

ERNEST PITCHER

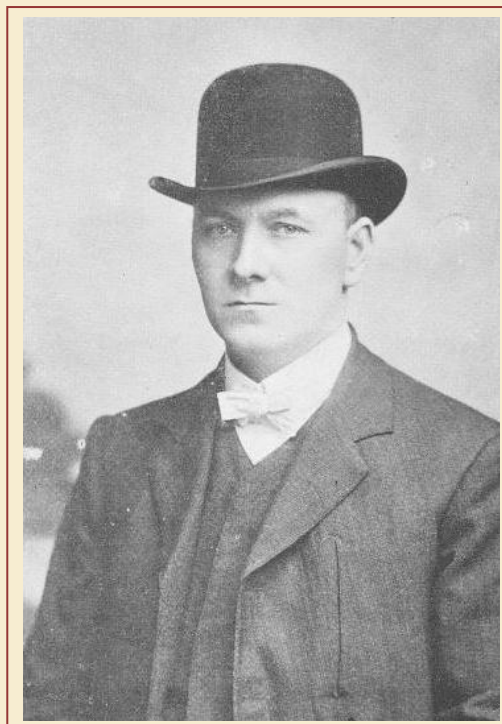
aka **Sam Wilson / Sam Pitcher**

Ernest Pitcher came to Australia in the mid-1890s as Sam Wilson, a "plantation melodist," cornerman and "Negroistic comedian." Between 1900 and 1908 he was largely associated with the Clay, Rickards and Fuller circuits, reverting to his real name in 1907. As "the Big Mug," Pitcher developed a saxophone, concertina, banjo and comic stories act which he toured on the Fullers' circuit until 1926. His last known engagement (as Sam Pitcher) was a 1929 production of *Babes in the Wood*. He died in Sydney in 1940.

English comedian Ernest Pitcher came to Australia in the mid-1890s as a "plantation melodist," cornerman and "Negroistic comedian." His early career in the country, which included engagements with firms such as the Coogee Aquarium and Percy St John and W. J. Wilson, saw him billed variously as Sam Wilson, Sam F. Wilson and Sam Pitcher. He and his wife Flo Murray (daughter of playwright Archibald Murray) were associated with Harry Clay around 1900/01, appearing on the emerging entrepreneur's first New South Wales Queensland with the emerging entrepreneur. Between 1902 and 1908 he was largely associated with Harry Rickards and John Fuller.

Changing back to his real name in 1907, Pitcher went on to work for James Brennan and Lennon, Hyman and Lennon for several years before re-establishing his association with the Fullers (he maintained this connection through until at least 1926). Invariably billed as "the Big Mug," Pitcher had by then developed an act that involved saxophone, concertina, banjo and comic stories. During the 1910s he toured New Zealand four times for the Fullers, was briefly a member of the Paul Stanhope Revue Company, and took up short-term contracts with J. C. Bain, Harry Sadler, Holland and St John and the Tivoli circuit among others.

As **Sam Pitcher**
Theatre Mar. (1907), 13.



RICKARDS' THEATRE ROYAL
Sole Lessee and Manager, Mr. HARRY RICKARDS.
Business Manager, Frank Barnes. Treasurer, Norman H. Brown.

GRAND OPENING NIGHT—SATURDAY, 8th NOVEMBER.
MR. HARRY RICKARDS'
New Tivoli Minstrels and Speciality Company.

PRICES TO MEET THE TIMES.
Private Boxes (to admit four), 10s. 6d.; Dress Circle, 5s.; Orchestra Stalls, 2s.;
Stalls, 1s.; Pit, 6d.

MANAGERIAL CARD.—Mr. Rickards begs to inform his many friends and patrons that he will open the above popular Theatre on SATURDAY Next, 8th November, with a Brilliant Company, introducing

THE GRAND FIRST PART
And some of the
BEST ARTISTS OF THE VAUDEVILLE WORLD.
Direct from England, and First Appearance in Brisbane of
A. G. SPRY, VIOLET WELBY-COOKE,
One of London's Leading Comedians. Charming Young Wire Walker.
JENNIE OPIE, TOD CALLOWAY,
Illustrated Songs. Topical and Comic Vocalist.

FLORRIE RANGER, Serio-Comic; STELLA RANGER, Balladist; DORA TAYLOR,
Serio-Comic and Danseuse; NELLIE YORE, Gifted Soprano; GORDON HALL, Baritone
Vocalist; JAMES HARVEY, Eccentric Mimic; SAM LA MERT, Clever Whistler;
LES WARTON, Coon Comedian; SAM WILSON, Plantation Melodist; JAMES GRAY-
DON, Interlocutor.

Full Operatic Chorus, and the Latest Bioscope,
Showing the most recently received Pictures of the various Pageants in connection
with the CORONATION CEREMONIES. Operator, Mr. TAYLOR.

Doors open at 7.15; commence at 8 p.m. Box Plan now open at Falgout's.

SUNDAY EVENING, 9th NOVEMBER.
And Every Sunday Evening.
GRAND NATIONAL CONCERT, GRAND NATIONAL CONCERT.
At 8.15. Admission by Collection.

TIVOLI THEATRE.
Sole Proprietor and Manager .. Mr. Harry Rickards.

MATINEES, WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY at 2.30.

LA SYLPHÉ, London's Greatest Classical Dancer.
THE FIVE WHITELEYS
in their Acrobatic and Musical Pot-Pourri.
HENRI ALEXANDER.
SEELEY and WEST, Comedy Musicians.
RHODESIA, Society Lady Juggler.
THE MOLASSOS,
ARTHUR CROXON.
Comedian, Mimic, and Monologue Entertainer.
Tom Dawson, Ernest Pitcher, Daisy Sylvester,
Keldie and Davis, etc., etc.

Town and County 27 Nov. (1907), 52.

Brisbane Courier 5 Nov. (1902), 2.

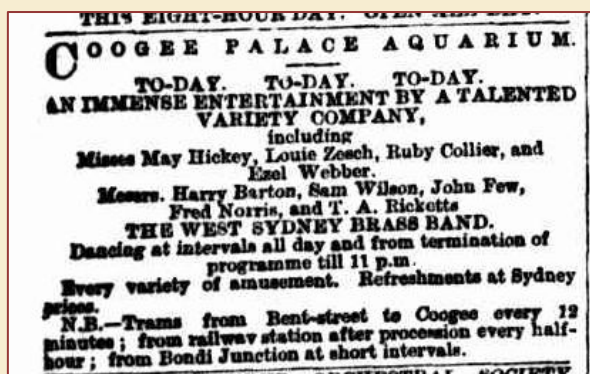
After returning from South Africa in May 1924 Pitcher secured engagements as a "between screenings" act with film exhibitors in Sydney, Fremantle, Adelaide and Broken Hill (including, for example, Bert Howard, Star Pictures and Union Pictures). He was also associated with George Campbell's Cockatoo Farm Co in 1924. His last known engagement (billed as Sam Pitcher) was as the dame Belinda in George Marlow's 1929 pantomime *Babes in the Wood*.

Pitcher's grandson, Lloyd Pitcher, writes that he has so far been unable to establish any further engagements after 1929. In 1935 his grandfather apparently sold the family home in the inner Sydney suburb of Stanmore and bought a

smaller house in Strathfield which better suited his and wife's retirement years. Their eldest married son eventually lived there. Ernest died in Sydney in 1940.

SEE ALSO

- [Florence "Flo" Murray](#)



Sydney Morning Herald 5 Oct. (1896), 2.

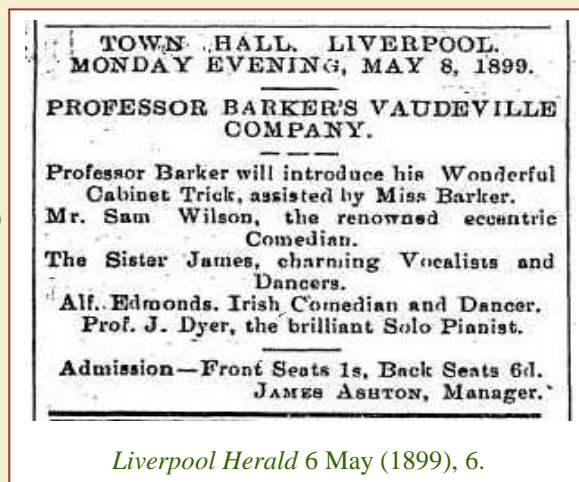
QUOTATIONS

- Imported artists are not in it with Australians in long runs. For example, where is there an American or English act that could like Tommy Armstrong, Vaude and Verne, the Driscolls, Jack Kearns and Ernest Pitcher - to name only a few - go on playing in Australia from year's end to year's end? It is nothing for some of these to play a fifteen, twenty or twenty-five weeks' engagement at the one house. Even at the end of such a season they more often than not are going as successfully as many an imported act that happens to be opening in their closing bill" (TT: Sept. 1915, 49).

ENGAGEMENTS CHRONOLOGY

All entries between 1896 and October 1907 are for Sam Wilson/Sam F. Wilson. All other entries are for Ernest Pitcher.

- 1896:** (Coogee Aquarium, Syd; 5, 18 Oct.)
- 1898:** ST JOHN & WILSON (Alhambra Th, Syd; 1 Oct. -* > St John & Wilson's Alhambra Music & Burlesque Co)
- 1899:** PROFESSOR BARKER (Liverpool TH, Syd; 8 May -* > Prof Barker's Vaudeville Co) • J. CLARKE (Quong Tart's Elite Hall, Queen Victoria Markets; Syd; 6 May -* > Saturday Night Concert Co) ▶ JOSPEHINE WANGENHEIM (Federal Hall, Lismore, NSW; 7-9 Nov. > Princess Comic Opera Co)
- 1900:** HARRY CLAY (Skating Rink, Grafton, NSW; 26-31 Dec.)
- 1900:** HARRY CLAY (NSW/Qld tour; ca. Feb. - July)
- 1902:** JOHN FULLER (Temp Hall, Hobart; 2 Sept. - 25 Oct.) ▶ HARRY RICKARDS (Th Royal, Bris; 8 Nov. - 31 Dec. > New Tivoli Minstrels and Specialty Co)
- 1903:** HARRY RICKARDS (Th Royal, Bris; 1-5 Jan. > New Tivoli Minstrels and Specialty Co) • (Tivoli Th, Adel; 24 Jan. - ca. 11 Mar.* > as Sam F. Wilson; New Tivoli Minstrels and Specialty Co) • (Tivoli Th, Syd; 4 July - 25 Sept. > first appearance, New Tivoli Vaudeville Co) • (Op House, Melb; 26 Sept. - ca. Nov.* > New Tivoli Vaudeville Co) • (Th Royal, Perth; 23 Nov. - 31 Dec.)
- 1904:** HARRY RICKARDS (Th Royal, Perth; 1 Jan. - *) • (Tivoli Th, Syd; 29 Mar. - ca. 12 May*) • (Th Royal, Bris; 14 May - 26 June) • (Op House, Melb; 2 July - *)
- 1906:** JOHN FULLER (Op House, Auckland, NZ; ca. 26-31 Dec.)
- 1907:** JOHNFULLER (Op House, Auckland, NZ; 1 Jan. - *) ▶ HARRY RICKARDS (Tivoli Th, Syd; 19 Oct. - 31 Dec. > as Ernest Pitcher)
- 1908:** HARRY RICKARDS (Tivoli Th, Syd; 1Jan. - *) ▶ JAMES BRENNAN (Nat Amph; Syd; 5 Feb. - *) • (Gaiety Th, Melb; ca. 22 Feb. - ca. July*) • (Nat Amph; Syd; 10 Oct. - ca. 18 Dec.*) • (Gaiety Th, Melb; 19-31 Dec.)



Liverpool Herald 6 May (1899), 6.

- 1909:** JAMES BRENNAN (Gaiety Th, Melb; 1 Jan. - 18 June) • (Nat Amph; Syd; 19 June - ca. Sept. *) ▶ LENNON, HYMAN & LENNON (Empire Th, Adel; 9 Oct. - 31 Dec.)
- 1910:** LENNON, HYMAN & LENNON (Empire Th, Adel; 1 Jan.) ▶ JAMES BRENNAN (Gaiety Th, Melb; 3 Jan. - ca. May*) • (Nat Amph; Syd; 13 Aug. -23 Dec.) • (Gaiety Th, Melb; 24-31 Dec.)
- 1911:** JAMES BRENNAN (Gaiety Th, Melb; 1 Jan. - ca. Apr/May *) • (Empire Th, Bris; 15 July - 8 Sept.) • (Nat Amph, Syd; 16 Sept. - *)
- 1912:** FULLER-BRENNAN (Nat Amph, Syd; ca. Dec.) • (Th Royal, Wellington, NZ; ca. 30-31 Dec.)
- 1913:** FULLER-BRENNAN (Th Royal, Wellington, NZ; 1 Jan. - ca. Mar.) • (Op House, Auckland, NZ; ca. Mar. - *) • (His Majesty's Th, NZ; ca. Sept.) • (Op House, Auckland, NZ; ca. Oct/Nov.)
- 1914:** n/e (Little Th, Syd; 30 Jan. > benefit George Dean) ▶ BC&C (Crystal Th, Townsville; 25 Apr. - *) • (Th Royal, Charters Towers, 2 May - *) ▶ FULLER-BRENNAN (King's Th, Adel; 11 July -*) ▶ (Crystal Th, Broken Hill, NSW; ca. Aug.)
- 1915:** J.C. BAIN (Princess Th, Syd; ca. Feb.) ▶ FULLERS' (His Majesty's Th, Wellington, NZ; ca. 4 Sept.)
- 1916:** HOLLAND & ST JOHN (Empire Th, Bris; ca. Jan/Feb.) ▶ FULLERS' (King's Th, Adel; ca. Mar/Apr.) ▶ HARRY SADLER (Princess Th, Syd; ca. Dec.)
- 1917:** HARRY SADLER (Princess Th, Syd; 1 Jan. - *) ▶ HOLLAND & ST JOHN (Empire Th, Bris; ca. May) ▶ FULLERS' (His Majesty's Th, Wellington, NZ; ca. 12-31 Dec. *)
- 1918:** FULLERS' (His Majesty's Th, Wellington, NZ; 1 Jan. - *) • (His Majesty's Th, Wanganui, NZ; 24 Jan. - *) ▶ FULLERS' (Empire Th, Bris; ca. Apr/May* > with Paul Stanhope Co)
- 1919:** FULLERS' (Empire Th, Bris; ca. Apr/May* > with Paul Stanhope Co) • (Op House, Auckland, NZ; ca. Dec.* > with Paul Stanhope Co)
- 1920:** FULLERS' (Op House, Aucklnad, NZ; 1 Jan. - * > with Paul Stanhope Co) • (His Majesty's Th, Wellington, NZ; ca. Feb.) • (Lyceum, Feilding, NZ; 19-21 Apr.) • (Bijou Th, Melb; ca. 29 June - *) • (Majestic Th, Adel; 10 July - *) • (Bijou Th, Melb; 11 Sept. - *) ▶ C. W. WEBBER (Temp Hall, Hobart; 22 Oct. - *)
- 1921:** FULLERS' (Fullers' Th, Syd; 29 Jan. - *)
- 1922:** [no details]
- 1923:** FULLERS' (Empire Th, Bris; 10 Feb. - *) • (Bijou Th, Melb; 24 Mar. - *) ▶ RICKARDS' TIVOLI THEATRES (Tivoli Th, Syd; 18 Aug. - *) ▶ UNION PICTURES LTD (Lyceum Th, Syd; 24 Nov. - * > pictures and vaudeville)
- NB:** Pitcher travels to South Africa sometime between the end of November 1923 and late May 1924.
- 1924:** UNION PICTURES LTD (Princess Th, Fremantle, WA; 24 May - 20 June > "coming direct from South Africa") ▶ (Empire Th, Albany, ca. 25 June - 1 July > vaudeville and pictures; cancelled his appearance for 2 July) ▶ D. CLIFFORD THEATRES (Star Suburban Theatres, Adel; 5-26 July) ▶ LENARD'S PICTURES (Lenard's Pictureland, Broken Hill; 15-21Aug. > vaudeville and pictures) ▶ n/e (York Th, Adel; 23-29 Aug.)
- NB:** Star Suburban Theatres circuit incl. Unly, Goodwood, Port Adelaide, Semaphore, Parkside, Norwood
- 1925:** FULLERS' (Bijou Th, Melb; 19 Sept. - *) • (Majestic Th, Adel; 2 Oct. - *) • (Empire Th, Bris; ca. 16 Nov. - * > vaudeville support to George Wallace Revue Co)
- 1926:** FULLERS' (Bijou Th, Melb; 1 May - *)
- 1929:** GEORGE MARLOW (Grand Op House, Syd; 11 Nov. - * > as Sam Pitcher; *Old Time Minstrel Show*) • (Grand Op House, Syd; 26-31 Dec.)
- 1930:** GEORGE MARLOW (Grand Op House, Syd; 1 Jan. - 1 Feb.)



Sydney Morning Herald 9 Nov. (1929), 2.

Thanks to Lloyd Pitcher (grandson) for his contributions to this biography.

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