

I WENT to Harrogate again, after a gap of a few years partly for the pleasure of visiting the town itself and to see the new Supercentre and to refresh myself with happy memories — I once enjoyed a supreme emotional experience on the Stray, the large open expanse of grass and bushes in the centre of the town — and anyway it is

always pleasant to visit this fine town where remedial baths eased the gout of Edwardian Yorkshire folk.

Coming to the Exhibition itself I must confess that my view is that it's probably not really worth while having both the ABTT Trade Fair and the Harrogate event. I don't really see the theatre supply industry being willing to

devote not only cash but time to attending both events, and after all, they constitute the exhibitions. As to which of the two is the better, white hot pincers will not draw an opinion from me but perhaps they should come together plus an international conference which should have a serious sounding programme, so that official

visitors can claim the expenses, and yet continue to be cheerful and fascinating — rather like Showlight '81 — in fact.

Having looked round I decided the correct thing to do was to invite John Offord to tell us about the whys and hows of his latest venture. The Editor.

ENTERTAINMENT '81

by John Offord
Editor of 'Entertainment and Arts Management'

ENTERTAINMENT 81, held at Harrogate Conference and Exhibition Centre from November 24-26 last year, was the first 'total' convention for entertainment and the arts to be held in the UK.

Civic halls, arts centres, or regional theatres, could meet up with the product providers — agents, promoters, and producers. They could also see the latest in lighting and sound systems, visit the stands of seating manufacturers or study box office computerisation.

From the outset it was important to us as organisers that we 'dress the house' in this fashion. An overcrowding in one area of interest could mean the possible demise of another in future years. Although technical stands numbered almost half of the exhibitors, in no way did they swamp the show.

We considered it important to offer a complete range of ready-to-occupy shell schemes in the exhibition halls. We feel it is vital to the future of the event that we make it possible for any size of company, music group, or touring theatre company to find exhibiting at the event a project well within their grasp.

Harrogate itself is central on the UK map, and offers a complete mix of conference facilities. For an entertainment event it provides us with a splendid contrast in styles with the Matcham Royal Hall at one end of the complex and the modernistic Super Centre at the other; the two exhibition halls we use providing a total undercover link between the two venues.

Eight seminars were arranged for Entertainment 81, and there were 39 top speakers booked, all experts in their own fields. In addition, there were five special presentation sessions, commercial and non-commercial, and a specially commissioned video production by John Pick on the role of 'The Venue'. Commercial presentations included Rank Strand's own 'Symphony in Light', which excellently described the company's new range of lanterns.

We want our annual visitors to book three days in Yorkshire in November and to know they can kill several birds with one stone. They can talk deals, or



Coloured Minims were launched at the show.



Our author — the checks, greets George Melly — the stripes.



buy or hire equipment or services — or just get hold of the latest news and gossip. And they can do it all in a relaxed atmosphere, at one place, and at the same time.

Delegates came from local authority leisure departments, subsidised theatres, arts centres, and from the companies who serve them. For the first time in the UK many management branches of the business were thrown together. On the technical side, in addition to theatre technicians, we had a fair number of television personnel visiting the event. Around 50 visitors from overseas braved the winter journey.

Lunchtime, evening and late-night there was entertainment in abundance. Over 140 entertainers made their way to Harrogate for Entertainment 81, and they ranged from Punch & Judy to Old Time Music Hall performers, from Ronnie Scott and his Quintet to English Dance Theatre, and from Billie Jo Spears to Geoge Melly and John Chilton's Feetwarmers.

We had created with the event a convivial atmosphere where management of entertainment and the arts could meet together and discuss not only the present, but more importantly future problems and ideas. We had achieved our first step on the way to an 'Edinburgh Festival for Management', and it was gratifying to receive a letter from one arts centre director, thanking us for 'bashing people's heads together in such a delightful way'.

So what plans do we have for 1982? Certainly we want to retain the main themes of the event, and we have much to learn from Entertainment 81; fine tuning the existing programme alongside the introduction of new ideas. From now on we can look at each year independently as far as themes are concerned, and try to judge what the business requires from year to year ... and then add a little flavouring ...

Note: Entertainment 82 will take place in Harrogate from November 30 to December 2 this year, and the programme will be announced in late May.

◀ Our stand at Entertainment '81 — note the first public appearance of the coloured range of Minims now of course enlarged to include a very fetching brown!

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