

STARTING TODAY

**How I
shocked
Dad—by
Frankie
Vaughan's
son** —Pages
10 & 11



My crazy life

by Frankie Vaughan's son

Give me the make-up, give me the dress ... and call me Hilary!

HIS DAD SAYS—'I WILL STAND BY MY BOY'



WHEN Frankie Vaughan read our interview with his son there was silence for an emotion-charged minute.

Then, his voice choked, Frankie said: "Knowing that he has said that is more than I ever wished or expected."

"My biggest pleasure in life is to give and David giving back to me is an added bonus I hope I can accept gracefully. I don't have words to cover how I feel about that."

"When he was away from us I prayed and now I say a very personal, private prayer every day I wake up for the happiness the good Lord has given us together."

"Love is the most important thing in our house, the one thing we are never short of."

"David got out of some trouble he was in with drugs because of his own

self-respect. I like to think that is how he was brought up. Stella is a marvellous mother—she is an amazing lady and a fantastic wife."

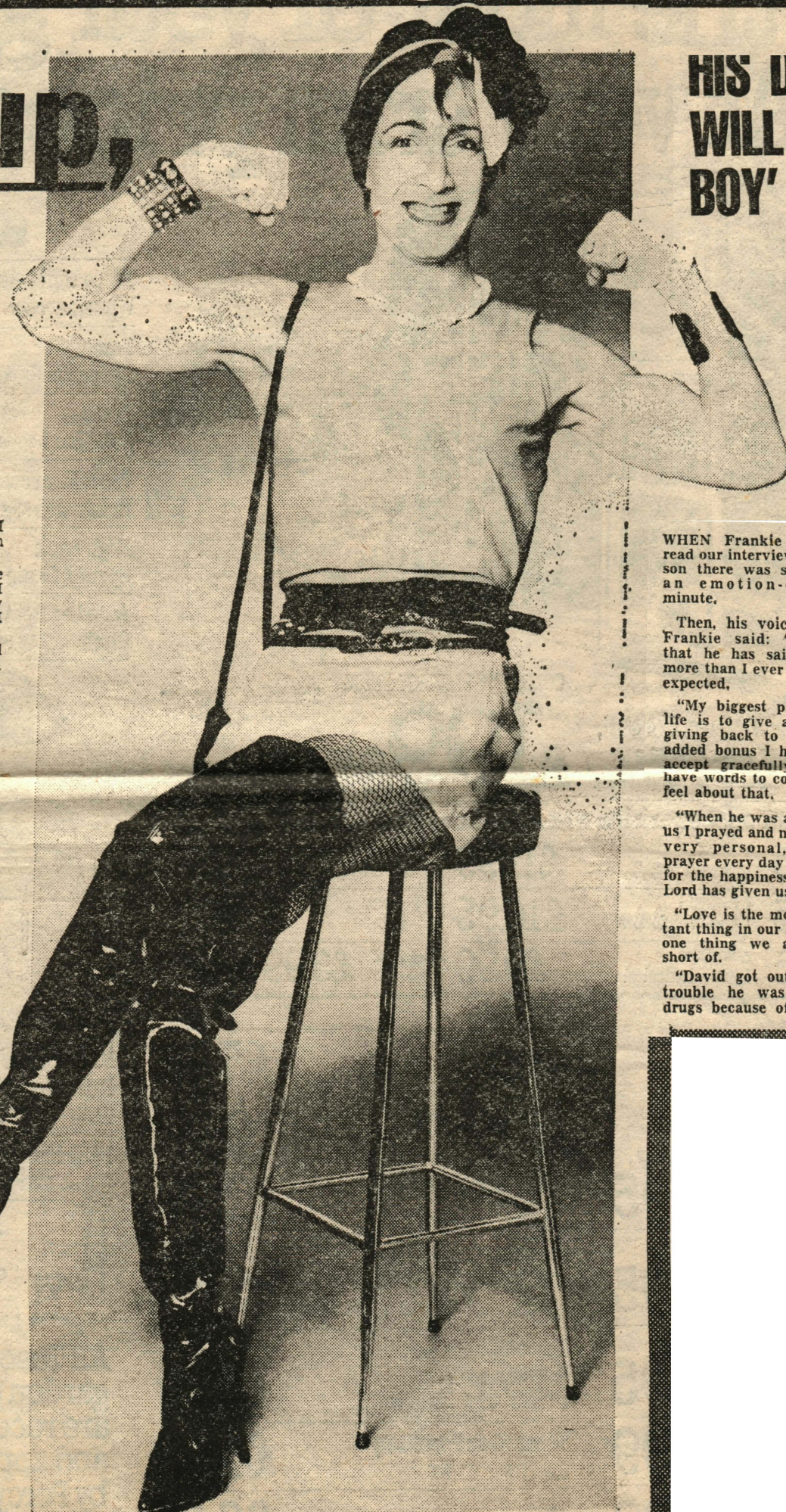
"When David first told me he wanted to go into showbusiness, I was horrified. I told him he didn't know anything about it."

"He said, 'I've been in it all my life'. I had no answer to that—it's true."

"I was amazed when he told me about the female character he was creating for the stage. I don't pretend to understand it—I am not that knowledgeable about the pop world."

"He will come in for a lot of stick—his shoulders are broad enough but it is going to be very difficult for him."

"Knowing him as I do, he is such a butch, ballsy character. It takes a lot of guts to do what he is doing."



READY for anything—David as "Hilary". Pictures: ALLAN BALLARD

THE bizarre life of showbiz star Frankie Vaughan's son David would have driven most parents round the bend. His career flopped. His marriage failed. He took drugs. He nearly became a down-and-out. But David pulled through, thanks to the love of his family, and is rebuilding his life—as a pop singer in drag! This is David Vaughan's touching, nearly tragic and often hilarious story.

Interview by DAN SLATER

MY FATHER'S trademarks were his silver-topped cane and a top hat. When I told him I was going out on stage to sing wearing a dress, make-up and high heels, he fell about laughing.

Then he said: "Now I've got one of everything—a son, a daughter and a fag."

I have created this transvestite character called Hilary Goldbeck. She's a kind of Jewish Sloane Ranger.

I say "she", but in fact Hilary is a man who won't deny the woman in him—as I don't deny the woman in me.

I may manifest the macho side of me but the woman in me is the soft, subtle and creative side.

That doesn't mean I go about dressed as a woman. That is just the way I show the woman in me on stage.

My father has just come back from Majorca with a present for me—a pair of really lovely ladies' boots.

He phoned me from Majorca and asked me how high I wanted the heels.

"Do you want to go all the way?" he asked, and he was laughing down the phone.

He's lovely. It seems I can't shock him any more despite the disgrace of letting him down so badly.

Some of my relatives are bound to think I'm on the turn but I don't mind.

I don't sleep with men but if that is what people want to think, then that is up to them.

Most of my friends are gays—male and female—because they are the creative people.

My father has no fears about me at all. He knows me too well. If I had any fears like that about myself, I couldn't portray the character on stage.

My central understanding

'I went to the Ladies when I had tea at the Savoy'

wear a woman's clothes. I know, because I have been out in public as Hilary.

I went to tea with friends—a girl and three men—at the Savoy Hotel in London. I wore a dress, high heels and make-up and ordered from the waiter in my normal deep baritone.

I decided to go to the loo—the ladies' loo. I was intrigued to see how luxurious it was. Much nicer than the men's.

There is a lovely chaise longue. I lolled about on that for a while enjoying myself.

The cloakroom attendant and the two girls adjusting their make-up at the mirrors accepted me totally.

I ANSWERED the call of nature, came out and started fixing my hair. (Hilary doesn't wear a wig.) One of the girls was still at the mirror.

I smoothed my dress down, looked at the girl and cleared my throat very loudly—in a guttural, masculine way. I could almost feel the waves of shock and horror.

The girl swivelled her eyes at me and the lipstick she was applying gashed up over her mouth. I turned smartly and left before I could be thrown out.

I could take the easy way and be a nice, middle-of-the-road singer. I have a tremendous voice and I'm a very good actor.

But because my father has covered those areas, I daren't.

He's my dad and I can't get away from that. I regard my father as a blessing but if I don't deal with it head on, it will consume me.

There was a time when I tried to break away completely—and it almost ended in suicide for me.

I sat on the bed with pills in my hand and a glass of water. I had made the decision to do it. It would be easy just to put the pills in my mouth and drink them down.

I'd gone against my father. There had been a parting of the ways and I believed the split was forever.

We'd had a terrible row

and things were badly broken up between us. My wife had left me and taken our baby daughter with her. I felt I had no family left.

All my life, my father and mother had been only a telephone call away. But now there was no communication. I was on my own.

Crazy though it sounds, I owe my life to Anthony Quinn and his film, Zorba The Greek.

The television was on in my room and through my haze of misery I heard Anthony Quinn, as Zorba, say: "Life is trouble. Only death's no trouble."

I somehow knew that I had to hang on.

I went to the toilet, threw the pills down and cried and cried.

My crisis had started when I sold the flat where I lived with my wife, Karen, and daughter, Natalie.

I sold it for £32,000 and lost every penny trying to get a television variety programme going in America.

I had gone against my father in going to the States. My parents thought the plan was foolhardy. But I'm a gambler and I went ahead and blew it.

We came back to Britain and rented a flat in Bourne-mouth.

I took the only job I could find, cooking in a restaurant and working a heavy, 16-hour day.

I was in such a state of mental confusion that once, driving down a dual carriageway, I pulled over to the side and actually began banging my head on the steering wheel and crying: "Please God, let me get back into showbusiness. Let me stand before a microphone and sing."

LIVING with someone like me is well nigh impossible. I'm a performer. And if I don't perform, I explode inside. I used to wake up at night sweating. Our marriage was smashed around.

The strain was too much for Karen. She left me and took our baby with her. I have never been so low in all my life.

Losing her was like losing a limb. When she was no longer there to say good

morning and good night, I felt my life had really fallen apart.

The day after I had come so near to ending it all, I turned up at work with my eyes bloodshot and I couldn't stop vomiting.

I lied about the dreadful state I was in by saying a close relative had died.

One of the waitresses, Glynis—I will bless her to my dying day—guessed my problems went deep and tried to help.

I was living in an hotel room that cost £30 a week and I was earning £60.

Glynis heard of some flats to rent and took me along to see them, but the rent was only £10 less than my hotel room.

She took me back to her father's house. Sitting in the garden in the sunshine was a friend of her dad's, a grey-haired old lady called Jean.

She said she had a house and she'd love me to come and stay with her. I was bowled over by her kindness.

She didn't want any rent but I made her take £14 a week.

That wonderful old lady—well into her seventies—put me back together again. We became very close.

She told me I must take up my singing career again. I got a week's holiday from the restaurant and she packed me off to London.

It was 18 months since I had spoken to my father or mother. They didn't even know where I was.

In London I stayed with some very dear friends in Golders Green.

Two days after I arrived, I passed a jeweller's shop and a beautiful pair of diamond earrings caught my eye.

I was gazing at them wishing I could buy them for my daughter when the door flew open and my sister, Susan, rushed out crying and laughing.

She thought she would never see me again.

I had no notion she worked in the shop. It was nowhere near our family-home in Tottenham, North London. The chances of our

meeting like that were nothing short of a miracle.

We just stood there crying all over the pavement, we were so happy to see each other. I said: "How are mum and dad?" and she said: "They miss you, baby."

I went to see them. My marriage had bust up. I had no wife, no daughter and I'd

lost all my money but I said: "I'm not coming to you cap in hand. I'm coming because I love you."

"I want to give you my love and I want to feel somebody loves me. I just want to put my arms round you."

At that we just fell into each other's arms, embraced and cried, We'd

had a terrible time. We'd been at opposite ends of the pole but my father said to me:

"David, we are here for you. No matter what you do and in spite of the things you've been through, we love you."

"Let us help you. Be with us—give us the opportunity to help you."

NEXT SUNDAY: How I hid my

drugs problem from Dad