

Dumetrius in Person

COVERING Wellington's Theatre district the other afternoon, just before the neon lights went on, *The Listener* interviewed Simon Jordan, David Beckett and Mr Pym (of *The Long Shadow*, *Walk a Crooked Mile* and *Knave of Hearts*, respectively). But it was not, after all, such a high-pressure assignment, since all three are simply mutations of that celebrated radio personality Guy Doleman, who is probably remembered most vividly by serial-addicts as the suavely villainous Dumetrius, the man with the dossier. Such pressure as the assignment involved was required more to persuade Mr Doleman to give something from his own dossier.

"I was born in Hamilton," he told us. "My parents were on the land, and I was brought up in the country. We shifted to Canterbury later. After I left school I worked around the countryside—farming, a bit of deerstalking, rabbiting, some timber-felling, shearing—the usual stuff. I even went mining with an old fellow called Thompson—he's dead now. He taught me about prospecting and I did that for a while.

"I suppose I'd always been keen on the stage—I'd read about it, and I liked mimicking people. Later I did some radio acting, and a couple of parts in local shows. I remember the first one. Someone dropped out and I took over at the last minute. They stuck cards with the cues on all round the stage. It was all right, but it wasn't acting."

He considers his acting career started after his father died, when he set out to try the London stage. At Sydney, where he broke his journey, they were filming *Always Another Dawn*, and he got a leading role in that, his first with Charles Tingwell. From that Guy Doleman entered Australian radio, and his first show was the very popular *Hagan's Circus*, in which he played "that devilish bad character," Grant Andrews. There followed several plays for the Minerva Theatre, and many more radio shows, including the Caltex Awards series—so many that names are forgotten. About that time he won the award for the best actor of the year.

When Robert Morley turned in *Edward, My Son*, Guy went on tour with him, and then followed several pictures—*The McAndrew Kid*, *Strong Is the Sea*, *Kangaroo*, and *His Majesty O'Keefe*, which was made by Warner Brothers in Fiji, with Burt Lancaster in the lead.

"While I was in Fiji," he said, "I got some time off and went tramping in the interior. I went with a great tall Fijian who towered over me, but he got cramp very badly and I had to carry his pack. We got lost and wandered around for a long time until we finally found his village. By that time we were both so hot and thirsty that we just staggered to the nearest water and jumped in. They held a great ceremony and made me a chief. The Fijian had a *tambua*, a killer whale's tooth, and he gave it to me. I managed to get an export permit for it—they are very rare—and I've still got it, and I'm rather proud of it.

"From Fiji I went to Hollywood, where I first did a series of plays for TV with Sarah Churchill. She's a fine actress to work with. And I had a bit part in *Dial M for Murder*. I'd just arrived on the set when I saw a plain



girl with glasses and grease on her face. I walked over and said to her, 'Give me a light, honey'—I hadn't recognised Grace Kelly. Working with Hitchcock was very exciting. He's a wonderful director, and you could feel the suspense while you were filming."

He went back to Australia to tour with *The MacMahon Case* for Hal Roach, and then took part in the *Long John Silver* radio and television shows, which are one of the major Australian series. While Robert Newton was sick, Guy Doleman took his part as Long John Silver, one of his favourite roles.

"*Smiley* came next. I was that boundary rider who just came along out of nowhere and fixed everything up at the end. In the sequel, which is what I'll be doing when I get back to Australia, I'm all through the picture as the 'heavy'

lead. After *Smiley* I had a toughie part, the stand-over man, in *The Shiraz*, the film of Darcy Niland's book about a man who takes his young daughter on the swag with him.

"I think the Australian film has a great future, but it badly needs more money and more overseas producers. There's some of the finest actors in the world there. But I don't like all these films with kangaroos and the outback—they should just make the films in Australia and forget all about the 'local colour' business. It's quite a country, apart from all that guff. The same goes for the stage—more money, but mostly the need is for opportunity to work with more experienced producers. There's not much local colour on the stage.

"I prefer stage and film acting to radio, which I like but find very hard

work, from morning to late at night, and weekends, too. In Australian radio the producers leave it to you to create a part and get on with it. Of the parts I've had recently I've liked Pysie (in *Knave of Hearts*) best—he's fun to do.

"I'm married, to a girl I met in Christchurch, and we've a 12-year-old daughter Ingrid, of whom I'm naturally very proud. She's already started some modelling and acting, though she's still at school. I do a lot of sailing in Sydney, with as much swimming, surfing and deep-sea fishing as I can get in.

"At present I'm looking forward to seeing my family in Christchurch again, a brother and sister and another sister in the country. I've only been back once on a brief tour since I left New Zealand ten years ago."