

**THE FACT** that Rolf Harris had the final number one in the singles chart of 1969 may not please the hip too much. But all the children and grown-ups either side of the teenage gap are delighted; they like Mr. Harris. So too do the people who recognise him as a professional, highly competent man with great warmth, charm and the ability to be an absolute stickler for perfection.

Rolf Harris is 40 next birthday and, although he doesn't feel he's any serious pop contender, it says a lot about his character that he's already worried how he's going to follow "Two Little Boys".

"Quite honestly I don't usually do very well with singles," he admits. "Most of them do all right over a long period of time—'Jake The Peg' is selling well over a couple of years—but they hardly ever get into the chart. So I just don't expect these things to happen.

"But 'Two Little Boys' was right for Christmas. It wasn't a Christmas song but it says everything about Christmas without being very jingle bells orientated.

"I never know what the hell to do for singles. I can't do straight pop stuff. I once had a record called 'Bluer Than Blue.' Remember that? Well, I felt like a cheat when I sang it because it didn't mean a thing to me. I didn't plug it much. Though I'm sure it could have done well, it would have horrified me to see it in the chart."

## Category

Rolf is a peculiar part of the entertainment business and it's hard to pigeon-hole him. He doesn't fit in the pop category, nor the Des O'Connor brigade. Somehow he is out on his own . . . accept no substitutes!

Where does he think his popularity lies?

"What an awkward question! Well I hope it's because people realise that I'm REAL.

"I try to be an entertainer rather than a singer, and I try to always get a close contact going between myself and the audience.

"There's a frightening gap between the young and the middle aged which I don't think I've managed to overcome yet. You know, I did

'Top Of The Pops' the other day and I asked the producer if, before I went into the single, I could talk to the audience and try to get them singing it with me.

"He was rather surprised: 'Really?' he said, then: 'Yes, of course, go ahead'.

"I wanted to get those kids involved instead of treating them like a group of non-thinking dancers. I felt very nervous talking to them because it was like throwing yourself off the deep end—if it hadn't worked I'd have been sunk—but in fact they all burst into song at the appropriate moment and it was marvellous.

## Image

"I think I get on with children because I've created a real enough image for them to believe what I say. I don't like this 'Uncle Rolf for the kiddiwinks' type of approach, as



# Rolf Harris —relaxed chart topper who worries about not being worried!

are very prepared to knock you—they practically wait to pounce!

## Hard Time

"If you come to Britain and make it good here—and they don't see what you've been doing—they get this mental attitude about 'well it might have been good enough for those Pommies but not for us'. They can give you a pretty hard time."

Although Harris doesn't class himself as a pop name he still has the same problem as any group—how to find a follow-up.

"I just want to sit and wait for the right song. But people are already asking me what I'm going to do and it's beginning to worry me. I get concerned about all the facets of my career—sometimes carrying things to ridiculous lengths and getting in such a temper if something goes wrong, or someone makes a stupid mistake.

"I know I've sunk into this incredible casual mood. Everyone keeps saying 'How marvellous and relaxed you are,' and then I think 'WHY am I so relaxed?' It's not like me. I think I'm getting a bit slapphappy and it's got to stop!"

## PENNY VALENTINE



though they're creatures from another planet who don't understand the English language. Anyway I'm really a big kid myself—despite my approaching old age!

"And I suppose because the children trust me their parents like me too. I'm not sure about that. Maybe it's because I try to be as sincere as possible in what I do—I know that sounds like a big bulldust line but I'd hate to do something I didn't believe in one hundred per cent."

With an awe-inspiring list of TV series and appearances behind him Harris is currently preparing to go back to Australia in January for a short tour.

"When I go back I don't feel Anglicised but I do feel that Australia is satisfied with second best—especially with music, and that kind of thinking worries me. I have had one of the TV series shown there so I should be okay, but these days Australians