

Here comes Charlie — again!

By Jean Fairweather

"BETWEEN the women and the potholes, I don't know how I am going to get away. If the potholes don't get me, the women will."

That was the inimitable Charles Hyatt Jamaican actor and comedian, sounding off about two of Jamaica's most prominent features — beautiful women and large potholes. "You know, there's a sameness about the women," he said and

after a well-timed pause for effect continued, "They're all beautiful."

Charles took time off from his sojourn in merry old England and flew down to Jamaica a few days ago. We were having a little chat about this and that last Friday evening.

These were really the lighthearted comments which came after he had said some serious things.

"What do I have to say?" he had started out. "I'm angry. I'm angry because of the lack of self respect I find here now. Everyone is blaming everyone else. I look at the filthy streets of lower Kingston and ask why? And people blame the KSAC!

"There's just so much a government can do and everyone expects the government to do everything. The only time many people intend to participate is when election time comes and they go to vote."

Charlie was very concerned about many things that were happening in the society in "the search of an identity" but he said he was not without hope. As a matter of fact, the main reason he is here now is to start making plans to come home.

"I decided to come in and look around to find out if the society will have me back. Because I have three children and I want them to have a Jamaican education."

Talking about the positive aspects of the society he said he was very impressed by what youth were doing in Jamaica, as they were well represented, many in executive positions, in business places he had visited.

Charlie, after making a name for himself in Jamaican theatre, especially in the annual pantomimes and as a comedian on radio — his *Here comes Charlie*, a radio series was a big hit — left the island in 1961 on a British Council scholarship. The scholarship took him to England, where he spent the first six months working with the Windsor Theatre Royal. He then went on his own.

First major role for Charlie

was in Evan Jones' *Return to Look Behind*, a TV play. After that he got many good parts in radio, television and stage productions and also did some cinema work. For nine months he played the part of a doctor in the BBC's radio serial, "Mrs. Dale's Diary."

Just before coming home this time he worked in a television play, the first in a series about women's prisons called "Within these walls," for London Weekend Television. In the play, which is being screened next month in London, Charlie plays the part of an inmate's uncle.

"The uncle is African," he said, "and is a very conservative Victorian type." Playing the lead in the series is Australian star, Gogie Withers.

On the cards is Charlie's follow-up album to his *Kiss me Neck* which was a huge success in Britain. The title of the new album, to be released in January is *Kiss me Neck Again*.

What's the scene like for a black in British theatre these days?

"As a black in British theatre, a black is still a black first of all," he said. This meant that there was still discrimination. Even though Charlie himself had proven that one didn't always have to wait for a "black part", he felt that "you always have to be proving it over and over again." "That's what England is all about," he said.

Does he think he will be able to make his living by theatre when he comes back home?

"Of course," he declared. "People are doing it right now. One can live by theatre — by one's art — in Jamaica."

Charlie expects to return to England on December 18. In the meantime he has been renewing old acquaintances, and in general, just "looking around."

Jamaica Daily News, December 2, 1973, page 22



Charles Hyatt