commented on his noticeable stage experience and repose; and one local newspaper described him as 'tough and wiry'. He stage-managed and led when Campbell was indisposed. The troupe did five shows of the *Western Cabaret* at Alexandra Palace on the 405-lines, London-only, BBC television service in 1939; and another two each of *Rocky Mountain Rhythm* and *Way Out West* in 1946. They recorded for Decca's Rex in the early 1940s, including *Der Fuehrer's Face* with vocal by 'Buck Douglas' (R-7087). Fred is on Bill Campbell CD compilations. In the

breaks between Campbell's troupe's tours, Fred made solo variety appearances as Buck Douglas. After Campbell's death on 25th April 1952, his widow Peggy Bailey led the troupe; and sixty-seven year-old Fred continued touring as Buck Douglas for about another year in a new 'second-half' show called *The Golden Prairie*.

From the late 1930s Fred and Winifred's home was 32 Manor Road, Wallington, Surrey (octogenarian Leslie Douglas's address in *The International Who's Who in Popular Music 2002*). Winifred died in 1942 aged forty-eight and Fred married widow Beatrice Phyllis Tilsley née Longville. He died 'peacefully at home' on 1st March 1955, aged sixty-nine, and is buried in Mitcham Road Cemetery Croydon. The family announced his death in *The Stage*

on 3rd March as 'Fred (Buck) Douglas'. His death was registered as Arthur E Clifton. Widow 'Phyl' posted an *In Memoriam* to 'Fred (Buck) Douglas' annually in *The Stage* until 1978.

(The image of Fred in pierrot costume is reproduced by kind permission of *This England* magazine. Mike Thomas supplied details of The Two Gilberts, and the Columbia studio photograph of Fred with Stan Greening, Nat Star, Ted Heath, Wag Abbey etc.)



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Alfie Noakes – Star Trumpeter

In His Own Words – As Told first-hand to

Peter Tanner

Compiled for *Memory Lane* by **Terry Brown.**

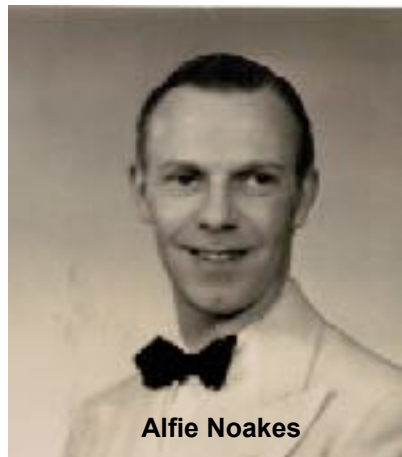
PART SEVEN



Alfie continues his wartime reminiscences with Geraldo as told to Peter Tanner

"Now I must tell you about another wartime radio show on which Geraldo was fortunate enough to be featured. This was a special Tommy Handley show, known as the Tommy Handley Half Hour, which was broadcast every Tuesday, live, by short wave, for troops overseas only, from the Criterion Theatre. We played three or four dance numbers to a full house of troops on leave. The big feature of course was the cross talk between Tommy Handley and co-star Jack Train, both of whom were stars of ITMA. Besides our radio work, I must not omit our many visits to various RAF stations. I recall that during one particular week we were honoured to play at Stanmore, Hornchurch, Biggin Hill, West Drayton and North Weald. In fact if my memory serves me correctly, we played Biggin Hill twice during that week. Whilst we were playing at Hornchurch the alarm sounded and many of the pilots and other crew members rushed off to their Spitfires and Hurricanes to get at the German raiders. There is one particular Christmas Day I

shall never forget, either 1941 or 1942, during which we played four broadcasts - one early in the morning and one early evening, a half hour of dance music on each. After the morning programme we went to a London Hospital, played a concert, part of which was broadcast, and after the early evening show we went to the Criterion Theatre – then a BBC studio. Here we had our Christmas dinner which consisted of one fried egg and chips each. More luxurious than it sounds today, for it should be



remembered that this was quite a rare dish in those severely rationed times. The final Christmas broadcast was a special Christmas Hour from the BBC's Monseigneur studio, Marble Arch, and featured those famous stars of Old Mother Riley films, Lucan & McShane. In direct contrast, on another Christmas evening Gerry invited us to his lovely apartment in Berkeley Square where we all enjoyed the lovely hospitality of Gerry



and his wife. Me, well I spent my time admiring the furnishings and decorations, but I must confess that I very much enjoyed the excellent wine that Gerry served.

Another rare time we had to relax was on 29 October 1941, when each member of the orchestra was presented with a card – 'Admit Geraldo's Band' – a special invitation to attend a preview of the Twentieth Century Fox film Sun Valley Serenade, at the company's private theatre in Soho Square. The stars of the film were Sonja Henie, John Payne, Milton Berle and Joan Davis but naturally we had come to hear the Glenn Miller Orchestra. At the end of the

screening Gerry was handed the orchestral score of the film and we did a special broadcast featuring the many fine tunes from the film. Later on we were invited to a similar preview of the second Glenn Miller film, Orchestra Wives.

Another broadcast I remember, one of the many, was a special Meet the Boys show – Gerry's own title for it. This was first aired to the forces from 10.00 to 10.30pm on 11 November 1941. The announcer specially engaged for this show was Franklyn Engelman, then a captain in the army. The idea was to introduce each member of the band, first giving an 'amusing' description of him and then asking what number he would like played. Here are a few examples – Sid Bright – sits at the piano looking like a Toby Jug; Jack Collier – has a delayed action smile. I mean you tell him a joke last week and he'll laugh like blazes next Tuesday; Alfie Noakes – He's a Canadian from Toronto which may, or may not, account for his wearing a fawn lumber jacket, bright blue trousers, spectacles and a cap with checks like a Times crossword puzzle. What was my request? 'Tis Autumn, arranged and sung by George Evans.

Away from Geraldo another wartime radio show I recall with real pleasure was Hi Gang! This featuring that famous American film star husband and wife team, Ben Lyon and Bebe Daniels, together with comedian Vic Oliver. The orchestra booked for this show was directed by my old friend, Jay Wilbur. You will recall I had been Jay's lead trumpet on so many records and Jay engaged me to play from the first show on 26 May 1940 to the last, altogether 96 editions! I remember many of the guest stars, Robert Newton, Gilbert Harding, Robertson Hare, Diana Wynyard, Valerie Hobson, C. B. Cochran, oh so many. The

usual announcer for this show was Bruce Belfrage and I can always remember him saying 'Hugh!' to the audience for silence when the red light was due to come on. Somewhat naturally, the line-up of the outfit used to change due to various musicians having service duties, quite a few of them with RAF Orchestras. However I do have the line-up for one of the shows which was in

Gilbert Harding



September 1941 or 1942 – it was myself and Chick Smith, trumpets; Ted Heath and Bill Mulraney, trombones; E.O. 'Poggie' Pogson and Frank Johnson, altos; George Smith and Cliff Timms, tenors; Sid Sax, violin; plus a rhythm section comprising, Pat Dodd, piano, Jack Simmons, guitar, Billy Bell, bass and Jack Simpson on drums. Also at the time, Jay added a harpist named Walter Hayward, and Paul Fenoulhet used to be added on trombone when he was free from his job as director of the Skyrockets Orchestra.

It was while doing a broadcast at the BBC Maida Vale studios that the shortage of ideas for radio programmes was mentioned to me by one of the BBC directors. Suddenly an idea came to me; why not put on my own radio programme? Say an All-Canadian show? So I contacted Doug Lawrence at the BBC and asked if he would be interested in such a programme and a while later was presented with a contract for six radio shows to be broadcast monthly, starting July 1940. We decided to name the show 'Canadian Capers', which was to run forty to forty-five minutes and be

entirely Canadian. The following musicians were engaged to play in the Maple Leaf Orchestra under my direction and that of pianist, Jack Penn; Max Goldberg, trumpet, Bruce Campbell and Tony Thorpe trombones, Harry Varden and Art Christmas, saxes, Jackie Hunter and Billy Guest, drums, Hugo Rignold, violin, and George Panton, guitar. The vocals were handled by Hugo Rignold's sister Pat, Bert

Yarlett and Phyllis Stanley. Radio and stage artiste Lyle Evans was on all the programmes, telling stories and humorous anecdotes. Our producer was David Miller and the usual compere was Gerry Wilmot. I guess our show became very popular as Doug Lawrence gave me further contracts for the show in 1941.

You know there were so many interesting incidents whilst I was with Gerry that it's difficult to know where to start. Here is one for instance – and it concerns one of our Royal Command engagements. This one was held in the drawing room at Windsor Castle on 27 March 1943. The relief band was that of the Grenadier Guards, so one or two members were doubling in both bands! The newspaper write-up of the time, which I still have, states that Princess Elizabeth, who will almost certainly one day be the Queen of the British Empire, could 'jive' and 'cut a rug', with any jitterbug present! Well she certainly proved this by dancing every number from the opening, Pick Yourself Up, to the closing, Goodnight Waltz, at four in the morning! Princess Margaret joined her for a while, but she was only twelve

at the time and had to go to bed early. The newspaper concluded by saying everyone had a good time – and that certainly included the whole orchestra.

Now I must tell you something about our ENSA trips during the war. Gerry's position with ENSA during those years was very high and the authorities knew they could rely upon him to provide the Forces, both over here and abroad, with the highest level of entertainment. It was in the late summer of 1943 that we first heard something about our entertaining troops abroad. Then, reporting for work at the Drury Lane Theatre one morning we were all told that we would be sailing sometime in October. For security reasons we were not to tell anyone. We were also informed that we would be able to write home from the various places at which we would play but not to mention the name of any town or camps.



Ray Noble - The Songwriter

This is a DVD containing an edited version of the programme about Ray Noble, which was shown on

BBC-1 in 1978, as part of a series *The Songwriters* which Tony Staveacre produced. It features an interview with Ray Noble and songs sung by Marti Webb, Sheila White, Paul Jones and Peter Gale. The orchestrations were created by Ken Moule. The film lasts about 18 minutes. See Pages 30 and 31 for availability.

All letters would go via the Forces post office system. The next thing was that we all had to have injections to prevent us picking up any diseases whilst away. We each had nine in all and they were carried out over a two week period at a private surgery somewhere near Euston Station. As these vaccinations were pumped alternately into our right or left arm, you can imagine how sore we were and how difficult it was to play sometimes. I felt especially sorry for the rhythm section. However even the saxes and us in the brass section found we quickly got tired - as did most servicemen. As for Gerry, waving the baton for any length of time made his arm so sore that he had to give it a rest once in a while.

Finally came the morning in October 1943 when we were all told to be at Drury Lane Theatre early the following morning when we would be departing from England. No one knew where we were going though everyone was busy trying to guess. A NAAFI bus took us to Euston where we took a train to Anfield. Another bus then transported us to Liverpool docks and we boarded a grey two funnel liner. After a day or two aboard at least found out we were on the Shaw-Saville liner, Dominion Monarch. Before lunch and dinner every day a loudspeaker, in each cabin and all the lounges, relayed a good recording of Percy Grainger's In An English Country Garden. This was the call for meals but it didn't seem to us to be particularly appropriate – though I don't know if Dinner For One Please James or Tea for Two would have been any better! We soon found out that with us on board were a number of Army and Navy officers bound for the same destination as ourselves. But where - the Middle East, Africa, the Far East? We just didn't know. A problem that arose when we boarded the Dominion Monarch was:

officers or orchestra for the very limited number of cabins available? I think a coin was tossed in the end! At any rate, we appeared to win and shared the lovely cabins with portholes looking out to sea, whilst the officers shared bunks put up every night in the various saloons and lounges.

We sailed in a convoy, of course, and the other boats around us numbered about ten to fifteen. Some of these ships would sail off somewhere else during the night and others joined us in their place. This was the system used in many of the wartime convoys. Our speed of progress was also regulated by that of the slowest boat – around 8 or 9 knots an hour. All outside lights had to be extinguished after sunset and there was no smoking allowed on deck. When we entered the Mediterranean most of us guessed where we were headed. After a couple of days the captain announced: 'Sleep with your clothes on, in case of an emergency'. Luckily for us all during the entire trip there was no emergency. It wasn't long before we saw the coast of North Africa on the starboard side; then Alexandria in the distance, and a final landing at Port Said. At this point my 8mm camera was handed back to me as we were not allowed to take any photographs during the voyage. NAAFI coaches were waiting for us, small but comfortable, and soon we were on our way to Cairo, passing through Suez and stopping at Ismailia for some Eastern hospitality. On arrival in Cairo we found we had been booked into the National, a really lovely hotel. Gerry, however, stayed at the famous Sheppard's Hotel – totally destroyed during the demonstrations a few years back.

TO BE CONTINUED

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Al Bowlly's London



Our next walk will be our most popular, parts of it having been televised several times. It will take place on **Saturday, 11th May, 2019** starting near the Strand at 11:00am

and will identify many of the places in central London associated with Al Bowlly.

Sixteen locations are visited in this walk including the Savoy Hotel, the St. Martin Registry Office, 17 Orange Street, Charing Cross Mansions, where Al's Blue Plaque may be viewed, the Monseigneur Restaurant and site of the now demolished Dukes Court. Refreshments will be available at this point for those who want them.

For those who wish to, after the main part of the Walk, there will be the opportunity to visit Abbey Road Studios in St John's Wood* where Al recorded hundreds of records as a soloist and with Ray Noble and Geraldo among others.

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Tickets are available either by post or through our web site. Prices are £5.00 per person for any number of tickets purchased by Memory Lane subscribers, or £7.00 otherwise. On receipt of payment, your Itinerary and coloured location map will be sent to you.

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* The visit to the studios requires a short underground train journey, the fare for which is not included in the price for the walk. (If you buy a Travel card, the underground fare will be included.)

The Eddie Condon Story

By

Barry McCanna



Barry McCanna

PART THREE - BRANCHING OUT

PART THREE – BRANCHING OUT

In autumn 1937 Red McKenzie introduced Eddie to Nick Rongetti, who had a small club in Greenwich Village, on Seventh Avenue at 10th Street, and was having a bigger one constructed on a vacant lot opposite. The new venue, known simply as Nick's, opened in the middle of December, and Eddie alternated with Sharkey Bonano's band. Bobby Hackett was on cornet and Pee Wee Russell on clarinet. Eddie said there were only two rules for the band.

"Shoes must be worn on the stand, and anybody who falls off must get back under his own power." According to the New York Times obituary:

When Mr. Condon and his men completed a set, he would retire across 10th Street to Julius's, a bar without music, trailed by many of Nick's customers who wanted to feast on the guitarist's conversation. Mr. Condon was frequently late getting back to the

bandstand and those who had followed him were equally late in returning. This annoyed Nick Rongetti, proprietor of Nick's, so much that he dismissed Mr. Condon with great frequency. He always

hired him back immediately but he never could bring himself to point out to Mr. Condon that his conversational habits were depriving Nick's of considerable revenue. "Eddie is sensitive," Mr. Rongetti said. "I wouldn't want to hurt his feelings by bringing up such a commercial matter."



Meanwhile, back at the Commodore Music Shop reissues were selling out, and the record companies still owned the masters. Milt conferred with Eddie, and decided that since sooner or later the original musicians would be passing through they should assemble them to make new recordings. The first opportunity that presented itself was Benny Goodman's Carnegie Hall Concert on 16th January 1938, when everybody who was anybody was in town. The following day

Eddie Condon and his Windy City Seven (Bobby Hackett, George Brunies, Pee Wee Russell, Bud Freeman, Jess Stacy, Artie Shapiro & George Wettling) recorded "*Carnegie Drag*" which was issued as a 12" 78 coupled with "*Carnegie Jump*", "*Love is Just Around the Corner*" which was coupled with "*Ja Da*", and "*Beat to the Socks*" which was coupled with "*I Got Rhythm*" by the Bud Freeman Trio.



musicians have so much to give to a hot orchestra as Eddie, with his metronomically regular rhythm which induces superb swing." Nevertheless, when he came to New York in 1938, and presumed to tell American musicians how jazz should be played, it drew the riposte from Eddie "He's a game guy, coming over here and

telling us how to play jazz. We don't go over to France and tell them how to jump on a grape, do we?"

The success of the venture led to another session being booked at the end of April, with Jack Teagarden replacing Brunies. They recorded "*Embraceable You*" coupled with "*Serenade to a Shylock*" (issued on a 12" 78) and "*Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland*" coupled with "*Diane*" (the latter side issued as by Jackson Teagarden and his Trombone). Eddie had talked up the project in advance and been promised a feature in *Life Magazine*. It appeared in the edition for 8th August, and in terms of publicity it was everything he could have wished for, and more. Custom increased at Nick's, with customers crowding the stand to compare the photos in *Life* with the real thing. "Pee Wee's quite a sight, isn't he?" Nick said to Eddie. "You can't hear a face", he replied. In the meantime, further recording sessions for Commodore followed, at irregular intervals, dictated by the availability of suitable musicians. A notable release was a four-part jam session on "*A Good Man Is Hard To Find*" with double brass and triple reeds.

Hugues Panassie, a French jazz lover who published a magazine called *Le Jazz Hot*, was rather complimentary of Eddie's playing, writing "Few

Inspired by the BBC's organised jam session on 5th November 1938, in the Viennese Room of the St. Regis Hotel, which was compèred by Alastair Cooke and broadcast direct to England, Eddie began organising weekly jam sessions in the main ballroom of the Park Lane Hotel, which were a sell-out. All went well until the fifth week, when two vice-presidents of the holding company overheard the proceedings and terminated the arrangement. It was a case of when one door shuts another one opens. Milt Gabler had expanded his business with the introduction of mail order, and opened a branch store on 52nd Street. That winter he began a series of Sunday afternoon concerts at Jimmy Ryan's, the club opposite, and the musicians were organised by Eddie.

Meanwhile, he had decided to organise a co-operative band, which at Phyllis' suggestion was called the Summa Cum Laude Orchestra. The records they cut for Decca between July 1939 and April 1940 under Bud Freeman's leadership included numbers that were associated with Bix and the Wolverines. Eddie himself fronted a record date in August 1939 which produced "*There'll be Some Changes Made*", "*Nobody's Sweetheart*", "*Friars*

Point Shuffle" and *"Someday, Sweetheart"*.

At the end of 1939 the band participated in a jazz version of Shakespeare's *"A Midsummer Night's Dream"* called *"Swingin' the Dream"* at the Centre Theatre in Radio City. It ran for thirteen performances, in the course of which Nick fired them, not happy at taking second place to the Bard. They went into the Brick Club on West 47th Street, which job lasted until the summer, when they were booked for four weeks in the Panther Room of the Sherman Hotel in Chicago. There they alternated with Stuff Smith and his band, and Lee Wiley sang occasionally. On return to New York the band broke up, but Nick wanted them back, so Eddie rounded up those still available.

1941 began with ASCAP imposing a ban on the radio networks broadcasting any of its music unless they agreed to double the fee involved, a stand-off that lasted until the end of October. That summer Eddie took a job at the Brass Rail in Chicago, under Jimmy McPartland's leadership, and generated another article in *Time*, which was good for business. Back in New York, Eddie had set up a network to help deal with what he called "parish business", a version of London's Archer Street, where messages could be left and passed on. All of which helped, as he put it, to put jazz in a rented pew. 1941 ended with the attack on Pearl Harbour.

Eddie had arranged for a Fats Waller concert at Carnegie Hall on 24th January 1942, which was a limited success. Fats imbibed backstage beforehand with his many

well-wishers, and the intermission lasted twenty-three minutes, one minute to get him off, and twenty-two to get him back on. Afterwards Oscar Levant said "I never realised how much Tchaikovsky owes to Gershwin." It had been intended as the first of a series, but it became apparent that the venue was too formal and cavernous.

Eddie followed up by renting the more intimate Town Hall on West 43rd Street for a jazz concert on 21st February, 1942. It was entitled *"A Chiaroscuro Jazz Concert"* to reflect the shades of colour that would be represented, and despite a low attendance (Eddie's opening announcement began *"Lady and gentleman"*) it was decided to continue. Eddie had great respect for Sidney Bechet's playing, and ensured that he was featured prominently. The admiration was mutual; Bechet enjoyed working with him and enjoyed his wisecracks. Later he credited Eddie as one of those principally responsible for his come-back.

The third concert prompted a phone call from Worthington Minor of the CBS television studio, who had witnessed the event, and thought the format would be ideal for transmission. And so it proved, but after four weeks the Federal Communications Commission issued a war ruling limiting stations to a maximum transmission of four hours per week, which effectively brought the project to a halt.

Eddie was then called before the draft board, which after much deliberation found that he was unfit for military service (apart from



anything else, he had been born deaf in the right ear). He spent the summer playing at military camps, which concerts were greeted with great enthusiasm, participating in service broadcasts, and making V-discs.

That autumn he resumed the Town Hall concerts, beginning on 7th November 1942. They proved to be a tremendous success, and continued for the next three years, switching later to the Ritz Theatre, and from 1944 were broadcast over NBC on what was known as the Blue Network. The announcer's introduction promised "the only unrehearsed, free-wheeling, completely barefoot music on the air". Those broadcasts from 20th May 1944 onwards have been reissued on LP and CD. Forty-eight of the concerts were transcribed by the Armed Forces Radio Service, and broadcast to servicemen around the world, as a result of which Eddie Condon topped the GI popularity poll.

In 1947 he graduated to television with "The Eddie Condon Floor Show", a weekly half-hour series which continued until 24th September 1949, first with WPIX, then with NBC. Eddie said they scared potential sponsors to death, but managed to hold out unsponsored. A log of the 1949 transmissions exists on the web, and those appearing included Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong, Billy Eckstine, Count Basie, Roy Eldridge, Cootie Williams and Sarah Vaughan.

In 1945 Eddie and the manager of Julius's, Pete Pesci, decided he needed a place of his own. They both wanted to have the club in order to remain in Greenwich Village, Eddie

reasoning "the closer my bed to the bandstand the better". He and Phyllis had married on his thirty-seventh birthday, and lived in an apartment on Washington Square North, which they moved into when it was vacated by Amy Vanderbilt.

The first "Eddie Condon's" opened at 47 West 3rd Street on 20th December 1945 (the day the paint dried), and Eddie called it "Town Hall with booze". A reporter who asked him the capacity of the club was told "About 200 cases". He defined the club's policy as "We don't throw anyone in, and we don't throw anyone out". Eddie had nicknames for many of the regulars, and the men's room attendant was known as "Flush Gordon". Pesci controlled the purse strings, and was dubbed "Ivan the Terrible". Eddie was not a fan of bebop; a waiter who dropped a loaded tray received the admonition "None of that progressive stuff in here, please!" When the block was torn down in 1957 he moved to a new venue in the Sutton Hotel on East 56th Street, which opened in February 1958, and lasted until 1967.

In 1954 Eddie participated in the first Newport Jazz Festival. He said he was ill at ease in the fresh air, but he managed. The following year the Festival took place in a rainstorm, and was recorded

by George Avakian for Columbia. Also in 1954 Eddie made history by giving a dual concert in Kleinhan's Hall in Buffalo with the Buffalo Philharmonic, and repeated the experience in January 1956 by giving two concerts in Washington, D.C. with the National

Symphony Orchestra. One of them was held in Constitution Hall, a venue from



Eddie Condon in 1946

which he'd been banned a decade earlier by the Daughters of the American Republic, who owned the venue.

Also in 1956 Eddie took a group to England, kicking off in Glasgow, with support from Humphrey Lyttelton and his band, and in 1964 he toured Japan, Australia and New Zealand. On 20th January 1969 he played at the Inaugural Ball for President Nixon. In the fall of 1971 Columbia Artists put together a seven-week tour through twenty-six states, which included a concert entitled Stars of Jazz at the Lincoln Centre for Performing Arts. His last public appearance was at the Newport in New York Jazz Festival in Carnegie Hall on 5th July 1973. He was admitted to hospital two days later, and died on 4th August. He was succeeded by his wife Phyllis and their two daughters, Maggie and Liza.

His autobiography "We Called It Music" (subtitled "A Generation of Jazz") which was published in 1947, rapidly became a best-seller, and deservedly so. It's generally regarded as one of the best books on jazz, and is still in print. It was followed by "Eddie Condon's Scrapbook of Jazz" which is a fascinating photographic record of his career, complete with press cuttings and concert programmes, with a linking commentary. I have drawn heavily on both books in the writing of this article.

It would be hard to over-estimate Eddie Condon's importance to jazz. He was a trailblazer, who campaigned long and hard for jazz musicians to be accorded their due, and a pioneer, who organised integrated record sessions before 1930, and similar groups onstage in an era when that practice was still frowned on. He spearheaded and encouraged a group of like-minded players, and the recordings they made, for Commodore in particular, were instrumental in the revival of jazz.

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The Songs of Noel Coward

A special feature by
Barry McCanna



PART ONE

I can think of only two figures in popular music who were both composer and lyricist, namely Irving Berlin and Cole Porter. I used to think that Noel Coward was the British equivalent, but although he often wrote both words and music that wasn't always the case. On the other hand he was also a playwright and author, actor and painter, so he deserves a special category of his own. He wrote over 300 songs, many of which he sang in his own inimitable fashion (rather more melodiously, it has to be said, than either Berlin or Porter). Some he also recorded, many of them having been written for his revues or musicals.



Noel Peirce

Coward was born in Teddington at the tail end of the nineteenth century, on the 16th December 1899 (his first name derived from the proximity of his birth to the Christmas festival), to Arthur and Violet (née Veitch). There was music in

the family; his father was a piano salesman, and both parents sang in a choir, but the family finances fluctuated, and they lived in what was then called "genteel poverty". Their first-born, Russell, had died suddenly of spinal meningitis before Noel was born, and understandably Violet doted on her second son.

He attended Claude Selfe's Chapel Royal School in Clapham as a day boy from the age of eight, and later enrolled for a course of twelve lessons at Janet Thomas' Dancing Academy in Hanover Square. That apart, he had very little formal education, and seems to have been largely self-taught as a musician.

In January 1911 he obtained his first professional engagement as Prince Mussel in the children's play *The Goldfish*. At the end of the year he appeared in the first performance of the

children's play *Where the Rainbow Ends* at the Garrick Theatre under the actor-manager Charles Hawtrey. This became an annual Christmas production, in which Noel appeared again in 1912 and 1915.

Italia Conti, an actress who trained the cast of *Where the Rainbow Ends*, put him forward for a part in Gerhardt Hauptmann's dream poem *Hannele* at the **Liverpool Repertory Theatre (now the Liverpool Playhouse)** in March 1913, directed by Basil Dean. There he met Gertrude Lawrence, who would feature large in his career. He wrote in his memoirs that she "gave me an orange and told me a few mildly dirty stories, and I loved her from then onwards". In the same year he was cast as the lost boy "Slightly" in *Peter Pan*, repeating the performance the following year.

During 1914 he became the protégé of the society painter Philip Streatfeild, who introduced him to the eccentric bohemian hostess Mrs. Astley-Cooper, owner of Hambleton Hall, where he became a frequent guest. This was Coward's entrée to the world of country house living, and he kept a notebook of the conversations to which he was privy. His hostess later commented "It amused me to hear my remarks put into the mouths of actors." It's apparent, even at this early stage, that Coward's background was ideally suited to the role of detached observer, viewing the foibles and excesses of society with a jaundiced eye, while making a careful note of anything he might put to use in the future.

Coward spent much of his teenage years touring in rep, where he learnt his stagecraft, and attempting to write plays of his own. During his late teens he signed a three-year contract with Herman Darewski to supply lyrics, but although he received the agreed

payments few of his songs were published. He was introduced by Beatrice Lillie to André Charlot, who was unimpressed, and told her not to waste his time with "young composers who played the piano badly and sang worse"! Nevertheless, Coward supplied lyrics to Doris Joel's music for the song *Peter Pan*, which was sung by Phyllis Titmus in André Charlot's revue ***Tails Up***, which opened at the Comedy Theatre on 1st June 1918.

The end of the First World War was celebrated by a Victory Ball at the Royal Albert Hall on 27th November 1918, but the festive mood was marred by the death the following day of one of the attendees, Miss Billie Carleton, from an overdose of cocaine. Coward had met the young actress, and the theme of drug addiction would surface in his 1924 play ***The Vortex*** and could be discerned in some of his songs.

In the meantime he had set his sights on New York and undeterred by a shortage of funds, he set sail on the RMS Aquitania in May 1921. He spent five months there, and made many friends during his stay, including Fred and Adele Astaire, and Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. He took in many shows, including *Shuffle Along*, and was impressed by the pace of those productions, an approach he adopted for his own use.

He began appearing in musical plays in his early twenties, and his first was ***London Calling*** (a reference to the new radio station call-sign 2LO London) which was produced by André Charlot, opened at the Duke of York's Theatre in September 1923, and ran for 316 performances. The songs included *There's Life in the Old Girl Yet* and *What Love Means to Girls Like Me*, both sung by Maisie Gay, *Russian Blues*, and his first great hit, *Parisian Pierrot*, sung by Gertrude Lawrence. According to Cecil

Beaton, the last-named song became "the signature tune of the late 1920s".

The play also featured a waspish parody of Edith Sitwell's *Façade*, entitled *The Swiss Family Whittlebot*, narrated by Maisie Gay as Hernia Whittlebott, which failed to amuse the Sitwell family. Although the show was a success, Coward was unhappy with Charlot's managerial involvement, and eventually bowed out.

The impresario C. B. Cochran had had his eye on Coward for some time, and during the run of *The Vortex* invited him to write the book for a new revue, leaving Philip Braham to provide the music. Noel disregarded the distinction, and deliberately produced sketches which incorporated songs. *On with the Dance* opened at the Pavilion Theatre on 30th April 1925 and ran for 229 performances.

The big hit of the show was the song *Poor Little Rich Girl*, which Cochran had wanted to drop as being "too dreary", and which Noel fought successfully to retain. Alice Delysia played a lady's maid, singing it to her mistress Hermione Baddeley while she danced in the spotlight. The lyrics carried an overt warning about the perils facing young society ladies with time on their hands, and more money than sense.

Noel recorded it in August 1925, together with *Lady Bird* from the same show, and *Other Girls* and *Prenez-Garde, Lisette* from *London Calling*. He also recorded two other songs at the

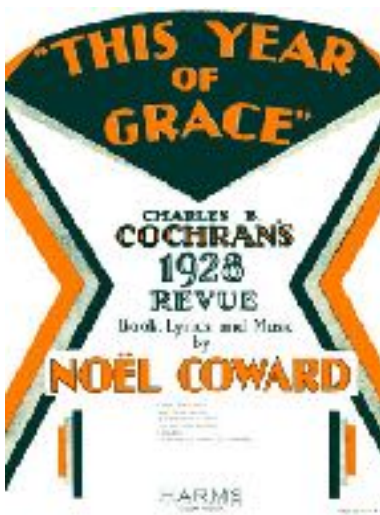
same time, namely *He Never Did That to Me* (about the failure of a silent movie villain to live up to his on-screen persona) and *We Must All Be Very Kind to Auntie Jessie*, but sadly all six were rejected.

He provided the entire score for C. B. Cochran's revue *This Year of Grace*, which opened at the Pavilion on 22nd

March 1928, with Douglas Byng, Sonnie Hale and Jessie Matthews in the cast. At the time Sonnie Hale was married to Evelyn Laye, and Jessie Matthews to Henry Lytton, but the two stars began an affair which became a *cause célèbre*, and ended in a double divorce. *Dance Little Lady* was one of the hits of the show, yet despite the exhortation of the title, the song and its stage setting carried a warning of the empty life being pursued by the Bright Young Things.

Coward recorded five of the numbers from that show, four with orchestral accompaniment directed by Carroll Gibbons, namely *Mary Make-Believe/A Room With a View* (the latter title copied from E.M. Forster's 1908 novel) (HMV B-2719), and *Try to Learn to Love/Dance, Little Lady* (HMV B-2720). Carroll provided a piano accompaniment for *Lorelei*, which was coupled on HMV B-2737 with an occasional Coward song *The Dream is Over* (in due course used in the 1933 film *The Little Damsel* in which it was sung by Anna Neagle).

Attempts were made to adapt some of Coward's plays for the screen, but



without much success, because this was the silent film era. There was a world of difference between a witty one-liner spoken on stage and the same words projected for the cinema audience to read. Undeterred, in 1928 Michael Balcon of Gainsborough Films commissioned Coward to write a costume drama for Ivor Novello, with the title *Concerto*. It rapidly became apparent that this was a non-starter, and the project was called off, Coward returning his fee. His efforts were not wasted, however, because he used the plot as the basis for his next musical, the operetta ***Bitter Sweet***.

It opened at His Majesty's Theatre on July 18th 1929, with George Metaxa and Peggy Wood in the cast, and ran for 697 performances. There were several memorable songs, namely *If Love Were All, I'll See You Again*, *Zigeuner* and *The Call of Life*. Coward recorded the last-named, together with *World Weary* (which he wrote for the Broadway production of ***This Year of Grace*** in which it was introduced by Beatrice Lillie). He was again accompanied on piano by Carroll Gibbons, and the result was issued on HMV B-3158. The song "*If Love Were All*" contained the self-deprecatory lines "I believe that since my life began/The most I've had is just a talent to amuse". A secondary cast was assembled for a Broadway production to run in tandem; it toured in Boston starring Evelyn Laye, and opened on Broadway on the 5th

November, 1929, where it was a smash hit, and ran for 159 performances.

Next came ***Private Lives***, a comedy with music by Coward, which was the first play to be produced at the Phoenix Theatre when it opened on 24th September 1930. It starred Noel himself, Gertrude Lawrence, Lawrence Olivier and Adrienne Allen in a tale of entanglement between love and marriage. Accompanied by Ray Noble, Noel and Gertie recorded the Love Scene from Act 1, which introduced the song *Someday I'll Find You*, and a scene from Act 2, which were issued on HMV C-2043. The play included the memorable line "Extraordinary how potent cheap music is". It transferred to New York, and opened on Times Square on 27th January 1931.



Coward wrote just four numbers for ***Cochran's 1931 Revue***, which opened at the Pavilion on 19th March 1931, with a cast that included John Mills and Queenie Leonard, but it ran for only 27 performances. He recorded *Half-Caste Woman/Any Little Fish* with Ray Noble and they were issued on HMV B-3794. Both songs echoed themes already explored by Cole Porter, albeit more explicitly, in *Love for Sale* and *Let's Do It* respectively. Porter was happy for Coward to create several alternative sets of lyrics for the latter song, which he performed in cabaret. He also borrowed from Porter's "*Mrs. Lowsborough-Goodby*" and "*Fresh as a Daisy*".

TO BE CONTINUED

Leslie Jeffries

A Memory Lane exclusive by

Terry Brown



PART TWO

We continue the story from where Leslie Jefferies was appointed to the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne.

Eventually Jeffries made his Eastbourne debut on Sunday 22 April 1934. A reviewer, listening to Jeffries rehearsing for the broadcast wrote, 'I never realised how shivering sweet a waltz song could be until I heard Mr Leslie Jeffries rehearsing one with his orchestra Friday morning. His violin playing has the singing sweetness which makes his song melodies so haunting'. Following his debut, the *Eastbourne Gazette* complimented him on his performance, noting. 'He chose for his violin solos, Dvorak's *Songs my Mother Taught Me*, and Kreisler's *Tamborin Chinois*. Mr Jeffries playing was of the best quality, both in full purity of tone and charm of expression. His tone is remarkably steady and

seductive and his technique, very finished. No less successful was the performance of the orchestra. The management of the Grand Hotel are to be congratulated for having secured so admirable a violinist in succession to Mr Jones and Mr Sandler'. Following his first broadcast Jeffries was usually heard on Sundays at 9.00 or 9.30 once a month. He always featured himself in several violin pieces with his pianist Sydney Ffolkes, both as soloist and as accompanist, and frequently presented a featured singer such as baritone Foster Richardson, tenor Leonard Gowings, sopranos Vivienne Lambelet, Gaby Valle and Thelma Tuson, amongst others. This pattern of broadcasting continued for the next four years to March 1938. Bearing in mind that the Jeffries Orchestra was only six strong, including



himself, this is a pretty remarkable achievement.

Other than his Sunday broadcasts at the hotel itself, he played more frequently, usually six days a week, with additional special concerts. A reviewer in *The Stage* theatrical newspaper provides an explanation as to why Jeffries remained so popular for so long. In 1937 he wrote, 'At the Grand Hotel they've had Albert Sandler and Tom Jones. Each had his own standards, but Leslie Jeffries is a combination of them

both, and has his own knowledge of what a changing public requires. I doubt whether the Grand Orchestra has ever been of a higher quality than it is today. All the players are masters of their instruments and although there are only six of them, they have with the deft combination of a Mustel Organ a facility of sounding like a symphony orchestra when occasion demands. High spots of the programme are the piano solos of Sydney Ffoulkes. I have heard a lot of brilliant pianists, some more famous, some less famous than Mr Ffoulkes, but I have never had more satisfaction than from his playing, which covers a wide range. Leslie Jeffries' own work is marked by perfect execution, faultless quality of tone and a brilliant but entirely unobtrusive technique. And what an admirable setting for Mr Jeffries is the Grand Hotel itself; its spacious floors; its balconies and lofty columns soaring up



high to the roof through which the delicate sounds of the strings vibrate gently, and one gets the impression of being in a palace of melody'.

Apart from his broadcasts and enduring presence at the hotel, elsewhere over these four years, Leslie Jeffries and his Orchestra appeared in a musical short entitled *BBC Musicals No.2* made in 1936. Produced by song writer Horace Shepherd for his film production company Inspirational Films, Jeffries, with his usual line-up augmented to eight, performs *Hungarian Rhapsody No.1*. The short was re-issued as

Melodies of the Moment in 1938 and under this title it can be viewed on YouTube. Another first for Jeffries in 1936 was when he and his trio, consisting of himself, pianist Sydney Ffoulkes and viola player Horatio Fagotti, were invited to play at the Radiolympia Exhibition in London at the beginning of September 1936. They played three times a day over the first week of the exhibition's run. Another interesting excursion for Jeffries was his first appearance on a BBC television broadcast on 8 March 1937, where he performed with his pianist, Sydney Ffolkes. The show, much to the annoyance of a letter writer to the *Eastbourne Gazette*, could only be seen within a 30 mile radius of Alexandra Palace, from where it was broadcast. Ever popular for the whole of his stay at the Grand Hotel, especially on radio, Jeffries was also a regular recording

artiste. He had been signed by the Parlophone Company and had made his first record, *Springtime Serenade/The Balkan Princess*, in September 1934 (R1887). He followed this with around thirty more sides, mostly of operatic medleys and light orchestral works, rather than solos, through to 1937.

As mentioned earlier, Jeffries sojourn in Eastbourne came to an end in March 1938, with one final broadcast from the Grand made on 6 March. It was Jeffries himself who made this decision, telling the *Eastbourne Gazette* that he had been offered the opportunity to return to live touring, something he had missed being able to do whilst at the Grand. True to his word, the Leslie Jeffries Trio, consisting of Jeffries with James Robertson (piano) and Orazio Fagotti (cello), began a series of mainly cinema appearances from 4 April 1938, starting with the Gaumont Cinema, Streatham. Just prior to this, Jeffries had recorded four sides for the HMV Company on 9 March with an augmented studio group as Leslie Jeffries & his Orchestra. *Hey Gipsy*, *Play Gipsy* and *Dearest Love* were issued on HMV BD534, and *Tres Jolie* and *Le Petit Capitaine*, on HMV BD548. In May and June their cinema appearances included the Rialto, Walthamstow and the Paramount in Newcastle upon Tyne. In July, Jeffries also returned to regular radio work, again with a larger studio group based around his trio. In August, in between his cinema and radio appearances, Jeffries also took up the post of Musical Director for the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall, London, where he installed another six piece orchestra. He left his then current trio partners, James Robertson and Orazio Fagotti at the club, and used Jack Byfield (piano) and Reginald Kilbey (cello) for his cinema trio appearances which, during September, included the

Plaza, Rugby, 'with the permission of the RAC'.

Jeffries continued dividing his time between the RAC and cinema work, as well as radio, for the rest of the year. At the start of 1939, yet another opportunity arrived when he became Musical Director for the Carlton Hotel in London. As Leslie Jeffries and his Carlton Hotel Orchestra ('From the Carlton Hotel') he began regular BBC broadcasts from 11 January. Aside from these, towards the end of February, he also began Sunday concerts broadcast from the Royal Automobile Club. Unfortunately with the outbreak of war in September 1939, all public entertainment performances were stopped by government decree and the Carlton Hotel management had to let Jeffries go. Jeffries later said he would have returned to the Carlton immediately the performance ban was lifted but he decided to step back from performing to assess the likely impact of the war on his entertainment activities, as well as to take a breather as he had not had a proper break from working for more than ten years.

After several months out of action, the BBC announced that Jeffries had now reformed his orchestra and had returned to the Carlton Hotel, and would be making his first wartime broadcast on the 12 April 1940. Jeffries very quickly got back into the thick of things and, as well as regular broadcasting during the war years, he joined ENSA, taking both his orchestra and trio, and on occasions as a solo act, all over the UK and on the continent entertaining troops and factory workers, to popular acclaim. I should also add that between 1939 and 1945, Jeffries made a number of film appearances. In 1939, he performed *The Skaters Waltz* in Inspiration Films' *Radio Nights*, following which he made two

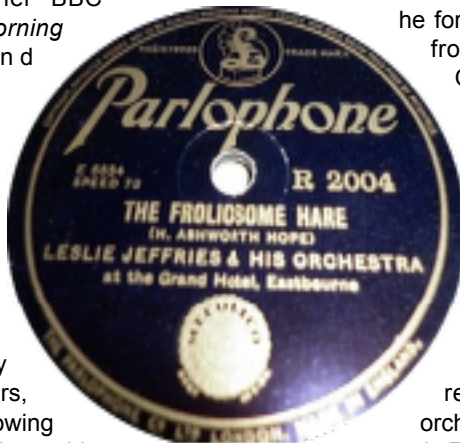
shorts with his trio in 1942, and one each in 1943 and 1944 for Pathe Pictorial, all of which can be seen on the Pathe site at YouTube. During 1943, Jeffries revived his old Rialto incarnation for touring purposes as 'Leslie Jeffries and his Rialto Orchestra' and he made a number of broadcasts under this name. At the BBC, he also became a regular on the *Break for Music* and *Variety Bandbox* series. Across 1944/5 into 1946, Jeffries broadcast at least once a month and was heard in further BBC series such as *Morning Melodies* and *Elevenes*.

Now fully established as one of the most popular light orchestras on the BBC, when the Grand Hotel in Eastbourne, which had been requisitioned for army use for some six years, announced that following a full refurbishment it would be taking paying guests once again, it seemed almost inevitable that, as reported by the *Eastbourne Gazette*, 'Leslie Jeffries' Orchestra has been engaged'. Jeffries made his first return performance at the Hotel on 28 September and would re-commence regular broadcasts from the Hotel on 10 October 1946. Jeffries played live at the Hotel from 4.00pm to 6.00pm ('During Tea') and 8.30pm to 10.15pm ('After Dinner') 'except Wednesdays', the band's day off. The *Eastbourne Gazette* gave a detailed report of Jeffries return noting, 'Leslie was given a most cordial welcome when he appeared in the crowded lounge of the Grand Hotel, and it was obvious from the first notes of his opening number that neither he nor his

orchestra had lost anything of the delightful style and touch that made them so popular in pre-war years'. The article mentioned that Jeffries had brought back two of his original orchestra, Frederick Cramer and Sydney Ffoulkes, and his musical programme included the *William Tell* Overture, a selection from *The Chocolate Soldier* and Handel's *Largo*.

From January, 1947, Jeffries became a regular on the BBC's Thursday *Music at Teatime* shows, then in July he formed a small off-shoot from his Grand Hotel Orchestra, the Chelsea Players, who began regular broadcasts on the *Friday Bright and Early* shows. For a large part of 1949 the Chelsea Players also performed on Sundays until Jeffries re-introduced his full orchestra, 'Leslie Jeffries and The Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, Orchestra', for regular Sunday broadcasts from 4 December 1949. The full orchestra, the Chelsea Players and on occasions Jeffries as a soloist or with his trio, continued broadcasting regularly, usually at least once a month right through to 1954. The *Eastbourne Herald* kept track of his broadcasts and here is an extract from one such article giving a flavour of a typical Jeffries radio programme. The broadcast discussed was made on Monday 10 July 1950.

'Leslie Jeffries and his Orchestra gave a varied programme of light music on Monday for which enthusiastic applause was given by an appreciative audience. The programme started on a



popular note, with a selection from Ivor Novello's *Dancing Years*, which included original arrangements of *I Can Give You Starlight*, *Waltz of My Heart* and *Leap Year Waltz*. In contrast to a spirited little piece, *The Village Children*, by Kalman, Sydney Ffoulkes gave a delightful rendition on the piano of his own composition, *Juliet*. A wide range of ballet was covered in a delightful selection which included excerpts from Gounod's *Faust*, Tchaikovsky's *Nut Cracker Suite* and Drago's *Serenade*. Leslie Jeffries showed a fine interpretation and technique of the intricate gipsy air *Zigeunerweisen* by Sarasate. This difficult piece, designed in many ways to tax the abilities of violinists, presented few difficulties to Leslie Jeffries who gave a polished, well timed and clear cut performance. *Blue Dream* by O'Hagen, and Liszt's *Liebestraum* were beautifully played by the trio, the solo cello part being taken by Edward Collinson, who left nothing to be desired in his interpretation. The programme concluded with a selection from *Faust*.

In 1952, Jeffries made a 20 minute short, filmed in the Hotel, for Inspiration Films called *Melodies from the Grand Hotel* in which he and his orchestra performed *Trees*, *La Donne e Mobile*, *The Canary* and an extract from *Hungarian Rhapsody*. Guests Dinah Kaye and Cavan O'Connor sang *These Foolish Things* and *I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen*, respectively. On 8

February 1953, Jeffries celebrated his 450th BBC broadcast from the Hotel, a world record at the time. With changing

tastes and new management at the BBC, broadcasting from the Hotel eventually came to an end and Jeffries made his last broadcast on 24 April 1954.



Leslie Jeffries at Eastbourne

Although no longer broadcasting, Jeffries became an enduring presence at the Grand Hotel, ever popular and one of the longest serving resident conductor/violinist Music Director for any Hotel, ever. He even returned to making recordings during his long tenure, including a long playing record *Music from the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne* for Oriole Records (MG20010 released January 1957). But eventually all good things come to an end and Leslie Jeffries' reign concluded on Friday 12 August 1960 when, after being taken ill whilst performing in the Grand Hotel's Palm Court on Thursday, the day before, he sadly died aged just 62.

Jeffries had a busy and very varied career really split into two halves, initially embracing the world of Jazz and dance bands, before moving to probably his first love, the violin and light music. Especially famed for his Palm Court broadcasts from the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, it should be remembered that his abilities as a violinist were second to none

Alex Mendham And his Orchestra

by Tony Bradley



PART ONE

The highly successful Alex Mendham Orchestra is one of the leading Orchestras today, performing the music of the Golden Age of the 1920s and 1930s. Alex has taken time out of his busy schedule to talk to *Memory Lane* readers about his life in music.

Welcome Alex. What is your background and what drew you to the music of the dance bands?

I'm from Essex. My parents were not particularly musical, but encouraged my early interest in music. As a child I had piano lessons, but I also persuaded my parents to buy me a saxophone. I took lessons during primary school and learnt the basics of keys, scales, pitch, intonation, and tone, but I was also self-taught up to the age of sixteen. I listened to recordings and developed musical phrasing by playing along and playing by ear. I also played regularly with a local Trad Jazz Band where I learned about improvisation. In my local music store, I discovered many jazz artists, but it was *At The Jazz Band Ball* with Bix Beiderbecke that really captivated me. I wondered if anyone was around today



who played that kind of music and who I could play it with. I was fifteen when I contacted Vince Giordano and he was very encouraging and enthusiastic. When I was seventeen, Vince invited me

to America, and that was a huge eye opener in learning about how to organise and run a band. I sat in with the Nighthawks quite a lot. This encouraged me to start my own band in the UK.

Do you have a favourite 78 recording, band, arrangement or song? Are there any gems in the collection?

Some of my favourite 78s are my collection of Anson Weeks radio transcriptions. They give me an idea of how a band might have put together a set list, or varied the programme and things like tempo and key changes. I

also like the announcements and introductions, it's like a window into that time. I really like the Coon - Sanders Nighthawks Orchestra, their music reflects the freewheeling spirit of the time. I like the Paul Whiteman and the Dorsey Brothers Orchestras, plus Ambrose and the arrangements of Lew Stone, on numbers such as *Do Something*, and his arrangement for Roy Fox on *Oh! Mo'nah*.

You studied with Bob Wilber and met ex Paul Whiteman saxophonist, Al Gallodoro. How important was this in your development as a musician?

Dan Levinson, a saxophonist with Vince Giordano recommended me to Bob, who lived in the UK, and Bob accepted me as a student of alto sax and clarinet for about five years. Bob had been taught by Sidney Bechet, and he had also played with Benny Goodman. He was a fantastic teacher and I improved dramatically when listening to his tone and trying to match that in person. Bob would also tell me about the fantastic musicians he knew, people like Jimmy Dorsey, Miff Mole, and Red Nichols. It was all so far removed from this young guy from Essex. It was an invaluable experience. I still rely a lot on what I was taught by Bob when I'm playing today. I didn't think anyone from the original Paul Whiteman Orchestra would still be around, but Dan organised for me to hear Al Gallodoro play. When we arrived I heard music coming across the car park and it sounded like a record from the 1930s, but as I got close, I realised it was live. I had never heard a saxophone sound that way today. Over lunch, Al told me about Paul Whiteman, and musicians such as Frank Trumbauer of Bix Beiderbecke fame, and Chester

Hazlett. It was a surreal experience, to meet someone who played with a band in the 1930s and who still played so beautifully. It made me realise that it was playing technique, and not just recording techniques, that were important in recreating the sound of the period.



You were twenty when you established your own Orchestra. Were there any difficulties the early days?

Yes, quite a few. It's always a work in progress. I placed an advert in a music newspaper, saying that I was a young guy looking to put together a band of young musicians, and that I was going to hold auditions. Within days I had over seventy e-mails, so there was definitely an interest amongst younger musicians for the music. Some of those original musicians are still with me. I was a little naïve when I first started and I lost money on the first few gigs, but we persevered and eventually gained a following. I was aware of other bands, but I also had a clear idea of what I wanted to achieve. I wanted to approach it with a fresh set of ears, and to try and bring something of the enthusiasm and excitement to the music that I heard on records. It was originally a young person's music, so I tried to assemble a band that reflected that, not necessarily younger musicians, but musicians with an excitement for the music.

What are the pressures of leading an Orchestra today?

I think changes in public taste. People still dance, but dancing as social entertainment as it used to be has gone.

Many people prefer to go out for a meal or go to the theatre. The restaurant dance floors have made way for more tables and to the undiscerning ear, it doesn't matter if it's a three piece jazz group or an orchestra playing, it's still background music. Disc Jockeys can provide for the increased variety of musical tastes today, which is much harder to do with a group of musicians. There is far more competition today, but I find that if anything is done well, there is a market for it. We perform concerts and keep busy performing for private parties and events. It's strange, we play music that was intended for dancing to a concert going audience, but much of it was of such high quality that it still works for a concert audience.

How do you ensure that your musicians are playing in an authentic style?

We listen to original recordings and also watch original footage. For example, the use of shake vibrato is not much used today, but by shaking the trumpet for example, a faster vibrato is achieved and it can also vary the pitch of the tone and lead to a warm, mellow, and

rounded sound. It's also important to gain experience in ensemble playing which many bands did so well. Ambrose is a good example, where three trombones could sound as if one musician was playing. Musicians need to blend with one another.

The Orchestra uses original period instruments. Does it make a difference?

For me it makes a massive difference. It's like trying to make a meal with the wrong ingredients. Modern instruments are often geared towards different or modern styles of music and other modern instruments, such as electric guitars. Plastic drum skins are different to calf skins and they can sound brighter for example. It's similar with many other instruments.

For further information, Alex has an informative website, full of information about himself and the Alex Mendham Orchestra, plus CDs and tour dates, which readers can find at: <http://www.alexmendham.com>

TO BE CONTINUED



Embassy

The Last Woolworths Record

By **John Phillips**



John Phillips

diameter with an orange and black label depicting the tiny mimosa flower, it was acoustically recorded on one side only. The blank side had moulded serrations in the shellac to prevent the small disc from slipping on the

turntable. Many featured out-of-copyright brass band selections highly truncated, bell solos, ballad songs by singers uncredited, and similar ephemera. One might hardly guess this to be a successful formula, but sales remained strong enough for it to be joined by another record company in 1923. The

Vocalion Record Co. introduced the "Little Marvel" disc in this year, the label had a light blue floral design on a white background. A prominent "W" was on display to allay any doubts as to its origin.

Similar in size to the "Mimosa" they were recorded on both sides, a practice quickly adopted by Crystalate for their miniature disc. In 1925 when the electrical process of recording improved sound quality, both labels were beginning to attract professional artistes. These mainly came from the Music Halls but were never identified or credited on the label. Woolworths even at this early date had created an image for itself which it was never to lose as a downmarket inexpensive store. Established and respected performers were naturally anxious regarding their reputation by appearing on the counters

of Woolworths with other cheap goods. However

on first playing it was not too difficult to recognize many of the singers.

Charles Penrose (The laughing policeman) and Leslie Sarony were unmistakable, fine

The story of Woolworths begins in 1878 when Frank Winfield Woolworth and later his brother Charles opened their first five and ten cent store on 22nd February in Utica, New

York City. By 1908

they had opened

562 stores across

America and

Canada, and

true to American

enterprise they

were looking

across the

Atlantic in order to

gain a foothold on

the European

Continent. Britain

became an obvious choice, a prosperous

country, high density population, and no

language problems. The first Woolworths

store selling nothing over sixpence

opened at Church Street, Liverpool in

1912. It rapidly became the focus of

great interest and popularity, and not just

the price factor, goods for the first time

were placed on open display on counters

for customers to examine before

purchase. By the early 1920s there was

not a city or large town in Britain that

could not boast having their own

Woolworths.

In 1921 Woolworths agreed a

contract with the Crystalate Record

Co. of Tonbridge in Kent for the

supply of miniature records which

could be played on any

gramophone. It was in this year

that the small "Mimosa" record

appeared on the Woolworth's

counters. Just over 5 inches in



singers like John Thorne and Stanley Kirkby had their 90 seconds of glory on "Mimosa" and "Little Marvel".

These miniature records which gradually increased in size to 6 inches were produced until 1928 when production came to an end.

Considering that many thousands of these records were sold over an eight year period, it is rather surprising how few of them seem to turn up today. Vocalion switching to their new "Broadcast" label pulled out of the bottom end of the market, leaving Crystalate to introduce their new 7 inch "Victory" record to the Woolworths counters. This disc featured an attractive yellow label with a picture of Nelson's flagship displayed across the top half. Selling at sixpence each new artistes, who were now credited, made their first appearance on "Victory". Albert Whelan, Tommy Handley (both popular on the wireless) even Al Bowly before reaching the height of his popularity appeared with the "Victory" Dance band directed by the redoubtable Jay Whidden. "Victory" records endured throughout the most turbulent crisis to face the record industry. Producing a luxury item the great depression had driven many record companies to the wall. Even the industry giants HMV and Columbia were to merge in an attempt to mitigate the worst effects of the crisis. It has to be noted this was a sad day for the record buying public. The healthy competition between the two companies was lost, and the new merger which in 1931 became EMI (Electrical & Musical Industries) turned into a conglomerate.



The prestigious name of HMV slowly eroded, eventually being overtaken by more enterprising members of the industry who records aside, produced better designed, and it has to be said more reliable products.

In April 1931 after a successful run of three years, "Victory" records were replaced by the celebrated 8 inch "Eclipse" record. Still selling at sixpence each and offering even better value, displaying the sun's eclipse, the bright red and gold label for dance band and light entertainment, blue label for more serious content. Jay Wilbur was overall musical director for both labels, and top-rate bands recorded for "Eclipse". Bertini and the Blackpool Tower Dance Band, Harry Leader, and Jay Wilbur himself directed a first class house band under many different pseudonyms. The Ambassadors 12, The Philadelphians, The Hottentots, The Radio Syncopators, the list goes on, all with a sound quality as previously mentioned able to match, and often surpass recordings made by rivals including EMI. "Eclipse" records provided inexpensive home entertainment for the many who faced hardship through a period of previously unknown recession. By September 1935 the crisis was beginning to ease a little as the economy started to pick up over concerns at what was happening in Germany. It was during this month that Woolworths introduced a new record to their counters.

Crystalate's 9 inch "Crown" record featured a black label (Later turning bright blue) picturing a gold

crown and lettering. Some very good performers appeared on this label, Rossini's Accordion Band (Harry Bidgood) Mrs Jack Hylton and her Band, Billy Merrin and his Commanders, and not forgetting an 18 year old London girl Vera Lynn. Still maintaining the same quality standards as Eclipse, this sixpenny label was cutting profit margins to the bone. After just 354 issues it all came to an end. In March 1937 Decca was able to purchase Crystalate for £200,000 and production of "Crown" records was stopped immediately. They adopted Crystalate's medium priced label (Rex) as their own budget label selling at one shilling and sixpence each. Some of the Crown artistes were transferred to this label, but for the first time in nearly twenty years the record counters of Woolworths remained empty. It is hardly surprising that no other record company stepped in to fill the gap. This situation lasted throughout the war years and it was not until 1954 long after Woolworths had abandoned its "nothing over sixpence" policy, that a new record was to appear on their counters.

Oriole Records Ltd had been established by the brothers Jacques and David Levy with their state-of-the-art modern studio situated at New Bond Street in Mayfair. They had been producing Oriole records since 1950. In February 1954 production was to proceed for the issue of a new "Embassy" record to be sold exclusively by Woolworths. These were 10 inch shellac discs with a bright silver and red label selling at four shillings each. Not particularly inexpensive when Decca records were available at the British Home Stores for four shillings and sixpence, but nevertheless still the cheapest on the market. They all



featured professional artistes and musicians who with a few notable exceptions were unknown to the general public. In order to keep costs low they were paid no royalties on record sales, agreeing to a fixed fee for a given number of recorded sides. To exploit the growing spending power particularly of the younger generation, the records were kept completely up to date with the latest "Hits" of the day taking priority. This required a rapid turnaround at all stages of production, very often taking as little as four days from studio recording to counter shelves. The records sold well with weekly UK sales in excess of 100,000 copies. Occasionally the Woolworths version would outsell the original "Hit". A classic case in point being the Connie Francis *Stupid Cupid* which climbed high into the charts, but was 'eclipsed' by the Maureen Evans version on Embassy. If a popular song happened to take your fancy and you were not too fussy as to who sang it, then the counters of Woolworths were ready to welcome you. Towards the end of the 1950s Embassy records were available in vinyl 45 rpm format; also EPs were issued of popular shows and light operetta all at a competitive price. After issuing 1,200 titles all this sadly came to an end.

In 1965 an American company CBS purchased Oriole, and showed no interest in continuing the supply of records to Woolworths. They seemed more concerned in getting their hands on Orioles well equipped studio and modern pressing plant at Aylesbury to produce their own products. The records sold by Woolworths over the previous 40 odd years were never going to achieve any long term historical or artistic merit, neither were they ever intended to be so. They are however part of the British recorded heritage.

In Your Own Write



The Editor's featured letters.

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PRESENTATION COLUMBIA RECORDS

I have acquired a 10" record album, sadly sans contents, inscribed "These three Presentation Columbia Records will enable you to enjoy at once the gramophone side of your instrument and suggest the immense variety of recorded entertainment available". Does anyone have any details of the records which might have been in it and when it was issued? Although it says "three" on the cover, the album does contain six envelopes. The wording suggests it was issued as a gift with the purchase of a radiogram.



Thank you in anticipation

**Richard Prout
Barlby
North Yorkshire**

PHYLLIS ROBINS DISCOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Are there any discographical details of Phyllis Robins available anywhere,

please? The recordings she made with dance bands are listed in the Brian Rust/Sandy Forbes Dance Band Discography, but there are other records she made that were not as part of a dance band. I am hoping there is something substantial somewhere!

**Richard Prout
Barlby
North Yorkshire**

DAVID McCULLUM

In the 1960s, there was an actor David McCullum and a violinist of the same name in Mantovani's Orchestra. Were they related?



**Martin Pascoe
By E-mail**

Editor: They were father and son. David Keith McCallum Sr. (26 March 1897 – 21 March 1972)

was the Scottish leader (principal first violinist) of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Scottish National Orchestra.

Early in his career, he arranged music for several local silent cinemas. He also played in the cinema trio and it was here that he met his wife, cellist and orchestral violinist Dorothy Dorman. In 1922, he broadcast as a solo violinist for the first time. Between 1932 and 1936, he led the Scottish Orchestra in Glasgow under John Barbirolli, then was asked by Sir Thomas Beecham to lead the London Philharmonic Orchestra in succession to Paul Beard, who had joined the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

During World War II, McCallum led the National Symphony Orchestra and played with the London Studio Players and the BBC's Overseas Music Unit. After the war, McCallum rejoined Beecham, this time as leader of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He had several small roles in movies.

From 1961 to 1971 he was leader of Mantovani's orchestra. At this time, his son David McCallum Jr. was at the height of his fame, prompting Mantovani to introduce his leader to audiences with the quip, "We can afford the father but not the son!".

David Keith McCallum, Jr. (born 19 September 1933) is an actor and musician. He first gained recognition in the 1960s for playing secret agent Illya Kuryakin in the television series *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*. In recent years, McCallum has gained renewed international recognition and popularity for his role as NCIS medical examiner in the American television series *NCIS*.

BLUE GRASS BLUES

Does anyone know of a CD, or posses a 78 rpm of *Blue Grass Blues* on the Regal G series? I remember John Gunn, publisher of the famous record trading magazine *Gunn Report*, had a copy many years ago, but have not heard it since. No such record is listed in the Brian Rust/Sandy Forbes Dance Band

Discography so it must be American or by an artiste other than a British dance band. Any help would be much appreciated.

Peter Bangs
Clacton-on-Sea

KEN SYKORA AND FRANK WAPPAT BROADCASTS

I recently acquired some old cassette tapes of radio programmes about dance bands. The earliest one was introduced by Ken Sykora and he played among other things, *I'm In The Market For You* by Ambrose, *Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries* by Roy Fox and the Boswell Sisters singing *When I Take My Sugar To Tea*. Ken's presentation manner was excellent describing the Ambrose band as so well paid that singer Sam Browne could propose a merger before playing *I'm In The Market For You!* Another cassette was of a broadcast by Frank Wappat called *They Called Me Al*, a very informative programme with Harry Hayes and others recalling the Al Bowly they knew.

I wonder if anyone reading this knows when these programmes were made and from which station.

Ken Moy
By E-mail

Editor: The Ken Sykora broadcast was was almost certainly broadcast on the BBC Light programme during the late 1950s or early 1960s. I would certainly be pleased to publish any further details if anyone reading this can supply them. Frank Wappat told me he made the programme *They Called Me Al* for broadcast from pirate off-shore station Radio 390, the sweet music station, in the mid 1960s. This was some time before Frank started broadcasting from BBC Radio Newcastle which was not until the following decade.



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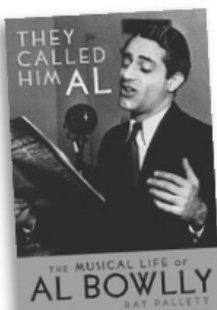
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