

LES CANNIS

Projectionist-operator, circuit manager, house manage.

Les Cannis began his association with Harry Clay in 1910, initially working as a performer before taking on the role of projectionist. He toured Queensland for Clay (1913-1914) and worked in the same capacity around the entrepreneur's Sydney circuit, in addition to the role of Front of House manager. He eventually established himself at Clay's Sydney headquarters, the Bridge Theatre, Newtown. By 1917 Cannis was a circuit manager on the company's New South Wales southern line. He continued with Clay's up until at least 1925.

Les Cannis is believed to have started with [Harry Clay](#) 1910 as a variety entertainer on the entrepreneur's Sydney circuit but by 1912 was primarily employed as a projectionist. It was in this role that he toured Clay's Queensland circuit in 1913 and 1914. Cannis eventually became one of Clay's principle employees over the next decade or so, working in various positions - including Front of House manager and circuit manager during the 1917-1918 period. A 1918 report also records that he had begun to involve himself in filmmaking around this period - although this was no doubt separate from his employment with Harry Clay. It is known that he was still on the company's pay role in 1925. Over the many years he worked for Clay Cannis was often referred to as "Handsome Les" Cannis in *Australian Variety and Show World*.

QUOTATIONS AND ANECDOTES

- 1917:** Les Cannis, the handsome and ever-smiling one at the [Bridge Theatre](#) [Newtown], is one of the most popular and obliging fellows one could wish to meet. Les is invaluable to Harry Clay in every capacity. It would be a good movement if the firm could place him in charge of one of their suburban houses, as he is capable of working up good business (*Australian Variety* 16 May 1917, 13).
- 1917:** Les Cannis ('ansom Les) is a great boating man and holds several medals for life-saving. It was only a few weeks back, when [Alec Stagpoole](#) and [Ted Gabriel](#) were sailing in the Harbour, that they came into some difficulties. Ted got a bad time, which may have been serious but from the assistance of Les and Alec (Now go for it!) (*Australian Variety* 29 Aug. 1917, n. pag.).
- 1918:** Les Cannis went as manager to Goulburn with [Ted Stanley's](#) company. Les had the pleasure of seeing a record house for his efforts and is proclaimed one of the best, looking after the artistes' comforts in many ways. During his short stay in Goulburn he made many friends, and his debut was such a success that Harry Clay says he is the man for the position and intends to keep him on the weekly run (*Australian Variety* 4 Jan. 1918, n. pag.).
- 1918:** Les Cannis still reports excellent business at Goulburn, where he goes every week. Les is one of the many "Heads" in the town now and has quite a host of friends. He is an honorary member of the Racing Club and Vice President of quite a lot of associations. Les is a "white" man with a smile for every one (*Australian Variety* 15 Feb. 1918, n. pag.).
- 1918:** Handsome Les Cannis is some boy with the movie machine, and is hard at work producing a film which promises to be something out of the ordinary (*Australian Variety* 26 Apr. 1918, 14).

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. In 1913 Cannis assaulted an audience member at one of Harry Clay's shows in Bathurst, New South Wales. According to a report in the *National Advocate* a group of boys in the audience were calling out during the show. Cannis went to investigate and spoke to a man called Harold Jacobs who was standing in front of the boys. He reportedly said to Cannis "blame the right one" and was then hit. The Police Magistrate fined Cannis 16 shillings (including 4 shillings costs) in lieu of four days' imprisonment ("[Blame the Right One.](#)" *National Advocate* 6 Mar. 1913, 2).

FURTHER REFERENCE

Djubal, Clay. "Harry Clay and Clay's Vaudeville Company: 1865-1930." MA Thesis, U of Queensland, 1998.

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