

# ‘Always top bands at the Strand’

**‘Right through the year dancing was only to the best bands that Ireland could offer, with cabaret spots by recording stars of great repute.’ Coleraine Chronicle, 28 December 1963.**

“ Bobby Platt had a lot of big stars appearing.  
Laurraine Gardiner

Bobby used the contacts he had made booking bands for the Boathouse to continue bringing big name artistes to Portstewart and Limavady. As well as the best local showbands, he brought chart toppers from Britain and the United States, so dancers didn't have to travel to Belfast.

One Strand Ballroom dancer commented, **‘We get so many good bands down here, I've forgotten what a bad one sounds like.’ Coleraine Chronicle, 8 June 1963.**

## LULU

Lulu and the Luvvers were due on the Strand Ballroom stage at 11pm on 5 December 1964. At 11:40 Bobby told the crowd Lulu would not be appearing as **‘through some misfortune which he could not trace they had not been able to get here in time.’** (Coleraine Chronicle, 12 December 1964). There was **‘a sprinkling of boos and foot stamping from some sections of the hall,’** so Bobby offered 2s off the next week's admission. Patricia from that evening's support act, the Barristers, sang Lulu's hit **Shout**.

Just as the dance ended Lulu arrived, having got lost and taken the Coast Road, and **‘had trouble with the engine of their van.’** (Northern Constitution, 12 December 1964). Bobby lent Lulu £10 to get the Liverpool ferry home, in return for a promise she would appear at the Strand Ballroom on her next tour. Lulu kept her promise, and returned to Limavady on 13 January 1966. A review described how she **‘waltzed, wiggled, pranced and jumped about the stage during her highly-polished act.’** (Coleraine Chronicle, 22 January 1966).



Bobby with Lulu 1964. Courtesy Bobby Platt collection.

## CHUBBY CHECKER

Chubby Checker played the Strand Ballroom on 22 July 1963, after chart hits with **The Twist, Pony Time, and Let's Twist Again**. He was described as **‘certainly one of the greatest, if not the greatest, ever to visit the Strand. Never have I heard so many people say that they had a really enjoyable night.’** (Coleraine Chronicle, 27 July 1963).



Backstage at the Strand Ballroom, July 1963. Left to right: Ken Brownlow of the Kentones Showband; Bobby; Chubby Checker; Mrs Brownlow, wife of KEN. Courtesy Bobby Platt collection.



## HELEN SHAPIRO

Helen was only 17 when she appeared at the Strand Ballroom on 19 October 1963, but had already toured with the Beatles, and had four top five chart hits. Earlier that day Helen was invited to become Vice-President of Portrush Youth Club, and spent time with Club members handing out photographs, and signing autographs.

Backstage afterwards, Helen commented, **‘Boy, am I dead beat. But I've enjoyed my tour of Ireland. And I can't wait until November when I return again.’** (Northern Constitution, 26 October 1963).

Helen Shapiro backstage with Bobby before her performance. Courtesy Bobby Platt collection.

