

THE CENTAUR—ONCE A MYTH, NOW A LEGEND

Well, people, I had dreams of phantasmagorical stage lighting and adoring applause for my hundred and sixty-ninth comeback at the most lavishly elegant Centaur Club on the world famous Peachtree Strip for Friday and Saturday nights of last week. Unfortunately, much to my dismay, and further proof that somehow they will always get even with me for being a superstar from the twilight zone coupled with the outer limits; other agents, in no way connected with the legitimate theatre, were determined to steal my show regardless of any plans and dreams that this timeless star has had to endure throughout a lifetime of struggle and heartbreak; for what, at this writing, I can't be sure.

My first knowledge first came through the news media while riding in my 1943 Club Coo-pay, formerly owned by Al Capone, while accompanied with my overnight smash sensational high rock, hex-tet group, commonly called the Converse All-Stars. The entire collage of this highly overtalented group were all assembled—"instruments" and all—along with my entire new wardrobe which I purchased from MGM's auction of famous stars' gowns at phenomenally high prices, which were all cheerfully provided through courtesies of the syndicate, whoever they might be; because we all know that money means nothing to them and all that really mattered was that I looked particularly good for my comeback performance. My new \$50,000 wardrobe made the Queen of Sheba's gowns look like she had been making many rounds to the Good-Will Industries, which have several big stores—all connected with one. Well, now I know it is true that in show business that one day they hang a star on your dressing room door. Hell, I had no idea mine would be down by nightfall!

Meantime, and via the grapevine, I heard that late last Friday afternoon many, many stars had fallen. Tears were shed, careers were shattered, waiters, bartenders and doormen were now unemployed. Shirley Temple Jones had to grow up and at last face life, as Portia did in the early 1950's. Mr. Massell, with the unemployment rate up as high as it is now, how could you be so heartless? Do you know how hard it would be for you to have to get into a dress and look pretty for a salary of \$5 or \$10 a night, with a dollar or two tip, provided you are lucky? Where will these people go? What will they do? Or do you really care? Will you, kind sir, have them for Thanksgiving turkey dinner in your fine home with your family? Or, would you have them ask for spare change on the street? Better still, we could



photo by mims

build a lot of ovens around town, like Hitler would do, and throw in lots of so-called undesirables and serve them to the numberless people already living in Atlanta who are going hungry.

Oh, how well I remember when the plush night-spot opened in early May and I quote from the *Bird's* edition of May 11, 1970, written by Lance:

"There's no business like Drag business!" sings Phyllis Killer on the showcase stage; behind her, swags of curtain looped through golden towelrings conceal a world of entertainment. A transvestite knight in shining silver lamé, boots and tunic, she gestures with the mike and tosses a helmet of brittle spunglass angelhair teased out and curled like the tips of ocean waves. Oh baby, hairdos and costumes in a

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CENTAURICIDE

The Centaur Club is no more—closed by City Hall because of "underworld connections."

So what else is new? Is there anybody who doesn't know by now how gay bars and clubs all over the country are tight within the clutches of Mafia and syndicate organizations—how else could any gay bar obtain and keep the necessary licenses without dealing directly, on a cash-in-hand basis, with police departments of each city, all of which have fairly smooth working relationships with "organized crime." Atlanta is certainly no exception to this rule.

The question is: Why the Centaur Club? Out of all the raunchy dens up and down the Strip (not to mention the bar/club network all over Atlanta), none of which has anything resembling the healthy atmosphere of the Centaur Club with its drag show and its gay clientele, why would the home of "Billy's Beautiful Boys" be singled out and designated as an "undesirable establishment"? Why—because it has no defense. The Centaur Club was a gay bar. Thus, Massell can have his cake and eat it, too. He can give the appearance of stamping out "organized crime" in Atlanta and at the same time practice a bit of gay repression at a time when Atlanta's gay population is in the process of getting it together.

What we must remember is that the Centaur Club was important because it contained and employed gay people, and because on its stage were displayed the talents of drag queens, guerrilla theater troops who have functioned, before the advent of organized Gay Liberation, to provide one of the few out front challenges to the sexual politics of Amerika during the last few decades. Gay people came together at the Centaur Club, and gay people are beautiful. But because we, as gay brothers and sisters proud of our shared consciousness, did not and have never had any measure of control over the Centaur Club, or any other "gay institution" whose primary purpose is to make money for a few individuals, we should remember the good times we had there and from them derive energy to go about building gay-defined and controlled structures that the Man (and you know who that is!) can't destroy whenever he chooses.

Out of the bars and into the collective consciousness!

—miller francis

dolly

CONTINUED FROM P. 8

Many of her best songs deal with the oppression of women. One of the finest is "Don't Let It Trouble Your Mind:"

*But I'd rather live alone
Than live with someone
That doesn't love me.*

*And I'd rather have you go
Than stay and put me down,
A-thinking you're above me.*

Another, "Just Because I'm a Woman," deals with men's oppressive double standard towards women:

*I can see you're disappointed
By the way you look at me.
And I'm sorry that I'm not the woman
That you thought I'd be.*

*Yes, I've made my mistakes
But listen and understand
My mistakes are no worse than yours
Just because I'm a woman.*

There are more and more, but you get the idea. As they say on the radio, "You owe it to yourselves, friends and neighbors." You really do—you should take a listen to Dolly and Porter.

Start off with Dolly's album "In the Good Old Days" which has, in addition to the title song, "Don't Let It Trouble Your Mind," "He's a Go Getter," and John D. Loudermilk's "It's My Time." Porter's best album is "The Carroll County Accident," which has "Rocky Top" and an out-of-sight version of "Banks of the Ohio." For both get "Porter Wayne and Dolly Rebecca," a fine album worth the price just for the photos on the cover.

—gene guerrero, with thanks to Anne Romaine and Tom Gardner, who appears courtesy of *The Virginia Weekly*.

CLUB CENTAUR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Real fantasy world. Free booze and a buffet. Everyone loves it. Decor, a specialty of the house, in the style of Apocalyptic American, Eclectic Decadent. The old Beauty College (guide my pen, Burroughs; inspire me, Viva!) metamorphosed fittingly into a butterfly showbar. Square pillars carry traces of Roman columns. A fresco of Renaissance medallions curves around the base of the balcony, and dully gleaming shields (what period, what land? no matter; Sir Walter Scott, maybe) grace the balcony rail as it defines the upper level of the intimate amphitheater. Two staircases (Drag Queens' Delite) make traffic a pleasure; one winds down next to the stage for stunning entrances. Empire chandeliers light the spectacle. Oh Beardsley, Oh Wilde, the Savoy was never like this. The glow of good makeup lights our faces. Beautiful Drags glide perfectly from group to group—total theater—everyone can see everyone."

What a sad scene it was with the chandeliers being taken down and the pieces of statuary being removed, and the draperies being stripped off the walls in a much more dramatic scene than Lester could have ever provided with his phone-ripping scene. But the saddest of all were the tears that welled in the eyes of Fancy and Baby Jane. It is pretty hard

to sink old "Titanic," your writer and celestial goddess, victim of our times and other assorted mayhem; and I sincerely hope that some jealous drag hasn't given out my shoe size for cement fittings, mainly because I have tried to be beautiful people and make the world that way and mean no harm to any one single person, except that queen that "shopped" my rhinestone tiara.

Now, I would like to relate a startling piece of information! For about a month or two, I had the strangest feeling that the whole show was being spied upon by undercover agents. The GBIs came in one night and other general paranoia along the same lines drifted in from time to time. Police harassment increased during the last few weeks, but even in this atmosphere, I am positive that no in the club knew that it was going to be closed. Mr. Massell, or whoever, how could you do this to me? What am I to do? My career is shot! I have got to think of something—I will, I will! I'll make a record! I'll show them they can't put a star down! Oh, lord, I forgot I already have several—on "other" files. Let me think! Let me think! I've got it. I'll cut one and become a recording star. So, to my fans and followers and worshippers and believers, I have gone to Nashville and cut a record, soon to be released, so that you will have something to comfort yourselves by on these long, lonely, dreary nights. You will remember when I could sing to you "live and in person." I had a place to sing then. I could wear dresses and jewels. But it looks like I might be wearing slacks for a while now, girls; and I know that I will have help from our fine new mayor who has helped me get my head straight. All I have is just one big favor to ask: "Sam, please don't make my pants too long!"

—diamond lil

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I know that the second biggest mistake any mortal can make is to allow himself to believe that his conscience (his awareness of the possibilities and probabilities of the consequences of his acts) is like a disease that can eat away the competency of his being. I would say ho! he sends his men to kill me out of loyalty to the memory of H.O.!

I would also say to myself he is using a sentence to end my proposition with not because they are nasty nor because they are nasty-nice but because in them I continue to use a preposition to end a sentence with.

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