

MIDNIGHT REVEL GUESTS NEW YEAR

As an anxious world faces a New Year, 6,000 revellers pack London's Albert Hall to greet 1949 at the Chelsea Arts Ball.

Official theme of the ball is "London River" - but on the floor the accent is on less clothes rather than more. Dancing non-stop to three bands, the merry-makers think it's all worth while, despite having to pay five guineas and upwards for their tickets and having a headache to contend with on the next day. At midnight, a cascade of balloons heralds 1949's first hour.

As the peak of Britain's most famous New Year revels is reached, carnival tableaux are dragged round the dance floor.

But the student-built pieces of art don't last long. The men who built them are the first ones to wreck them - that's part of the Arts Ball tradition.

Whatever the New Year has in store, it has at least got off to a noisy start.