

Treats in store for fans

THERE are bus ticket enthusiasts, even a magazine for badge collectors. So it shouldn't perhaps come as a surprise that a department store like **LIBERTY OF LONDON** (C4) has groupies.

We met one, as the observational documentary series began a second run, who'd made a pilgrimage from the North to stand in the famous scarf hall and take tea with the legendary store's American managing director, Ed Burstell.

Many staff members seemed to be similarly giddy about their workplace. In ladies' fashions we met the splendid Omar, a Birmingham lad only recently hired and already one of the store's most successful salespeople.

As a student, Omar told us, he



Matt Baylis
on last
night's TV

had wandered around Liberty's while his mates were larking around in the park.

In other stores, I imagine staff members might get carpeted for being unshaven or wearing too much make-up. Omar got a ticking-off for turning a cape into a drape and swathing himself in it.

Elsewhere, with all the excitement of the early X Factor auditions, hopeful designers

were queueing round the block to pitch their creations to the top brass, a custom invented by Liberty's founder in 1875.

To be fair, these lacked the comedy of the X Factor, although seeing a man earnestly measuring a dog (to see if it was small enough to be allowed in) was a small pleasure, along with the woman showing off her dismal felt crowns.

It's a hugely enjoyable series all round, filled with people who love their jobs and are wildly inventive.

The low point for this reviewer was seeing how much they fawned as pop star Pharrell Williams arrived to launch his new perfume.

"Scent is like, um, paint for the body," he murmured, a wisdom every bit as profound as his hit song Happy, and around him everyone nodded frantically as if he was Kim

Jong-un. I suppose that's the risk of filming enthusiastic people. They'll get excited by anything.

Children, I find, are very good in a crisis. My six-year-old son might make a ridiculous fuss about his green duffel coat but when we missed our holiday flight after the car in which we were travelling stopped in the fast lane he was as cool as a Zen monk.

LOOKING AFTER MUM: A CHILDREN IN NEED SPECIAL (BBC1) reminded us that youngsters can indeed cope with anything but that's not the same as being unaffected by it.

We encountered a range of carers as young as 10 who had largely sacrificed their rights to be children to look after their parents.

One of the most striking things about this film was how thin the

vener of maturity went. Eleven-year-old Antonia Rae talked about how little she went out because she was scared her depressed and disabled mother might "make the wrong choice" in her absence.

She then compared her situation to having a new-born baby and being scared it would fall over, because for all her wisdom she didn't, of course, know that much about new-born babies.

Brothers Tom and Joe gravely tried to enjoy a break and not worry about their very ill mum but it was when they bickered about who was more homesick that we saw the little boys underneath.

Perhaps we also saw in all of them a hint of the adults they might grow to be: tough and decent but also anxious, unable to ask for help.