

REGGAE Ken

WOBBLING home late along Princes Avenue, past the clubs, under a bald sky filled with chilly stars, I noticed a small change in the sounds emerging from the club discos. Not funk and heavy soul, as a year ago, but reggae. From each club. Sure, it was not the mind-sweeping of Channel One, but it was reggae.

It's ironic, for in the city now 'blues' and shebeens are rare. So rare, those of last year are almost legendary. Norris plays no more. Jah Gibbon infrequently, and yours truly rarely.

The myth of reggae remains in most clubs. The police hassle any incipient sound system and the white closet lovers won't turn up where there is a majority of black people. The immense difficulties of putting a sound system together, coupled with the paranoia of our times, make any 'pure' reggae night a real feat.

Among black youth the music is biting hard. It brings dignity, and with dignity understanding.

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DENNIS BROWN has four new songs on a variety of labels. Two on D.E.B., one on Observer, and the best, for me, on a label conned out from the Morpheus sound system. Cut for them, on a slate, and issued by them as a Pre.

Immanuel God is With Us shows that Brown's voice has lost none of the promise on his early, teenage singles like God Bless the Children. Rated by many as the best singer in JA, by far, Immanuel is in fact the best single I have heard in many months. The Dub is simply magnificent.

As we hear that the Diamonds have just cut an album with Allan Toussaint Stateside we can rejoice that at least one singer is not tempted from the songs he knows best.

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MY STACK of pres, this time around numbers about 50. Many are total disasters. Junior Murvin only escapes out of five tries with Tedious, on Orchid Pre., produced by Scratch, and this Scratch is the genius of White Belly Rat, not the self-agitated parody of himself on his latest for Island, Dread Locks in Moonlight, which is gunk par excellence. And he of all people should know better, and if he had any power in the re-cut of Sufferer's Time, for the disco market, Jah should boot him up the bum.

A real badama from Lloydie Chalmers, tired out no doubt by all those singles Delroy Wilson has been cutting for him. Hello Africa is the one for those parties where the mouth is the enjoyment menwise, and the highs come from gabble de gabble about who gabbled last. This single will shut up their mouths.

Big Yu is back to his indolent brilliance on two of his four recent offerings. Love in the Neighbourhood, (Dee Jay), and Jah Jah Love Them (Ghanan), show how unique Buchanan is. As if asthma rattled his chest, he burbles out his mixture of poetry, sermon and machismo. Ras Michael's new one, Jah New Name, is as fine as Run Aggression, on the Rastafari label. I'd need a tome to tell of my love for all this man sings, and does.

Jacob Miller has a rocking bumper on Top Ranking, Forward Free, and a new man for me, Hugh Mantell, is produced excellently by the highly under-rated Augustus Pablo, leaving me to say that of all the recent pre. singles, Immanuel and Tedious are essential for all reggae lovers.

Finally, the brilliant Pablo Moses album on Kilik, Revolutionary Dream, is being queued for in Button Street.

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THE ECONOMICS of pre. is worth clarifying. A single sells in JA for 45 cents (25p), and is hustled over here by the streetmen and sold to outlets for 70p or more. We buy the record at £1.20. The excess looting never benefits the artist, or the people in the local record industry. Like tourism, the rip rips the base, and the profit fattens the exiled bandits.

If Mr Manley's mouth is affected by what he hears himself say, then there can be hope for the Jamaican musicians and singers. Co-operatives, talent shared, contractual fees simplified, and hiddle-diddle done in.

The schools wayward kids attend (like borstals here), that produce so many talented artists, could be edged away from their liberal 'rehabilitation' to a progressive support for culture, blocking always the desire for poor men and women to see exile as the only place they can survive without belly rumbles.

Cynics, and we know them, say the poverty and the hassle produce the sounds. They could add that we might all die, for then we could value life better.

This continual exploitation of reggae by those around its periphery can be stopped, and the eager youth, who've saved for weeks for some singles, won't have to deny themselves daily bread to hear the music they love. And the artists need not back into the poor yards, defeated again by the contractual maze, and the pressure of gangsters, demanding a tune for the price of a pound weight in Kingston.

THEATRE

EMPIRE THEATRE 709 1555
April 12-16. SCOTTISH OPERA. Tue. and Sat. Macbeth; Wed. and Thur. The Magic Flute; Fri. The Merry Widow.

PLAYHOUSE 709 8363
Until April 16. THE FRONT PAGE by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur. One of the great successes from the National Theatre. Gloriously funny play set in the mad world of newspaper reporters in the Chicago of the 1920s. Large cast of outrageously lovable parts. Should give the Playhouse company a happy end to the season.

April 18-23. ST. JOAN by George Bernard Shaw. Production by the Prospect Theatre Company, Britain's leading touring company.

April 25-30. LONDON CONTEMPORARY DANCE THEATRE. Mon.-Wed. Nema, Step at a Time, and third work to be announced. Thur.-Sat. Stabat Mater, Successions, third work to be announced. Matinee Wed.

PLAYHOUSE UPSTAIRS 709 8363
Until April 16. KENNEDY'S CHILDREN by Robert Patrick. Remarkable play of insight and compassion - lament for the death of the American Dream and with it the death of innocence.

April 18-23. GIMME SHELTER by Barry Keefe. Soho Poly production.

EVERYMAN (on tour) 709 4776
THE WESTERN KIRKBY COWBOY - at Highwayman pub, Skelmersdale April 1, 8.30; Old Toby pub, Skelmersdale (April 2, 8.30).

YATESY AND THE WHALE - at Bluecoat Chambers (April 19, 8.30); St. Anthony's Parochial Club, Great Homer Street (April 28 at 8.00).

FOCO NOVO (touring Merseyside)
TIGHTEN YOUR BELT by Jon Chadwick and John Hoyland. Bold Miners' Club, St Helens (April 5); Wallacey Labour Club (April 6); Pirrie Ward Labour Club, Liverpool (April 8).

AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS

THEATRE ROYAL St. Helens 28467
April 28-30. THE PAPER CHAIN by Falkland L. Carey and Ivan Butler. Presented by well-known local society The Unnamed Players.

NEPTUNE THEATRE 709 7844
April 1 and 2. COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS by Ronald Jeans. New Electron Players.

April 14-16. BLITHE SPIRIT by Noel Coward. G.H. Lee Dramatic Society. April 19 and 20. DRAMA FESTIVAL. Liverpool Federation of Townswomen's Guilds.

April 22 and 23. THE PEACOCKS MUST GO by Dennis Driscoll. East Wavertree Players.

April 26-30. DANGER INSIDE by Falkland Carey and Ivan Butler. Green Room Players.

OTHER AMATEURS

Until April 2. HEDDA GABLER by Ibsen. Chester Theatre Club follow last year's successful production of A Doll's House. Little Theatre, Gloucester St., Newtown, Chester. Tickets: phone Suaghall 733 or from Broadway Travel.

April 15-23. TWO AND TWO MAKE SEX sex. by Richard Harris and Leslie Darbon. Little Theatre, Houghton Street, Southport. S'port Dramatic Club. 7.45.

April 19-23. RUDDIGORE. Rock Ferry Amateur Operatic Society. Ticket Sec: 608 8384. Gladstone Hall Theatre, Port Sunlight, 7.30.

April 20-23. A GHOST ON TIPTOE by Robert Morley and Rosemary Sissons. Birkenhead Dramatic Society. Little Theatre, Grange Road West, Birkenhead, 7.30.

April 26, 28 and 30. TIMON OF ATHENS by Shakespeare. Merseyside Unity Theatre in collaboration with Liverpool University Dept. of English Literature. Eleanor Rathbone Theatre, Myrtle Street, 7.00.

April 27-30. CALAMITY JANE. Musical Western. Heswall Operatic Society. Little Theatre, Grange Road West, Birkenhead. Tickets: 342 6690 or from Norwest Travel. 7.30.

April 28-30. GOODNESS HOW SAD by Robert Morley. Crescent Players. West Kirby Grammar School for Girls, Graham Road. Tickets: Mrs Fawcett, 2 Beechcroft Road, Meols (632 2124). 7.30.

LITTLE BIRD. Monthly pack of information from a wide variety of sources. "To be ignorant of Little Bird is to be ignorant of life" (Dr Johnson). By post, 50p for 6 issues. News From Nowhere, 48 Manchester Street, Liverpool 1.

P.S. If you have leaflets or handbills to distribute, get 70 copies to Little Bird by 3rd Monday in the month.

RADICAL EDUCATION NETWORK meets Thursdays, 128c Shiel Road. Send sse for details or phone 263 2880. We're compiling a list of

INFORMER



There's a rare chance to see an Indian film at the Bluecoat on April 18 and 19. It's 'Distant Thunder'. According to director Satyajit Ray, it's about how a World War can affect people who are remote from the centre of things, but who are affected very deeply by it, all the same.

FILMS

What to see...

4 April. FREE OPEN SCREENING. First in a monthly series. Any film brought will be shown. Take a film or go and watch. Merseyside Film-Makers Association, Open Eye Cinema, 90 Whitechapel, Liverpool. 7.30.

4 and 5 April. THE KING OF MARVIN GARDENS. -MFIS.

6 April. BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN (USSR 1925). Dir: Eisenstein. Perhaps the most celebrated Russian film. Also BEZHIM MEADOW, the greatly acclaimed but rarely seen Eisenstein short. -MFIS.

6 April. BLOW FOR BLOW (1972). Marin Karmitz, 100 workers and a group of film-makers. By, and largely about, women. Reconstruction of the occupation of a textile factory. -Open Eye.

7 April. BLOW FOR BLOW (See April 6.) -Open Eye.

13 April. ADOPTION (Hungary 1975). "Confirms that Meszaros is now in the top flight of Hungarian directors" (Films and Filming). "Impeccable acting and observation" (The Times). -Open Eye.

14 April. THE ADVENTURES OF BARRY MCKENZIE (Australia 1972). Dir: Bruce Beresford. Starring Barry Crocker and Barry Humphries. Based on the famous cartoon strip in 'Private Eye', about the hilarious adventures of a young Australian in London. -Birkenhead F.S.

14 April. ADOPTION. See 13 April. -Open Eye.

15 April. THE WAR GAME and CULLODEN. Peter Watkins' Culloden broke new ground in its 'newsreel' approach to this often glamorised battle. The War Game projects us into the aftermath of nuclear war. The BBC, who commissioned it, found it so terrifying they wouldn't show it in 1965 - and they still won't. -MFIS.

18 April. DISTANT THUNDER (India 1973). Dir: Satyajit Ray. Distant Thunder is the sound of far-off gunfire, or perhaps the crashing of an empire. A comfortable Brahmin couple face inexorable change. Subtle, but profoundly telling. -MFIS.

19 April. DISTANT THUNDER (See April 16.) -MFIS.

20 April. LAST YEAR IN MARIENBAD (France 1961). Dir: Alain Resnais. Past, present, future, the mundane and the mysterious, reality and illusion are all inextricably combined in this classic and revolutionary piece of film-making. -MFIS.

20 April. THE LION HAS 7 HEADS. (1970, Glauber Rocha, Italy/Brazil). Major political film about the viciousness of colonial exploitation, by one of the leading film-makers of the Third World. -Open Eye.

21 April. THE LION HAS 7 HEADS. (See 20 April.) -Open Eye.

22 April. MERSEYSIDE FILM-MAKERS' ASSOCIATION. General meeting, Open Eye Cinema, 6.00 p.m.

22 April. WIVES (Norway 1975). Dir: Anja Brein. Norway's answer to John Cassavette's "Husbands". Three former school friends decide to forget (temporarily) their families and blaze a tragicomic trail through Oslo. -MFIS

25 April. TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES. (Germany 1973). Dir: Ulli Lommel. "The most controversial film of the competition [Berlin] ... It brings the story of Fritz Lang's "M" up to date with a vengeance by revealing its anti-hero for what he was - a seducer and murderer of young boys. The film's chilly realism, however, is only half its achievement." (Nigel Andrews, Financial Times). -MFIS

25 April. THE PAWNBROKER. Rod Steiger winning 'Best Actor of the Year' in this film which also took 12 other awards. A Jew who survived Auschwitz, but lost his wife and three children, runs a Harlem pawnbroking business, and after

discovering his partner is using it as a front, his sense of human dignity returns to him, and feeling for the other unfortunes around him. -Crosby Int. F.S.

26 April. TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES. (See 25 April) -MFIS.

27 April. EMITAI (1972, Ousmane Sembene, Senegal). A truly "important film" by Africa's first director of world stature. Shattering film of revolution - about the exploitation of Africa's culture. Also THE LONE RANGER (with Pete Townsend of The Who). -Open Eye.

28 April. BLUE WATER, WHITE DEATH. (USA 1971). Dirs: Peter Gimbel and James Lipscomb. Award-winning documentary about the quest for the Great White Shark. -Birkenhead F.S.

28 April. EMITAI. (See 27 April) -Open Eye.

29 April. THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE (France 1972). Dir: Luis Bunuel. Savagely funny demonstration of the power of appetite to exceed consumption. Six elegant bourgeois and their relentless pursuit of an elusive dinner. -MFIS and Heswall F.S.

30 April. THE WILD BUNCH (USA 1969). Dir: Sam Peckinpah. Featuring William Holden, Robert Ryan, Ernest Borgnine. By 1914 the old West was dead. Pike Bishop and his gang won't accept it. These are the last of the 'real' men, unable to come to terms with a world containing motor cars and machine guns. -MFIS.

where to see it

BIRKENHEAD LIBRARY FILM SOC. 7.30 p.m., Williamson Art Gallery, Slatey Road, Birkenhead. Membership 85p plus 35p admission, or season subscription £2.75. Guests 40p.

CROSBY INTERNATIONAL FILM SOCIETY. 7.30 p.m., Crosby Library. Membership £1.50 (OAPs, students 75p), admission 20p (10p), guests 50p (25p).

MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY (MFIS). 6.00 and 8.15 p.m. 45 Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool 1. 50p, membership 75p.

HESWALL FILM SOCIETY. 7.45 p.m., Alexander Hall, Heswall. Season subscription £5, or membership £1 plus 60p admission. Members' guest tickets available.

OPEN EYE FILM SOCIETY. 90 Whitechapel (former Grapes Hotel). 8.00 p.m. 50p (membership 75p).

ROCKNOTES

AT LAST rock seems to be going in a new direction. The kids can no longer afford the 'rock aristocracy' of Led Zeppelin, The Who, the Stones, etc.

Instead, they are looking to each other for cheaper, more energetic forms of entertainment. At least that is the theory of 'punk rock' or 'new wave'. And thus the streets have given birth to the Sex Pistols, The Clash and The Damned and a host of others created to quench the thirst of boredom and pointlessness that pervades the kids on the dole.

How is it then that Liverpool, with such a high unemployment rate, can be missing out? There are no Scouse New Wavers! Is it because we haven't got the nerve to give it a go?

Are we still under the shadow of the Beatles' triumph or are we just apathetic? Perhaps we are, but I think rather that it is a lack of encouragement, a lack of places to play, not enough people prepared to take a chance with a new, local band... a new, local balls reaction of working class youth.

So arise pub and club owners. Open your doors and let the tide of frustration rush in. And when the kids with begged,

JAZZ

THE COFFEE HOUSE pub in Wavertree this month celebrates its eighth anniversary as a jazz club.

It has been a remarkable success story, as every Tuesday for eight years has always been packed to the doors with an invariably enthusiastic crowd.

One very pleasing aspect of the place is the wide age range of the audience, which has never been entirely dominated by either the students from colleges nearby or the regulars at this old-established pub.

In the past there has been a sad lack of any similar venue for modern jazz. True, there is the Mike Jackson Quintet on Wednesdays at the Gladray Club (that place has never been the same since Gloria left) but there has been no other regular venue for modern jazz since the demise of the Banyan Tree.

To some extent the music, and the musicians, can be blamed - it has never been a style with the kind of universal appeal that earlier forms of jazz have had (some would argue that this is a good thing) and its performers have always tended to be introverted compared with the brash style of many traditional players.

However, at last, there is a new, regular venue with an exciting and attractive programme of modern jazz. Eric's Club in Mathew Street, in the city centre where the New Cavern used to be, is the scene for a new modern jazz club starting on Wednesday April 13.

There is a spectacular opening show on the 13th with Chris McGregor's Blue Notes, the Kenny Shaw Band and Will Gaines as compere and tap dancer extraordinaire.

This is followed on the 20th by Henry Cow as the main attraction, the New Gary Boyle Band on the 27th, Bud Freeman on May 4th and Carmell Jones and Johnny Griffin on the 11th. Also present on each evening will be resident local musicians.

The shows start at 8 p.m. and don't finish until 1 p.m., which means that those going to see Stan Tracey perform his "Under Milk Wood Suite", with Donald Houston, at Liverpool University on May 4, can wander across to Eric's afterwards to finish the evening with Bud Freeman. What a night!

Admission charges vary from 90p for Jazz Centre Society members to £1.20 for non-members. Tickets are available from Eric's and J from the Merseyside Arts Shop (051-708 7592).

The Manchester branch of the Jazz Centre Society, and its director, Ian Croal, have inspired this move to revive the local modern scene and are to be congratulated for it. Although (as recent letters to the Musicians' Union magazine have pointed out) the massive emphasis which the society places on modern and contemporary jazz can be criticised from a national point of view - here on Merseyside they look like remedying a desperate need.

LIVE JAZZ can be heard at the following places on Merseyside:

Monday: Merseyside Big Band, Victoria Hotel, New Brighton.

Tuesday: Blue Magnolia Jazz Orchestra, The Coffee House (pub), Wavertree. Savoy Jazzmen, Parkgate Hotel, Parkgate, Wirral.

Wednesday: Merseyside Jazz Band, The Sportsman, St John's Precinct, Panama Jazz Band, The Black Horse, West Kirby. Mike Jackson Quintet, Gladray Club, Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool 8. Modern Jazz, Eric's Club, Mathew Street, Liverpool.

Thursday: New Orleans Jazz, Westminster Hotel, Chester. 1930s style jazz, Victoria Hotel, New Brighton.

Sunday: New Orleans Express, The Albion, Chester. Kirklands Orpheans, Kirklands Wine Bar, Hardman Street, Liverpool.

ALSO: The first Monday every month Formby Jazz Club meet at Formby British Legion, and the first Thursday every month the Blue Magnolia play at the Black Greyhound, Northwich.

borrowed or stolen equipment have become tax exiles, THEN you can sit back and perhaps then count your money.

RECENTLY released is the new Pink Floyd album, "Animals". It's a far cry from Punk Rock, starting off with a three-minute acoustic number which leads into "Dogs", which takes up the rest of side one, and is very much in the vein of "Dark Side of the Moon", and "Wish You Were Here", as is side two.

I myself feel that the vocals are the failing point of the album, but the lyrics must rate amongst the band's best. It's not a bad album, but personally I would forsake Pink Floyd's last three albums for just one side of "Umma Gumma".

OF THE BIG names that have recently visited the city, Be Bop Deluxe were the best that I caught. Bill Nelson is truly a superb guitarist.

ERIC'S CLUB in Mathew Street seems to have taken off as a permanent rock club. Memberships are available from Probe Records in Button Street (off Whitechapel) for 50p.

I think the place could do without the near riot it had when the Damned played there, but let's face it, that's rock 'n' roll ...

-IAN BURNS