

THE CHEEPEN COLLECTION

Memorabilia relating to cinema manager Maurice Cheepen, who received many showmanship awards and was clearly very popular with his audiences.

He was born on the continent in 1902, arriving in London in 1905 when his father got a job in the East End as a tailor. Young Maurice had a fascination with films from a very early age, and he was involved in the story behind a film he was to show at the Astoria, Old Kent Road, many years later: *The Siege of Sidney Street!* His story was that he was on his way to school when he saw hordes of policemen and, next thing, he was part of the crowd watching the events unfold. He was there from 8.30am until the afternoon, and saw Home Secretary Winston Churchill directing operations, but got a good hiding when he eventually made it to school!

After leaving school, his first jobs found him in the postal department of a corset company and later as a jeweller – but every evening he would be at the pictures. He lived in Aldgate, and a favourite haunt was the People's Picture Playhouse in Skinner Street, EC1. He used sneak into the projection box and, when an uncle went into the cinema business and into partnership at that very cinema, Maurice was given a part-time job there. After his uncle sold out, Maurice stayed on, eventually managing the place himself, even though he was only just over 16. Initially, the London County Council opposed the renewal of his licence, due to his age, but one was granted when it was agreed that the new owner would put in at least one appearance each week!

Maurice re-named the cinema the Globe in 1920 and stayed there until the following year. He moved to the Tottenham Pavilion, then to the Star at Hornsey. There, he was smitten with the owner's daughter, Rose Benedicts and after a brief courtship they were married in August 1926.

By that time, Maurice had joined the Hyams Brothers and worked on many publicity stunts, finding his true forte, before being appointed manager of the Broadway, Stratford, when it opened in December 1927. When that was taken over by Gaumont British, Maurice moved to the Savoy, Leyton, then to the Prince of Wales, Lewisham and the Astoria, Old Kent Road. Many others followed, especially during the war, when he found himself closing some cinemas and opening others.

Soon after V.E. Day (in August 1945) he took over at the Trocadero, Elephant & Castle, followed by a lengthy spell at the Troxy, Stepney. The early 1960s saw him at the Astoria, Old Kent Road and the Gaumont, Shepherd's Bush.

The consummate showman, he gained a number of Showmanship Stars and was renowned for his publicity stunts.

The Cheepen Collection (in the Stepney file):

Maurice Cheepen personal memorabilia, including photographs, newspaper cuttings, Showmanship Stars and official luncheon invitations

Advertising leaflets, postcards and adverts (Troxy, Stepney)

Celebrity photographs (identified)

Photographs (unidentified)

Showmanship: Publicity stunts (photographs, newspaper cuttings, scrapbooks):

File 1:

Dry Rot (1956)

Racing tipster Prince Monolulu promoting Gaumont-British News and The Grand National, with actor Jeffrey Hunter

Mister 880 (1950)

The 7th Voyage of Sinbad (1958)

Song of Paris (aka *Bachelor in Paris*) (1952)

Africa Screams (1949)

The Great Rupert (1950)
Safari (1956)
The Great Locomotive Chase (1956), promoted using Southend's 'Kursaal Flyer'
Fair Wind to Java (1953)
Cinderella (1950)
That's My Boy (1951)
Wings of Danger (aka *Dead on Course*/1952) + *The Atomic City* (1952)
The River (1951)
The Man in the White Suit (1951)

File 2:

Brides of Dracula (1960)
5 Fingers (1952)
A Life of Her Own (1950)
The Facts of Life (1960)
[Unidentified painter?]
[Four girls in vintage swimsuits]
[Horse/donkey promoting Oklahoma! (1955)?]
[Promotion for a Dracula film?]
Miss Cinema 1955
Miss Cinema 195?
The Woman for Joe (1955)
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1960)
Summer Madness (aka *Summertime*/1955)
No Love for Johnnie (1960)
[Display of real, uncut diamonds]
Desert Mice (1959)
Nat Gonella and his Georgians [live band]
Lords of the Forest (aka *Masters of the Congo Jungle*/1958)
Gaumont Greater Films Season: "Autumn Film Parade" (8 week programme)
Oh, You Beautiful Doll (1949)
Appointment with Danger (1950)
Mr Belvedere Rings the Bell (1951)
District 3 New Year Staff Ball 1956, featuring actress Jill Adams
Concession counter decorated for Christmas
Mr Music (1950) + *Operation Haylift* (1950)
Lust for Gold (1949)
The Pure Hell of St Trinian's (1960)
Swiss Family Robinson (1960)
"Matt Helm's Slaygirls", promoting one of the Dean Martin 'Matt Helm' comedy adventures
Troxy Stepney poster board outside newsagents', with poster for *The Secret of Convict Lake* (1951) +
The Guy Who Came Back (1951)
Red Skies of Montana (1952)
The Big Lift (1950)
The Young Lovers (1954)
The Jolson Story (1946)
Peter Pan (1953)
All the King's Men (1949)
David and Bathsheba (1951)
The Long Ships (1963)
Two Flags West (1950)
Portrait from Life (1948)
The Prince Who Was a Thief (1951)
The Hound of the Baskervilles (1959)

File 3:

Circle of Danger (1950)
The Mating Season (1951)
Pool of London (1950)
Pagan Love Song (1950)

One Night in the Tropics (1940)
The 13th Letter (1950)
A Night to Remember (1958)
Red Mountain (1951)
This is My Affair (aka *I Can Get it For You Wholesale*/1951)
With a Song in My Heart (1952)
Where No Vultures Fly (1951)