

Marcus Craig

1940 - 11 Aug 2013



Here's a quote from critic Bute Hewes on the occasion of the opening of William Forbes-Hamilton's *Victorian Music Hall* at the *Star Hotel* in November 1971.

'Then of course there was Mr Marcus Craig, queening it over everybody and upstaging his fellow artists atrociously. As an unloved pantomime fairy, fat and fourtyish, he brought the house down. As a dainty diminutive red-coated soldier, he was straight out of the military camp. Mr Marcus Craig could take his performance to any Victorian music hall anywhere in the world.'

By November 1973 the show had moved to Auckland's *Inter-Continental Hotel* and ran up 500 performances. Another performer in this troupe was Joe Dewey, who won a *VAC Scroll of Honour* in 1983. By 1974 Marcus had withdrawn from the Music Hall and joined Edye Parker's Troupe at *Oliver's Restaurant* in a floorshow based on the film *Cabaret*. In 1975 he developed his Diamond Lil character and was performing at Phil Warren's *Ace of Clubs*.

'I don't play the character of Diamond Lil as a woman, I play it as a male, dressed up as a woman, sending the character up. I don't treat it for real. That is different from a female impersonator endeavoring to appear like a woman. I even use my hairy chest as part of my send up. When one writer described me as a 'drag queen of Music Hall', I was furious. In the 'Diamond Lil' show I play one brief male role (The Pink Shadow) and assume the femme comedy characterisation for the rest of the show.'

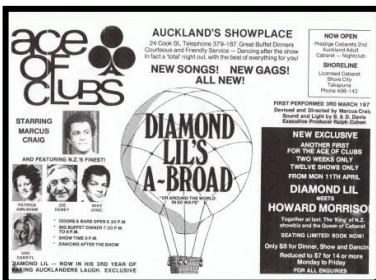
David Lennard was born in Adelaide, Australia, in 1940. The son of an Aussie railway man and an English-actress mother, he was brought up in the South Australian village of Naracoorte. His father served in the South Pacific with the *AIF* during WW2 and returned unscathed, only to die in a railway accident a year later. His mother toured with the *Carl Rosa Opera Company* in Brisbane, his maternal grandmother was a pianist for silent movies and his grandfather once sang with Dame Clara Butt.



David learned Piano, sang as a boy soprano and acted in school dramas. As a teenager while working in an Adelaide music store, he decided to become an actor. 'A girlfriend persuaded me to take the part of a wedding guest in an amateur show. I went reluctantly but on the night of the first dress rehearsal I went out in front of the lights and it hit me – pow!'

With the Adelaide based *Flinders Revue Company* he played Tony in *The Boy Friend*, Timothy in *Salad Days* and Conrad Birdie in *Bye Bye Birdie* as well as revue. He played for several years in Adelaide's own *Old King's Music Hall*. He appeared in three Skippy Television programs, played a barman in the Mick Jagger movie, *Ned Kelly*, worked on various television series and was an out of breath athlete in the Ryan O'Neal film, *The Games*.

He moved to New Zealand by accident in 1974, stopping on his way to London for a few weeks and ending up working with the *Mercury, Central* and *Independent Theaters*.



At one time Marcus was considered as a replacement to John Clarke when Clarke left TV2 to move to Australia. In 1976 he recorded live LP, *Diamond Lil live at the Ace of Clubs*. His live recording of *Gumboots* with John Clarke made the *NZ Top Twenty*.

Marcus received a *VAC Scroll of Honour* in 1978 and in 1981 won the *Benny* and the *Shure Golden Microphone*. He served on the VAC committee in 1978, 1981-83 and was President in 1991.

Craig moved to Sydney in 1994. He was currently living in Brisbane at the time of his death on 11 August 2013. His health over the last 4 or 5 years was in steep decline with diabetes as the root cause of most of it.