

WHAT THE PUBLIC WANTS

1ZB's Record Request Session



DOUG. LAURENSEN

They ask for it and usually get it

EVERY radio listener, anywhere under the sun, criticises radio programmes. It has become one of the favourite indoor sports of the twentieth century. In spite of the cry that the public is becoming increasingly mass-minded, every person has his own favourite type of radio programme or recording, and criticises accordingly. Few realise that radio organisers themselves have many more headaches gauging what the public wants than do the listeners themselves. Station directors have sent terse memoranda to programme organisers to "pep up the programmes" or "tone it down." Programme organisers have read the Riot Act to their departments. Assistants have racked their weary brains, continuity writers have thumbed the pages of dictionaries for unhackneyed words to introduce programmes, and after a great deal of worry and fuss the resulting programme has been disliked by fifty per cent. of the listeners!

Listeners' Own Choice

All the ZB Stations have their Sunday Request Sessions, and, like Doug. Lauren-

son's record request session from 1ZB, they have the particularly happy idea behind them of giving the listening public exactly what it wants for at least two hours on Sundays. Listeners choose the records themselves.

How they choose provides interesting data for an analysis of listener taste,



MILIZA KORJUS

in the most popular recording of all

and what is true of 1ZB is true of all—we're taking 1ZB as our example now. So far, not a session has passed without many requests for Bing Crosby, with Nelson Eddy running a close favourite. Gracie Fields and Deanna Durbin lead the woman singers, but it is an interesting fact that, at the time of writing, the most popular record is beyond all doubt Miliza Korjus singing "One Day When We Were Young." Gracie Fields in the

"Trek Song" runs this a very close second. Humorous records are seldom asked for, and when they are they show that George Formby is first favourite, with Ronald Frankau next.

1ZB's record request session is broadcast each Sunday between 12 midday and two—as are the similar sessions at other ZB Stations. 1ZB's first programme was made up from requests from tramwaymen, followed the next week by typists, and then on succeeding Sundays by the police, nurses, cashiers, high school boys, high school girls, school teachers, training college students, and florists.

Pupils and Teachers

The type of music asked for naturally varies enormously. The greatest difference between two sessions was noted concerning the high school boys and the school teachers. The boys came out hot and strong for swing music and hot rhythm numbers. The school teachers in the main followed a more classical trend, although one university professor

Free Comment

In the actual running of the session Doug. Laurenson is the reverse of orthodox. While making no claim to being a musical critic, he freely comments on the listeners' choice, and has raised a healthy controversy on the merits of different types of music and artists. No listener is mentioned by name, only noms de plume or initials are used, so no one can complain of unfair publicity.

The mail for the session has been enormous, averaging well into the seven hundreds each week, and comes from far outside 1ZB's average coverage, from all over New Zealand. Because of the magnitude of the mail, it became impossible to broadcast every request. So the session has been slightly modified. Instead of sending in the name of their favourite record, listeners in each section of the community are asked to nominate their favourite artist. This has resulted in a smaller mail, but it is now possible to satisfy practically everybody who writes in.

All the People All the Time

Doug. personally handles and files each letter sent in. He hopes in months to come to have such a complete record of listener tastes that he may be able to design a programme that will suit everybody all the time. "There's nothing new in a Request Session," he says. "Of course there isn't." But, incidentally, if anybody drops on something really new, he can send it along to any radio station, all charges collect. Something new in radio is treated with as much deference as if it were the answer to a maiden's prayer!



BING CROSBY

Demanded by "misguided" boys

wrote in asking for Fats Waller. The most popular record in the school boys' request session was Bing Crosby singing "Little Sir Echo."

"No fewer than forty-seven misguided boys have asked for this," said Doug. over the air, which remark resulted in an infuriated 'phone call from a young man in the Lower Fourth. Things looked hot for Laurenson on the other end of the 'phone until he mentioned that he was 6ft. 1in. in height, so the Fourth Former toned down and invited Doug. out to school for some tennis.

The following Sunday, seventy school girls nominated Miliza Korjus singing "One Day When We Were Young."



GRACIE FIELDS

Trekking along behind Miliza Korjus

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