

Lazy Sunday Afternoon

A Tribute to 'Uncle Ernie' – by Alan Miles

On Sundays in the early 60s, anyone who is anyone that is went to the flicks in the afternoon, at the Old Granada, which is now a ruin in Hoe Street.

We all queued outside the cinema and Ernie the Commissioner would be dressed in a uniform which was slightly too big for him, and which made him look like a south american dictator. He would dragoon us into a queue, and he would repeatedly say “***one and nine at the front, come on one and nine at the front, and two and nine at the back , come on two and nine at the back***”, he would give order as we slowly filed into this fantastic picture palace.

Ernie was a very enthusiastic commissioner; I think he 'gave' his life to the Granada. On this Sunday that I am writing about, The Evergreens a band from Gants Hill were playing on the bill, during the breaks between films. The band members were Jewish and this provoked some nasty anti –Semitic insults from the front of the audience.

As soon as the Granada was open, The Top Ten Hits were played, so we had records as well as a band. Ernie the flying commissioner would now be at the doors tearing the tickets as we all filed into the darkened cinema. He would grab the tickets from the flowing audience and then a pretty usherette , would direct you to the open seats with her bright flashing torch, and Ernie could still be heard shouting out “***One and nine at the front , two and nine at the back***”,

A few of the local yobos turned up that afternoon and sat right in front ready to make a nuisance of themselves. On a previous occasion the same yobos actually threw lighted fireworks on the stage.

When a film was shown, and whilst a bit of kissing and cuddling was going on during a scene, in which a woman showed a bit of her anatomy, all the yobos at the front would stamp their feet, and shout out a graduating “***WooooOOOH***” and wolf-whistle at the same time.

Due to this rumpus from the front of the audience, Ernie ran towards this section of the audience flashing his torch vigorously, telling the yobos to “***Shut-up***”. Targeted tonight by from the front row was the band performing; The Evergreens .They opened up with “Stars Fell on Stockton”, and here and there anti-Semitic insults were made by some audience members.

Then the singer walked on stage dressed in a nice three piece suit, and announced to the audience that the next number was going to be “Living Doll” by Cliff and The Shads. Further boos and groans were heard from the insulting members of the audience. So the band finished with “Living Doll”. Then the singer took his jacket off, he wore a lovely three piece suit and a waistcoat, and menacingly “***if anyone wants to have a go with me , I'll see 'em outside after***”. Then he said “***we would like to finish with a great number recorded by The Rolling Stones and The Beatles called 'Money',***” Then the band started to play and the singer broke into “***The Best things in life are free but you can keep that for the birds and the bees I want money, give me money***”. At that point a salvo of pennies and

halfpennies hit the band thrown by the front members of the audience. It's as though the singer got his wish in singing "I want money"!

Ernie had hidden himself beside the ladies was side-right and a very dark area. seeing this small riot ensue, Ernie spontaneously started flashing his torch at the rioters. I think he had an extra large torch for such occasions, it was almost like a search light, which would unflatteringly light the audiences faces. He was heard shouting at them **"Come on keep quiet the one and nines or I'll get the police, I will I'll get the police"**, Ernie's words were law.

The hooligans at the front; a bunch of loud-mouths from Higham Hill did as they were told, and the curtains slowly closed on The Evergreens.

Alan Miles – July 2013 [email](#)