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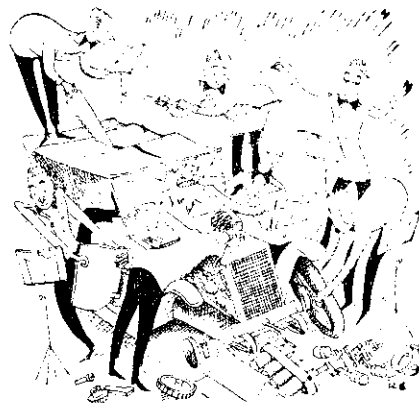
NOISES ON AND OFF

Spike Jones and his Futurist Background

ONE third of a century has passed since the Italian Luigi Russolo put out his *Futurist Manifesto* on "The Art of Noises" in which he said music would have to break out of its narrow circle of pure musical sounds "and conquer the infinite variety of noise sounds." Not nearly so long a time has passed since "Spike" Jones, a former drummer in the dance band accompanying Bob Crosby's radio show, decided to experiment in sound effects as a substitute for music, and shortly found that musical nonsense was a highly profitable stock-in-trade. Now, Spike Jones is to music and commercial radio as Salvador Dali is to art and window-dressing. His latest record, according to a December copy of *Time*, is a cranky version of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*.

In this, the *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* has camel bells (whatever they are), the *Arab Dance* has "an accompaniment of carefully modulated burps." Tchaikovsky's flutes, piccolos, and muted strings are drowned out by noises made with washboards, police sirens, and breaking glass.

Previous records by "Spike Jones and his City Slickers," some of which are broadcast in dance music sessions by the NBS ("Chloe," "Hotchi Cornia," and "Little Bo Peep Has Lost Her Jeep," for instance) have contained cowbells, a motor horn, a popgun, a saw, an octave of flit-guns (tuned in E flat), two octaves of tuned doorbells, a .22 pistol, and "every conceivable noise capable of emerging from a human larynx." Spike Jones is also said to have



"With deliberate and conscious musicianship"

machines, Noise was born. To-day, Noise is triumphant, and reigns supreme over the senses of men. For many centuries life evolved in silence, or, at most, with but a muted sound . . . if we overlook such exceptional phenomena as hurricanes, tempests, avalanches, waterfalls, nature is silent. . . .

"The art of music at first sought and achieved purity and sweetness of sound; later it blended diverse sounds, but always with intent to caress the ear. To-day, growing ever more complicated, it seeks . . . sounds that fall most dissonantly, strangely, and harshly upon the ear. We thus approach nearer to the *Music of Noise*. . . .

"The most complicated of orchestras reduce themselves to four or five classes of instruments differing in timbre. . . . So that modern music . . . struggles vainly with this circle.

"We must break out of this narrow circle of pure musical sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds. . . .

"We futurists have all deeply loved the music of the great composers. Beethoven and Wagner for many years wrung our hearts. But now we are satiated with them and derive much greater pleasure from ideally combining the noises of street-cars, internal-combustion engines, automobiles, and busy crowds, than from rehearsing for example the *Eroica* or the *Pastoral*."

Six Families

After a good deal more about the noises of a great modern city, sounds of air, water, or gas in pipes, purring of motors ("indubitable animalism"), flapping of awnings and flags, railway stations, forges, power stations, etc., Signor Russolo enumerates the futurist orchestra's six families of noises, "which we shall soon produce mechanically":

- (1) Booms, thunderclaps, explosions, crashes, splashes, roars.
- (2) Whistles, hisses, snorts.
- (3) Whispers, murmurs, mutterings, bustling noises, gurgles.
- (4) Screams, screeches, rustlings, buzzes, cracklings, etc.
- (5) Noises of percussion on metals, wood, stone, terra-cotta, etc.



"Booms, explosions, crashes"

invented an "Anvilphone," a "crashophone" (breaking glass), a "poontango-phone" (cigar box and lathe), and a "latrinophone" (a lavatory seat strung with catgut, very popular with GI's on a tour in Europe).

History Predicts Itself

All this is not entirely new. Luigi Russolo thought things out quite fully in 1913. In his *Futurist Manifesto*, Russolo wrote:

"Life in ancient times was silent. In the 19th Century, with the invention of