

of Sinatra between 1954 and
albums by Nat King Cole, Rose- popular music.

Flash Gordon

DAVID GORDON and the Pick-Up Company at Sadler's Wells started the Dance Umbrella with a cornucopia of ideas. Some were extensions of work he has presented before, either for his own group or in pieces he has made for Extemporary Dance Theatre. Other themes were new to London, showing that he is now using dancers' technical skills more overtly than he used to, and replacing their verbal comments with music or visual devices.

Because he prefers not to keep his works going for more than a year, he often carries ideas over from one piece to the next, keeping in touch with the past while he tries out something new. He opened his London programme with a chair piece, 'Nine Lives.' Chairs to Gordon seem talismans, magical objects that can be transformed from props into partners, horses or obstacle courses. He starts with a solo that would appear to exhaust everything that could possibly be done with a chair: then the rest of the company come on and take over from there.

In 'My Folks,' the bravura closing piece, he uses lengths of fabric (designed by Powers Booth) in a similarly versatile fashion, this time decorative as well as practical. A piece of cloth becomes a costume, a drape, a sled or sling. The simple act of folding, pleating and laying out fabrics creates a sequence of movements that seems only accidentally to be 'choreography.'

Gordon uses a kind of legerdemain to disguise the fact that his company is dancing. The audience's attention is caught by the props and sees the movement that animates them as purely functional. The dancers have a business-like air, treating each other's bodies as neutrally as they do the chairs and fabrics. They appear an androgynous lot, suprisingly dif-

DANCE

JANN PARRY

ficult to distinguish from a distance.

The exceptions are Gordon and his wife, Valda Setterfield. Older than the rest of the cast, they have a distinctive quality of their own. Each of the three pieces in the programme features a duet for them which introduces a strong emotional element, though what they actually do is prosaic enough. In 'My Folks,' the nearest outline of a folk dance contains a whole history of courtship. In 'Offenbach's Suit,' he lifts and cradles his wife in a repeated cycle of turns that says more about a loving relationship than most pas de deux ever can. It is a beautiful piece, rediscovering the principles of dancing so that even the familiar seems newly-minted.

LONDON
LAUNCH OF AN
EXCITING NEW
VENTURE IN BRITISH
BALLET 1977

SONG OF A WAYFARER PHOTO: LEVAT



LONDON F

LF

Artistic Direct

LONDON SEAS

DEN I

PETER
LEADS A HO
DANCERS IN T
OF MODERN AN

WORLD
PREMIERE

OF A NEW
BALLET BY
NILS CHRISTE
IN PROG. 1

Sadler's W
Box Office 01-2

Quest for Queneau (Radio 3)
burrowed into the French polymath
his fly through