PERFORMANCE
Magazine

No.9

the ENTERTAINMENT ISSUE

SHOWBIZ FUNDAMENTALISM, INSIDE THE GENERATION GAME, HISTORICAL BANQUETS

PLUS

IVOR CUTLER INTERVIEW

SPRING PREVIEW

60p

No9

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The Performance Magazine.
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ISSN No 0144-5901

The Performance Magazine receives assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain.

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The ENTER

ENTERTAINMENT ISSUE

Every popular artistic experience, visual, theatrical, or electronic, has a dark, unacceptable side and a bright, well lit side. It just depends on what angle you look at it from. In particular the activity which we call Entertainment, existing more or less everywhere in the industrialised world, forms a self-admiring network of jovial consensus, within which, there are many resonating layers of experience. Some are considered aesthetic and 'reviewable'; others, while not necessarily seamy, are in a strict no-mans-land of exploitation, resounding with Sir Charles Forte's oily dictum 'Giving them what they want'. The consensus, while binding together outrageously disparate elements, consists of a mutual desire to Have Things Done to One. Sexual or religious in origin, it leads us from cowering in cathedrals to being dragged through Disneyland. The classic metaphor for this desire, which is both highly sexual and sexless, godly and godless, is Showbiz. This, by way of its sheer immodesty, is bound to dominate any study of Entertainment, (and indeed any study of world affairs, post-Reagan). But although Showbiz is important, because it is 'timeless' and represents a false stability in an unstable world it is not the whole picture.

Everything you look at in the Entertainment world can be traced back almost inevitably to a source with almost opposite ideals and aspirations. Early experimental theatre, for example, provides the inspiration for 'participatory' theme meals in the medieval and tudor styles. (Indeed some of the extras, clowns and minstrels, are refugees from the impecunious subsidised arts.) In the live waxwork shows and audio-visual 'experiences' there is reflected clearly the environmental work undertaken by visual artists at the start of the last decade. As for social realism, the Generation Game on TV, provides an exact mirror image for those who wish to depict alienation in work and the family, using exactly the same research and simulation for reinforcement, as opposed to de-conditioning processes. (An interesting drop-out in this area is Bingo. The materialistic scourge of the sixties has been deodorised, socialised, removed from the popular 'craze' origins. An artform dedicated to the pure worship of money, it was too accurate a reflection of society to be acceptable, so the authorities borrowed the premise of community artists in diversifying the delights of the Bingo Hall.)

On the whole, it could be said that the vulgarisation of any artform is its final and truest manifestation, that the inevitable movement toward decorativeness and triviality is a force to be reckoned with. Not closed to this view, the Performance Magazine decided, partly in a seasonal spirit, but also feeling that a serious look at Entertainment, poised as it was between actual culture and no-culture, was long overdue. We found by a process of automatic selection, those places seeming appropriate in terms of bizarreness and relevance, and who were willing to entertain our writers. In all cases, we met unquestioning co-operation, which must say something. We hope that those establishments which come under a somewhat keener gaze than they might have expected will forgive us in the age old Entertainment spirit of 'Any Publicity is Good Publicity'.

Showbiz Fundamentalism

The Talk of the Town

I can't say that it was exactly the fulfilment of a dream but it certainly satisfied an intermittently felt curiosity. There it's been since 1958, confidently lodged next door to Leicester Square Tube Station, a London landmark of sorts. It used to be the London Hippodrome, since 1900 traditionally the home of showbiz spectacle. It's **'The Talk of the Town'**, self-styled as 'The World's Most Lavish Theatre-Restaurant.' During the day it's used for Conferences, Promotions and Product Launches. In the evening it offers 'the complete night out' — '* Spectacular Floorshow * Star Cabaret * A Superb 3-Course Dinner and Coffee * Dancing to 3 Live Bands'.

Steeped as I am in the folklore of the movie nightclub and saloon (there's a thesis to be written on this setting as a pivotal social nexus) my hopes ran high. Would there be a cigarette girl? A back-room gambling den? A police raid?

No such luck. There *is* a discreetly lit Cocktail Lounge (Waiter Service only). But most people head straight for the main restaurant, a vast lay-out of tables banked in a rising semi-circle, plus balcony, facing a dance-floor and stage. The tables are crammed uncomfortably close together in order to pack in as many people as possible — about five to seven hundred, I'd say. Stage machinery smoothly slides one bank on as it slides another one off, so there's no let-up in music throughout the evening. As a sign of the esteem in which The Performance Magazine is already held in London's Nite-Spot world, we are escorted to a table right next to one side of the dance-floor — with our backs to the stage! Our table companions are a couple who speak nary a word to each other and avoid eye contact with us. It is Friday evening, the place is packed out. No trace of London's *jeunesse doré* here. Indeed few *jeunes* of any kind are to be seen. This is a night-spot for the middle-aged, for the odd family group, for the firm's outing. After being welcomed, as Gentlepersons of the Press, by the Head Waiter himself, we ordered — 'Saumon Duglère' (Poached Darne of Salmon) for my companion of the night, and, for me, 'Carré d'Agneau Rôti de la Menthe' (Roast Best End of Lamb with mint sauce, to the groundlings). While still coping with a very drab *hors d'oeuvre*, I suddenly found my right leg moving slowly upwards to resounding music. I shifted it smartly under the table, for the entire dance floor is rising up to become a large forestage. Robert Nesbitt's floor-show, *'Revue Bubbly'* is about to begin.

It's one long song-and-dance spectacular — 'Talk of the Town Salutes the Great Night Spots of the World'. The Grand Tour features 'Maxim's 1910' (lots of can-can squeals and saucy bottom-pinching), 'On the Town in New York', 'Disco Crazy', 'On the Strip in Las Vegas' ('the happiest town of them all'), 'Geisha Revue', 'Copacabana Revue' and the climatic tableau, London's 'Champagne Shower', complete with real bubbles ('Forget all your troubles... Life is a bubble tonight'). Cohorts of leggy chorines with impassively gleaming smiles and headily outsize headgear, four token chorus boys a gleamingly photogenic vocal quartet, plus lead singer 'Blayne Barrington' coming on as a kind of Super Mr Showbizswinger — all cavort their way through a series of lavishly costumed, impeccably drilled routines, dazzling in their high-energy banality. The spirit of Florenz Ziegfeld, it seems, is not dead. The numbers include the great showman's theme song, 'A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody', and at one point the girls actually slowly descend a staircase. Of course, the incestuous 'Nightspot Hommage', format has been shrewdly chosen. It at once absolves them of the task of producing anything really original; it feeds the audience's nostalgia; and, by placing London as the last stop on the tour, it serves to promote The Talk of the Town itself as the ultimate in showbiz glamour.

As for the chorus girls, they clearly embody one common idea of female sexuality: a vision of elongation (the high heels and headgear,) acres of exposed flesh complemented by acres of even more glittering addornment, plus, of course, uniformity. A sure-fire combination. (Oddly enough the programme bills the female dancers as 'the dancers' and the male dancers, demeaningly, as 'the boys.')

Seated as we are next to the stage, the breeze from all those swirling feathers adding a disconcerting al fresco element to our meal, we are in a good position to see how all this razzle-dazzle, this Folies Bergères sans bare tits, looks in gruelling close-up. The answer is: impeccable. Not a wrinkled stocking. Not a drooping plumage in sight. The splendidly outlandish costumes are in tip-top condition and the performers, who have to make several quick changes, work hard. It's fast, slick, snappy consummate professionalism in the service of the gloriously inane. There is something timeless about this entertainment, pitched in musical sensibility somewhere to the distant right of the middle of the road, a kind of distillation of Popular Showbiz that, give or take a detail or two, could have been staged at any time during the last fifty years. It may be the kind of show you always avoid watching on Saturday night TV but, no question, seen live, vulgarity on this shamelessly uninhibited scale has a breathtakingly saving chutzpah.

As the last bubbles of the final tableau drift away and the forestage descends, I feel moved to crack the oppressive silence of our table companions. 'Been here before?' I ask. At once they spring into animated sociability. They come from County Sligo and are on their way to a Ham Radio Convention in Leicester. They don't think much of either the food or the entertainment. 'Never have I seen so much flesh exposed', he confides, adding as a quick afterthough '— at such close quarters.' As for London, it has deteriorated badly since their last visit. She deplores the quality of the shops, while he is disturbed by the large influx of black people. 'Enoch Powell was right', he wistfully informs us....

We decide to take a turn on the now crowded dance-floor. It's the kind of music that makes you feel like snapping your fingers — slowly. Among the couples I notice more than one May-September combination, suggesting that the Escort Agencies are in business tonight.

Returning to our table, a hostess approaches us to collect payment for a photograph taken of us earlier by the House Photographer. It turns out to be £3.80p — 30p more than the price originally quoted. When I question this I'm told that the extra 30p is for postage. 'Don't worry, I don't need your thrity pee', the hostess reproves me as if she's used to saying it. 'I don't make the rules. I just obey orders.'

Judy Garland appeared here. So did Ethel Merman, Sammy Davis Jnr., Alma Cogan and the Beverley Sisters. But tonight at 11.00 pm our International Star of the evening, making his fourth appearance here, is — 'Kamahl'. Not perhaps the most reassuring celebrity for our Irish friends, Kamahl is a stocky mature Ceylonese-Malaysian singer from Australia. Confident in his genuine gift, his stage manner is engagingly modest and laid-back after the flashiness of the Revue; but, apart from an enjoyable rendering of 'Stand up and fight until you hear the bell' from 'Carmen Jones' his repertoire is direly conventional, including such crowd-pleasers as 'The Impossible Dream', 'My Way', 'Hava Nagila and 'Ol' Man River'. He gets the audience to join in the choruses and also finds out where we all come from. It's just like Butlin's — only international. There turn out to be proudly patriotic parties from France, Italy, Sweden and Finland,

and a particularly rowdy table identify themselves as Amsterdammers. At the end of his hour-long act, Kamahl goes around the edge of the forestage shaking hands with the lucky ones. Your correspondent did not flinch from taking part in the ritual....

When the cabaret ends at midnight most of the clientele leave, though the place is open for another hour. The man next to me in the toilet remarks to a friend: 'I've had better grub in oor works canteen.' He has a point. With the exception of a rather tasty dessert called 'Coupe Bubbly' the grandly named food is pretty glum, in fact well down to the standard we expect of Charles Forte, which is hardly surprising since 'The Talk of the Town' is in fact the brainchild of that very restauranteur, together with impresario Bernard Delfont and producer Robert Nesbitt.

Their faces leer at you in unflattering close-up from the souvenir programme. Sir Charles Forte, we learn, is 'the man whose ideas have revolutionized many of the places where Londoners go to eat and celebrate. Simply, his main idea was to give them what they want. It is his secret, though, to give them a little more than they expect.' Whoever wrote that copy never dined at The Talk of the Town.

'His main idea was to give them what they want.' This sounds familiar. The same profitably generous principle animates the whole Holiday Camp movement, and The Talk of the Town is nothing if not a more spectacular variation of that milieu, complete with its all-in package price, maty community entertainment and dire grub. Despite the discreet foreign waiters and Fabergé Product Display in the foyer, it's all about as sophisticated as a wax pineapple.

Yet this ersatz quality, the feeling that the whole shebang is nothing but a vast *simulation* is, I suspect, one key to understanding its perennial appeal. Its not just that it's all so reassuringly familiar, (after all, everyone has seen something like this before) Rather, by taking the familiar to its rarely seen optimum, it forcefully reaffirms the primacy of 'Show' business as one enduring and reliable value in an otherwise crazy mixed up world. Moreover, since the experience is totally controlled from the moment you enter to the moment you leave allowing little freedom of movement or choice, you have something pretty close to an authentic *ritual*, complete with its high priest (the International Star who offers himself to be touched) and Rhine (stone) maidens. Yes, the Talk of the Town is a Temple of sorts, one of the few remaining outposts of showbiz fundamentalism in a be-wilderness of shifting taste.

I wouldn't have missed it for all the tea-services in Chinacraft. **Neil Hornick**

Our critic and his wife surprised enjoying a joke by the house photographer at the Talk of the Town.

Inside the Generation Game

Can a class stereotype be innocent? Is a questionably gay comedian acceptable because he is 'Harmless'? Can 36 NALGO pensioners from Hastings all be wrong? What does 'shut that door' really mean? .....

I asked the last question to the press officer assigned us on our visit to 'The Generation Game' rehearsals at Shepherds Bush. She didn't know. It was probably some thing left over from Larry's music hall days. Did we know Larry Grayson used to be in music hall? No, we didn't, but it was easy to believe. On television, it passes unnoticed, but even in a rehearsal with few spectators, Grayson played to the sparse faces in the empty stalls rather than the looming cameras.

What was the function of a programme like 'The Generation Game', I asked our friendly informant. Its good earthy fun, she replied. It isn't cruel, no one is made a fool of. Would-be contestants write in from all over the country. Then, teams of researchers go and meet them in their homes and assess their suitability for television exposure. They didn't want raving extroverts, just ordinary people, willing to have a bit of fun. It was even possible to become an inadvertant celebrity, like 'Mucky Maisie'.... she had got covered in the glue she supposed to be scooping from tins to jars and had become briefly a celebrity, making follow up appearances on this and other programmes. (I remembered working in a factory where women did this job scooping stinking glue — with their bare hands, always accurate). The games are based on suggestions from viewers, often based on their real life jobs. Their suitability as games is tested out by the research team, who fearlessly play them all.

I suggested that 'The Generation Game' perhaps took the place of the parlour games people played in the old days. Yes, she thought, that was probably true. A national parlour game, with 'Mucky Maisie' as the best 'sport'....

Where had the idea for the series originally come from? It had been developed from an idea on Dutch television. The press relations person seemed proud of the international connections of TV games. 'Blankety Blank' was an American idea, this one Dutch. National characteristics made a difference, however. The British shows did not have the emphasis on big money prizes of their transatlantic counterparts. The contestants in 'The Generation Game' received only the prizes they had earned. There was no appearance fee. British audiences were not so much interested in the money, rather in the fun of remembering the potential prizes which passed before the winner on a conveyor belt. This sequence was played back to the audience so that they could check that only the remembered gifts were received, to see fair play. If we stayed for the show, we would see for ourselves.

While we talked, one of the games was in rehearsal. Professional stand ins took the place of that night's contestants. (These meanwhile, were being entertained by the BBC at its other studios, meeting stars, having a meal... They did not arrive at Shepherds Bush until six o'clock, just in time to meet Larry and Isla before going straight on air). The stand ins were trying to pipe meringue baskets. The man who demonstrated had been making them for twenty five years.

Our informant was telling us about the relationship between stars and producers. I had been interested in the difference between an old time performer developing an act in direct contact with the audience, an individual skill modified through experience, and the modern importance of the TV producer. She told me that some stars, Perry Como and Val Doonican for example, will only work with certain producers. Como will fly in, not knowing and not wanting to know anything about the show. He trusts completely in his producer, a young woman. Shirley Bassey's producer had had her sent up in a hot air balloon which went off course, strapped to the prow of a lifeboat during its launch — 'She didn't know she would get wet' — filmed in a rocket at Cape Kennedy. The trouble with this sort of thing, the press officer sagely observed, was that it always came down to 'where next?' After Cape Kennedy, the moon? On stage, they were into their third run through of the 'play' that was to be the last of the evening's games. They had rehearsed it three times, once with the evening's guest stars, once with stand ins, now again with the stars, in costume. Aimi MacDonald played My Lady, Isla St Clair — Larry Grayson calls her 'Isle' — her maid. A body in the drawing room, the famous French detective 'Hercules Perriptt' as Grayson called him.... they read their words from giant cards. At each entrance, Grayson, playing the butler, changed his props. First he summoned my lady with a whistle, next a trumpet — an excuse this for some campy

high kicks to the delight of the Army Physical Training Team now watching from the stalls (they had demonstrated the first game). Lastly, a pocket siren, which made an incredible noise. My lady and Isla make their entrance, climbing out of a chest stage right. 'Come on girls, cock your legs up'. The occupant of a suit of armour stage left gets to goose Aimi as she pretends to faint. Lastly she falls on the couch next to Grayson. 'mind this instrument I've got in front of me' (the siren).... Despite all the double entendres flying, we were told that they once abandonned a game involving making candlesticks because it was too phallic. The man who scripted the play ran forward with a few ideas for more stage 'business'. The 'Programme associate', his job was to think up things like this play. He was middle aged and looked like a bookmaker. It was time to go next door for a drink before the show.

In the pub, I reviewed my reactions so far. The major feeling was one of childish enjoyment. It was lovely to watch things in rehearsal, to get a glimpse into a secret world where glamorous stars wear comfy cardigans and ordinary faces, and were outnumbered ten to one by technicians, grey haired men in shirt sleeves, operating complex machinery, while young girls with clip boards fetched and carried.... The show used live music, and 'some of the best session men in the world' were shut up in a little box to play tunes appropriate to the events on stage. It was all so crazy and old fashioned, so harmless.... and yet, I knew it wasn't at all harmless; that the dangerous stereotypes of 'family' and 'work' on which it was based have been the source of untold damage in countless individual lives. These stereotypes were the model for the silly games.... but I had been able to stop myself from laughing at those games, nor from admiring the skills of Isla and Larry; the timeless, rapport between audience and performer which really kept the whole thing going. It felt suspiciously like singing songs in the underground during the Blitz, like listening to Gracie Fields or Max Miller, some sort of national duty.

A little drunk, we returned for the performance. We were seated upstairs in the theatre balcony, which also housed, closed off, the complex mixing and control panels. The warm-up man was onstage. He tells some mildly dirty jokes... 'Who are all the unmarried men in the audience? All the ones who are smiling...' He mentions the party from Hastings, the NALGO pensioners, here thanks to the efforts of our friendly press officer. The producer appears, wearing a blue velvet suit, and tells us that when he waves his arms, we must applaud as loudly as we can. It has something to do with the ratings. We applaud him, just for practice. The contestants come in. I can't believe that they have just arrived. What must it feel like, I wonder, to be going out in front of so many people.... 'Hey Ho Off WE GO' it says on the monitor above our heads. The orchestra, far below, strikes up the signature tune. We raise the roof, as instructed. Grayson's well cut suit conceals the belly that a comfy cardigan had earlier revealed. Isla St Clair is introduced, in an orangey red dress with sequin flowers on the shoulders. She gives Larry a 'JR' doll sent in by Betty from Bromsgrove. (We had earlier been told that the stars are inundated with gifts. Women knit them sweaters...) The first contestants are introduced, 'Nesta and Paul Rooks!' Isla learns all her cues by heart, and delivers them with remarkable energy, as if she really means them. Unlike Grayson, she is supremely camera conscious and fiercely professional. We learn, Grayson reading from a card, that Nesta had asked her husband to marry her, after a four year court-

ship. They had met in 1939, working as conductress and driver of the same bus. Her son was an ambulance man, and had delivered eleven babies. He used to keep white mice in the cupboard. Next, a mother and son from Kent. She looks very young but has had seven children. Her son is twenty eight and unmarried. One day, he was sitting in the living room when the ceiling fell in on him. Once out fishing, his cast went astray, and the hook ripped out the seat of his friend's pants. The researchers do their work well. Family secrets come tumbling out, the surrealistic underbelly of normal life. The first game features the Army Physical Training School (at least its not the SAS). They make a mess of their routine, and the sequence has to be re-recorded. The contestants have to join in the routine, throwing heavy medicine balls to shouted commands. They get it all wrong, and I find myself laughing helplessly. The games go on. One, featuring matching tunes with musical instruments, is not a success. It is hard to understand what was required, and two of the contestants score nothing. Isla is obviously upset by this; it doesn't seem to quite fit in with the spirit of fun. Earlier, I had asked if anything ever goes wrong — had a contestant ever lost their temper, or got upset? Had there ever been an accident? I was assured that this had never happened.... the contestants were so carefully chosen. Nesta and Paul have survived to the final game, the play we watched rehearsed. Nesta proves herself indeed full of fun as the proceedings get ever more chaotic and Roy Hull and EMU — surprise guests — emerge from under the corpse's sheet. Emu promptly begins to peck at everyone in sight. When I saw this later on TV, in a shop window on Saturday evening, the cameras closed in on the puppet bird pecking at bottoms and crotches as Grayson sounded his siren.... After the fun and games, the surprise guests (the Nolan Sisters make a brief appearance at one point, smiling in the contestants doorway — they are not seen again, and certainly don't sing...) the evening's climax is reached. The overall winner is sat, stage centre, in front of a conveyor belt of consumer goods. The effect is somewhat spoiled when the scene shifters move in and we see that the belt is only a few feet long. Young men stand at either end loading and unloading the goods. On screen it looks like an endless stream of products, a consumer's cornucopia of carving knives, cut glasses and kitchen gadgets. If there isn't a cuddly toy amongst them, we were told, viewers write in to complain. The total value of possible prizes never mounts up beyond three hundred pounds.

Nesta takes her seat, and the belt is rolled. As the goods slowly pass, the amplified voice of the producer names them. When the belt stops moving, Nesta is sat on a very high chair, stage front. At a given signal, she must name all the goods she can remember. Each one she names becomes her prize. Grayson helps her, the audience cries out, a young woman in front of me shouts 'an ice cream maker' time and time again until it is finally mentioned from the stage. Nesta's recorded voice is played back to us as the prizes are brought in. Competitors and guests crowd the stage for their final bows.

After the show, there is a party upstairs, with peanuts and white wine, the dressing rooms crowded with people. Tonight, Isla's parents, who had been in the audience, will be amongst them. I find myself wishing that we could go too, so successfully has the air of cosy family fun been created. The bubble bursts, I wake up, I reject the family. I reject the systems and heirarchies that this show embodies and exemplifies. The producer, and our friendly press officer with their top-drawer accents, and the technicians in shirt sleeves being serviced by the young girls with clip boards — embody the studio as a metaphor for a society. The horrible prizes, however they glitter, are designed to keep Nesta endlessly at home, making ice cream, mixing up cakes, polishing glass ware. You even have to be part of a bona fide family before you can take part. So it looks like no peanuts for the likes of me, not ever, no fear. The power of such shows however is to make me capable, even just for a second, of a certain twinge of regret. As we join the respectable crowd thronging down towards the exits, a young man turns to his woman companion. 'The trouble with coming to something like this,' he observes, 'is that when you watch the programme again, it's never the same'.

Lynn MacRitchie

The Peasants are Revolting

Audience Participation at 'The Beefeater'

Andrea Hill

St Katherine's Dock is notorious among artists working in the Wapping area as a kind of foreboding of their own fate; the SPACE and other converted warehouse studios in Wapping are due for redevelopment and up-marketing (rumour has it that the Daily Telegraph is planning a move there, into a chic glass-walled building that allows passers-by to observe the printing presses in action), and St Katherine's Dock is the hated and feared example of the outcome. A small pleasure-haven in the midst of one of the dreariest and most bashed-about neighbourhoods of London, it is sealed off from its surroundings by a lagoon sporting romantic sail boats, a pub festooned with coloured lights, the World Trade Centre, the Tower of London, an expensive collection of riverside apartments, the classy Tower Hotel, and... the Beefeater Restaurant. A sense of fantasy and unreality slides over you as soon as you start looking for a place to park, it increases as you walk through the pedestrians only/houseboat party district, and by the time you hit the Beefeater, you're irredeemably in never-never land, almost without noticing.

Let me say straight away that, at the Beefeater, not only is beef not on the menu, but the food in general is well this side of terrific. I'll go further and reveal that 'my companion' as they say in the Time Out restaurant columns, declared that she was 'starving' after a five course meal. Yes. after nigh-invisible portions of pate, soup, fish things, chicken, and fruit hard as a rock, the hunger pangs — enhanced by a day's anticipatory fasting — were still there. Still, it was better than beans on toast, and there was an enormous amount to drink — jugs of wine and beer refillable on request. My only serious complaint in the food department was the absence of a cup of coffee at the end of the meal.

There's no time wasted at the Beefeater in getting the hapless 'peasants', as diners are called, involved in the evening's festivities. One's hand is kissed (only if one is female presumably) on entering the door by a man in puffed sleeves — luckily there is a ladies room nearby for collapsing with helpless laughter. All the tables, each seating about 40 people, have different names; ours was Kensington Palace. An amiable jester accosts you with questions about where you're from (which made me long for Circus Lumiere's routine — 'Is there anybody here who isn't from England?... Well fuck off back to your own country!'), a few 'wenches' with those hats like brioches and other assorted persons in medieval costume make small talk, big paper hats were distributed ('like sick bags' quipped my comp. when we discovered we couldn't hold a conversation with them on our heads), keepers of food and drink were appointed at each table, and heads of table are introduced, toasted, cheered, and made to wear embarrassing capes. Before long, a crucial principle for the night's entertainment is established — audience participation. Throughout the evening we're encouraged to sing with the Royal Entertainers, to beat on the tables as applause, to shout out 'Bring out the next remove' for more food. It's interesting to speculate where the radical impulse in fringe theatre of a decade ago towards active viewer involvement originally came from. The Beefeater seemed to be informed by music hall cum speedy tourist-engulfment. The latter aim, to beguile tourists and take in money, is not a fringe aim of course, but what is common to both cases is the pressure of time. To put it crudely, when there are only two or three hours to convince or captivate the audience, then the quickest, most foolproof way to do it is to proceed without undue sensitivity. Whatever resentment is felt by the audience in the first hour at having their privacy trampled and being made to react to people in whom there is no a priori reason to be interested, will probably disappear in the second hour to be replaced by feelings of euphoria and goodwill and belonging to a friendly group, no matter how temporarily.

The facade, like the DC10, exhibits dangerous hairline cracks in places. A couple of performers looked pissed off, bored, or wildly amused at the audience's expense. More disturbing were some excessively clean-shaven, grey-suited, sinister-looking characters hanging about the bar. Gangsters? Thugs? Bouncers? Managers? Or maybe just guests — the lords and ladies. In any event, the question arose — how out of hand can all this enjoyment get, and at what point does nastiness seep in? It's not that there was a real possibility of drunken brawls and smashed heads, but the grey men were symbols, like the skull at the bottom of a Holbein, that nothing's ever as much fun as it seems, or even if it is, it won't last long. The Titanic always springs to mind on these occasions, one minute all's merry celebration and confetti and funny hats, the next minute — almost like moral retribution for behaving like a jackass — horror overtakes the proceedings and everyone dies.

Morbidities aside, most of the performers at the Beefeater knew their stuff, and carried it out in the glorious tradition of the Hack. The sword balancer, impervious to jeers and cheers and flashbulbs going off in his face, balanced his sword on his nose, with aplomb. Knives of various kinds were passed to the audience to prove their acute sharpness — to tell the truth they were pretty blunt — before being utilised in daredevil tricks. O there were jesters and jokers and kings (no queens) and troubadors and maids and decorative characters of every kind. There was a 'Dockyard Doris', an immense man who reappeared in several tarty female guises (it seems inappropriate in context to call it 'drag'), and at one stage burst on the scene in a little cart with a light blinking on the top of his head. Everyone was very camera conscious — if they noticed a picture being taken, they held their pose till the flash went off.

The historical mixed with the surreal — Dockyard Doris was truly weird, so was a pale and languishing jester — though it might just have been his makeup. So was a woman sitting at the end of our table who looked severe, Germanic, tormented and batty. After the last 'remove' (pears you could hit with a hammer without damaging) an extraordinary thing happened. The entertainment package slipped sideways into another dimension — historical pretences were dropped and the royal entertainers launched into lusty renditions of 'John Browns Body is a Mouldering in the Grave', 'K-K-K-Katie' 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling' and 'It's a long way from Tipperary'. It was Saturday night at a pub which locks everybody inside at midnight, blocks up the windows, and indulges in nostalgic shenanigans till dawn. Everyone was invited to dance. Everybody danced. The performers disappeared. A jukebox was turned on full blast. A JUKEBOX. At 11.45 they kicked everyone out. I should have known it all along. We weren't at a medieval banquet at all or even a reasonable facsimile of one — we were at a thinly disguised disco.

Andrea Hill

The 'hapless peasants'.

Silicone Gremlins

Palladium Cellars

To be honest, the idea of watching waxwork dummies with silicon gremlins in them doing unspeakably gruesome things to their like has its fascination. For one thing, it would be interesting to see how revolting they could be in comparison to their human counterparts.

And while we're at the height of the silly season (it hasn't stopped this year) why not indulge in the juvenile fantasy of watching particularly ghastly green slimy things chomping away at human entrails? Add to this the fact that a visit to the *Palladium Cellars* conjures up visions of gargantuan iron stage machinery in dank and rat infested (probably haunted as well) cellars, and you may well wonder what better way to idle through a lazy afternoon.

Things start off promising: I arrived to the comment 'You wanna see the *show*'. It doesn't sound much, I admit, but when it's delivered by the kind of chap you expect to see toting tickets for a Soho flesh show, with a rather wicked leer on his face, you reckon there must be something worth seeing down there. By the way, this fellow was, for the most part, human — the next one you meet downstairs is most definitely not. Surrounded by tableaux of Oliver Twist and Macbeth, accompanying gurglings and snatches from Lionel Bart, flickering lights and curious mechanical creaks, the poor fellow tries his level best to be heard. He's saying something about stars of stage and screen, to be honest I couldn't quite make it out. But he's rather interesting to look at; every bit of his face moves, it's one of those frightfully clever film projected onto featureless dummy jobs — but I mustn't spoil it — it's a splendidly eerie impression.

You soon get the idea that what the chap was trying to say was that this was an animated museum of wax-work models of famous screen stars, each caught in situ. Now this really won't do — if you want to see famous screen stars caught in typical situ. you go to see the films. A little imp in me informs me that this is a load of hoo-ha which has been concocted to make me think that this is something more important than a piece of prime real-estate developed with the wheeze of nobbling bored tourists on wet afternoons in the West End. No way are they going to get me to say that Errol Flynn gave the performance of his life after being dunked in a vatfull of wax. Either it works as what it is, or it doesn't. Some bits do and some don't.

Among the hoots and howlers are the cowboy whose head revolves nearly as much as the one in *The Exorcist*, the guy who keeps getting shot in a Chicago gangfight (who looks as dead when he comes up as when he goes down), and a Dr. Frankenstein who looks like he has been sent down from university and is having to make ends meet by working in a Ruhr steel-mill.

Downright disappointments include a sea-battle with ships that sway backwards and forwards about as enthusiastically as rowing-boats on a windless day, and Dracula, who's obviously up to a piece of harmless Saturday night necking.

But there are some goodies. A werewolf tries to rip its cage apart behind your back amid blood-curdling howls, and there's Yorick nattering away ninety to the dozen, not to mention Dr. Jeckyll transforming into Mr. Hyde in front of your eyes.

Kids will love the last exhibit — a fully operational space-craft you can walk around in. In fact kids will probably lap it all up. Me? I'm getting old. **Pete Shelton**

Bingo Crazy

Finsbury Park Top Rank

Bingo is a very serious business. It attracts big crowds and big money. Top Rank proudly claims '£1 million a week paid out to members'. The rub is: the more members play and the more new members join the more money there is for prizes. The obvious attraction of bingo is that the winnings are high and won without the intermediary complications of slips or chips. Cash in hand, no fussing. Finsbury Park Top Rank casino on the Seven Sisters Road is one of the most popular (big prizes, computerized scoring, mini-bingo, three bars and occasional cabaret) and one of the largest in London. On the Thursday evening I visited the casino the main prize — on the last game of the second session — was £2400. Other winners pocketed prizes of £50, £100, £200 and £300. Punters hoping to improve their odds would stake 10 or more books — around £7.50 worth. Watchful of my small Performance Magazine expense budget I bought a measly four. The game divides into lines and full-houses. A line is always played for before a full-house. Claims bring stewards scurrying. The numbers are checked quickly and the winning card goes up on the electronic scoreboard. Silence. 'Eyes-down' again. Three cards and the first session is over — it has lasted just over half an hour.

Before the 1960 Betting and Gaming Act bingo was banned as an illegal lottery. Its new status found a huge audience. In the early sixties it reached boom proportions. Cinemas, clubs, dancehalls were forced to close due to dwindling audiences. Bingo moved in. Top Rank profited. Its large popularity caused immediate and vociferous criticism. The Council of Churches, politicians, sociologists and other watchdogs all had their say. Bingo was a leader issue. Bingo had 'eaten' into communal working class mores weakening class housewifes became synonomous with the game, bingo became synonomous with the undermining of the cohesion of the nuclear family. It was drawing women away from the kitchen and the firehearth. What the 1960 Betting and Gaming Act did was open up the door to the working class, especially working class women, to bet in the 'open' on a wide and 'egalitarian' scale. (In a single decade gambling became the largest industry in the volume of money handled.) In 1963 — in response to the widespread criticism — the National Association of Bingo Clubs resolved to promote the game as a 'popular and respectable pastime'. Top Rank's self-promotion as a 'social-club' is a direct result of this scheme. Bingo is not legitimatized as popular entertainment. Top Rankers holiday together, help charity together. The Top Rank motto is that meeting people at bingo is just as important — even more so — than winning. A recent letter in the Top Rank Bingo News illustrates the catechism:

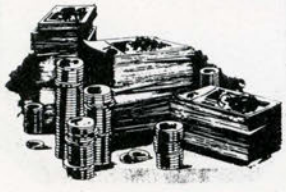
'I thought your readers would like to know that there is a lot more to bingo than just playing a game with the chance of winning a prize at the end of it. Well, I'm sure they know that anyway, but in my case it has proved to be a cure to what I thought was an 'illness'.... The long and the short of it is that I decided to try my luck at bingo, and went along to the nearest Top Rank Club. After seven months I haven't done much more than cover my travelling costs and entrance fees with small wins — but the real 'luck' has been the friends I have made and the lovely happy atmosphere at every session'. The letter was written by a 67 year old widow. Bingo has entered her life and 'enriched' it. The implication is that the game has been a therapy. She now has friends and something to 'do'. For thousands of men and women everynight over the country bingo provides an opportunity for meeting and drinking with friends. For thousands of others it is simply one of the easiest ways of gambling for large prizes. Whether it serves the social needs of patrons or not bingo is an interactive form of gambling quite unlike any other. It involves large numbers of people in a game which is consensual. Players canot rely on skill or on the favours of others. All players have the same chance of winning. Disappointments are thus met more easily. This is not only due to the nature of the game but the 'soft' context it is presented it: the informal atmosphere of the club. If things are going

badly one can always have a drink and chat to friends. This maybe the case in other forms of gambling, but in bingo it functions quite cynically as social compensation.

Bingo is also drama. Like most forms of gambling it compresses excitement within to a short space of time — three or four minutes. The repetition of the ritual only serves to consolidate the desires and anticipations of the player. Bingo is also a theatre of contrast. A contrast between the silent passion of the game and the cacophony of the interludes. At the Finsbury Park casino the traditional theatrics of the caller though were kept to a minimum. He told one joke. His voice was steady and methodical. His only concession to the seaside showmen and their 'clickety-clicks' was calling all numbers with a zero 'blank' and softening his voice forlornly when he called out single figure numbers: 'Number five on its own' he sighed. He let the huge electronic scoreboard at the end of the hall do all his fancy talking. The reliance on technology is a relatively new departure. Players can now see fair play being done. On video monitors mounted around the hall the audience can see each ball as it is plucked off the air jet. Similarly each number as it is spoken is digitally recorded on the front of the callers rostrum. The game now has instant recall. The 'personality' of the caller would seem to be an irrelevance.

Finsbury Park casino is enormous, an air-hanger of a place, once a venue for wrestling and boxing. Rows and rows of tables and bench seats partitioned by wide aisles stretched the length of a vast hall. The place was hot, smokey and crowded. When play wasn't commencing the hall had the atmosphere of the market-place. One man was selling gold trinkets. A girl was walking up and down the aisles modelling black skin tight leatherette trousers. Women exchanged knitwear. Gossip centred on prizes won and prizes dreamed of. My table companion said he was going to Essex Road tomorrow for the £1000 jackpot. I wandered over to the mini-bingo at the back of the hall. The machines rattled as the numbered panels were pressed. Dozens of spectators milled around each machine. Mini-bingo — the type of bingo you see on the high street — can be played without being a club member. The stakes are small, prize vouchers are exchanged for goods — mainly groceries. At 9.00pm people hurried back to their seats for the second session. The caller sauntered down the central aisle back to the rostrum, nodding at the regulars and winking at the girls. The noise subsided again. We raised our pens. 'Eyes down' he cooed. Everybody's mind was on that £2400 prize.

John Roberts



C'est Torture

The London Dungeon

'This installation has been showing for the last five years at one of London's strangest galleries, situated under the London Bridge to Waterloo railway line and specialising in environmental work, usually featuring some element of violence or some physical pain inflicted through disease, misfortune or spiritual malevolence. The instigator of the project, Anabel Geddes, and a band of mysteriously unnamed artists must be congratulated on producing work that is both consistent and enduring. The environment is created using four continuous sound tapes, the natural acoustic, dripping water, lack of light, stench, and 'found' objects, such as chains, gibbets, racks etc. Special poignancy is given to the environment by the interesting use of life-sized, realistic human sculptures. Surrogate performers, surrogate victims, frozen, as it were, in mid-event. The tapes were unobtrusive, setting up various changing atmospheres rather than suggesting action. The use of synthesized, electronics mixed with live, natural sources was excellent and helped greatly in the making of the emotive feel of the work.

The gallery, strangely enough, have found the enterprise quite profitable with a surprising number of tourists and young people viewing the show for a commercially rated entrance fee. This remarkable popularity amongst the public for an art form usually hidden away in subsidised provincial galleries and fringe theatres, can only be explained by the growing interest in sado-masochism and mutual mutilation in the doleful dole queueing society of today.'

The above could easily have been submitted as a criticism of 'The London Dungeon', which as part of the commercial spectrum of 'environment as entertainment' phenomena I was to visit.

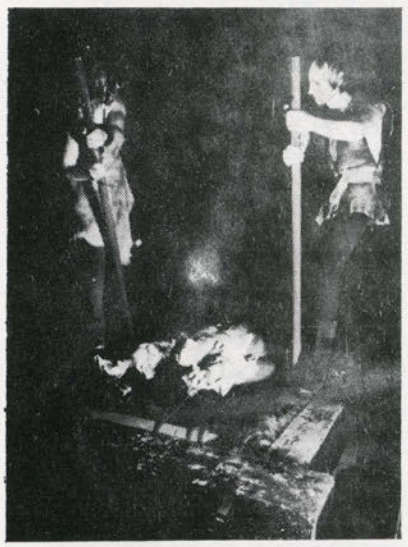
Perhaps if I were approaching this place as somewhere to go when it was raining or when I wanted to be frightened or shocked I'd not be so enthusiastic. Nor indeed if I were scrutinising the quality of the 'exhibits'; but I found the place exciting in the way I feel when I enter an environment constructed by artists in the lofty worlds of performance art and the experimental theatre, Father Christmas's grotto was like that too (where are they all now?). Conversions of large plain spaces into places of fantasy and imagination are deeply ingrained in our now adult minds. The caves beneath the bedclothes, the exploration of sub-terranean tunnels between the legs of tables and chairs, games with torches in the dark, ghost trains, and more recently inflatables and performance-environments. Do you remember the Coal Mine in the Science Museum, London? These same elements are echoed in good exhibition design and architecture, use of space for fantasy rather than aesthetic, for imagination rather than information.

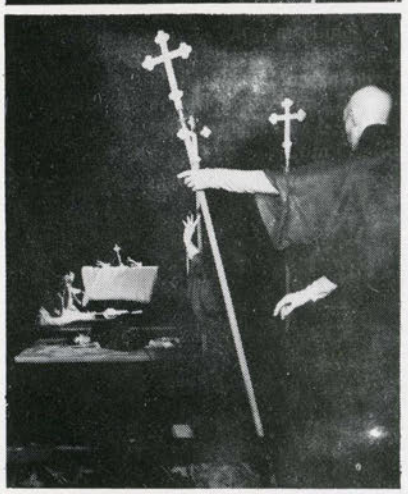
The London Dungeon is not in my mind an exhibition, neither is it a museum. Indeed one of my greatest criticisms of it would be that there are too many notices telling the public facts. The images should speak for themselves. No notices would provide any interesting answers to the 'What's that man doing, Mummy,' or 'What's it supposed to be?' type of question, and on the more practical level they could dispense with the extra lighting introduced for reading them, thereby increasing the effective spatial disorientation. I entered the 'dungeon' space without knowing at all what to expect, there was obviously a lot to see and I was ushered towards an area where I 'started'. The themes covered by the displays are all related to the dark side of human achievement, those things pushed back into the recesses of the mind and the history books (to be regularly pulled out by children artists and mad criminals as their fancies take them.)

Facts: there are tableaux scenes of torture and outrageous punishments — branding, racking, hanging drawing and quartering (the quartering being carried out by an ancient skinhead), beheading and being suspended over a growing fire. Thomas Becket is featured, so is the Plague and early attempts at surgery. Most of the blood and gore seems to be thoroughly British, with the notable exception of Vlad Dracula impaling what appear to be rather pretty boys on stakes.

On the negative side, there were too many short cuts taken with the figures, too many elegant effete hands, legs and feet directly swiped from shop dummies giving, for instance, ridiculous grace to the bottom half of the two otherwise well-built straining men pulling at the not particularly taut-looking rack. The more distant and unexpected the presence of figures, the better was the effect. Generally, lighting was dim or with a few low volume spots effectively placed and real or imitation candles spluttering on brackets from the walls. Keep the real ones, chuck the rest away! On the subject of candles, I was given the treat of watching the maintenance man renewing the candles. Needless to say his performance was one expressing the desire not to be associated with his

work. He also informed everyone above the sounds from the tape machines: 'It needs a new switch.' I had a good time. Incidentally, there's a Gary Numan lookalike in the Reformation scene and Christian Vander chopped Charles I's head off, or so it appears. **Tom Castle**





Fox Photos

Heaven

Disco as Environment

How varied are the roads to Paradise. Who would have thought that the tacky hinterland of Charing Cross station with its mobile tea shops, hotdog stands and souvenir stalls, its stenching alleys and brash tourist infested pubs should conceal within its midst the gateway to heaven. Yet so it is and, Lazarus like, I have been there and returned to tell you, vicarious revellers, the tale.

Around the corner from the Players Theatre where the spirit of Victorian music hall is preserved with nostalgic fervour and under the railway arches that, wre they not so reminiscent of Gorky's lower depths might be truly described as Dickensian, is a doorway with the simple if unlikely motif 'Heaven' glistening from it's surface out across the cobbled darkness. The lure was irrestitable so in I went. It was not St Peter who greeted me but one Doug Lambert — a Public Relations man.

Mr Lambert, a diminutive, eye-patched American, welcomed me to the club. I was to check in my coat and make myself at home, for in this subterranean world most, if not all, my pleasures would be catered for. You need be neither dead nor virtuous to enter into this particular heaven, all you need instead is to be gay or, if it is a Tuesday night, a member of Equity.

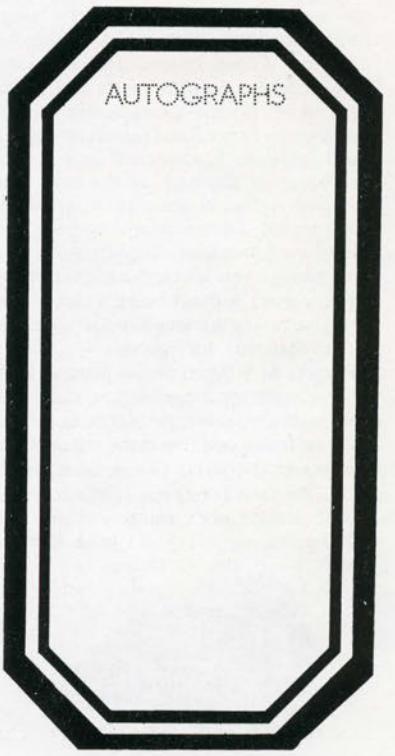
Possibly late-night London is coming to mean more than just Ronnie Scott's, Wagner at the Coliseum or B-movies at Shepherds Bush. London Transport is proclaiming on full-colour posters that 'the last train leaves later than you think,' and even if the night buses do speed past would-be passengers huddled in the dark, their crews fearful of being mugged, murdered or worse, there are increasingly things to do and places to go in the capital after the pubs have closed.

One such is Heaven, a vast warren of delights in what was once the 'Global Village'. Now the interlinking bars, disco, theatre and restaurant provide a last resort for gays at the end of the day. Opening at ten, the arched underground caverns do not close until two in the morning or even later. At the weekends more than twelve hundred men are there at one time and even at the beginning of the week there will be five or six hundred.

The decor is a dream of confetti, glass, neon, chrome and magical lighting and it extends to the clientele as well as to the environment. Pool tables, pin ball machines and video games add to the dazzle; the bar staff are polite young men in short sleeved shirts and straight ties; drinks are inexpensive; the atmosphere is relaxed and uninhibited.

On my particular night of adventure — at last a use for my Equity card — Alex Harding and Alan Pope were vamping and singing away in the Paradise Bar with songs of their own and old standards by Rogers & Hart and, (in Pope's words), 'that bisexual — to give him the benefit of the doubt — cripple,' Cole Porter. Such informal cabaret seemed utterly appropriate to its setting.

The disco, to my innocent eyes and ears at least, was a source of wonder. One approaches it from above, descending from a gallery of bar tables, the floor disappearing into the distance with the perspective of an airport runway, with landing lights flashing between the shadowy forms of the assembled hedonists. But the night was not mine, there were deadlines to meet, and like Cinderella in the fairy tale I joined those thronging to join the train back to suburbia. But let us not imply that Heaven is mere escapism. It is not. It is the real thing. For its patrons, Heaven is a manifestation of a coherent alternative lifestyle; environmental theatre, not as the means of creating world of make-believe, but as the provider of entertainment in another reality. **Luke Dixon**

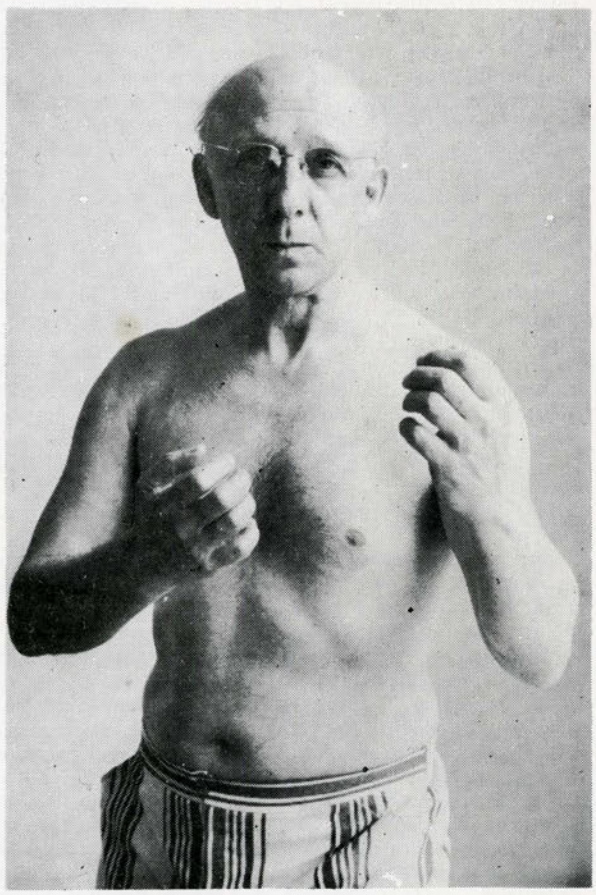


Ivor Cutler's Private Habits

Interview by Luke Dixon

Whether it is for his now near legendary appearances on the wireless in 'Monday Night at Home', his gramophone recordings, his minor stardom on the rock scene, or simply his eccentricity, Ivor Cutler, humourist, broadcaster, songwriter, teacher, lyricist, playwright, musician, recording artiste, performer, poet, cartoonist, teacher, prankster, bicyclist and cult, has long been held in special regard and affection — near reverence even — by a certain following. His hobbies, he says, include the tête-à-tête, and indeed when I went to see him in the Kentish Town flat that has been his home for the past fourteen years, he proved to be the most congenial company. His award winning sequence of tiny radio plays were currently being repeated on what was once the Third Programme, preperations were in hand for a Drury Lane concert with the Roches and the publication of three new children's books and a volume of poems. After the preliminaries of tea and goat's milk and a vast box of milk chocolates denuded of everything but the soft centres to which he has a particular aversion, our conversation turned to the fact that 'Time Out' had been reduced to calling him 'pretty weird' in its radio column. Did he always get that sort of reaction?

Cutler: Well, I've had it all the way through.
Dixon: Do you find it easier to be accepted than you once did?
Cutler: I seem to. I think that perhaps John Peel more than anyone else has been responsible for this as far as the younger generation are concerned. Because when I do gigs you get these great hairy men of between twenty and thirty coming and sitting there to the surprise of the rest of the audience who wonder where they have come from — because they don't normally find them in say a poetry ambiance....
Dixon: Is it primarily poetry places that you do gigs?
Cutler: No, I just take the gigs wherever they come from. I'm doing one at the end of the month with the Roches, they're a trio from the States, at the Drury Lane Theatre. I don't know whether they've heard of me but the management thought that it would work well. When I did it with Van Morrison it worked very well because there was a big correlation I suppose in intelligence — or in the capacity for listening to me....
Dixon: I always think of you as a rather intimate performer which I guess you're not in somewhere like Drury Lane.
Cutler: Well no. With the Van Morrison ones I had three nights in that bloody great place at Hammersmith — Hammersmith Odeon — and that was about three and a half thousand people. I don't think I enjoyed it anything like I usually do with a smaller audience.
Dixon: Did you change your style of performance because of that?
Cutler: Not in essence. But I suppose a little because I couldn't see who the hell they were anyway. So I was just busy shitting myself and hoping for the best. That's frightening because if I can see them (because they had to have it dark for technical reasons) I can glare at them and dare them not to enjoy themselves.
Dixon: When did the harmonium come into your life?
Cutler: Oh before poetry or stories was ever thought of. It was in 1955. I was living in Camberwell and I was looking for a piano, because I'd just got married, and I discovered that pianos were very heavy. And in this shop there was a harmonium, and I played it and the instrument was light to carry and the sustained bass gave me a lot of pleasure. I thought: 'Ah! bagpipes!' It cost me two pounds ten and that included cartage. So I took it home and discovered its potential...
Dixon: You mentioned the sound of bagpipes. Is your Scottish background still an important factor?
Cutler: ...I think I've been very much affected by my environment and Scottish music and Scottish (Pause) — culture's an awkward one with Scotland — how language is used; how people talk to one another there; how words are used in Scotland.
Dixon: You've written and recorded some apparently autobiographical pieces.
Cutler: One could say that they are made up but somehow my life's experiences have got in among it so that it gives a sense of being genuine although these kind of things didn't happen at all...
Dixon: They tend to be minimal always rather dismal incidents.
Cutler: Well that's a Scottish kind of thing. Pleasure is not a thing to be thought of in Scotland. I think that's the influence (although I'm not a Christian) of the Free Church. So you get all these people going around with tight lips and looking for trouble. They all feel as guilty as hell because Scottish type religion has made them feel like that.
Dixon: Would you describe yourself as a romantic?
Cutler: (Laughs) No, no, I think I'm still romantic except when you get older your eyes get clearer and you see the silly buggers you're playing. It's very nice.
Dixon: Do you mean cynicism?
Cutler: Oh, you wouln't say that — I'm not a grandfather — but you wouldn't say that a grandfather watching the ploys of the grandchildren would be looking at them cynically. I think he looks with warm amusement, loving amusement at some of the



things: I suppose watching teenagers falling in love and young people doing that stuff; and watching young marrieds and the first children; and all the stages one has been through oneself; and you are amused (Laughs) watching them walk up to the precipice ever so bold.

Dixon: Do you write your poems with the thought of reading them aloud?

Cutler: In the sense that my ear is always involved in the writing of the poem, because I write it fairly slowly and listen to the words as they are coming out onto the page and try and get the counterpoint and the texture and all that all right. (Searches in pockets). It must be in another jacket. I was going to show you my poetry. It's written in a small book and there are barely any alterations in it because I do it right the first time. Because I am unlike these guys who spend a year working on 'the sonnet', polishing it up. It's not my style.

Dixon: Where do you write?

Cutler: Mostly in bed, I think. Well, a lot in bed. There's two ways. Either you write in the small hours in bed. If you wake up at four say, your intellect is not censoring. Because I've got a fight against the intellect because I'm an intuitive man and I don't like the way the intellect comes along and puts his big heavy boot on things. So that's a good time to be writing. It's one of the good times and the other is, because I'm a show off, to write in public places where other people will see me bent over a book and, not knowing what I'm up to, they'll think, 'Oh, isn't that pathetic. Look at that poor old man writing and frowning and looking round to see if people are noticing that he's writing.' I've seen one or two people like that in my life and I warm to the pathos of them.

Dixon: How did your collaboration with Phyllis King come about?

Cutler: Well it wasn't a collaboration. We were keeping company and we used to go to the zoo a lot — we had a season ticket. I'd gone there to draw and she went to draw. I'd gone there to draw because I used to to go to Holmes Road to do life drawing and suddenly got bored with the female body — as a model — and thought I'd go and draw birds, and when I went to the zoo I discovered I was writing instead. And I used to say to Phyllis, 'come on you write,' and she said, 'no I'm no good, I'd be no good.' I said, 'oh, come on try.' And she tried and she was no good! (Laughs) But she kept on and she did a poem with one good line and then I knew she had it, you know it's only a matter of getting all good lines and sure enough... and now she is so good that when we do gigs together she steals the audience off me. I've twice had to cut a show short because I was supposed to finish but her last set so held the audience emotionally — right magic you know — that I said, 'Ladies and gentlemen, no point my carrying on after that.' And you could see them all nodding. She was very angry the first time. She said, 'don't you ever do that again.' And I said, 'well I couldn't help it.' And the second time I did try and read one and I read one and I thought 'don't be a fool'. And she had to accept.

Dixon: Do you still teach, Ivor?

Cutler: No I gave it up at Christmas. I suddenly thought, what the hell am I doing. I've just outgrown it and I never want to see a child again in my life... I realised I'd been playing silly buggers all these years because I'm sure I didn't need to teach for as long as I did — although I got certain kinds of pleasure out of it and I think I was very good at it....

Dixon: Did that proximity to kids affect your work? They recur quite often.

Cutler: Oh kids. I'm not sure how far. I used to say that kids kept me young because I was with them and the way in which their minds work. I'm sure it has some effect.

Dixon: You don't feel you've aged suddenly since?

Cutler: (Laughs) Well I'm interested to find out. Well, intermittently I feel quite old, especially when I'm being asked to do things like touring. Trains and hotels just horrify me. But I think when you're young it's nae bother. You actually like it.

Dixon: How do you describe what you do on your passport? What's your occupation?

Cutler: It was teaching, then when I got a new one I thought, 'what'll I do?' and I wondered about poet. But I thought if you say poet they'll search every stitch of you and your bags because they'll think there's going to be hash there. So I thought I'll compromise and made it composer, that sounds dignified. So my passport at the moment says composer. I don't know what I'll do next time.

Dixon: You work in a lot of different media... Do you find you've got a preference?

Cutler: Yes, I think live performance because you see them there... That's a lot of pleasure for me.

Dixon: How prepared are you when you go on to give a live performance? Do you know what you are going to do before you get up there?

Cutler: For concerts it's timed to the second. I'm extremely good. I've worked out that if you're asked to do ten minutes then you do eight minutes of material and two minutes is for turning the pages and then laughing and things like that...

Dixon: It's not the same with a poetry reading?

Cutler: As far as timing? Well, mmm, it depends. It depends if it's open ended or not. If it's open ended then one stops when one thinks it's right and there's a certain amount of preparation knowing the shape that it's going to take. Sometimes I leave the kind of poems in a poetry reading open because if the audience is very warm and I feel I can, I'll do more serious poems... There was one up in Whitby I did not so long ago and there was something about them, and I just kept doing the hard — not the hard stuff — but without laughs in it and it was a smashing one and I really felt blessed. Whereas if they're people just waiting for belly laughs; if its five o'clock and they haven't had their tea yet, you can't expect them....

Dixon: Does that imply that you take the serious poems more seriously?

Cutler: Ooh, that's a good point. I don't think so. That's a real toughy because in a way one thinks of the poems without laughter as the ones where you've really worked and kept this humour thing out of the road... Because I'm sure my humour is for bad reasons, you know, like fear. But the funny ones are good too. It's jolly interesting, one of the serious ones I read up in Whitby has the line, 'the cry of a hen in pain', which is ridiculous. And I stuck it in and there wasn't a titter, and I thought, 'wow'. They can see beyond the funniness — because the noise of the poem I thought was quite good.

Dixon: Your pieces are often very brief.

Cutler: Yes. I had a long affair with brief work.... I don't know whether I'm lazy or whether I just like paring it down.

Dixon: Do you bicycle a great deal?

Cutler: I do it every day. It's like a therapy, not only the exercise; it's like meditation. You just forget what you're doing. It's dangerous.

Dixon: Can you tell me how you got into recording?

Cutler: Well that goes back to 1957.

Dixon: As long ago as that?

Cutler: Yes. I was going round trying to — I'm a painter! (Laughs) Sorry. And I wanted to earn enough money to leave teaching so I though I'd write songs and I discovered I'd a facility for writing funny songs. So I thought, being naive you know, I'll just take them round Tin Pan Alley and people'll buy the songs and I'll make money and then I can leave teaching. I went round for two or three years trying to sell the songs and no-one would touch them but there was one guy called Box, of a firm called Cox and Box, who took a great fancy to what I was doing and he pulled all the stops out and I got the breaks there, the telly and the radio — 'Monday Night at Home' — and he also went to Fontana and got an EP out and then went to Decca and got an LP and an EP and I suppose that was the beginning of the gramophone bit. I've been with just about every one of the major companies.

Dixon: You were talking earlier about anonymity when writing in public. Is the opposite true, do you find you're often recognised?

Cutler: I think probably more people recognise me than I realise. I remember being with somebody and she said, 'these people behind were whispering, "that's Ivor Cutler".' I think I get about the right amount of recognition and the right quality of recognition. I remember when I was doing the Beatles (Magical Mystery Tour), there was twenty-four hours a day non-stop of people wanting to be near them and see them, to get their autographs. I thought, gosh, it would be quite intolerable and one wondered how the Beatles weren't going about like emperors and

continued on page 24

SPRING PREVIEW/DOCUMENTATION

This Spring, the ICA, London, and the London Mime Festival are combining to bring several performance groups from the Continent to work in Britain for the first time. Performance Magazine invited the ICA to provide documentation on these groups, and others commissioned from Britain, which it sees as demonstrating a concept of 'Theatre without Plays'. For some years, the ICA has been promoting this form of 'theatrical' performance art in London, in particular recently The People Show, Moving Being, and Lumiere and Son. These, and the companies documented here operate, in the ICA's words 'both across and outside the boundaries that are described by the terms: play, dance, mime, performance, opera.... All of them have recently shown a growing concern to break out of the esoteric corner in which they find themselves placed in the public mind.'

The various companies will be basing national tours on the specially commissioned work at the ICA, Details at the end (as available at present, for further info phone the ICA on 01 930 0493).

Preview/Documentation is a service that Performance Magazine will offer, in addition to its ordinary listings, to venues who are combining with others to tour performance groups and artists around the country.

Bart Stuyf in 'Grey' – see overpage. Photo Bob Van Dantzig.

Bart Stuyf in Grey (Holland)

'Our work is neither mime nor dance, it's something in between, a combination of theatre-movement and plastic arts. The pieces take some plastic form, object or structure as starting point.
The aim with GREY was to create a spacial framework by means of a floor that rises without interruption into the curve of a wall, giving the impression of a horizon-perspective. The wall looks a bit like a huge skate-board, but one built out of separate elements that can be moved independently of each other.
I set out with the idea of a fast-moving, quick-changing, dynamic performance, but when we actually started working with the elements it became clear that they demanded a kind of slow, fluid movement; it was then that we discovered that slowness can be extremely dynamic.
Music comes last with us. I can't plot movement patterns to a rhythmic piece of music. The visual effect comes first, then the music. For GREY we finally settled on some non-repetitive musical sounds by Steve Reich.
I improvise and change according to time and circumstance. I'm not a headstrong person, and I don't want to be prisoner of a dogma or someone who, against his better judgement, can't deviate from his starting point and gets himself into a mess, rather than admit he's wrong.
I'm an artisan and a romantic. I think GREY has maybe become too aesthetical and beautiful. Our next piece may be much rougher — I don't like extreme refinement or the super-artistic. It's like a joiner making a chair: it doesn't have to be 'perfect' in its style, but it does have to be really very beautiful.
The non-art experts coming to see our shows have a strange sort of fear that there is something very special and exclusive to understand. But that's nonsense. You only have to look and look, and what is there, is there.'

Bart Stuyf, Nov '80.

RADEIS = RADISH (Belgium)
Visual/Cartoon Theatre

IK WIST NIET DAT ENGELAND ZO MOOI WAS

Will you also take off your blouse?
Because even on the North Sea beach it
can be warm and in any case wet.

and

BECAUSE OF ILLNESS

We are not mimes,
we are vegetables,
We are vegetables,
we do not speak.

Uiwz Sievaquite

Termeik Mimetheatre (Holland)
The Rainbow Cafetaria

A silent, acrobatic thriller. The peace of a run-down city cafe is disturbed by the arrival of the transparent man with a diamond as big as your eye...

Mime is the main ingredient of Termiek's work, spiced with acrobatics and a dash of dance, but the starting point of each piece is normal everyday behaviour.

Termiek is a cooperative company, founded in 1977 by graduates of the Amsterdam Theater Academy.

Parisiana (Belgium)

I am

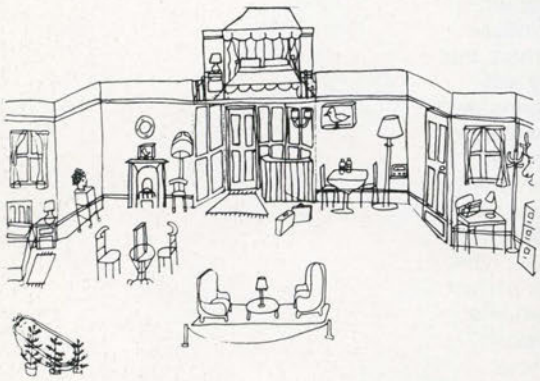
Michiel Hendryck

Erik de Volder

A group of friends and I originally formed Het Etherisch Strijkerensemble Parisiana in 1977 to produce individual theatre events for exhibitions, festivals, conferences and other special occasions.

Parisiana is now a permanent group of at least 18 performers and a seven piece orchestra. We have become masters of the ethereal environment, of the consciously constructed lie, the subtle and inventive happening, the undermining of every social cliche, and of lack of good taste.

Hesitate and Demonstrate



Bob Van Dantzig

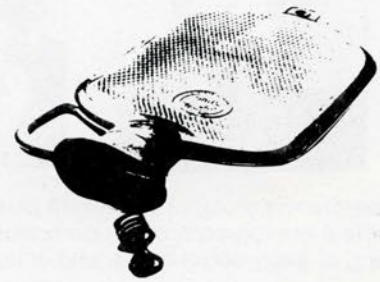
Mike Figgis Redheugh

REDHEUGH is the name of a house in Northumberland. The house is the central image in the show. Forty years pass and the house looks the same. Objects, people and photographs from the house are present on stage. The characters in the film, the airman, the woman and Mr Hunter, carry out a low key drama which takes forty years to conclude. A fourth character, a singer, is present as the dark side of the woman. In a formal musical way, she links the characters on celluloid to the same characters live on the set. She sings four songs, accompanied by clarinet, violin, cello and piano.

REDHEUGH is devised, directed and composed by Mike Figgis. The performers are Mike Figgis, Gilly Edwards and Tony Work. The singer is Julianna Bethlen. The musicians are Jake Tucker, Fiona McIntosh and Harriet Allan.
Mike Figgis

Phantom Captain in Wakeathon

When, on 2nd May 1977, Mrs Maureen West of Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, set up a new world record for Voluntary Sleeplessness, having stayed awake for eighteen days seventeen hours, little did she realise that mention of her feat would not be confined to the Guiness Book of Records. The Phantom Captain, in association with Somnambulart Promotions, will present 'Wakeathon' by Neil Hornick and Joel Cutrara. Wakeathon is likely to be developed partly as a workshop project involving performers and others interested in working with the company. (For details see advert)



Lumiere and Son in The Perfect Show

Who will ever forget the rib-sundering explosé that was Lumiere & Son's fabulous 'Circus Lumiere', seen by packed and hysterical houses at the ICA last October? This thoroughly modern circus finally despatched the paper tiger of the red-nosed clown to an ill-earned grave and received a phenomenal acclaim leading to an unprecedented prominence for the self-effacing members of Lumiere & Son, whose only desire had been to shock and abuse without fear of retaliation. Previously submerged in the swirling and loathsome muds of visual and formal experimentation within the theatrical avant-garde, the company has at last seen the light, whose luminosity has facilitated the discovery of its proper vocation. The delighted cries of 'Hello, Mr Funny Man!' from strangers in the street have so intoxicated the unworldly performers that they have shed the ghastly self-indulgences of their pioneering past for the warm and mineral waters of a whole new brand of entertainment that is never less than utterly delightful, highly fulfilling and very interesting for all people regardless of their age, sex, race, class, type, taste or stature. Surely this perfect evening out should be inked into diaries of everyone in the world? Book now or forever hold your purse.

Bart Styf/Grey. ICA, London. — January 6th-10th. Arnolfini, Bristol — January 13th-14th. Arts Lab, Birmingham — January 6th-7th.

Bart Styf/Grey. ICA, London — January 6-10. Arnolfini, Bristol — January 13-14. Arts Lab, Birmingham — January 6-7.

Hesitate and Demonstrate. York Arts Centre — January 15-17. Trent Poly — January 20-24. Theatre in the Mill, Bradford — January 29-31. ICA, London — February 10-21. Residency, Arts Lab, Birmingham — March 30-April 4.

Termeik/The Rainbow Cafetaria. ICA, London — January 13-17.

Radeis. ICA, London — January 20-24.

Parisiana. ICA, London — January 22-24.

Mike Figgis/Redheugh. ICA, London — January 27-February 7.

Phantom Captain/Wakeathon. ICA, London — February 25-March 14.

Lumiere and Son. ICA, London — March 18 —

By Popular Demand S.F. Mime Troupe

Writers and Readers

To celebrate the entering of their third decade, one of the oldest and best-known political theatre groups in the US, the San Francisco Mime Troupe have recently published a collection of scripts culled from around 20 productions performed between 1970-1976.

Although they regularly tour Europe, they have never visited Britain, though this year were planning to do so, only to have to cancel when the dates offered made it impossible. For British audiences (and similarly inclined performers) this is a singular omission, because although the Mime Troupe continues to rely almost entirely onits commedia dell'agit prop form, they are never less than interesting, and their raunchy energy powering their political formula Marixst comedies is something to behold. Working mainly outdoors, they have been hounded, harrassed and their members arrested by City Authorities, the CIA, FBI and State Department almost since day one.

In November, this time against all the advice, against the pleadings of their business manager they toured Cuba at the invitation of the Havana government.

'Economically, it was a disaster, a disaster, but it was a chance that we simply couldn't pass up,' says Joan Holden, one of the senior members of the Mime Troupe and the person more than any other responsible for delineating the trademark of the troupe: political formula comedy. Arguably her most popular piece, The Independent Female is included in this collection, and it, like all of the Troupe's work, is written in consultation/collaboration with the rest of the company.

A fierce feminist critique, The Independent Female, is also significant in another sense — being as it was the bridge between the old and the new Mime Troupe. It was this performance that carried the company from the first ten years of autocratic rule by the Troupe's founder, Ronny Davis, into the second, and no less traumatised decade of collective leadership.

Right now the Troupe, now numbering 15 persons who each receive a poverty-line salary seem poised between another major turning point. But one senses that unlike the ritualised blood letting that resulted in the collectivisation of the group in 1970 that this one will be a quiet revolution, and a change that has to do with politics than theatre, artistic integrity and professionalism.

Of course the irony of it is that it was under Davis' tutelage that the group collectivised. They took to heart his dictum: 'The cultural revolutionary, just as the armed guerrilla, must be capable of taking power. When this theory was translated into practice Davis stunned the Troupe by resigning. He then sat down and wrote 'The San Francisco Mime Troupe: the first ten years.' Davis, his undeniable genius, still lurks like a malevolent spirit in the psyche of the Mime Troupe and an example of his continuing hold is that at the company's two-story home, in the centre of San Francisco's latino district, no copies of his book can be found. It is banned. And this writer when he arrived there with a copy in his hand was urged to burn it. It is extraordinary to the outsider that this need to exorcise the past still continues.

With Davis it is the same love-hate relationship. And when he sat down to talk to this writer he indicated that this may be the last ever interview he ever gave where he talked about the Mime Troupe.

Simon Kelly

'I wrote the book to get the Mime Troupe out of my system. I came to the Mime Troupe with an enormous amount of expertise, which I then denied... that was the hippie movement: anybody can do anything, which is encouraging. Americans encourage people to do that. But it eliminated the division of labor and it eliminated expertise,' he says.

When it first became known in the US that the Mime Troupe were finally bringing out their own book, people, particularly in San Francisco, were excited. At last, so the thinking went, the collective would lay down their vision of the work, would articulate it, and in part, refute some of the often brutally personal criticism in Davis' memoir. Such is not the case. Apart from a short prologue there is no discussion of the toupe, of its direction. While no doubt 'the play's the thing,' this lack of an articulated position is sorely missing and in itself may act as a commentary on the unwieldy, some would say fragmented, mind of the collective.

Davis' argument against guerrilla theatre/collectives, or 'anybody can do anything,' first set out in his book 10 years ago has been sharpened to the point where he can now say:

'You're not a member of the company unless you do the shitwork. You got to the shitwork because all labor is reduced to the lowest common denominator. You got to act on stage and suffer with us, unload the truck, load the truck, make the lunches, got to share the work, and if you don't share the work, you're not a real worker. Its the worst notion of crude communism, perverse Maoism, collectivism. And all that stuff is dead. Despite it being dead it still exists.

'Collective — what does that mean? That means we're political. Wait a minute. I know collective in Berkeley that runs the Cheese Board. They sell cheese. There's a collective that runs the Swallow Restaurant. They're a collective. They serve meals. A collective doesn't mean anything. What's the politics of it...? Naturally enough, members of the Mime Troupe would phrase it differently, but essentially this is the position they too are approaching — albeit it would seem for different reasons.

'We used to destroy whole productions by doing this sort of work regardless of ability), 'says Dan Chumley another senior member of the Troupe. And adds Holden: 'We reached the apex last year when we cast three non-singers in a musical. None of them could sing but that didn't stop us. That was a clear division and the end of a road... there's now a saying current in the group: cast the best. Its taken us 10 years to reach this point... Sometimes I could hype myself to believe that it was going to work because I wanted it to work, because I wanted these people to break through. And then the moment of truth eventually arrives.'

So what was it then preventing the Mime Troupe from seeing that this method of casting wasn't working and was in fact harming the work and impact of the company?

'Personal relationships. The feel for other people. They have their rights. People who live on $100 a week and bust their asses all the time. They have rights,' answers Chumley,

'But,' cuts in Holden, 'the real thing is your artistic integrity. You want to see a thing done right. You want to have a certain quota of strong people. And that's what we've become more realistic about.'

'What everyone wants to do in the 1980s is to become bigger, to become ligitimate in some way. To make a decent living,' she adds.

In recent years the Mime Troupe have been disappointing a lot of their faithful audience. But their last production which opened in August, Fact Person, has revitalised that flagging interest. That and the advent of a Reagan administration may well serve to propel them into the 80s where as usual they will: 'Rip holes in the curtain of the ruling class propaganda,' says Holden. 'We're in a very pre-revolutionary stage here in the US and we unite with and support all forces that we conceive to be progressive. We try and push the analysis a little further to the point of class analysis. That's our task. To point up that YOUR interests and THEIR interests are not the same.'

Simon Kelly

Moving Being/ Body Politic
ICA

Ten minutes into 'Body Politic' I started to panic. I couldn't understand what was going on. How would I be able to fabricate a review from the flimsiest of impressions? I imagined myself ringing the company up to ask questions and have the production explained to me so I could cobble something together, but so shaky was my grasp of the proceedings that even in an imaginary phonecall I was stuck for words, unable to formulate so much as a stupid question, let alone an intelligent one. Sitting in the pitch black I broke into a cold sweat, increased my feverish and illegible jotting, and suffered pangs of acute dread as a vision rose before me of my accusing typewriter. What would become of me?

A quarter of an hour later it all started to fall into place; by the end of the 1½ hour performance, I realised what the problem had been: the company was attempting too much. Attempting too much is always better than attempting too little, but 'Body Politic' needed a somewhat firmer hand with the pruning shears, and a stronger single direction. The performance took a non-narrative form, preferring juxtaposition of unlike events/pictures/tableaux /incidents/sounds/speeches; it didn't exactly ramble but it was a little piecemeal, with few consistent threads running from beginning to end. A focus or expansion on fewer elements, even the repetition of more ephemeral moments, would have been welcome. An idea of the massive range of information and imagery presented is afforded in the programme by the list of source materials: 'Text: William Blake, Jack Lindsay, D. G. Gillham, Erica Jong, Angela Carter, Michael McClure, Dan McCarroll, J. G. Ballard, Norman Mailer, Robert Creeley. Image: Blake, Lindner, Bellmer, Heartfield, Muybridge, John Dine, Ed Kienholz' etc. Of all these, William Blake seemed to be the favourite and the most frequently recurring source; slides of his work were shown overhead in conjunction with various happenings underneath, but he functioned more importantly as a text source and general inspirational figure. An actor portraying an academic type with ponderous intonation and tidy clothes read at intervals from texts by and about Blake, on his life, beliefs, and work. This lecturer was a fairly reliable note of sobriety in proceedings which at times verged on the chaotic — though at some point near the end even he shattered his image by shedding his trousers. There was also a dancer who put in a few solid appearances; a chunky, earthy looking figure who performed the type of movement which appears self-governed, obeying natural rhythms of the body. Her interludes were always welcome because they were wordless, against the lecturer's and others *description* of mind/energy/ body, her contribution was the real thing — free-flowing physicality, uninhibited by language.

There was no single idea at stake in 'Body Politic'; instead a variety of conceptions, not all of them agreeable, was presented about the body, often with quasi-political overtones. The person with whom I attended the performance remarked that she found some of the ideas 'rather immature... for people of that age'. It's true that, partly because of a fondness for flashing lights, mixed media, loud noises, scrambled events, and the omnipresent William Blake, there was a rather Sixties air of all-out liberationism to the proceedings. In addition, there were touches of repulsion and violence which sometimes seemed gratuitous and almost comical, but sometimes were genuinely disturbing. In the latter category was a Keinholz-type tableau, probably borrowed from that sculptor's 'The Letter', of a woman giving birth with a lightning bolt of pain in her tummy and letter from her absent husband in her hand. In 'Body Politic' the woman had a red light in her crutch, a face full of agony, an accompaniment of thunderous noise and slides of a baby's head appearing between legs. It was a most ghastly and pessimistic portrayal of the nitty gritty of labour, and more than admirably served its function as an answer to male mystification of motherhood.

Not so acceptable, I thought, though equally intimidating, was a portion of Glenn Davidson and Anne Hayes' performance. This duo appeared two years ago at the ICA in the New Contemporaries, and part of their work here was substantially similar — they relate the body to gesture and gesture to mark by drawing around themselves on plastic, marking between their fingers, around their feet, heads, torsos. So far, fine. Then all of a sudden they appeared in a transparent cage. Without ... any ... clothes ... on ... She was spread-eagled and suspended from the cage, he was standing on top of the cage, behaving like a wild gorilla. More deafening sound effects. They were both wrapped in polythene, which got torn off from strategic places and stuck onto other strategic places. The totality was dramatic but unsatisfactory and didn't really work even as a horror-story; it kept starting to seem like something out of Not the Nine O'Clock News.

The puzzling aspect of the show (which by the way was extremely well done, presentation-wise) was its lack of orientation. Like an essayist who relies extensively on other people's ideas and appends pages of footnotes to everything, 'Body Politic' was really boiling down to a series of quotations and borrowings, without point or shape. As I've mentioned, the range of sources was impressive — but what were they there for? Why didn't they add up? What was behind it all? A collection of ideas and pointers engenders mental confusion, especially when the collection is so large. Images blur, texts become a nightmare for the ears, each new development becomes more and more difficult to grasp and get into. At the end — which arrived completely without warning — stunned exhaustion seemed like the most legitimate response, and while being stunned or being exhausted are not such bad things in themselves, it was a shame that there wasn't something of a more substantial scheme to hold onto.

Andrea Hill

Combination/ Benefits
Albany

Often, when writing up taped interviews, I am struck by the amazing shift in tone and meaning which mysteriously occurs when words, originally spoken, are written down. 'Benefits' recently performed by The Combination at The Albany Empire, Deptford, seems to fall headlong into this trap. I had not read Zoe Fairbairns' novel before seeing the play. Deeply disturbed by what I saw on stage, I hurried to borrow the book (it's the sort of book that one of your friends is sure to have). Lifting out its written 'direct speech' and presenting that as dialogue had failed completely to catch the book's many-questioning layers. This is perhaps to be expected, in any transfer of a novel to performance, but there were times during the play when the effect of seeing and hearing the written text spoken seriously distorted the meaning of it. The fleshing-out of written characters with living performers unfortunately contributed to this effect in the case of Judy, the young black woman, shown facing her pregnancy and motherhood in confusion and dismay. Performed by a black actress, Judy came close to a racist stereotype — unable to cope, we see her baby handed over to Lynn, capable, middle class and white. Shown in her red robes conducting 'goddess' ceremonies, Judy seems merely ridiculous, 'foreign'. In the book however, the character Judy plays an almost metaphorical role. Through her, the author is able to deal in an allusive way with the women's tentative exploration of female religion and mythology, and their unease about bearing boy children.

These faults, however, would seem if anything to arise from over-cautiousness; from a serious attempt to carefully adapt a very complex book. Such is the unwillingness to cut, condense or even rearrange that the production lasted nearly three hours. It seemed a pity that some of the

excellent devices, in particular the use of video tapes on two colour monitors, could not have been extended to deal with perhaps whole areas of the text. As it was, they worked well in conveying the flavour of the children's demonstration, the Europea conference, and the manipulation of the media by the 'Family' Party, and helped to create a sense of 'the future' (the play starts in 1976 and ends in 2001). But the book's unresolved questions remained glaring, even more disturbing when posed before of a mixed audience. In it s treatment of lesbianism, for example — no character is shown with a commitment to being gay; lesbian relations come about largely as a result of accident or misunderstanding. There is also criticism of the Womens Movement's so called lack of leadership. I personally find it inappropriate for the stuff of so many agonised debates to be brought into the public gaze using what eventually ammounted to little more than carricature.

On the positive side, it was good that The Combination should tackle a serious feminist work in this way. It was also good to have the book's central and strongest premise — the crucial importance of fertility and reproduction presented as a theme for a serious performance. The performers coped well with the multiple roles and a script which for the reasons discussed, must have been a little difficult to enact. But next time it might be wise to consider carefully just how those worthy motives and essential debates really come over, before sending them out to confront a public which, away from the cosy radicalism of the Albany, must be expected to be at least questioning if not even hostile.

Lynn MacRitchie

Pure Monkeys/ Death by Kissing
Oval House

Since it is now possible to progress from the B movie to the United States Presidency, the genre would seem a more potent vehicle than one might previously have suspected. With a possible view to forming a future Cabinet of performance artists, Pure Monkeys have compiled a definitive pastiche of the B movie feature film, complete with an orphaned heiress, a fortune in Silonian diamonds, a man's duty to the American people, the ennui of a Frank Lloyd Wright apartment, the razzamattaz of the cocktail lounge, capping it with a fatal denouement by the waterside.

It is good to see this group moving from an openly acknowledged debt to Hesitate and Demonstrate via a competent but pedestrian production of Genet's 'The Maids' (seen at Oval House earlier this year) to a piece that shows convincing handling of roles and dialogue, an assured sense of timing and an ability to conceive visual and musical images that come together in a total concept. Maintaining pace and integrity as a thriller, the piece is not content with easy satire on pregnant pauses and meaningful gestures but digs deeper, tampering with celluloid myths, debunking machismo and upsetting the stereotypes. No gangster's molls here, but instead two full blooded female hoods, drily undercutting themselves by one telling the other not to wear skirts while they're on a job.

A genuine wit pervades the show, expressing, to use a phrase from Alexander Pope, 'what oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed'. The melodrama of the B movie lends itself readily to the 'high intensity theatre' that Robert Hughes recently deemed a characteristic of performance art but while there has been much borrowing from the idiom, few have fulfilled their debt to it. Pure Monkeys pay it all back and more by evoking, with a sparkling performance, the images of American culture that Bryan Ferry labours at in rock music.

Phil Hyde

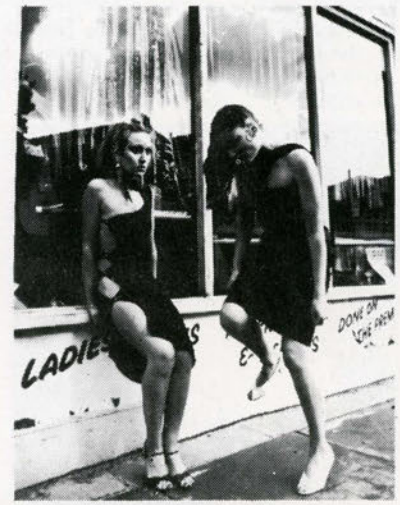
Munich Mannequins/ Death and Co.
Half Moon

What can be going on down in the depths of the East End? The successful transfer of 'Pal Joey' up West completed and the spondulicks (handsomely rolling in), the Half Moon finding itself with not one but two empty theatres on its hands has seemingly thrown open their doors with no thought of artistic control to anyone with enough of the ready to hire the space. The first to arrive with the necessary boodle in the Mile End Road, all the way from Austria, were the English Speaking Theatre of Vienna (I kid you not) with a revue of embarrasing banality entitled 'Playthings'. But over that pitiable event let a veil be mercifully drawn.

Lest we should have taken this to be a mere aberration however, confirmation that the Half Moon's brace of major venues are now devoid of policy where visiting performances are concerned came in the form of an enterprise so dire as to boggle the mind, raise the gorge and enlarge the spleen of anyone foolhardy enough to witness it — yet alone unfortunate enough to shell out their greenbacks so to do.

The performance, at the old Alie Street premises, entitled 'Death & Co.', was a punk life of the poet Sylivia Plath presented by three women calling themselves the Munich Mannequins. This is not the first play about Sylivia Plath; well actually it is the first but buggered out of all recognition. Barry Kyle, whose name has been generously dropped from the programme and publicity, devised the original for the RSC, incorporating the poet's own brief and only piece of dramatic writing into a theatrical compilation of her life and works. It is on this that the Mannequins seem to have based their performance.

The hyped pre-publicity and the striking photographs of Clare Muller which accompanied the show raised expectations of stylishness but not even the thinest veneer of style was allowed to distract from the self-indulgent wallow of amateurishness that ranted on the stage before my scarcely credulous eyes. Irrelevant images were projected onto a white



square rudely painted onto the rear wall of the theatre; the lighting operator, latent thespian that she was, performed herself, albeit in shadow, on the screen between the illuminations. She could have done no more damage on the stage itself, where she would have had little difficulty eclipsing the woefully inadequate efforts of the three Mannequins and the pianist there already had she chosen so to do.

Feelings of despair and irritation at the thought of an entire even of such tacky codswallop soon gave way to a mounting rage at the double exploitiveness of the show — an exploitation of Plath's life; of the intermittent greatness of her poems here disfigured by a delivery of ranting incompetence, and exploitation (though it might have been meant as irony to give the company benefit of dubious doubt) of taunting, provocative sexist imagery in the dress and attitudes of the performers.

With the bulk of touring companies visiting London confined to the splendid idiosyncracies of the ICA and the bewildering eclecticism of Theatrespace, the metropolis cries out for a thoughtfully run venue for itinerant troupes. The old Alie Street synagogue could yet, given a little direction, fill that need.

Luke Dixon

Leeny Sack The Survivor and the Translator
Action Space

It is only possible to come to grips with what Leeny Sack's one-woman show is trying to do when you get outside into the fresh air. This is because, during the course of her time with you, she has dev-

Clare Muller

eloped an emotional concept through a fairly technical and 'difficult method of environmental performance, then plunged you suddenly, mercilessly into the bitter core of it. From winding and curving around the subject to an inescapable process of direct confrontation — eyeball to eyeball — which brooks no compromise or nervous laughter. The dislocation caused by this lingers and does not go away.

The emotional concept here consists of the inability of a relative to connect with

Jill Posener

the Nazi Holocaust as experienced by the Survivor (presumably but not necessarily her mother). The concept is approached in an oblique, almost aesthetic mode — starting with a blitzkreig attack on a metal frame bed in blinding white light and proceeding through a series of Jewish-American anecdotes and jokes — 'How many *Germans* does it take to change a lampshade? — several layers to that one.

Leeny Sacks initial role of the Translator — an animated, vivacious, slightly dotty Jewish woman, with a symbolic visual trapping — headphones connected by a long lead to a suitcase — leads the audience on to think they are seeing 'art', that they can, if necessary hide behind a series of abstractions. The environmental devices are visually pleasing — the hospital bed connected by string to an animated rocking chair take on their own personalities. The chair, in which she is eventually to sit and so become the Survivor is interrogated — disbelievingly. 'Was your head shaven? Did you ever pray'.

In what formally amounted to the second half the tables were turned on the interrogator... and ultimately the audience. Having achieved a frantic, acrobatic, clothes change, Leeny Sack seated herself close, very close to the front row, and in a cool, clear, unhurried manner began to relate the experience of the concentration camps and the various methods of extermination. The very directness of her speech chillingly contrasted with the previous caricatures of the 'Jewish Mother' — the old relative rambling on fussily in Polish and Jewish-American English. It concentrated to a single focus the flesh-crawling reality of what was being done to human beings by other human beings.

At this point, the crucial, but difficult part of the performance began. The feeling was that anything might happen. The audience were being threatened by this plain presentation of the facts. It was like one of those rather embarassing moments at the end of a didactic theatre piece where the cast stands in a line at the end and delivers a brief ritualised declaration. But this did not stop. It went on... and on. Some people were caught up, transfixed by the horror. Others shuffled nervously... and were noticed by the performer. The fascination was — how far would she take it?

She did not let up for a moment. She took us to the centre and did not let us out. Nor did she provide a structural link or relate to what had gone before. Frankly, this could lead to problems. Kicking off with all that zingy extroversion; an ending like that could eventually ruin a good few arty evenings out. And I'm not sure whether people will grasp the exact nettle involved here. She was doing something far more important than causing a few watery eyes. This was risk-taking performance at it's most dangerous. And its best.

Rob la Frenais

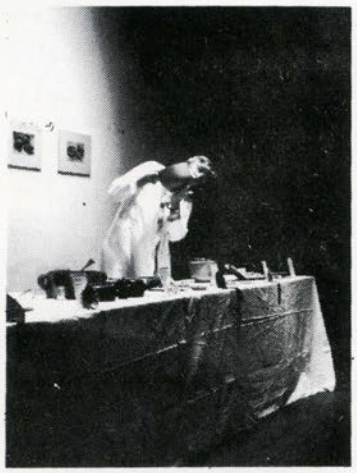
Carlyle Reedy
Bobby Baker
Sonia Knox
About Time — ICA, Arnolfini, touring

There was a catch, an ambiguity, awaiting the audience of the performances in the About Time show at the ICA. On the one hand one was asked to consider artworks presented by women dealing with issues specifically from a woman's standpoint. But from another direction comes another filter, a desire to evaluate one's own experience of what the artist is trying to say. Is this latter not a formal question, even if only on reflection one comes to understand the language and formal constructs that are being employed? Sometimes a gap occurs between being able to recognize an authentic voice, and trying to make sense of an artist towards whose political perspective one may feel sympathetic, but whose formal construct does not successfully achieve the relationship between its intention and how it is understood. Such criteria help me sort out style from affectation, efficient use of hardware, props, space, paint, time, light, sound, whatever, from mere virtuosity. In short, is an artist seriously trying to say something to her/him self, and to her audience, or is there a compromised motivation? The male spectrum of the artworld is certainly infested with the ambitiously motivated, the aggressive, the reactionary. I do not expect women artists automatically to be free of such pressures.

These apprehensions in no way relate to the three performances I managed to attend. Each in its distinctively individual manner both entertained and affected me. I thought Sonia Knox was in part tackling the problem of authenticity. She appeared in a loudly patterned dress, and walked off stage to produce two more and a plain one, which she hung in a line along the wall. Then she sat facing a sewing machine. With the same hand she turned the machine's wheel and held a video camera, producing images of the floor and lower wall on the monitors. She took one of the dresses, laid it on the floor at the other side of the gallery and chalked around it. Lying down nearby she read scripted thoughts into the camera, thoughts on her self-definitions, as artist, as woman, as being of protestant Irish descent, as middle class. She defined herself as an individual and as an individual part of a society. She concluded the not happening of a differently culturally conditioned society attaining insight into the realities of another's. Meanwhile she graduated towards an ever more foetal position. The dominant form in this latter section became superimposition. Playing from independent recorders we heard a nostalgic pop tune, a military percussion, an unfolding tale of a domestic reality in a world in which the walls surrounding are violence and war.

I have always enjoyed Carlyle Reedy's work. Her Woman One was performed against impossible odds, boxed in a space so confined that those who hadn't arrived early had to be content with a video relay. She appeared cutting a hole from a screen made of a white translucent material she favours. The persona of Miss Minter shaved off an eyebrow, and applied white makeup to half her face delivering repeated greetings of 'good evening viewers' like a soundtrack with the needle jumping back. Comments on makeup and vanity blended with anecdotes and cameos. She encompassed an enormous variety of activities, ironical, witty, non-sequential poetic, accumulative. At one time she announced 'this is the longest part of the performance' knocking things over, playing tin cans, creating ambiguous images of martyrdom and improvising moments such as when she repeatedly stamped a coke can into the ground with her bare foot exclaiming 'this is miserable'. In her culminating vision of maternity (eternity?) she picked up paint and brush to create her ending. Letter by letter on the sole screen remaining standing appeared 'eek its too crowded good nite'.

Bobby Baker presented a piece entitled My Cooking Competes. Behind a long table covered with white linen, hung a row of colour photographs of nine different meals for different occasions — a Visitor's snack, a budget meal for two, a supper party for four, a TV dinner and so on, each typifying a particular social occasion and slanted with a class implication also. Laid out on the table was the exact realization of the items in the photographs to the last mustard pot. The amount of work



Charles Hustwick

Bobby Baker

involved was unmistakeable, the presentation immaculate. She worked her way from one end of the table to the other, describing every minute detail she could recall, every how and why of the ingredients and their preparation, awarding herself a rosette for each dish before moving on to the next. As she accumulated a constellation of rosettes on her white coat, it gradually dawned that this person, so meticulous, so caring ('you must be careful not to grate your fingers when grating the carrots') was starting to reveal contradictions. Pride in her achievements gave way to a gnawing boredom, exemplified by the increasingly persistent short-cutting in her cuisine, and culminating in the Buffet lunch for Two, containing a ghastly sauce thrown together from mahonaise and mustard, and in which the peas came from a packet. Controlled, understated, deliciously ironic, her message crept up on her audience unawares.

These three artists seem unquestionably engaged in for want of a more precise term what I would call a liberation process. Pragmatically, they use the gallery context, but that is only a part of a total process. All three have built and enriched thematic material on which, particularly in the case of Bobby Baker, they have working for some time. And after all, in some ways, performance artists are working in the most direct, often the most exciting form available to the contemporary artist. If you mean it, you have to be prepared to put yourself on the line.

Charles Hustwick

Gegen/Passion
Theatre Space

Here is experimental theatre from Germany trying to be outrageous and succeeding. Before the stage lights come up, a fat naked man carrying a candle through the darkness has knocked himself against the audience and disappeared. In the first part a beautiful mother shoots her new born baby, is wooed by a handsome man as she weeps at the grave, and, after he has seduced her, she shoots him too; all in minutes. And before many minutes more, the naked man who is really an angel, has showered the audience with celestial feathers and the stage with confetti and mock snow in celebration of the marriage of the returning couple; a ceremony climaxed by the man killing the woman.

With excellent make-up and simple but effective dress changes, the couple appear and re-appear in a variety of high camp guises, Nina Haagen fashion. Using a cabaret style they mime and dance short love scenes which always end in the death of one of them: she preferring the gun, and he strangulation. The angel twaddles and dances around them, envious that he cannot be human.

The couple are never quite real, it is the angel, in his cute pathetic way, that holds the charm of this performance. He is short and so fat that his tiny genitals are almost hidden by his stomach. He wears paper wings, has gold sprayed in his naval and a beautifully made up face: a veritable cherubim and the star of the show. Jealous of the human audience as well, he threatens them with green stuff ejaculating from a plastic penis, and near the end with kisses from his blooded mouth. But he means no harm. Dirk Bach combines a simple humour with vivid visual shock, but throughout remains essentially a tragi-comic character. Indeed I felt all he really wanted in life was to become one of Cavafy's boys.

In the penultimate scene the couple have degenerated to a sado-masochism which is too outrageous even for the angel who kills them both (after his fair share of the pleasure); and then to the music from Love Story says 'I will sing murder because I love murderers'. On singing he stabs himself with a wooden cross. The man and woman come back, of course, as angels to mourn the dead angel who was human after all.

There is a soundtrack throughout (complete with tape-recorder clicks) ranging from funeral marches to English ballads and from waltzes to the Pink Floyd. There are even smells for the truly sensuous.

It was a carefully contrived performance, the images remaining aesthetic throughout and Martina Bako and Martin Vogel using their well-trained bodies skillfully. As to my deeper meaning, I was too busy warding off the angel.

Paul K Lyons

The Alternative Miss World
Classic King's Road

Whilst Gabriella Brum and other hopefuls were primping and preening for Eric Morley in the Albert Hall the Classic in the King's Road was host to the premiere of Richard Gayor's film of Andrew Logan's 1978 Alternative Miss World Contest. The art-world (crepuscular part of the art-world (that crepuscular part of the and the Zanzibar) was out to pay homage to Logan's reign as the prince of swank. Premiere fever was in the air; *sprezzatura* everywhere. Powdered faces and Gothic costumery compulsory. For the girls it was Madame Bovary out of Lady Macbeth, for the boys, post-Bowie bell-boy out of Walter Scott. Those ten minutes spent filing langorously into the cinema, past giggling onlookers and inscrutable functionaries, were their ten minutes.

Logan's Alternative Miss World may have been a hoot to be at and participate, but to watch it 'cold' was like being drip fed on marzipan. Gayor's treatment was wheedling and ingratiating. The camera concentrated too much on those with little to say: the feckless backstage showbiz chatter of helpers, participants and liggers. Questions arriving from the 'deviancy' of the spectacle were never given a context to work in. Underneath all the sexual-politics the same old showbiz razzamatazz. Two people with lot to say were the narrators of the film: Molly Parkin (whose two daughters were contestants) and the playwright Stephen Holt (of *Men* fame), a fast-talking New Yorker with as much front as Harrods and a brusque line in Big Apple gay inneundo. Compering the contest, as always, was the incorrigible Mr Logan himself, a spectacular vision of British high-camp hemaphroditism: one half of his costume was modelled on Captain Mark Phillips, the other half on Princess Anne. I say Mark Phillips and Princess Anne but it could have been any Royal couple you choose to think of — what was important was the sartorial dazzle of the gender-fuck. Helping Logan out and conducting the informal mini interviews with the contestants — 'What's your favourite hobby?' 'What's your favourite thing to do?' — was Divine, looking.... well, like Divine. He muffed some of his lines and some of the contestants were a bit too witty for him, especially the leather suited, whip wielding Miss Wolverhampton Municipal Baths, but he was the star guest and anyway he had been in a real film. The costumes of the contestants — it is upon these that the contestants are judged; the contest is geared to fashion *and* passion — were a mixture of the bizarre, stately, brave and dumb. Jill Bruce set fire to her headress, Jenny Runacre swanned down the stairs wearing a huge steel mesh cape. With the men there was much baring of legs. All were enthusiastic show-offs and all were desperate to win. A good many of them though stood no chance at all. As someone said at the beginning 'the women don't stand a chance'. This was the men's evening. The crowd roared approval at those men who were provocative as *women*. Joan Crawford legs, a sexy pout and feline manner were sure-fire mark winners. As to be expected all these qualities belonged to the winner, Steven Hughes, alias Miss — Linda — Carriage, who caused all round consternation after he had been crowned, with much tears, by promptly falling off the stage. The donkey that was to carry him out looked on incuriously. A bank played, the audience mounted the stage and a party began. A star had been born and forgotten in an evening. **John Roberts**

Ivor Cutler interview from page 14.

being snooty. Because I think if it happened to me I should certainly become like that. It was remarkable. All the time everybody thinks you're a god.

Dixon: Have you any publications coming out?

Cutler: Yes, I've got a new book of poetry called 'Private Habits' which seems a fetching title. Inside there is a Chinese picture with a little boy of six with his finger up his nose and his big sister who's pointing at and saying, 'Not necessary use hand finger scoop nose hole.' It's from a children's book and it's intersting that the Chinese — that's the Hong Kong Chinese — would feel that that is quite acceptable for little children to see in school.

Dixon: You seem to come up with quite fetching titles... Do you think a title is important for selling the stuff as well as intimating what's inside?

Cutler: Um... Yes. I think a woman with large breasts can have an advatage — an initial advantage. But of course if the rest of her personality and her brain doesn't match up then people are greivviously disappointed. In terms of a product which is saleable then a title might induce people to buy on impulse and then discover afterwards — well it's not relevant after actually.

Dixon: I'm wondering what sort of person would buy a record called 'Dandruff' or 'Jammy Smears' on impulse.

Cutler: (Laughs) Well I would find it appealing myself.

Dixon: Do you find you've a following who buy anything you produce?

Cutler: Yes I think there are people who do that. It's the kind of thing I might do. I was a great fan of Kafka. He's about the only fiction I've ever bought, all Kafka's stuff, because Kafka was a big influence on my life — I don't know about the biggest — but he transformed my humour from sort of sixth form stuff into proper grown up type humour.

Dixon: Has your popularity waxed and waned over the years?

Cutler: Yes. It goes in cycles. This is the fifth cycle I think... I seem to disappear every now and again. The first culminated with the 'Evening of British Rubbish'. There was a lot happening with telly and 'British Rubbish' and the Establishment nightclub and the radio 'Monday Night at Home' all at one time. So I suppose I as a cult at the time and had a prestigious following right from the far right away over to the far left. Bishops and royalty. Every section claiming me for their own, which was jolly interesting because I was obviously not hoisting my own political colours to the mast to the extent where people would not listen.

Dixon: Can you tell me a bit about your background? You are presumably Scottish.

Cutler: I was born in Scotland. But I'm a third generation Jew. My grandparents came from different countries in Eastern Europe. Two of them landed in Glasgow and two in Greenock. There wasn't any Jews in Greenock so they got fed up with the isolation and came to Glasgow so that they could be with other Jews. And my mum and dad met.

Dixon: So did you have an orthodox Jewish upbringing?

Cutler: Yes. And that's why my humour and music are a jolly interesting synthesis. Jewish and Scottish humour in some ways have a likeness — the third element is Japanese by the way. These three seem to have very much in common. Because there are some jokes I've come across in Japanese which are almost lifted out of Scottish or Jewish... I came South in fifty-one. I was teaching in Scotland and you had to strap the children. I tried not doing it but they thought I was just soft so I got a belt and strapped, but it didn't please me. And when I left Scotland I cut my belt into fifty pieces with a razor blade and every child in the class got a bit of belt. It was a beautiful moment. A great moment in my life. And then I went to Summerhill, to A S Neil's place, and went up there for a couple of years.

Dixon: It must have been a big difference.

Cutler: Yes. Except that I'd known about it since I was fifteen. I'd come across his books and I thought it was some fairyland or wonderland or something. I couldn't believe that you could actually be in a place where life and education could go on like that.

Dixon: Did it live up to those expectations?

Cutler: I was too close to know. But I got a great deal from it, particularly in how to respect children in the right kind of way. I grew a lot there....

Dixon: Do you regard yourself as an eccentric?

Cutler: If you chose your definition I am or I am not. I think I'm or would pass for, a very sane person. When I went to the Savoy to get a Pye radio award for these radio plays recently, I went to the lavatory before I went in and when came out of the lavatory the attendant sidled up to me and said 'Excuse me Sir, we like to keep these conveniences for the guests of the hotel.' I was thrilled but aggravated and I said, 'I am a guest Sir. An honoured guest.' But he was puzzled because I had my trousers tucked into my socks — check socks — and I had my hat with all the butterflies on it. He could detect that I was some guy who was caught short. I was dressed like this more or less and if you go to the Savoy you have a suit on and a tie. No nonsense. So in that sense I'm eccentric...

Dixon: Do you find your eccentricity is more accepted as you get older?

Cutler: I think I play it differently now because I think I'm more mature. I've lived out certain needs to show off, like wearing odd socks at one time — craving attention. I've seen photos of myself at that time and they've got that kind of look: 'Please love me', I think. Thanks to the women of my life I've learned to love myself a little bit better and quite a lot more than at one time. That doesn't happen to everybody. So I don't play eccentricities as much as I used to. But perhaps I'm so used to it that I don't even know I'm doing it. Because I know constantly people say, 'oh when I met you six months ago you said...' And I say, 'What, did I really say that?' with real surprise.

Dixon: I wondered whether there was any political motivation behind it in the broadest sense. That is whether you are anarchic philosophically as well as in practice.

Cutler: That's an interesting one. I'm not much of a theorist. I used to think philosophy was fantastic but I realised I haven't got that kind of brain at all. I see myself as pretty pragmatic as well as being romantic. I think I'm drawn towards anarchy. (**At this point a mask dislodges itself from the wall and falls grinning to the floor**) That was good timing.

Dixon: As a disruptive element in a school....

Cutler: Well that's just to shake the kids a bit. This is what I do, it's my stock in trade, to shake people a little and have them rethink their values. Some people don't care for that. That's where my enemies come from because I've said to them: 'I think you're pretty silly wearing the kind of clothes you're wearing and thinking and conforming...'

Dixon: Do you find you irritate people in your audience then?

Cutler: Yes indeed. I've made them very angry indeed. Suppose all your security is bound up by doing the 'right thing' and someone comes along and does an 'Emperor's New Clothes' on you. You are going to be jolly angry because it means either you believe this guy, which means that you're starting from scratch all over again, or else you think he's an idiot and he ought to be hung. Certainly there's been a lot of people who hated my guts for obvious reasons.

Dixon: How does it manifest itself? Do they heckle?

Cutler: I don't get much heckling, and I usually am able to deal with it when it happens. It used to be mostly on the radio I seem to remember — letters. There was a controversy in the Radio Times where somebody foolishly wrote an anti-Cutler letter and immediately all the legions sprang to the defence and then there was to and fro until the editor said: 'This must now cease.'

Dixon: Are you deliberately provocative or is it just that there is a natural element of provocation in what you do?

Cutler: I think it's the naughty boy thing: see what you can get away with. And it's happened more than once that people have said, 'God, I don't know how you do it, getting away with murder like that.'

Dixon: How do you react when people react negatively to what you're doing? Does it upset you?

Cutler: Not at all. After all it's taste — psychological taste or aesthetic. In fact I think when my reputation was made — reputation! — that half the people thought I was great and the other half thought I was horrible which is much better than instant acceptance, when you put your arms up and say: 'My audience how I love you.'

A rundown
by Paul Burwell

Captain Beefheart

Immediately prior to the commencement of the set, a tape of Chinese music was played instead of the usual recorded music, and no one seemed to like it. No one danced to it, although it was more danceable to than the stuff played by the support band. The music was rhythmic and melodic, although it operates in a different frequency range and works to different melodic principles. I would have hoped by now that people would be able to come to terms with these minor differences; and be able to relate to the actual music content. The announcer and the audience seemed to write it off as a piece of eccentricity by the mad Captain.

The set proper started off with an excellent bass solo by Zoot Horn Rollo who was then joined by the band and Captain Beefhart. It was one of the most enjoyable 'rock' gigs from a musical point of view, that I have been to for a long time. Captain Beefhart is one of the very few people doing anything original in the rock idiom since the genre developed in the 50's. Why does the music press always describe him in phrases like 'The madman of rock', and never give the serious evaluation of his work that bands like Talking Heads get? Possibly because Beefhart and the Magic Band used to adopt silly names and dress up in silly clothes whereas Talking Heads look like a bunch of cricket-playing tea-swilling accountants. Obviously more profound.

The reasons I find Beefhart's music so interesting are the same reasons that very few people were dancing to it at the Venue. He has found ways of developing the rhythmic base of rock music in ways that no one else has discovered. His use of layers of asymmetrical repeated rhythmic patterns creates an internal tension in a way that no one else is trying to do. To find parallels one would have to go to the work of jazz players like Coltrane and Coleman and Ayler, but their rhythmic layers — polyrhythms — are more concerned with developing extended rhythmic lines rather than exploring the way that different rhythmic phrases interact with each other. Music from the Tribes of Central and South Africa — Drumming from the Akan in Ghana and M'bila playing of the Chopi of South Africa has a similar rhythmic complexity, although the function and the actual sound is completely different, Beefhart's rhythmic patterns change much more often and the changes are related to the structure of the song in the same way that chord changes, which brings us by a commodious vicus of re-circulation to how to dance to Capt'n Beefhart, James Joyce and Screaming Jay Hawkins.

In African dancing, the dancer takes different rhythms for different parts of the body. The feet will follow one pattern, the head, hips, shoulders and arms other patterns. Beefhart's voice and his lyrics are also unusual but ot unique. Vocally and lyrically he owes perhaps something to Screaming Jay Hawkins. You'll have to check out some records to hear Hawkin's voice, but I can quote a bit of a lyric...

'Brush your teeth with a piece of a goons toenail
At the death steal the breath of a drunk in jail
Pull the skin off your friend with a razor blade
End tonight, Change tomorrow, bring back yesterday,
Shake your hip, bite your lip, shoot your mother-in-law,
Put on your gorilla suit, drink some elbow suit and have a ball
Get a spade, don't be late, its time for mad fun,
Feast of the Mau Maus has begun.
At the feast with the beasts of the Mau Maus
They make wine from the spine as they pull it out (?)
Its the test of the best of who stays'
etc.

'From Feast of the Mau-Mau
Whilst looking at lyrics, here's an excerpt from a song by James Joyce, sung (I think) by one of the Dubliners. I first heard this, sung unaccompanied, coming out of a jukebox in an Irish worker's pub in Hammersmith...
'Have you heard of one Humperty-dumperty,
How he fell with a roll and a rumble
Curled up like Lord Oliver Crumble,
At the butt of the magazine wall,
the magazine wall
hump pelmet and all (?)
He was one time our king of the castle
now he's kicked about like a rotten old parsnip
and from Green Street he'll be sent by order of his worship
to the penal jail of Mount Joy
The Jail of Mount Joy
Jail him with Joy
etc.

I hope I haven't misquoted Joyce too badly. Lyrically and vocally Beefhart has his predessors, his main achievement in rock, in common with the other main innovators of the genre, has been rhythmic.

Snake Eyes! Henri Pousseur Craps Out

Two people play dice on a hexagonal board. They are wearing different coloured hats. Mounted above the board was a video camera that relays the image of the dice board, seen from above, to two monitors. The board itself is miked so that you can hear the roll of the dice in quadrophonic stereo. The video camera also feeds into a video computer that 'reads' the numbers on the dice, say a six and a three, and triggers tape recorders six and three (there are twelve) which play via the quad. speakers a couple of minutes of electronic sound collage. The total of the throw being nine, the player moves his counter along one of those race games. Their move is displayed on a gigantic display on the ceiling of the gallery their suuare lighting up. In addition there is a carousel slide projector aimed into another video camera, all controlled by the computer (concealed in a five foot high green box) that takes the number of the square landed on, say number thirty and projects slide thirty into the video system which displays the text thereon on two more video monitors.

The whole piece was one of the stupidest, most expensive (too expensive, according to one of its minders) pieces of art (music) I have ever seen.

The basic idea, random selection of audio/visual material by 'chance' procedures, isn't exactly the newest or most profound development of twentieth century thought, but has been expressed far more economically by other people. In this case the idea was embellished on with enormous complexity and expense, the artistic dream of the art school technician. This was a bad piece of art. A good work of art should require a pairing down of extraneous material to express the deepest ideas it contains in the clearest and concisest way, not starting with a superficial idea and embellishing it, trying to make something of nothing. A good piece should only exist because there is no other way of doing what it does. A good piece should be an act of revelation for its instigatorc as well as for its 'audience'. Economy of means, preciseness and simplicity are vital attributes that this piece lacked. There was one other idea incorporated in this piece, which was located in the entrance to the Main exhibition space was that of audience participation — members of the public were allowed to wear the hats (red for the red counter on the board, freen for the green), sit down facing each other and roll the dice, overseen by three technicians (who, if they were very intelligent, could probably manage to read what was on the dice and press the appropriate buttons). Unfortunately, the whole edifice was located at the head of a two hour long queue to get into a Breugel exhibition and the public were loathe to give up their places at the front and roll dice.

Claws

Dear Paul,

Here's a copy of a test pressing of the Hybrid Kids LP CLAWS. Will send a copy of the LP as soon as possible. The track 'Deck the Halls' features a monologue written for BBC-TV (rejected by same) by The Phantom Captain. Also on the LP are Lol Coxhill (sax) and Maggie Nicols (voice). I play everything else, except drums. Cheers Morgan-Fisher.

Cherry Red records asked M-F to record

an album of Christmas songs, a project about which he had reservations, but eventually he went ahead with it, and completed the recording in three weeks. He said on the phone that people would probably slag him off for doing something commercial (which I wouldn't hold against anyone) but unless he has better luck than at present with his test pressings and subsequent delays in release date, he probably needn't worry on that point. I asked him if he was a Christian (I'd thought of writing on an anti Christian review) but he said 'No', and told me how he'd researched Christmas Carols and found hidden and pre-Christian meanings in them, which he was interested in exposing, although from listening, I didn't pick up on them. Also included are modern Christmas songs... 'Happy Christmas (War is Over) by John Lennon, for instance. There are Punk carols, PIL carols, what to me sound like Residents carols and what could be early Ultravox carols plus earnest young men fiddling with electronic gadgetry on small independent record label carols.

I think the record loses in its own terms by not adequately resolving the ambiguities inherent in the project. The material ranges from workings of traditional material along the lines of those silly ideas everyone has like wouldn't it be great to do the Noel Coward song book as done by the Sex Pistols' to quite traditional re-workings to modern settings that you could get away with in one of those modern cathedrals or on a TV programme to Morgan Fisher's attempts to re-construct the material to reveal other ideas. There has to be a touch of the desire to do a Phil Spector as well. Actually I guess that a re-release of Phil Spectors Christmas Albums would probably be more commercially successful than CLAWS, however, I don't think that Christian ideology needs the publicity Western thought, music, law, politics and society has been revolving around Christian ideology and deep structure for long enough... sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. I feel more drawn to music based on different ways of ordering. I think Christian music contains enough in itself to point out its own weirdnesses (he that hath ears to hear, let him hear) without there being any need to do anything else to expose it other than listen. I have an achingly beautiful recording of the Miserere (psalm 51) with Roy Goodman, the solo treble (probably not more than 11 or 12) singing lines like

Behold I was shapen in wicked ness
And in sin hath my mother conceived me.

✡ TAURUS (April 21-May 20): **Screaming and yelling may relieve your feelings, but it will not really solve your problems.**

Down The Tubes

Energy ran high in the East Finchley church hall. Three people were standing on the stage, one of them yelling angrily; the second beaming beatifically, declaring love and joy and the third grovelling on the floor, pleading.

'More!' shouted Dan Fauci, 'They're not getting it'.

The racket increases into an unintelligible muddle.

'Shit! I can't do it!' shouts the angry young man.

'Stick with it. Don't think. Express.'

The young man explodes and seems to be crying.

'OK. Change over.'

The three continue in different positions with different emotions. This time it's the person who does the pleading who can't do it. She tries, moves away and laughs.

'OK. Now you know where your blocks are. Next three.' says Fauci. The exercise continues.

Dan Fauci's Mastery Workshop Weekend was into its third day, some of the participants were looking strained, others elated; having been through numerous exercises and experiences exploring their creativity and commitment.

Fauci is a founder, director and teacher of The Actor's Institute of New York where such Mastery workshops are conducted. He has also conducted them in Los Angeles and Chicago. This was the first to be held in London.

He has had connections with EST and several of the participants had been on EST courses as well — all of them claiming how wonderful it had been for them, what breakthroughs they had experienced and so on. Fauci applies EST's approach to his teaching of acting.

The weekend was organised round some encounter-type activities and some fairly usual acting exercises. The first evening was devoted to the process of 'Getting Here'. We were all asked to speak to the audience for a few minutes while we had comments thrown at us such as 'Look at us. You're going away. Come back to us. You're full of pain. There's a lot of sadness in you.'

'I'm not here to make people feel comfortable,' says Fauci, 'The moment you get comfortable I want to start making you restless. That's when you're vulnerable. If you aren't vulnerable you aren't taking risks. If you're not taking risks, you're not really creating anything.'

The next day was given over completely to performing pieces that we had been asked to prepare.

One of the most dramatic changes I saw that day was that of a young woman who makes her living from stripping and has a polio-affected leg. Composed and easy-going, she chose to read a section from Mary Barnes' book, 'Pathway through Madness'.

'Why did you choose this piece?' asked Fauci.
'Because I like the images.'
'You were too controlled. This woman's mad.'
'No, not yet... she's rebelling against her parents.'
'Were you that girl?'
'No. Yes.'
'You identify with her?'
'No.'
'You don't.'
'No. Definitely no.'
'How does your leg affect you?'
'It doesn't. I accept it. There are some things I can do and some I can't. I've adjusted. I accept it.'
'You're embarrassed by it.'
'No.'
'You resent it.'
'No, I don't.'
'Get back to the piece. I want you to be mad.'
'I can't. I don't see her that way.'
'I want you to be mad.'
'I — can't.'
'Are you angry?'
'No — yes.'
'You don't have to stay, you know. You can leave. I'll give you your fees back if you want.'
'Yes. I think I do.'
'Then go. If you're going to stay, don't fight me.'

It looked as if she might leave but she started doing the piece hesitantly at first and then becoming confused, angry, rebellious, mad. She had stopped reading it. Then the tears took over. Floods of them. Some of the audience were also crying. Her performance was brilliant. She collapsed in tears at the end, utterly compelling to watch.

'Let your minds go', says Fauci, 'Your minds are the biggest blocks you've got. Don't make excuses or rationalisations for yourself — there are always reasons, justifications why you can't do this or that — forget it. You want to work as actors, dancers, comedians, writers then you've got to find your own creativity, take risks and then take full responsibility for it and realise it.'

He moves about flaying his arms, joking, intensely serious, giving sympathy, playing the fool and then in a flash becoming the profound Wise Man. Of course, his workshops are going to 'work'. They will work for anyone who feels that a new direction is needed in their lives and if they are able to explore their vulnerable areas then a cathartic effect is set up with the audience who in turn respond and support the person through the experience. The result is that the collective energy makes people start letting go and emerge feeling all the better for it. There's not much mystery to it. But the

simplest things are the most difficult to achieve sometimes.

When my turn came round I was asked questions about myself and my body when I ventured the information that I felt at odds with my body and that it seemed to be a problem of mine.

'I don't know what it is,' Fauci said, 'you're a very easy person to be with.' This surprised me as I always thought people considered me intense. When questioned, all but three of the audience agreed with Fauci that I was warm and easy to be with. I said I wanted to have some fun with my piece. As it was from Sophocle's 'Antigone' I thought it might be strange.
'Ok. Be drunk.' he said.

I started the piece hesitantly, remembering that when I was in Drama School I had once been given a drunk exercise that I failed miserably. I dismissed the thought and I don't remember what I said, did or who I said it all to but I was rolling over the stage, falling over and the audience were laughing. I've never considered myself to be funny and, naturally, I ended up feeling great.

The technique is simple enough. Persuade and encourage someone to expose themselves as much as possible, support them when they fall and then tell them to stand up again.

'It's a matter of going down the tubes — subway in the States', says Fauci, 'there's a moment when you're going down the tubes — that's the time to just let yourself go down them and take the risk. Then you start reaching your real creativity. But after this workshop you're going out there and the world isn't the Workshop. There you're going to need support. Being on your own is what brought you here. You've seen that you can't really do it on your own. Help each other. Tell each other where the jobs are. Support each other.'

The final day was given over to the building of support groups. After gruelling emotional exercises where even the stoutest of hearts wept or yelled, support groups of five to six persons each were established to keep tabs on each other.

Fauci displays admirable qualities. He takes simple and clear objectives and endows them with sincerity and energy. 'I like to churn people around,' he says, 'I want people to see their energy. All I know is that people are magnificent and that they are creative. My purpose is to let people discover their energy, their magnificence and then take responsibility for it. I wouldn't tell anyone what to do with his life. I just give him room to find out what it is and do it. I create room for discovery. You are the cause of your own creativity and the only thing to do is to keep the initiative. You create your own anger, your talent, your love, your hate and you've got to be in touch with them all if you want to create and keep the initiative. I just want to whip that into people.'

At the end of the weekend some people were feeling a bit cautious about everything but everyone started eulogizing about it. One young woman, Suzanne, said, 'I feel completely exhilerated. I have attained those particular goals that I put down when I arrived. I'm going to stop apologising for myself and take responsibility for myself.'

Another actress, Jiggy, said, 'I enjoyed it. I feel I'm back on the diving board again. Thanks a lot.'

Jim, a removal man, said, 'I just came for the fun. I enjoyed it.' Another woman, enraptured, went a bit overboard, 'If ever Buddha came from New York!' she sighed.

Well, I don't know about Buddhas from New York but it seemed I gained something from the weekend and so did some other people. But a lot of it is a simple, general application of encounter group methods to performance.

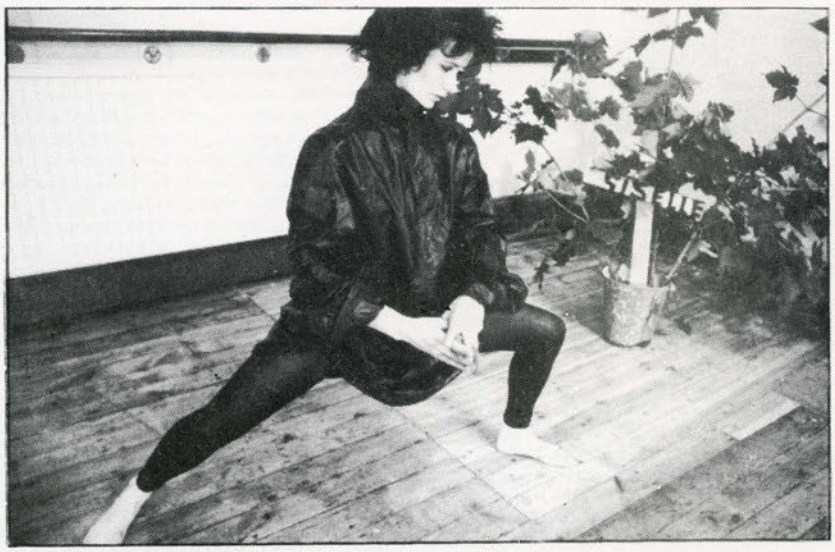
Further information about Mastery Workshops can be obtained from Lauren Jensen on 01-794 5144.

Bruce Bayley

Di Robson

Crappy Histmus! — From Cunning Stunts Theatre Collective. They are doing a new performance at the Tricycle Theatre London about 'The patriarchal political system which has created nuclear power stations and weapons and a whole range of lethal waste products capable of destroying millions of people in a moment.' December 16 - January 4 Info 01-636 6226.

Jill Posener



'I Giselle' see listings overpage.
Apologies to Jill Posener for not crediting her this photo in last issue.

FUTUREPERFORM

Selected National Performance Listings

BIRMINGHAM
Ikon Gallery Info 021 643 0708
3-24 January Video Installation by Steve Partridge. (Plus tapes & talk)
January 15. Includes a new piece using Ikon's display windows on to the street.
January 22. Video tapes & talk. David Critchley and Chris Rushton.
January 27-31. Jez Welsh. Installation. (Performance January 29)
February 7-28. John Blake, Gerald Newman. Installation (Talk & sound tape February 12) Light and sound work.
February 26. Naked Art Performance. 'Naked Art are a bunch of artists centred in Sheffield who have abandoned the notions of the performing arts for that of performance art. There is a youthful messianic zeal to their claim on the arena of actuality as their artistic domain. 'Actuality in a condition of special use' generates Naked Art; Art which is 'neither representational nor formally autonomous.' Performance Magazine no. 6 (also at Sheffield Univ. Drama Studio in 'Meditation 666' January 28)

Birmingham Arts Lab Info 021 643 0708
February 2-7. 'Nice' by Mustapha Matura, with Norman Beaton.

BRISTOL
Arnolfini Gallery Info 0272 299191
January 13, 14, 16, 17. Bart Stuyf. (See Spring Preview)
February 17-21. Siobhan Davis — dance residency.
February 28 onwards. Lizzie Cox. — Somerset. Exhibition and performances. Michael Stephan. Installation-In Other Words.

CARDIFF
Chapter Arts Centre Info 0222 396061
January 5-10. Cardiff Laboratory Theatre — The Village Project. Based on research undertaken by this Chapter-based company. In a previous performance 'Postcards in a Glass Court' 'We are on a rolling canvas of three dimensions, and as we tumble, normal points of reference blur, and we must ask, more tell ourselves, that it's the actor who at the end is hanging by the feet, and not our comfortable world inverted' Performance Magazine no. 5.
January 20-24. Leeny Sack — The Survivor and the Translator (see review)
February 12-14. Andy Smith — Solo Performance.
February 16-21. Pip Simmons Company — Rien Ne Va Plus. (See interview with Pip Simmons in Performance Magazine no. 8)
February 25-28. Diamond Age-Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad. Another company resident at Chapter.

NOTTINGHAM
Midland Group Gallery Info 0602 582636
January 22/23. TNT The New Theatre — World premiere, 'Don't Look Back'
January 30. Michael Nyman — solo performance.
February 5/6. Charlie Hooker & Vincent Brown. New dance, music, drawing devised for the studio.
February 12/13. Kaboodle Theatre present The Inside Story. A celebration of the breakdown of reason.
February 25. Trio ExVoco from Stuttgart, Dada sound poetry.
February 26/27. Three Women Mime Company in 'High Heels'.

NEWCASTLE
Basement Group, Spectro Arts. 0632 614527 / 733686
January 17. Silvia Ziranek — Rubbergloverama. (See her column in this issue)
January 24. Ian Robertson — Performance
January 31. Charlie Hooker — Performance
February 7. Catherine Elwes — Performance
February 14. Sid Smith & Chris Wainwright — Performance.

YORK
York Arts Centre Info 0904 27129
January 15-17. Hesitate and Demonstrate — Do Not Disturb.
January 23-24. Milktrane — An evening with Coqui and Bugare.
February 19-21. Bryony Lavery's Family Album.

LONDON
ICA. Info 01 930 0493
Until December 21. Monstrous Regiment in Shakespeare's sister.
January 6-10. Bart Stuyf Grey.
January 13-17. Termiek — The Rainbow Cafeteria.
January 20-25. Radeis. (From January 22-25) Parisiana.
January 27-February 7. Mike Figgis — Redheugh.
February 10-21. Hesitate and Demonstrate — Do Not Disturb.
February 25-March 14. Phantom Captain — Wakeathon.
Further details of these performances in Spring Preview.

Oval House. Info 01 735 2786
Until December 23. Hell is Empty. A thriller within an opera within a film. 'The Moral Issues of the day are dead. God is dead, and the West is about to perish. Midnight London April 1980. Veronica Gray, private detective, receives an offer of £500 a day to uncover the secrets of a suicide. Drifters of the M6 motorway know the secrets of S.E. Sanitation Engineering. The most powerful multinational operation in the world, operating from England. The end of the world is near. This is no Gotterdammerung, this is the last gasp of the rat-pack. An Oval House Production.
January 14-18, 21-25. Love for Eva. Based on Cinerella. An Oval House Production.
January 23-25. The Wee Wees — a new show.
January 28-February 1st. Shirley Cameron & Roland Miller. Head-Cases — devised for the Oval.
January 30-February 1st. Pure Monkeys in 'Death By Kissing' back by popular demand. see review in this issue
February 5-8. Womens Theatre Group. 'Breaking Through'.
February 6-8, 13-28. Implosions, directed by Melissa Murray.
February 18-22. Clean Break. 'In or Out' and 'Killer'.
February 20-22. Y-Front Theatre Company in 'Initiation Rites'.

Theatre Space. Info 01 836 2035
December 30-January 3. E=MC². Performed by the E=MC² group, directed by Sarah Toft. 'E=MC² is a sensual theatre. Our work is of a formal, symbolic and ritual nature. Our conventions are those of our generation; movement, lighting and live electric music.'
January 5-10. Walter Zerlin — Running around the Stage Like a Lunatic. Self explanatory. Also solo performance by Kjartan Poskitt.
January 12-17. The Unfolding Rose Company — Othello. (Played by a black performer).

Riverside Studios. Info 01 741 2251
Until January 13. Le Cirque Imaginaire with Victoria Chaplin and Jean-Baptiste Thierry with a Christmas Show. January 13-28 Ekkehard Schall 'For the Dying, For the Dead, For the Living' poetry and songs by Brecht, Weill, Eisler etc. January 20-25. The Graeae in 'Sideshow'. Six disabled performers with a bitter satire on attitudes to the handicapped, including 'Miss Crippled Universe 1980, with its prize of two tickets to Lourdes' It is 'awkard, scathing, but also canny enough to recognise that in leaving their sideshow they have merely joined another... ours.' (Performance Magazine no. 8)
January 27-February 1. David Bourne, dancer, and Al Carmines, the minister of Judson Memorial Church N.Y. Songs etc of Irving Berlin and Cole Porter, from Musical comedys of the 20s to the 40s.
February 3-March 1. Join Stock in 'Say Your Prayers' by Nick Darke.

Action Space. Info 01 637 8270
Two benefits: December 19. For Spare Rib. The Mistakes and cabaret.
December 20. For Lesbian Line. (Women Only) Cabaret, music etc.
January 6-10. Return of the successful 'I, Giselle' 'questions the female as victim role and tries to expose it. Just why does Giselle go mad at the moment of awareness, just as her anger at Albrecht's deception breaks out? ... its cause should be clearly seen — the anger a positive and justified response which the original Giselle is not allowed to make,' (Performance Magazine 8). February 6-28. Bryony Lavery's new show. Coming in March, 'Tapdance on a Telephone Line' by Della Frances Charles. Special Event: January 3. Action Space New Years Party, performances by local and resident artists.

TOURING
Cameron and Miller Info 0476 67248
Headcases. A new performance. Oval House Jan 28-Feb 1. Stair-Mail. Aberystwyth Arts Centre. February 25-26
Also (Shirley Cameron & Evelyn Silver) Performance for Leicester Womens Festival. Jan 31 (daytime)
'Miller and Cameron assume emblematic roles that may be, roughly subsumed as the authoritarian function and the victim function. The performances are formed around cultural elements — the holy image (in the procession), the tests of intelligence and rites of passage of exams, the crucified

victim, ritual killing, ritual exclusion from the group, ritual modes of consumption. Some of these elements are taken as the starting off point for improvised verbal expositions.' (Roland Miller on 'The History of Western Civilisation' Performance Magazine no. 2)

About Time Info 01 607 6326 (Catherine Elwes)
The highly successful exhibition of Womens Performance and installations at the ICA, 'About Time' (previewed in Performance Magazine no. 8) is to tour the country. Selected by Cathering Elwes, Rose Garrad and Sandy Nairne, the work is inclusive of a wide range of styles and forms of art, but it all 'indicates the artist's awareness of a womans particular experience within the patriarchy'.
December 9-20. Arnolfini Gallery. Performances by Celia Garbutt, Sonia Knox, Catherine Elwes, Silvia Ziranek, Bobby Baker, Carlyle Reedy, Hannah O'Shea. Plus installations video and tape/slide work, as shown at the ICA.
South Hill Park February 1981, Liverpool Academy March 1981. (As above)

Incubus Theatre Info 01 637 4789
The Old Testament Floorshow.... The worlds number one best seller brought unforgettably to the stage by a top class international cabaret of music, song, comedy, dance, illusion and atheistic outrage. After making a killing in the sacremental wine business Wally will entertain the post holocaust remenants to the spectacular, controversial, unpredictable Old Testament Floorshow.
January 21. Wolverhampton Polytechnic.
January 24. Worcester Arts Centre (A Catholic Hall)
January 26. Riverside Hall, Portsmouth.
January 27. West End Centre, Aldershot.
January 28. Bath Arts Workshop.
January 29-31. Vandyke Theatre, Bristol.
February 6. Ipswich Drama Centre.
February 10-11. Triple Action Centre, Mansfield.
February 12-13. Seagull, Lowestoft.
February 18-21. Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds.
February 25-26. Hoxton Hall. London.
March 1st. Old Bull Arts Centre, Barnet.
And many other places around the country and in Greater London.

Ivor Cutler Info 01 636 6226
See interview in this issue.
February 12. Ambit Promotions, Chalk Farm Library, London.
February 14. Milton Keynes Festival, Woughton Centre.
February 16. Glasgow Literary Festival, Mitchell Theatre.
March 2. Swindon Wyvern Theatre.

INFORMATION FOR NEXT ISSUES LISTINGS (March - April) to the Performance Magazine, 10 Fleet Road, London NW3 2QS by February 15.

Joyce Edwards

Ivor Cutler – See listings.

A Peripheral Postural Intimation

From Silvia C. Ziranek

Varying modes of personal predilections on the sidewalk had in no way increased the proximity of the possibilities of the perfumed exchange. The usual incentives of self expression lay unexploited, if thoroughly explicable. The recurring reveries (recreated for a mere dollar sixty eight) had failed to rearrange the necessity for elsewhere. Reappraising those nomadic memoires, where anything can happen in the last half hour, the personal jottings of the somewhat repetitive if improbable visuals had proved too much for the crossed knee and hospitable heating. Telephonic communications alternated with horizontal inclinations. My drink rhymed with vigour and not veneration, and I lingered longer with that no-mess style and the friendly shoe for men. Desmond Desmond let's duplicate the rhythm of our bodies and turn the lights down low. For, after all, subdued lighting is more a state of mind than a discipline. I briefly absented myself from the bienseance of his bonhomie, and emptied my more immediate attitudes of vocabulary and caution. Artifice beyond belief flowed from my knees like irreverent (irrelevant?) projections, like everso, as we reclined (lightly) on sauteed murmurs and curried compliments, that being the nearest I would wish to challenge the steady stream of availability. We shredded whims with nonculinary caprice and cavorted to the accompaniment of substituted pervasions. Life could never be the same with poor spelling. I declined on a phrase of discontent, and coerced cushions like presupposed personalities. I lost the piece of paper with his name on it, and slipped into something a leetel less reactionary, say for example my jaunty puce number, and awaited quality tells. So it seemed at the time, as I tapped him lightly on the shoulder, (left) and told him what he was doing (right, or is that too slick?). He needed more than mere mayonnaise to make things happen and he knew it pom pom. Thus attempting a vague verisimilitude of those temporarily translatlantic innuendoes I tampered with tomato ketchup, (don't we all at some time), or possibly just moments, briefly. I was feeling tentatively tribeca but more than somewhat Wandsworth. I was looking neither apres ski nor comme ca. I was considering practising for my future,

whatever his name was. I was faced with fiction, who, unlike dear Ruth, you would never find in Antigua with a sailor named Manuel. And haven't we all left our pantee in Tierra Del Fuego at some time hmmm? There I lay, surrounded by concentrated convention and passing phases, wondering if there were no other place for that familiar fancy Thursday? Exhausted by (cough) and I think you all know what I mean, one must occassionally contrive a leetel continuity. Therefore: still unable to explain the presence of the poodle in the bathroom, when all the time his emotions were crease resistant, his expressions drip dry. My tenses dense with the sense of French underwear and I leave it to you to estimate the colour dear reader. Later that same evening dot dot dot in every sense... His nose overwhelmingly rather, replete with limbate and advertising potential, eased itself into a unique position in history. Sometimes one must, but when, and where? No, no, really, and I mean that sincerely, for my hairstyle goes beyond the realms of idle speculation, (and here he gave her a controlled look), here comes someone. It all came back to her: your feet, my heart, the aching moon. Preposterous. Pretty pretty. Pom pom pom. Would accessories never go out of style? Is there no end to the incidental caresses of his accidental carelessness. (The majority of the onlookers) without. Should one say ha? Mmm it is and tastes great too. Was that love or was it hunger pangs (how after shave can change the man you love to the man you live with) ?*my* kitchen is designed in the classic style of ancient Mycaena to depict the timelessness of woman. She returned his look with the meaning of tomorrow. They overcame equipment — always an improvement on tea bags — and advanced the definitions of Deshabille. She was aflame with nonchalance. He was dressed in intimate interpretations almost discrete in catastrophe. Economy had played no part in the linguistics of his lapel; a tea cup here, an accordion there. No mandolins no mackerel. Serene in the authority of a single-button cardigan-jacket over a slim waist-pleated skirtette, she was dedicated to the leading brands yet still sorry, Sybil, fitted into nothing so nondescript as perfection. Who needed a broken heart when she had such a convenient complexion. A slave to somewhat, she tossed the dilemma around like a loss leader in lingerie, drenched in sense and the hairspray that says 'Come on touch me'. What was really terrific was the however only just visible between the hope and 100% cotton, completely obliterating the tautology of texture, yet so chez nous. Would she ever —

1 Be able to concentrate on a two-tone lilac half-sleeve pinstripe (verging on the Safari)?
2 Let opportunity stand in the way of success?
3 Compliment the coffee table?
4 Confuse solace with sauce vinaigrette?
5 Save herself for later?
6 Harmonise with ecology?
7 Wonder all the while if love could match the upholstery?

Thus it was that she recalled that, to some, the feet are mere playthings, but hers were with her for life. They spoke in a language all could understand. How she rippled to the rythms of those moody metatarsals. Listened to the poetry of the tweaking tendons. Ah oui those elusive yet supremely fine accomplishments, she called them dot dot dot feet.

NEXT WEEK: THE KNEE.

Ziranek