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**W**elcome to the October edition of your own exclusive magazine. I'm biased. I love autumn with its rich palate of colours, the nights drawing in, the mists and mellow fruitfulness. And I hope that once again we've provided nothing but the best for you to sit back and read as you watch the leaves fall.

Griff Rhys Jones is one of life's great enthusiasts who turns his hands to so much, be it acting as Fagin in *Oliver!*, campaigning to preserve architecture and the countryside or hosting fascinating TV documentaries. Our interview reveals how he acquired his own somewhat unusual coffin, and how you can see it at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts. Honest!

David Essex is also versatile. A pop singer and stage star he brings his own show about the fairground, *All the Fun of the Fair*, back to the Theatre Royal (with sets from Great Yarmouth's own 3-D Creations) and reveals a deep love for West Norfolk and the Fens. Will Young proves that winning a TV reality show (in his case *Pop Idol* ten years ago) doesn't have to become fifteen minutes of fame followed by obscurity. He's a big name. Meanwhile we highlight the new single, album and

musical direction from Peter Grant, a name worth watching.

We all love having a sneaky peek behind the scenes and this month we offer plenty of that. We meet Philip Johnson, the architect who has led the team building the Olympic Stadium for the 2012 games; we take you to Bletchley Park, home of the code breakers whose work was so vital and which helped shorten WW2 by a couple of years; and there's Duncan Jeffery from Gorleston who played such an important role as Head of Communications at Westminster Abbey making sure we all got to enjoy the Royal Wedding.

If this were not enough, our regular contributor Richard Barr rolls the clock back 25 years to the time when the centre of King's Lynn became a Hollywood film set for the making of *Revolution* with Al Pacino. This wasn't a disaster movie though sadly it's performance at the box office was.

This month we also turn the business spotlight on the career of Mark Jeffries, Senior Partner of Mills and Reeve in Norwich.

And to add to the general glitter - and we can't promise this every month - we review the World Premiere of the stage version of the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers movie *Top Hat*. This show is heading for the Theatre Royal and, if you've got a ticket, you are in for a real treat.

Our hope is that this whole edition of your favourite *Places&Faces* with a weekend break to Denmark, restaurant reviews from Lowestoft and North Norfolk and so much more will equally be a treat to read.

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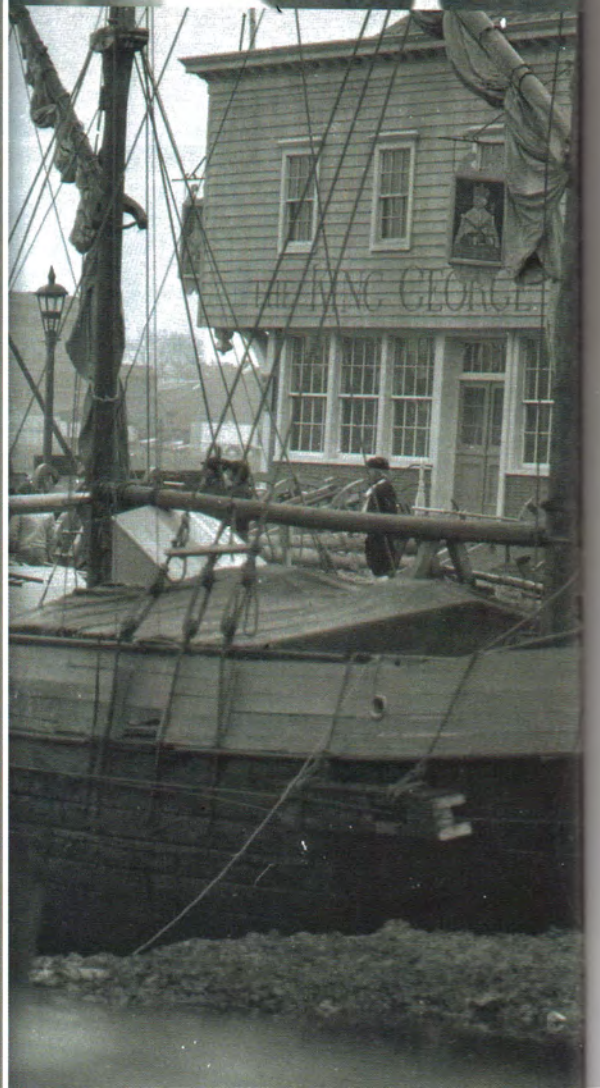
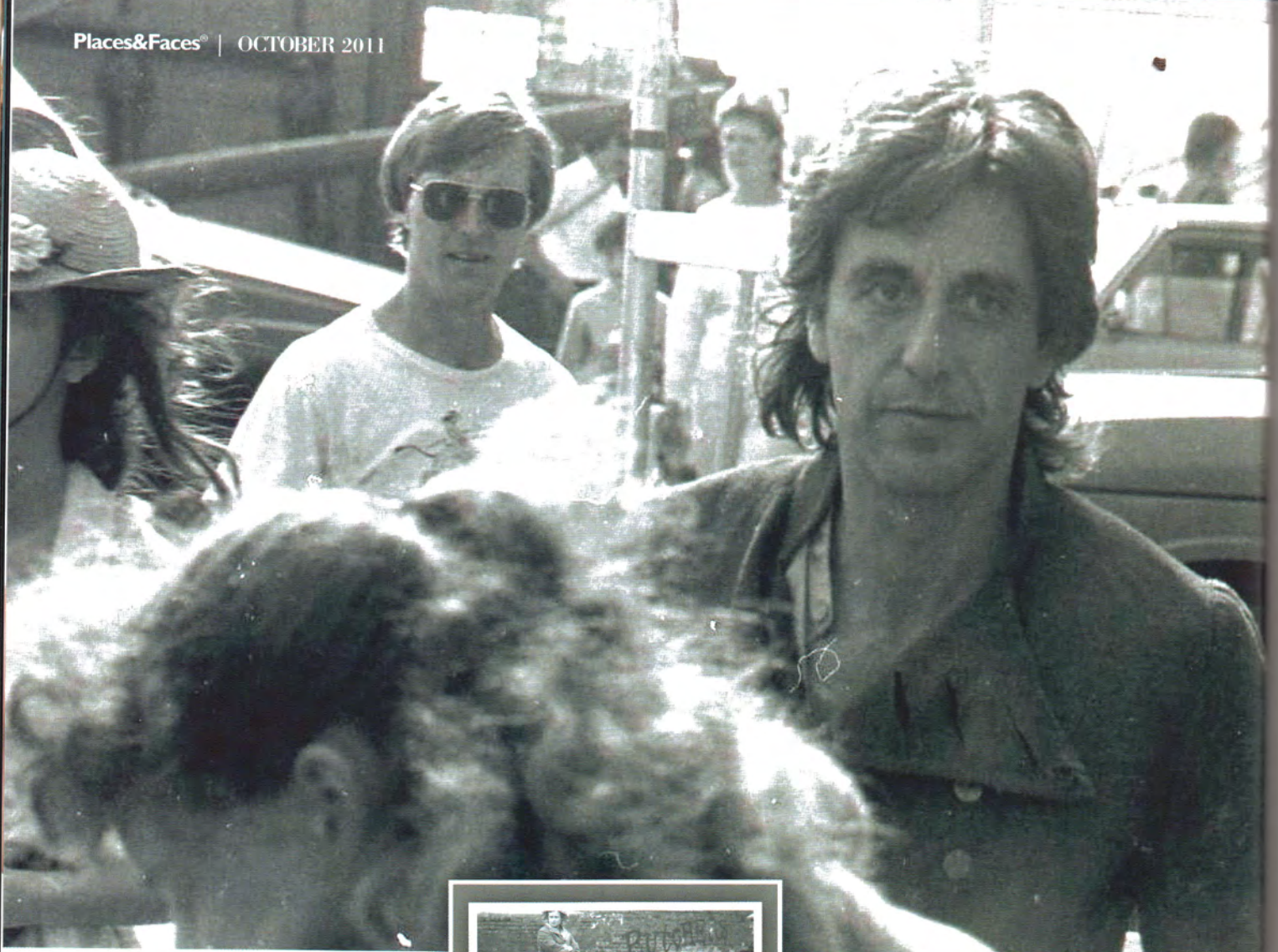
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# Come the Revolution

Richard Barr's small part in the making of a Hollywood epic in King's Lynn

**Y**ou will never read it in the history books and nobody was even killed or injured but those who were around in 1985 will certainly remember the time when troops marched through the streets of King's Lynn, and there was frequent rioting.

Fortunately none of it was real. It was the summer when much of the town was taken over in the filming of what was billed as the Hollywood movie of the year. Sadly it turned out to be the flop of the year - except in King's Lynn.

A year earlier we had started to spot flamboyant young men with clipboards who were seen eyeing up old buildings and pointing disapprovingly at new ones. There were rumours that it was to be the setting for a television commercial or a low budget romance. Nobody guessed that the most expensive film of 1985 was to be shot in the town.

In February that year, just after King's Lynn's famous Mart (the February fair) had left town, the scale of the production became clear. While the mart's world of lights and noise was being dismantled in one part of the town, eighteenth century New York was being created in another. The town had apparently been selected because so many of its buildings were similar to those of New York at the time of the American War of Independence.

Old buildings, complete with mossed slates and sagging roofs, appeared overnight. Houses suddenly changed colour. Shop fronts, taverns and brothels sprouted from abandoned buildings. If the producer wanted bricks on colour-washed buildings, teams of artists would carefully paint on each individual brick.

Walls would arrive in ten foot

sections and, once installed, were so realistic that you could only tell that they were artificial by tapping them. Local residents complained that they were frequently disturbed by people knocking on their walls to find out if they were genuine.

One of the town's eyesores (thankfully long since demolished) was a hundred-foot high grain silo. This was turned into a sugar warehouse. The green towers of the silo stuck out like three gangrenous fingers, but camera angles were kept low so that they did not appear in the final version. A long neglected tributary of the River Ouse was cleared of its mud and supermarket trolleys. It was turned (if you faced east) into a sordid Hogarthian underworld and (if you faced west) into New York Harbour.

Modern streets were aged by the laying of instant cobblestones (which tended to flap on windy days). Those street lights that could not be removed were clad in old tree trunks and fresh foliage. Ingenuity was used to disguise other features of the twentieth century. A pay and display parking meter was hidden during filming by a portable shop front (which was removed afterwards so that the council could continue to collect its dues). A bird box, complete with guano, covered an extractor fan.

Everywhere television aerials came down and hanging shop signs went up. Distant roof-lines were changed by façades propped up by scaffolding poles. Tesco's at the time was in the town centre and it too developed a fine colonial façade.

For the town it was a bonanza, not experienced since the bottom dropped out of the wool market and King's Lynn fell from being one of the largest provincial towns in the country

to just another East Anglian port. Unemployment in the town briefly nose-dived when 2000 extras were signed on to fight wars or join in riots for £20 a day (£30 if they were to be rained on).

Rain featured a lot in the making of Revolution. Huge tanks of water and an impressive array of hoses were deployed to soak the extras. On one occasion the film director Hugh Hudson shouted 'Rain' through his megaphone. Immediately the heavens opened and drenched the actors without the need for fire hoses. It just goes to show what power these film directors have!

But the filming was not without its tensions. There were apparently upsets with the cast and the cameras would be silent for days on end.

The young men with their clipboards did not handle the local population well. They seemed to assume that everyone would be delighted to have their houses painted or new fronts put on in return for a pittance. Some agreed. Other residents of King's Lynn insisted on a king's ransom in return for relinquishing the twentieth century. There were tales of people having their houses re-roofed or double glazing installed in return for agreeing to their houses being used. The film company had to agree, because one twentieth century house would have entirely spoiled the effect.

Even the local lawyers benefited. My particular moment of glory came when I was given the task of serving a writ on an individual who insisted on driving his motorboat along the Ouse when filming was taking place. He did not want to be served with the writ and I set off in hot pursuit on the office bicycle. He was on foot and dashed in and out of the alleyways that

criss-cross the old part of the town. Eventually I was able to screw the writ up into a ball and throw it at him. Even though I am normally a hopeless shot, I did succeed in hitting him. Legally that amounts to good service of proceedings - and filming was then able to continue.

Revolution starred Al Pacino, Natassia Kinski, Donald Sutherland and Annie Lennox. We became used to passing them in the street. We also learned not to be alarmed by the sounds of gun fire and the sight of palls of smoke hanging over the town. Smoke featured in many of the scenes. If buildings were not being burned, smoke was still needed to blot out parts of the twentieth century which could not be disguised by other means. Technicians worked with smoke generators to create a fog that hid the twentieth century on the other side of the Ouse.

Eventually the filming was over and the entourage of producers, directors, men with clipboards and stars moved on. Immediately there was a strong lobby to keep the scenery; many felt it improved the town beyond measure. But it would not have lasted, and we were sad to see it go. There is just one building that still bears part of the scenery. I do not know whether they were goaded into action by the filming, but the local authority has now completely revamped the area where the filming took place.

And the film? The Majestic cinema in King's Lynn was packed for days as all the extras and locals turned out to see themselves and their friends but in the rest of the country it had very small audiences and it soon disappeared without trace. Copies can still be obtained but no one has even thought it worthwhile to convert it to dvd: you can only get it on VHS.