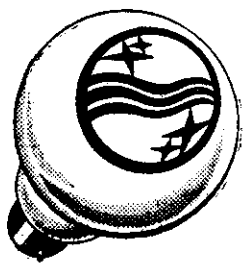


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RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

Spiritual-Swing

FATS WALLER playing "Deep River" on the organ. Here the two poles of Negro music life meet, the religious and the hectic swift orchestration which the Negro film *Cabin in the Sky* sawed contending as spirit against flesh. What sort of performance was it? The way in which Fats Waller here used the organ resembled figure-skating on thin ice over untold depths. At any moment Levinthal may raise his head and shatter the whole picture. Waller kept him well down, and yet his playing was not superficial; I doubt if any Negro could touch the religious music of his people without a knowledge born of sincerity. But nevertheless the word that came into my head to describe the number was "sweet," used in its more technical sense—the sort of slow lushness usually reserved to evoke emotions other than those connected with "Deep River." Waller, unsurpassed at a sort of wild, infantile, macabre hilarity which in its way spoke for much that seems potent in the Negro mind, could not attack the deep waters without falling back on technique, not devoid of slickness; but withal worth having.

Gadzooks

RECENTLY I found my attention drawn for the first time to a serial from 3YA called *Richelieu, Cardinal or King?* Now the case for the historical serial is that even when hazy on facts it awakes the imagination of the listener to the reality of historical epochs other than his own. This is an admirable thing to do. But I find myself compelled to admit that many such. *Richelieu* definitely among them, fall into the error of a false glamour. Persons living in another time are assumed to excite and titillate the public appetite solely because they wore the clothes we regard as fancy dress, spoke in a way we think of as archaic and were concerned with happenings that we think of as legendary and picturesque. The word I have placed at the head of this paragraph sums up this state of mind. But its result is inevitably a Hollywood vulgarisation, since any historical epoch was to those living in it as mundane, average, confused and everyday as ours to us. This is rather important; do we not wish to appear to our descendants as our real selves and not as figures from a melodramatic mannequin parade? If so, we should surely abstain from presenting *Richelieu*, a real man who really lived, as a character from Ruritania, and from leading the unthinking to suppose that the love-life of a French King, because it was conducted in thigh-boots, long skirts, and feathers, was more romantic, passionate, and dignified than the next man's.

Masque

THE Court Masque, latest treated in the *English Theatre*, BBC series, was a highly refined and specialised form of entertainment, aimed at providing diversion for the nobility and gentry.

The BBC treatment rightly stressed the Masque's main claim to fame, that it coincided with the great age of English literature between the Armada and the Civil War and gave that music a vehicle. For the rest, the programme made much of the ingenuity and beauty of the spectacle and stage devices involved (bringing one listener, it must be confessed, to the thoughts of the Messrs. Goldwyn and Mitchell; and continued in the determinedly proletarian strain of their earlier numbers. "It's all very well, yer know," said the 17th Century stage-manager, "but the people want something more real. It's all very lovely—like a dream—but dreams don't last." This is true enough, in the sense that after Elizabeth the English theatre tended to become an aristocratic hot-house; but I question whether this is the sole criterion. Granted that this art was exclusive and sophisticated, it was still in its particular line the best of its day (why, I wonder, were Milton's *Comus* and Shakespeare's *Tempest* not mentioned?); and it must often enough have happened that an art-form or idiom of refinement grew among the nobility and thence descended to the people. An example, recounted by James Agate, is that of the literary gent who asked the navy if he was going on all night breaking up the pavement with his pneumatic drill. The navy said "Definitely!" Seriously though, growth among the people and participation in their life is not art's only criterion.

Robin Re-hashed

"ROBIN HOOD" from 4ZB, would have met with a chilly response from me if it had not had the intriguing addition "With Basil Rathbone"; and the fact that it was scheduled for the evening programme indicated that it might prove to be adult fare. I'm afraid it just wasn't up to such expectations, although it ought to be recommended to juveniles as an excellent example of the swashbuckling romance. For adults, surely something a little more meaty and less fanciful is required than a re-hash of this fabulous tale of Robin and his Merry Men, with its overtones of false heartiness and its fake-antique script. That the melodiously smooth accents of such an actor as Basil Rathbone should be wasted on this sort of thing is one of the unsolvable mysteries of broadcasting. Mr. Rathbone, how could you!



Saturday Night in Dunedin

AT last, Dunedin's connoisseurs of fine music need not spend their Saturday nights at the pictures, playing poker, or in bed with a good book. It is now possible to sit by one's fireside from 8 o'clock till 10.30 without any twiddling of the radio knobs. The improvement of our local radio programmes has come gradually over a few weeks, a good item or two being interpolated here and there until on June 15 we arrived at an entire