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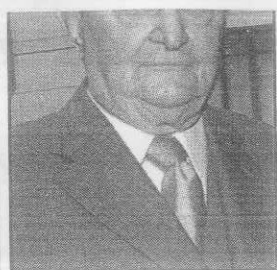
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Tom English at the
opening of the Marriott
Hotel in Henry Street

rekindled for two former employees, at the launch of the Limerick Marriott Hotel—built on the site of the city's old landmark. Seventy-two years after the Savoy opened its doors to the public, amid a bevy of ushers, usherettes, pageboys, the modern city that is now Limerick was transported back to those good ole days when tasteful opulence reigned large. Among those for whom

Accompanied by her grandniece Maeve O'Brien from Annacotty and her niece Marie Frost from Norwood Park, Mrs Sheehan was the starlet of the night. "I am just spellbound by tonight. I worked 32-years in the Savoy. It was lovely. Everything here is just so posh but yet so homely," said Mrs Sheehan who began her Savoy career as a pearl diver. "That was a fancy

worked my way up from counter to counter until I became a waitress on the floor," she continued. Now a resident at Corbally Nursing Home, Mrs Sheehan was given a special sending-off by the staff and patients of the home as she was whisked off in her glad-rads to the opening of the four-star hotel on Thursday night. "The manageress Helena Ryan and the residents waved me off

just as he entered the main door of the new Marriott Hotel. "When I saw the usherettes at the entrance it brought a tear to my eye," he said. "It brought back all the memories. They were dressed very similar to the usherettes we had—the same wine colour in the uniforms." Mr English was manager of the Savoy from 1954 until 1962 and

for their show sold out in a couple of hours," he recalled. The visit by the Philharmonic Orchestra even prompted one man to cycle all the way from Wexford for the show—without a ticket. "It took him over a day to get here and he didn't even have a ticket for the performance so I let him watch it from the operating box," said Mr English.

some quiet days, specially if a heat arrived. "When the first big heat wave of the summer arrived—it would empty and there is nowhere more lonely as a graveyard than an empty theatre, I recall a Mr Sheridan saying to me, "Tom to fill this place you would need to host the Last Supper—with the original cast," he joked.

Classy Marriott hotel opens



Time travel: usherettes April Fitzgibbon, Suzanne Givens, Charlotte Casey and Bianca Hickey, from the Holman-Lee agency, greet guests at the Limerick Marriott Hotel
Pictures Dave Gaynor

By AINE FITZGERALD

THE CLASSY elegance and regal past of Limerick's Savoy Theatre and Cinema was reinstated in the city at the weekend when, in the company of a veritable who's who of local luminaries, the new €100 million Marriott Hotel Development celebrated its official opening.

Situated on the former Savoy site on Bedford Row, the new four-star hotel hosted one of the most chic social gatherings that the city has witnessed in recent times.

From the 1930's style vintage Beauford parked at the main entrance on Henry Street, to the refined usherettes who lined the red carpet, there was no mistaking the venue's tie to its theatrical past.

"We are delighted with the launch, and, as the invitation stated, glamour has made a comeback," said Aisling Nagle-Purcell, marketing manager of the Limerick Marriott Hotel.

"The music and entertainment which was provided by Edgewood Productions really evoked the past history of the Savoy. They really added to the evening and made us the best show in

town," she added.

Among those to grace the red carpet were beautician and style guru, Celia Larkin, former Munster and Ireland rugby star Peter Clohessy, local auctioneer Cian Foley and his soon-to-be bride Sue Ann McManus, newly elected Mayor of Limerick, Ger Fahy, Miss Limerick Erica Salmon and former Savoy employee, ninety-three-year-old Bridget Sheehan from Janesboro.

"I am just spellbound by tonight. It was really beautiful. Everything was just so posh but yet so homely," said Mrs Sheehan who worked in the Savoy for over thirty-years during the forties, fifties and sixties.

"It's been an amazing evening—everybody are enjoying themselves. It's great now to have the official launch—everybody knows that we are here. There is obviously still development in the rest of the commercial side of the complex, so some people don't even realise that we are here, but tonight is about launching ourselves and saying that Limerick Marriott has arrived," said the general manager of the Limerick Marriott Hotel, Donnacha Hurley from Ballykeefe.

Reflecting on the years of hard work, graft and grind, that culminated in Thursday night's lavish

launch, Brian Harrington, managing director of Irresistible Hotels spoke of Limerick's need for a "first-class internationally branded hotel" such as the Marriott.

"What you see here tonight represents the culmination of almost three-and-a-half years of work since this project was first mentioned to us by our friend and development partner Michael Daly of Fordmount Developments.

We always believed that Limerick city centre needed a first-class internationally branded hotel such as the Limerick Marriott and now we have it," said Mr Harrington. One of the highlights of the event was the presentation of the keys by the former managers of the Savoy, Tom English, John Likely and Maurice Johnston to the new management of the Marriott, Donnacha, Brian and Bob.

And, in a complimentary gesture, the new management then presented the former Savoy managers with three silver salvers which were once used in the theatre, prompting Tom English to allude to the many happy memories of the Savoy in its heyday.

"As Bob Hope would say "thanks for the memories," he said, raising a huge roar from the crowd



Michelle McMahon, Rhebogue, and Caroline Smith, Dooradoyle, at the opening of the Marriott Hotel in Henry Street



Margaret Irwin, Fr Russell Road, Niamh Doody, Dooradoyle, and Helen Irwin, Raheen, at the opening



Celia Larkin, Killaloe, and Carol Meskell, Ballina, at the opening of the Marriott Hotel

for Limerick Hotels
for July 2007
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