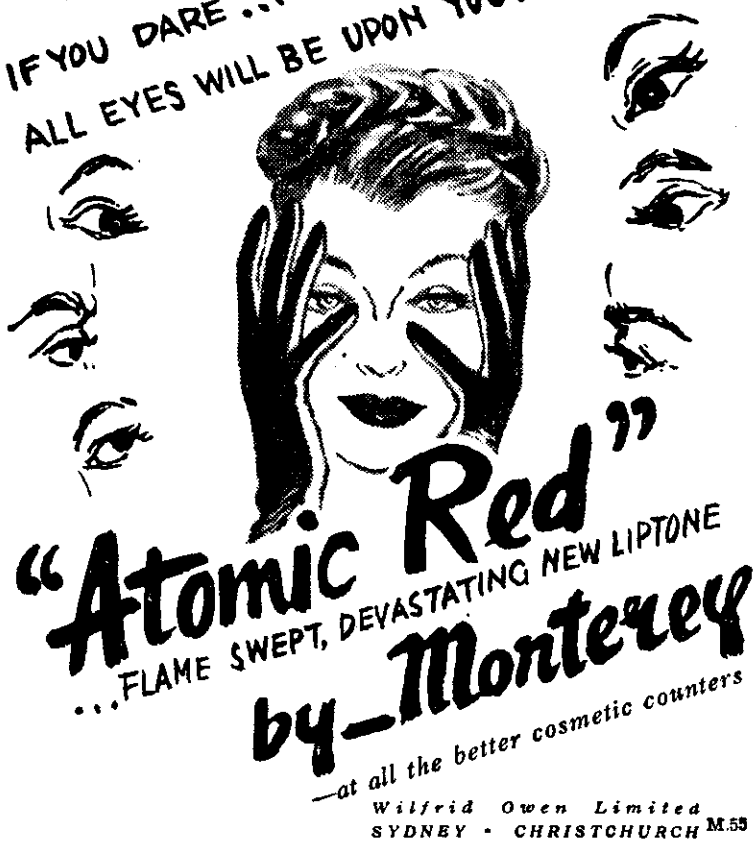


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WHO WANTS SONG HITS?

(Written for "The Listener" by "KAY")

IF vox populi is vox Dei, I give up—but not without a brief examination of the case. These popular numbers, as they are called, must be manufactured by the hundreds in the song factories of to-day.

Song hits, as delivered by crooners and caterwaulers, can certainly hit very hard—hard enough to hurt. The very young, who are addicted to these latest hits, will retort that all this is only middle age lashing out at what is new. But is it so new? It seems to me that never were tunes and words thrown together with so little inventiveness and so many clichés.

"A date with Fred MacMurray has me in a hurry: A guy like Mischa Auer has me in his power." Their titles often sound like conundrums—for instance: "Is you is or is you aint?"

How I can uke and uke and uke,
And you can uke a ukelele too,
And I can wick and you can wack
And we can wicky wacky woo,
Hello Aloha, how are you?

And here's another:

You've got me on the brink of a new affair,
And though I'm in the pink for a new affair,
Fall in love, says my heart,
It's romance, take a chance. . . .
And imagine any adult who is not certifiable getting up to sing—"O-oh, I wanna woo, I wanna woo and bill and coo. . . ."

All That Blueness

If we are to have comparisons, let love be like a red, red rose and not like a cigarette. And all that blueness! Blue of the skies—Your tum-tum eyes—Eyes so blue—Pining for you—I'm feeling blue. Nothing so saucy as a black-eyed Susan!

Picasso had his blue period, but he escaped. Mood Indigo, Rhapsody in Blue, St. Louis Blues—so they go on. Dream-Romance—hearts to burn, to churn, to girm—and not a head among the lot of them.

We, the public, are to blame for allowing such tasteless trash. It must be in the air, this blight, a symptom of our bankrupt times. As mites come to cheese and maggots to meat, a universal blight is on our song-making—and we are too blighted even to notice it. Unfortunately, the radio has the power to multiply these low grade wares.

The Rubbish Used to be Real

There has always been rubbish, but there was more variety about the old stuff. Occasionally a man sang about his dog—with more zeal than art—his Arab steed or his grandfather's clock. But how could the monstrous mechanism of modern industry produce songs or singers? Men are mostly robots now (remember Chaplin's *Modern Times*) and robots make no music.

To make labour easier, the older generations devised their labour songs; for instance, the sea-chanties, as specifically English as the hornpipes. Remember the "Nancy that kitted my fancy" and Nancy Dawson, Old England Square, and Hanging Johnny who had such a passion for the business.

The English hunting songs show the same positive zest in life—so, too the drinking songs, both British and German: Whisky for my Johnnie, Little Brown Jug, The Pope who lives a happy life, and (because he) drinks the best of Rhenish wine. The amusing Willie who brewed a peck o' maut which Rab and Allen came to pree.

Poetry of Life

For freshness of subject and treatment, the Hebridean songs took a lot of beating—the Churning, Spinning and Rowing songs, powerfully accented. A young Hebridean would make a song to his boat (Birlinn of the White Shoulders) and well he might as boats mean bread and butter there. The sailors sing, almost religiously: Bless the white sail and her fare, bless her riggings and her high masts.

In a tune worthy of Wolf, the seagull in the Land-Under-Waves is invoked: (continued on next page)

Declamation in Court

Proceedings have been lodged in the Supreme Court and removed to the Court of Appeal in connection with the Lower Hutt City Council's application for a declamatory judgment.—*The Dominion* (Wellington daily newspaper), May 23, 1946.

WHEN learned lawyers leave the Bar
And to the Bench are lifted
They give up arts in which they are
Peculiarly gifted;
The truth no longer they extract
By cross-examination,
And drop—this is a dismal fact—
The art of declamation.

BUT Lower Hutt will put this right—
At any rate it hopes to;
Its council gird themselves to fight,
Its counsel know the ropes too.
Scorning the dull decrees of yore,
Knowing what legal fudge meant,
They launch their application for
Declamatory judgment.

NOW therefore let the Bench prepare
The sledgehammer and needle,
The impassioned plea that cleaves the air,
The whisper and the wheedle,
Give over splitting legal straws,
And raise, with noble fury,
The ringing tones that win a cause
Before a common jury.

GOOD luck go with you, Lower Hutt!
No scheme was e'er so happy,
To jolt the judges from their rut,
And make the sittings snappy.
The fists that thump, the arms that soar—
No finer sight could I see.
And this is all at present, for
The case is sub judice.

C.