



Norah McNulty was born in *Eire* and educated at a convent school. Her family later moved to England where she completed her education at Cambridge reading English and History. She later became a technical author in an agency handling mainly engineering accounts.

She is active in the amateur theatre and a frequent theatre goer. She is married to a surgeon and they with their two sons, Jason and Charles, live together with three cats in a large Victorian house in Fulham.

SEVERAL years ago I took part in an impromptu contest as to who could name the most boring spot on the earth's surface. I won outright by announcing clearly and firmly "Tottenham Court Road".

For my overseas readers I should explain that this thoroughfare leads from the junction formed by the eastern end of that alley of bad taste known as Oxford Street, the poor part of Charing Cross Road and the western extremity of a thoroughfare so utterly tedious that no one even bothered to give it a name, and thus by default it became "New" Oxford Street.

In recent times the area has somewhat enlivened with the advent of about fifty HiFi and later, Video shops, becoming in time the Mecca for enthusiasts from all over the world, anxiously comparing the quality and prices of cameras, stereos and other mainly Japanese wares, offered by the many "Leisure Goods" shops in the Road.

More recently still it acquired a certain seedy exoticism with Porno shops springing up and an array of cheap, take-away food shops representing

TRIPLETS IN TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD

A new entertainment centre described by Norah McNulty

almost all nationalities and tastes excluding their pungent aromas to mingle with the diesel fumes.

As regards real entertainment, the only bright spot has always been the magnificent Dominion Theatre. This edifice was constructed as a cinema with full stage facilities — and full indeed by 1930 standards they were. For example one of those much illustrated but seldom seen pieces of equipment, a Schwabe Cloud Projector was hung above the stage to cast its cumulus images on a giant curved cyclorama. In fact, as recently as 1975 this was still in position — probably the only remaining example in Britain.

Although so well equipped theatrically, the Dominion actually opened as a Cinema with Chaplin's "City Lights", no less. So anxious were the then owners to overcome the unfashionable geographic situation of their new pleasure dome that they actually took this film on terms which gave the renters 100% of the box office, the exhibitors having to rely on kiosk sales, restaurant takings etc. But then I guess a new Chaplin movie probably did put the Dominion on the map very firmly.

Now, in fact since noon on July 30th this year to be precise, a new attraction has arrived in Tottenham Court Road in the form of a brand new Triple Classic Cinema in the new Central Cross Complex.

On this same site stood the old Berkeley and Continentale Cinemas, which were pulled down some years ago to make way for the redevelopment. Now, thankfully, Classic, spurred on by the success of their existing 5 screen complex around the Corner in Oxford Street, have re-affirmed their faith in the future of cinemas and "the magic of the movies" and brought not only an enormous new neon sign but also a new lease of life to Tottenham Court Road.

I suppose that now, within 200 yards of each other, we have very nearly the opposite extremes of approach to the cinema as it exists in 1981. The Dominion, apart from stage shows, still features 70mm long-running epics, with separate performances all displayed to its 1600 patrons by magnificent but labour intensive equip-



"Looks all right to me!" A Strand installation engineer checks the focus.

ment while the new Classic has three Auditoria, seating 328, 145 and 137 moviegoers, but only three projectors and one projectionist.

How is this possible? By the use of up to date projection equipment supplied and installed by Rank Strand Cinema. The common projection room houses the three Cinemeccanica projectors, each with a long-playing tower so complete films can be run without breaks or changeovers. Modern Xenon lamphouses eliminate the constant attention and adjustment that was necessary with the old Carbon Arcs (and also the mess they created) thus dispensing with the teams of projectionists who all played a vital part in running the show. At the new Classic one man can start and supervise all three separate projection systems within one spacious projection room.

The three Auditoria, although small by comparison with the Dominion, are furnished and decorated to an extremely high standard and the largest one has the added luxury of the latest

four track stereo system, to bring out all the realism of the special effects sound track, an increasingly essential feature of modern cinematography. Today's audiences are used to HiFi at home and naturally expect comparable quality in the cinema.

Many "old school" enthusiasts will mourn the passing of the carbon arc lamphouse, the old-fashioned projectors, which were marvels of precision engineering, the valve amplifiers and indeed the obsolescence of the projectionist's skill in the face of modern, simple, reliable equipment. Times are hard for the Cinema industry in this country however, and if we have to sacrifice the magnificent elaborate equipment of the past to keep the Cinema profitable then surely it is a small price to pay to ensure the survival of the Cinema at all. Companies like Classic lead the field in the battle to keep the Cinema industry alive and flourishing and we can all be grateful to them for at least brightening up what would otherwise be one of the dreariest parts of the Metropolis — Tottenham Court Road.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED TO THE NEW CLASSIC TRIPLE CINEMA COMPLEX

CINEMA No.1

Projector —
Single Cinemeccanica Victoria 5 belt driven single phase projector with manual 3-lens turret, disc type shutter, used in conjunction with a DGB 4 x 4 double sided long-playing device with a total capacity of 8000 metres of 35mm film.

Light source —
Cinemeccanica X2001 H horizontal Xenon lamphouse using 2000 watt bulbs and powered by a single phase T and R rectifier.

Sound amplification —
4-channel stereo optical system using Dolby CP 50 decoder (installed by Sound Associates) and a Cinemeccanica C/200 D amplifier rack providing approx. 100 watts RMS output per channel.

Loudspeaker system —
Three Altec biphonic loudspeaker

assemblies behind the screen plus 14 effects speakers mounted around the auditorium.

CINEMA No. 2 and 3 (Same equipment in both)

Projector —
Single Cinemeccanica Victoria 5 with DGB device as in No. 1.

Light source —
Cinemeccanica CX1600 vertical Xenon lamphouse using 1600 watt bulbs and powered by a T and R single phase rectifier.

Sound amplification —
Single track mono optical only using Cinemeccanica C/55 PT integrated sound system, providing approx. 30 watts RMS output.

Loudspeaker system —
Single Shure Premaster 701 loudspeaker assembly behind screen.



Long playing equipment. Up to six hours of continuous entertainment — courtesy of Cinemeccanica and Rank Strand Cinema.