

DAILY VARIETY

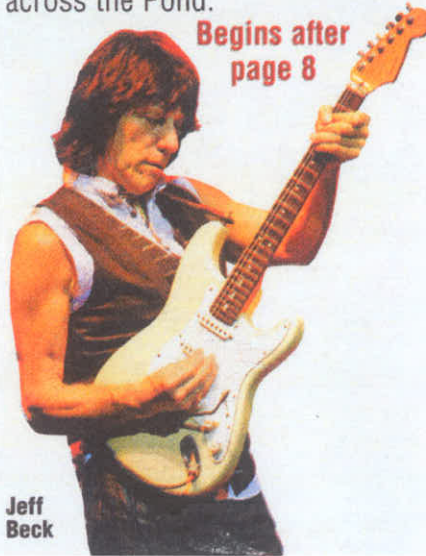
April 20, 2009

V PLUS

BritWeek invasion

L.A. prepares for onslaught from across the Pond.

**Begins after
page 8**



**Jeff
Beck**



GREAT BRITONS: ENGLISH CULTURE INVADES SOUTHLAND

ISLES FEST HITS L.A.

Union Jack flies over festive events, serious biz talks and transcontinental networking

By PETER CARANICAS

That Was The Week That Was," a satirical program that ran Saturday nights on BBC in the early '60s, launched careers and rocked the establishment by mining the events of the preceding week for its distinct brand of British comedy.

Were "TW3" around today, it might have a field day with BritWeek — which is not a week and not in Britain. Instead, it runs longer than three weeks and takes place thousands of miles away from the verdant isles that inspired it.

But "TW3" would also appreciate BritWeek's ambassadorial role in spreading the culture from which it sprang and cementing the strong ties between Great Britain and Los Angeles.

"BritWeek began when Nigel Lythgoe came to see me in 2007," recalls Bob Peirce, BritWeek chairman and Britain's consul general in L.A. "He said that with so many Brits in the entertainment industry, we should do some kind of event to bring all of them together in a celebration of the British connections."

Lythgoe, producer of "American Idol" and "So You Think You Can Dance" and a British transplant in Los Angeles, says the lightbulb went on when he attended an Australian-rules football match that was part of an Aussie weekend. "I said, 'This is crazy.' There are far more Brits here in L.A. As a country we're the biggest investor in Southern California. We should be celebrating our success here."

"I was all for that," says Peirce, "but I wanted to make it even larger and go beyond entertainment, so we brought in fashion, food, retail,

sports, etc., and got some private sponsorships."

Highlights of BritWeek '09 include a gala in support of Malaria No More, where the guest of honor will be former British prime minister Tony Blair, and the BAFTA/L.A. British Comedy Festival and Awards.

"We're really proud to present the first Charlie Chaplin Lifetime Achievement Award at the event this year," says BAFTA/L.A. exec director Don Haber. Tracey Ullman will receive the inaugural honor.

BritWeek's board includes several other Brit expats. One of them is lawyer Paul Wright, who is driving the event called Cool Britannia: British Cars From Classic to Contemporary at L.A.'s Petersen Automotive Museum. "British motorcars over the decades have always been the coolest cars," he says, "and they have always dominated the Petersen collection."

Also participating is Simon Wright, CEO of Virgin Entertainment Group, who has lived in L.A. for five years. He considers BritWeek a golden opportunity for effective promotion. "In the past I found it difficult to get people's attention," he says. "But BritWeek gives companies the chance to promote their brand. Of the 40 sponsors, about 10 are very involved, another 10 or 15 are quite involved, and the rest are happy just to have their name listed."

L.A.-based music producer Peter Asher, whose career harks back to '60s British Invasion group Peter & Gordon, is contributing to the music aspect of BritWeek by coordinating various British artists. "BritWeek plays on old-fashioned national pride," he says. "It makes people aware of our ongoing contribution. Plus, it's a lot of fun."

PLAYERS



Nigel Lythgoe
TV producer and co-founder of BritWeek



Bob Peirce
BritWeek chair and U.K.'s consul general in L.A.



Paul Wright
Lawyer and BritWeek board member



Simon Wright
CEO, Virgin Entertainment Group



Don Haber
BAFTA/L.A. honcho



Peter Asher
BritWeek board member

TIP SHEET

What: Brit Week
When: Kicks off April 21
Where: Various locations around L.A.
Web: Britweek.org

BRITWEEK FILMMAKERS FORUM: OVER THERE

This daylong series of seminars targets the making of movies across the Pond. It includes coffee, lunch and a reception and will take place Friday at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. Additional information: 310-312-1012 or heidi@britweek.org.

THE PROGRAM

8:45-10:15 A.M.

DIRECTING OVER THERE

The pitfalls and windfalls of working in the U.K.

Moderator: DGA proxy Michael Apted ("The World Is Not Enough," "49 Up").

Panelists: Actor-director Kenneth Branagh ("Hamlet," "Much Ado About Nothing"), Jim Sheridan ("In America," "My Left Foot"), Julian Farino ("Entourage," "The Office") and Julie Anne Robinson ("Big Love," "Grey's Anatomy").

10:45-12:15 P.M.

PITCHING OVER THERE

Getting access to talent agents, managers and studio decision-makers; pitching, selling, financing and packaging; cultural and business differences.

Moderator: Producer Nigel Sinclair ("No Direction Home: Bob Dylan," "Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines").

Panelists: Craig Emanuel (Loeb & Loeb), Judy Hoffund (Hoffund Poine Management), Danny Rosett (Overture Films) and Bill Gerber (Gerber Pictures).

1:45-3:15 P.M.

PRODUCING IN THE U.K. AND THE U.S.

Challenges facing producers working in different environments.

Moderator: Former HBO Films proxy Colin Callender.

Panelists: Andy Harries ("The Queen," "Northanger Abbey"), Stephen Garrett ("Life on Mars," "Eastern Promises") and Frank Doelger ("John Adams," "Rome").

3:35-5:15 P.M.

PLAYING AMERICAN/PLAYING BRITISH

British and American actors who have worked in each other's countries and in each other's accents discuss the cultural swap.

Moderator: David Hunt ("24," "Everybody Loves Raymond").

Panelists: Iain Glen ("Farscape Four," "W"), Owen Yeoman ("Troy," "The Mentalist") and Lucy Davis ("Shaun of the Dead," "The Office").



Oil: Great Britons participating in BritWeek include, from left, singer Joss Stone, Charlie Chaplin Lifetime Achievement Award winner Tracey Ullman, former PM Tony Blair and guitar hero Jeff Beck.

Photos: Getty Images & WireImage.com