

Titbits

10p

No. 4743
FEBRUARY 17-23, 1977

AUSTRALIA 35c
MALAYSIA 95c
MALTA 10c

NEW ZEALAND 35c
SOUTH AFRICA 30c

He's saving
lives with his
**DEMON
DRIVING SCHOOL**

MY SECRET VICE-BY PAT PHOENIX



Golden
fleecing
of the
Rev.
Ike

**THAT'S THE
WAY YOUR
MONEY
GOES-IN
CRAZY
HANDOUTS**



Giving
their all at
the great
**DRAG
BALL**



Two sophisticated "ladies" appraise the gay scene

GIVING THEIR ALL AT THE GREAT DRAG BALL



They dress in the height of fashion



BILL NEECH
Getting close to the subject



Hostess



COME back Fag Ash Lil, all is forgiven. Likewise, Dockyard Dora. You knew where you were with the old style drag queens. But not any more. Consider the tasty trio pictured on the right. They've just come first, second and third in a glamour contest at a London ball.

Fellers, every man jack of them . . . the ball was for female impersonators.

It was no joke this assignment, I can tell you. Fantastic chicks dressed to kill on every side of me and no way of telling who was what

and what was which—without being arrested. I felt about as at home as Arthur Mullard in a posh knicker shop.

On the rebound from such paradoxical pulchritude, I turned with relief to the organiser of this frolic, the incontestably feminine female, the limpidly lovely Andre A'dore. With her at my side I felt on safe ground.

But all too soon she deserted me to go and organise the contest for the most ladylike lad.

I was on my own again, a lonely question mark in a room full of exclamation marks.

"Fantastic, isn't she?" said a voice as I watched Andre wend with slen-

der grace among the flamboyant throng.

It was talent-spotting Barry Sullivan, manager of Superfly Productions. (Superfly has organised the big one—the Miss London Drag Contest of 1977 at Hammersmith

Town Hall on February 26.)

I nodded enthusiastically.

"She's very down-to-earth," volunteered Barry. "A little camp, but a very good-looking boy. And she does do a



Winner Colette (Raymond Edwards) flanked by the runners-up. Another Diana Ross?



Drag impresario Andre A'dore (above left) told the boys: "Come as you aren't"—and the boys duly obliged, as you can see. But all is not sugar and spice. Says Superfly Production's drag competition king Barry Sullivan (above): "I don't want to be backstage when the winner is announced"



superb Judy Garland." Hell's bells!

I gulped nonchalantly—try it—and took refuge in my notebook. Bewitched, bothered and bewildered wasn't in it. I felt squarer than the square on the hypotenuse, straighter than the shortest distance between two points.

I mean . . . for a while there I had actually fancied "her".

Like I said, come back Fag Ash Lil and Co, with your bulging biceps, tarantula legs and five o'clock shadow that no amount of talc can hide. No problems there.

Dressing up has come to a pretty pass when you can't tell the girls from the "girls".

All right, there were a few bizarre old bags at Andre's ball—in Queensway, would you believe. But with sophisticated drag currently packing them into the pubs and clubs, and classy drag shows from the States and France storming the West End in 1976, female impersonators no longer need to descend to crude parody to court public approval.

Now, anything goes.

Goddesses

There were slinky seductresses, cuty pies, shy young things, elegant mannequins and sex goddesses of the silver screen at Andre's ball.

Gentlemen all.

For the final, where contestants are required to parade in a fun outfit, then a swimsuit and finally an evening gown, judging will be on graciousness, poise and personality.

"They've got to look like sophisticated women," said Barry Sullivan. "We've invited every drag artist on the circuit and they've all accepted. It will be the biggest night ever in this country, dragwise."

A condition of entry is "no false attributes". Explained Barry: "Some drag artists have got bigger breasts than women—andshapelier. Hormone drugs and plastic surgery

Continued on page 22

Giving their all at the great drag ball

Continued from page 21

are blurring the borderline between male and female."

First prize includes a Continental holiday for two, spending money, clothes voucher, record token, champagne and a cassette recorder.

"It is to be hoped," said Barry, tongue in cheek (I think), "that as a mark of respect for the Sex Discrimination Act, Miss London Drag will be invited to open fetes and attend functions during her term of office."

Queensway's chocolate-coffee-cream trio automatically go through to the final.

Leading them will be Colette, who models herself on American singer Diana Ross. She has entered three drag contests to date—and won them all. When she is not Colette she is Raymond Edwards, aged 20, from Peckham.

Second-placed Louella—Malaysian freelance hairdresser Michael Lee—looked sensationally unsensational, if you see what I mean, in a simple frock, no jewellery and very little make-up.

Number three—a Sonja Henie blonde—asked for her name to be withheld on account of the fact that she works as a secretary to a barrister and doesn't want to lose her job!

The three of them posed in a friendly enough fashion for photographer Roger

Crump, but Barry told me that a terrific amount of needle goes on.

"When the winner is announced at Hammersmith Town Hall," he said, "I don't want to be backstage."

Why do they do it?

The answer seems to be that it's a fantasy escape. Most dragsters are gay and feel more glamorous when they slip into a flamboyant female role.

Very relaxing

But one veteran dresser-up maintains: "There are a lot of what you would call perfectly normal people who find it very relaxing or relieving to put on women's clothes every so often."

Be that as it may or June or April, drag occasionally goes beyond mere dressing up and becomes an art. Andre can kick a gown as devastatingly as did ever Rita Hayworth or Ava Gardner. With her fashion model figure and melodious voice she makes Danny La Rue seem like Old Mother Riley.

And if you think I'm too easily taken in, I have to report that shortly after chatting to Andre I was approached by a demure drag debutante attired all in bridal white, who asked tentatively: "That person you were just talking to—it was a woman, wasn't it?"

Goodnight ladies, whoever you are.