

Avenue Road Supper Club, The Devil's Den and the In Crowd - 53 Avenue Rd.

Entertainment at 53 Avenue Road started earlier than most in Yorkville Village, in something of a club in the more standard way we know clubs; a place to get together and enjoy a range of entertaining activities that here focused on a Brit expats clientele. It was called the *Piccadilly Club* and from its opening on January 6, 1956, first at 137 Avenue Rd, then moving south to 53 Avenue Rd. in March '57; the business was owned and operated by Gerald Peters. Over the next 6 years Peters would redefine the term "entrepreneur", to the chagrin of many he dealt with. The Piccadilly Club was bankrupt by the summer of 1963. In December, '63 Peters could be found in New York, working as a chauffeur and appearing on the Johnny Carson show reciting "Albert and the Lion". Quite the guy!

By January, 1964 J.W. Wild was operating a night club at 53 Avenue Rd. called simply, the Avenue Road Supper Club, with dining and dancing on the main floor to Jack Bond's Orchestra. The club experience changed over the next four years as the venue expanded internally (downstairs) first as the Devil's Den then as The In Crowd, embracing current music trends as it went. It was the home to several well known Toronto bands of the time as it transitioned in 1965, through Jim McHarg's Dixieland Jazz Band and Jack London and the Sparrows, to Jon & Lee and the Checkmates, Shawne and Jay Jackson & the Majestics, the Rogues and later the Mandala by the end of 1966.

In July 1968 it joined the Penny Farthing in dropping regular at least, live music. Until about April, 1974 it seems to return to its roots as a club but without advertised live music.

Updated: October 17, 2022

1958

May 12	Globe and Mail display ad	G&M May 12 th p.35 advertising the Piccadilly Club : "dancing, cinemascope, coloured TV, dining, snack bar swimming pool, travel agent, bridge, table tennis, etc. at 53 Avenue Rd. (WA 1-1711)
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1959

Feb 25 **Murray Ginsberg and the Lambeth Cake Walkers** G&M Feb 21st p.14 " in a display ad, Gerald Peter (owner) invites new members to his Piccadilly Club with dancing Friday and Saturday, plus other entertainment per above and jazz concerts as listed here.

1960

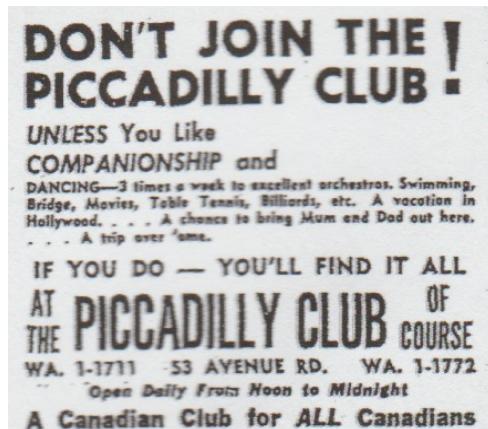
Jan 23 Globe display ad G&M Jan 23rd p.14 the Piccadilly Club emphasizes its travel agent business with trips to Hollywood, London and Rome.

1962

Dec 6 **Bob Cole's Band** Toike Oike Xmas Issue: the Electrical Club U.of T. Engineering Annual Fall Brawl - "dancing, booze, prizes, beer and peanuts"

1963

Apr 6 Toronto Star display ad Star Apr 6th p.29
Live music three times a week The Piccadilly Club still going strong



May 17-18	Jack Bond and his Orchestra	G&M May 18 th p.16 display ad for the Piccadilly Club. The first mention of Jack Bond; maybe by the phrasing, his first appearance at this location, possibly the beginning of a residency that would outlast the Piccadilly Club.
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1964

Jan 15-17, 22-24	Jack Bond's Orchestra	G&M Jan 15 th p.12, Jan 22 nd in the Avenue Road Club (main floor).
Feb 16	Jack Bond's Orchestra	Tely Feb 15 th Showcase Section, What's going on column, "Dancing to Jack Bond's Orchestra. Floor show plus buffet and bunnies."
Feb 23	Jack Bond's Orchestra	Tely Feb 27th Chum About Town in the After Four Section, "Dancing to Jack Bond's Orchestra. Floor show plus buffet and bunnies." The Bannermen (U of T group featured this week too) confirmed Feb 29 th What's Going On section
Mar 8	Jack Bond's Orchestra	Tely Mar 5 th After Four section though Tely Mar 7 th implies Jack Bond is playing Fri to Sun
Mar 13-15	Jack Bond's Orchestra (Fri and Sat) with Dave Ferguson's Quintet featuring Danny Stevenson on alto sax and clarinet on Sunday	Tely Mar 12 th After Four section
Mar 20-22	Last weeks line-up repeats	Tely Mar 19 th After Four section
Mar 27-29	Jack Bond's Orchestra (only reported)	Tely Mar 26 th After Four section

Apr 3-5	Jack Bond's Orchestra (only reported)	Tely Apr 2 nd After Four section
Apr 10-12 though to Sep 4-6	Jack Bond's Orchestra appears weekends (Fri-Sun) through this period	Tely Sep 3 rd After Four Section nor with a trio playing "nightly during the week" apparently starting this weekend
Jul 27	In an article by Nathan Cohen	Star Jul 15 th p.31 he writes: "His friends in the folk song field are holding a benefit performance July 27 at the Avenue Road club (of Piccadilly notoriety) for Peter Wyborn .. Who has to go into the hospital for cardiac surgery." The G&M Jul 22 nd p.8 notes that 19 acts including Ian & Sylvia and The Travellers will appear. The G&M Jul 29 th p.8 notes \$1500 was raised and Shelley Abrams of the Village Corner was an organizer. Sadly, per the G&M Oct 23 rd , Peter Wyborn 24, died in hospital (Oct 22 nd).
Sep 25- 27 to the new year	Jack Bond's Orchestra still appearing weekends (Fri-Sun) through this period	Tely Sep 26 th What's On (Saturday) column w/o mention of week day music but assume it continues?
Dec 4-5, Dec 11- 12, 18-19, 26	Jim McHarg's Dixieland Jazz Band in the Devil's Den	G&M Dec 4 th , Dec 11 th p.14, Dec 18 th p.14, Dec 24 th p.10 The Devil's Den downstairs now starts listing separately from the supper club upstairs

1965

Jan 8-9	Jim McHarg's Dixieland Jazz Band in the Devil's Den	G&M Jan 8 th p.10, Jan 15 th p.12, Jan 30 th p.32, Feb 6 th p.30 Tely Jan 21 st After Four section
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Jan 15-17	Jim McHarg's Dixieland Jazz Band in the Devil's Den in the basement with Jack Bond continuing in the supper club Fri-Sun)	Tely Jan 16 th p.27 in the What's Going On Section G&M Jan 15 th p.12
Jan 22-24	Jack Bond and his orchestra continues 3 nights weekends in the supper club with the Toronto Counts (Fri) and Jim McHarg in the Devil's Den on Sat	G&M Jan 22 nd p.12 Tely Jan 21 has the Counts on Friday; Jan 23 rd p.23 has McHarg's band both nights in the What's Going On section
Jan 29 - 31	Jack Bond and his orchestra continues 3 nights weekends in the supper club with the Pete Harris Quartet (Fri) and Jim McHarg in the Devil's Den on Sat	G&M Jan 30 th p.32 Tely Jan 30 th p.21 What's Going On Section Star Jan 30 th p.32
Feb 5-7	Jack London & the Sparrows on Friday and Jim McHarg Saturday in the Devil's Den, Jack Bond continues upstairs	G&M Feb 6 th p.30 Star Feb 5 th p.23 Display Ad: "dancing "every Sunday evening" Star Feb 6 th p30 Tely Feb 4 th p.2 of the After Four section and the What's Going On section, p25
Feb 12-14	As last weekend	Tely Feb 13 th What's Going On p.21
Feb 19-21	As last weekend	Tely Feb 20 th What's Going On p.29
Feb 26-28	As last weekend	Tely Feb 27 th What's Going On p. 21

Mar 5-7	As last weekend	Tely Mar 6 th What's Going On p. 21
Mar 12-14	As last weekend	Tely Mar 13 th What's Going On p. 21
Mar 19-21	As last weekend	Tely Mar 20 th What's Going On p. 21
Mar 26-28	As last weekend	Tely Mar 27 th What's Going On p. 21
Apr 2-4	As last weekend	Tely Apr 3 rd What's Going On p. 21
Apr 9-11	As last weekend	Tely Apr 10 th What's Going On
Apr 16-18	Jack London & The Sparrows take over both Fri and Sat with Jack Bond's residency continuing upstairs	Tely Apr 17 th What's Going On, p.18 G&M Apr 19 th p.19 "Rhythm 'n' Blues Friday and Saturday nights"
Apr 23-25	Jack London & The Sparrows and Jack Bond both continue as last weekend	Tely Apr 24 th What's Going On p. 20
Apr 30- May 2	As last weekend	Tely May 1 st What's Going On p. 16
May 7-9 and 14-16	As last weekend	Tely May 8 th What's Going On p. 20
May 19- 23	Jack Bond continues with Jon & Lee and the Checkmates Wed and Thurs, The Creeps Fri & Sat in the Devil's Den	Tely May 15 th What's Going On

May 26-30	As last weekend	Tely May 22 nd What's Going On
Jun 2-6	As last weekend	Tely May 29 th What's Going On, p.20
Jun 9-13	As last weekend	Tely Jun 5 th What's Going On p.22
Jun 16-20 and Jun 23-27	As last weekend but no specific bands identified	Tely Jun 19 th What's Going On Tely Jun 26 th What's Going On
Jul 3	An excellent article by Lotta Dempsey (Star Staff Writer) on Jon & Lee, and the Checkmates	Star Jul 3 rd p.15 writing: "Today they rehearse at the Avenue Road club where they perform two or three nights a week"
Jun 30-Jul 4	As the previous week	Tely Jul 3 rd What's Going On p.18
Jul 11	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates	Tely Jul 8 th After Four Section p.14 display ad, now on Sunday with "dancing"
Jul 15-19 Jul 22-25	Similar ads with band references	Tely Jul 10 th p. 18 What's Going On section Tely Jul 17 th p. 18 What's Going On section
Jul 18,25	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates	Tely Jul 15 th After Four Section p.14 display ad, now on Sunday with "dancing" and again Tely Jul 22nd After Four Section p.10
Jul 28-Aug 1	Ad similar to that in previous week's What's Going On section, but now The Rogues on Sunday	Tely Jul 29 th p.14 of the After Four section; the display ad has changed. References in the Tely's What's Going On section to the Avenue Road Club upstairs have not appeared for several weeks

Aug 4-8	Ad similar to that in previous week's What's Going On section, but now The Liverpool Set on Sunday the 14 th (sic)	Tely Jul 31 st , Aug 7 th What's Going On section and Tely Aug 12 th p.14 After Four display ad
Aug 11-15	Same line up presumed	Tely Aug 14 th What's Going On section
Aug 25-29	Same line up presumed, but now going back to Jon & Lee and the Checkmates on Sunday	Tely Aug 19 th and 26 th After Four section display ad
Aug 5 & 6	Labour Day special The Rogues both days with the Just Us 5 guesting on Monday	Tely Sep 2 nd After Four section display ad
Sep 8-12	Back to not naming bands in the What's Gong On section but a display ad in After Four featuring Jon & Lee and the Checkmates on Sunday the 12 th	Tely Sep 9 th After Four display ad
Sep 15-19	The Rogues (Sun)	Tely Sep 16 th After Four section
Sep 22-26	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates (Sun)	Tely Sep 23 rd After Four section p.14
Sep 29 - Oct 3	The Vendettas (Sun)	Tely Sep 30 th After Four section p.14

Oct 6-10	The Rogues (Sun)	Tely Oct 7 th After Four section p.10 By now the What's Going On section has been stripped to a minimal list
Oct 20-24	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates (Sun)	Tely Oct 21 st After Four section but now the Club is called the Avenue Road Club (did the bands move upstairs?)
Oct 27-31	JustUs (Sun) but now The Jades (Fri) and The Associates (Sat)	Tely Oct 28 th After Four section with the other weekend bands added
Nov 24-28	Bobby Kris and the Imperials (Sun) with Dean Curtis & the Lively Set on Fri and Sat)	Tely Nov 25 th After Four section with the other weekend bands still added
Dec 1-5	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates (Sun)	Tely Dec 2 nd After Four section with an added pitch: welcoming guests "To Their Bon Voyage Party ... a personal invitation to the many friends who have made our trip to New York possible ..."
Dec 8-12	Frank Shepherd & the Good Shepherds	Tely Dec 9 th p.12 After Four section, this week advertising only the Friday and Saturday night bands but reverting to the "Devil's Den" in much smaller ads.
Dec 24-26	Franklin Shepherd & the Good Shepherds (Fri & Sat) Shawne Jackson & the Majestics (Sun)	Tely Dec 23 rd After Four section - "3 Big Christmas Parties at The Avenue Rd. Club"
Dec 31 - Jan 2	Shawne Jackson & the Majestics (Sun)	Tely Dec 30 th p.10 After Four section. It's not clear whether Shawne Jackson & the Majestics did all three or just the Jan 2 nd

1966

Jan 14-16	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates ("welcomed home")	Tely Jan 13 th p.14 After Four section. The room they're playing in now called The In Crowd
Jan 28-30	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates (Fri & Sat) Shawne Jackson & the Majestics (Sun)	Tely Jan 27 th p.14 After Four section
Feb 11-13	The Castels (Fri), The Jades & Jackie Ross (Sat) Shawne Jackson & the Majestics (Sun)	Tely Feb 10 th p.14 After Four section
Mar 4-6	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates (all three weekend nights) in the In Crowd	Tely Mar 3 rd p.12 After Four section
Mar 25 - 26	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates (Sat) with an "Exciting New R&B Discovery" on Friday	Tely Mar 24 th p.10 After Four section
Apr 3	Jon & Lee and the Checkmates	Tely Mar 24 th p.10 After Four section - "with their last appearance before going to the United States for 3 months"

Apr 9-10	<p>Shawne and Jay Jackson & the Majestics (Sun) with The Just Us (Friday Upstairs and Saturday in The In Crowd in a display advertisement</p>	<p>Tely Apr 7th After Four Club. This display ad provides an idea of how the club was used; upstairs where Jack Bond used to play for dancing; downstairs where listening to R&B was more the norm.</p>	 <p>Don't Miss THE GROOVIEST DANCE IN TOWN THE WEEKEND THE AVENUE RD. CLUB 53 Avenue Rd., 925-1787 Special Easter Sunday Dance 8.30 p.m. to ? The Motown Sound of the 8 p.c.e. — MAJESTICS — FEATURING — • SHAWN JACKSON • JAY JACKSON • THE TIARAS WITH OTHER GUEST ARTISTS The In Crowd Saturday 10 p.m. to 3 THE JUST US Special Good Friday Dance (Upstairs) 9 p.m. to ? THE JUST US</p>
Oct 28-29	<p>Eddy Spencer & The Power</p>	<p>Tely Oct 27th p.10 After Four section display ad. From this it appears that Jon & Lee and the Checkmates were the house band through most of the preceding month when available</p>	<p>ANNOUNCEMENT!! <i>JON & LEE</i> <i>& The Checkmates</i> WELCOMES! A great new Rhythm & Blues Group EDDY SPENCER & The Power To their home... THE IN CROWD 53 AVENUE RD. Fri Oct 28th - 10p.m to 3 - Sat Oct 29th EVERYONE WELCOME!</p>
Nov 6	<p>Jon & Lee and the Checkmates</p>	<p>Tely Nov 3rd p.12 After Four section - "At Last Jon & Lee and the Checkmates are coming home to The In Crowd" suggesting they weren't around there a lot?</p>	
Dec 29	<p>The Mandala</p>	<p>Tely Dec 29th p.8 After Four section "Last Toronto Appearance" in the In Crowd (ballroom entrance)</p>	

1967

1967

Reference to this club all but disappears from the online listings in the dailies but given the next reference it is probable that like Charlie Brown's, such advertising proved unnecessary as the reputation of the house and bands sustained the crowds. Now with access to the TPL Reference Library after COVID-19 restrictions eased, more information from the scanned copies of the Toronto Telegram in 1967 and '68 will be added as available.

1968

Jul 13	A Globe and Mail article by Blaik Kirby "Yorkville: the <i>in-ghetto</i> enters phase IV"	G&M Jul 13 th p.21 where he writes: "Two other locations have also dropped live entertainment, while remaining open as clubs or coffee houses. They are the long-established Penny Farthing and the Avenue Road Club."
Oct 25	Star article referencing the Avenue Road club in a police investigation	Star Oct 25 th p.C36

1970

August	Teagarten & Van Winkle	Cashbox Aug 22 nd p. 62 GRT Canada with a four day meeting in Toronto at the Guild Inn ... capping (the) meeting with a "large sized blowout at the Avenue Road Club"
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1972

Mar 31 Globe display ad G&M Mar 31st p.17 ... the Avenue Road Club advertising a “Good Friday Dance”

1974

May 4 Globe and Mail display ad G&M May 4th p.30 addressed to the Members of the Avenue Road club a closing dance *“Due to demolition of the building. Watch the paper for our new location. Opening soon.”*

Aug 24 Star display ad Star Aug 24th p.G6 referencing the Avenue Road Club at 320 Davenport apparently still as a “club” renting space for dancing, with a similar ads Aug 30th p.E12, Sep 7th p.H11

Data Collection

These listings are a composite of what appeared in the Toronto Telegram's (the Tely) What's Going On listing in the Showcase Section and the Chum About Town listings in the After Four Sections and classifieds, augmented by electronic searches of the Toronto Star (Star) and Globe and Mail (G&M) archives from the 1960s on, with a little help from the UofT Archives. Where I take words directly from a listing I use “quotation marks” and/or italics. Where I cite an article I reference the reporter if identified, as best I can.