

Written and photographed by BERNARD MALKINSON

# WITH ROLF HARRIS IN MALTA

I HAVE many friends in the world of show business, most newspapermen have, but I have a new favourite—Australian star Rolf Harris.

Rolf, with former recording artiste Don Charles, whom I first met when he toured and I reviewed the Moss Empire shows, at Nottingham opened Caesar's, the most luxurious night club in Malta.

A week ago my wife and I were privileged not only with an invitation to attend but also by being invited to sit with the international star and his wife Olyva; sculptor Jason Monet, and a small group of English residents, who are personal friends.

**GALA OPENING**  
The Gala Opening was attended by 500 specially invited guests, including members of the Malta Government, the Opposition, the Australian High Commissioner (Sir Hubert Oppenheim) with other dignitaries and show business personalities.

My stay started on the Tuesday morning when I met again after years (The... was there on purpose) Don Charles who sang and recorded under the name of Don Bennett.

His mother, Mrs Nancy Young, was born in Ayr—near the Robin Hood Hotel; an uncle, Mr. W. Young, still lives in the district and there are many relatives, including a sister, Mrs. Maxine Brown, in the Hocknall area.

Amid the chaos that always precedes the opening of any new building, Don explained that he visited Malta in a cabaret three years ago and was so taken by the island and its people that he started to plan the night club.

A friend of Rolf Harris, since just after the Australian artiste first arrived in Britain, he was enthusiastic over the idea of a dinner one evening. As the meal ended the international star quietly said: "I'll come in with you."

What was to be a modest caterpiller blossomed and Caesar's is now a £50,000 enterprise that will attract international artists and which should prove a valuable addition to the night life of Malta, which at the moment, in my opinion, leaves a little to be desired.

My first introduction to Rolf Harris was the following morning when my wife and I were invited back.

**FIRST PHOTOGRAPHS**  
As we stood talking to Don Charles' famous Australian baritone voice boomed down from the

heights of the club. "How about this for a shot?" Rolf Harris, in a well-worn shirt and cut down jeans, was at the top of a ladder, four-inch brush in hand, painting the ceiling-plain blue; surely the most expensive interior decorator in the business!

From a table top I shook hands and then took the photograph reproduced in this article.

As Don Charles was attending to leaks in the refrigeration water supply and his wife chasing the non-arrival of cushions, Rolf Harris told how Caesar's came into being.

He paid tribute to Don Charles who had worked non-stop for five months and said the club would be the first project of its type ever to open on time—and on Friday, open on time it did.

**TRAINED ARTIST**  
He told me that he underwent training as an artist and there is no doubt that he has great talent in this sphere, as in many others.

We chatted in the shadow of his famous mural "Sun Arise" which covers one wall of the club from floor to ceiling.

There is also a Malta scene, with the farmers in the fields, the animals and the buildings; a scene of lakes and mountains; and a magnificent London fog scene—which features Don Charles and his dog.

Both Rolf and Don said that they loved Malta and found the people so warm-hearted.

"When I first came said Don "I looked for the catch. What were they trying to get out of me. Why was everyone so friendly. But there was no catch. They are just a warm-hearted, friendly people."

**AMAZED**  
"I was amazed," said Rolf "I wanted and wanted. There just wasn't one. They just like doing things for people."

Rolf took us outside to see two sculptures by Jason Monet. Jason, a brilliant man in his own right, is



Rolf Harris and Don Charles admire "Caesar's"



The writer with his wife and Rolf Harris.

a third cousin of the famous sculptor Claude Monet.

A magnificent wig he said that the sculptures were to distinguish two facilities within the club. During his opening speech on Friday, Rolf Harris said this was true and although he had not had time to paint the doors concerned the distinction was obvious. The audience roared.

As soon as Rolf Harris stood outside the club, crowds of holiday-makers gathered round and one, not realising that the star was actually involved in getting the club ready, said they were surprised not to see him dressed and singing. And so, at the top of his voice—and that is considerable—he burst into the first verse of "Lord George Knows My Father". The crowd roared.

He then admired the newly erected sign outside Caesar's and disappeared back into the club to continue his painting—his painting of the plain blue ceiling.

We met him again the morning the club was due to open. It was obvious that in spite of other people's pessimism and prediction "Caesar's" had conquered. It was going to open on time.

Rolf was rehearsing to John Gunn and his five-piece orchestra—all full time members of the Malta Festival Orchestra.

As soon as he saw us he waved and after getting a piece of music as he wanted it to be broke off and joined us.

Indicating the club he asked "Do you like it?" And he genuinely wanted to know.

**LUXURY**  
How could we help but like it. 600 square feet of air conditioned luxury. Bamboo furniture, four bars, kitchens equipped for an international class menu, including Maltese and British dishes—decor by the star himself.

We told him we liked it. "I'm so glad," he replied—and he meant it. Of all the international stars I have met he is the most genuine of men and I have met some very nice people in show business.

And so to the opening. Caesar's holds 500. The first audience was by invitation only and everyone on Malta wanted to be present.

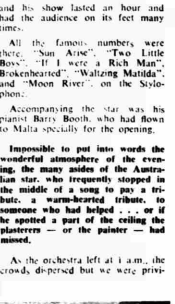
Invitations and tickets had gone out weeks before. The Prime Minister had been invited. Ambassadors and leading members of the government had accepted.

A dinner-jacketed audience heard the traditional blessing by Father Vincent, and were then welcomed by Rolf Harris, who hoped that the club would be a valuable addition to the night-life of the wonderful island.

He then introduced Don Charles, who sang with all the skill that talent and experience bring and as he closed, as he always does, with the song "Don't talk about me when I'm gone" my mind went back to the Empire, Nottingham, where I saw him — years ago. [The — is still there on purpose]

Then came the moment everyone had been waiting for: the cabaret by Rolf Harris. Many famous stars are earmarked to appear at Caesar's. None will receive a bigger, or warmer, ovation than Rolf Harris.

**TREMENDOUS RECEPTION**  
He walked on to start his show with his famous three-legged act...



Which is the false leg?



"The Me Kangaroo Down Sport"

Rolf Harris paints "Sun Arise" mural.



Mr. and Mrs. P. Keron and Miss Phyllis Rounce.



Caesar came and saw and conquered. So have Rolf Harris and Don Charles.



Don and Ann Charles with Rolf and Olyva Harris.



Mr. and Mrs. M. Matthews, Miss Joyce Wakefield, and Jason Monet.



Don Charles opens the cabaret.