

THE ZB's MAKE THEIR OWN FEATURES NOW

Radio Production Department In Full Swing

ONE of the busiest places at the head office of the Commercial Broadcasting Service these days is the production department, which has been working quietly for some time, and is now swinging into concerted action. Features are being recorded and new features are being planned, and there are few nights of the week that the head office studio is not in use either for rehearsals or for the actual making of recordings.

The setting up of such a department was a natural development of the Commercial Service, and it was hastened by the increasing difficulty of procuring features from overseas. A large proportion of these have been and still are made in Australia and the U.S.A., but New Zealand radio is more and more being thrown on its own resources.

THIS is welcome on several counts.

First, New Zealand talent is given a chance to prove how favourably it can compare with overseas talent; second, this talent is stimulated; and third, it provides an answer to people who are forever grumbling at the prevalence of un-New Zealand accents in radio features.

The first step taken, once the controller, C. G. Scrimgeour, had decided to set up a production department, was to accumulate the necessary equipment. Apart from expensive control room and recording apparatus, a large amount of studio equipment was also required, as there are occasions on which the making of a recorded feature may bring into use a barrage of six or eight microphones.

The department is now awaiting the installation of new recording equipment, made in New Zealand. This will be "wide range" in the truest sense of the word, and from a technical point of view, the work produced should be right up to the standard of overseas recording studios.

Executives Appointed

Next step was the appointment of a supervisor of production, and the executive chosen was W. E. Elliot, station director at 2ZB. Mr. Elliot's has been one of the careers of the CBS. An announcer when 2ZB was opened, he was later appointed station director at 1ZB, then transferred to 2ZB, and then appointed to his present job.

Other appointments were those of Bryan O'Brien, who is assistant production supervisor and producer, and Reg. Morgan, who is musical director, and in charge of all musical productions. Mr. Morgan, who has been a featured personality in both Australian and New Zealand radio, brings considerable musical knowledge and experience to his post.

To start with, and without the need of conducting elaborate talent quests, a wealth of talent was available. Not only are there many clever artists on the staff of the ZB stations, but artists have come to light through Sunday night concerts held in the various centres. In addition, several regular sessions at 2ZB, such as "Stars of To-morrow" and Geoff. Lloyd's "Radio Discovery Club," serve as a testing ground for Wellington radio aspirants.

The First Feature

The first feature undertaken was "Tales From Maoriland," with Oriwa Haddon, who formerly conducted Maori sessions from 2ZB, and Anna Hato, the well-known Rotorua singer.

Next came something unique, probably, in New Zealand radio, "Station T.O.T.," which reverses the normal procedure in that it is presented by chil-

Clever Young Performers

The youngest artists to appear so far over "Station T.O.T." have been two little four-year-old girls, Ngaire Thompson, who plays a piano-accordion nearly the size of herself, and Leigh Brewer, who is a clever tap dancer and singer. Leigh competed in the Wellington competitions last August, and won the Anderson Cup for dancing, and also a cup for the most promising dancer in the competitions. She has been learning dancing since she was three years old. Her singing is bright and spontaneous, and she picks up music by ear from the radio.

When it comes to youthful artists, however, 2ZB has a record which will be hard to beat. The youngest performer during a session the other week was a small boy aged just two years and nine months. With very little prompting, he sang two verses of a song.

dren for grown-ups. It originated from a half-hour broadcast produced by Bryan O'Brien one Saturday night from 2ZB. The telephone "jammed," so enthusiastic were listeners, and naturally "Station T.O.T." became a regular feature.

"Station T.O.T.," if you like to visualise it that way, is a backyard radio station centred round a jam-tin microphone. An alert ten-year-old lad seems to be boss in the neighbourhood, and a succession of young artists provide a bright programme, complete from musical items to burlesque weather reports.

The original compère was young and 'cello, but volume can also be in-



A BUSY SCENE in the head office studio of the CBS. "Radio Rotogravure" is in the making. Reg Morgan, who is producing the show, is here conducting the "Sunshine Singers"

Brian Johanson, but the "head man" now is nine-year-old Albert McGowan, who sings and plays the banjo ukelele à la George Formby, and, although he has had no previous training, reads dialogue like a born radio player.

"Station T.O.T." has unearthed some clever young artists, notably a boy who plays the mouth-organ so well that listeners invariably believe a standard recording of a mouth-organ player is being used.

"Melody Story-Teller"

Shortly after "Station T.O.T." went into regular production, Reg. Morgan made a start on his "Melody Story-teller" programme, which was a one-man effort in that he wrote the narrative, spoke it, played the accompaniments and sang the songs. A nicely varied mixture of classical and popular music, the programme told the stories behind many songs, from jazz to opera.

Another one-man production, a straight, dramatic one this time, was "Ships and the Sea," which was written and compèred by Peter Whitchurch, of 2ZB.

The biggest show yet undertaken by the CBS production department is "Radio Rotogravure," a series of musical shows, which will be on the air from all the ZB stations in the near future, and which will run to some 50 shows. Six have already been produced.

Artists from all over New Zealand will be heard in "Radio Rotogravure," and if rehearsals are any indication, the finished recordings should be of a high standard.

The Hammond Organ

Reg. Morgan, who is producing the show, is making extensive use of one of the few Hammond electric organs in the country. Both as an accompaniment for songs and to fill out orchestral effects the Hammond organ is particularly suitable for recording, as not only can it fill in instruments such as clarinet, oboe and 'cello, but volume can also be in-

creased or decreased at will to get correct balance.

Artists who will be heard when the first "Radio Rotogravure" shows go on the air include the "Sunshine Singers," a group of young women who were found by the "Radio Discoveries Club," the Orpheus Sextet, who have sung over the air with Reg. Morgan on previous occasions, and "Lolita," an attractive swing singer.

Mr. Morgan uses two orchestras. (One composed of Hammond organ, piano, steel guitar, electric guitar, bass fiddle, violin and piano-accordion) is for swing accompaniments, and the other (Hammond organ, piano, violin and bass fiddle) is a novel accompaniment for ballads and light classical songs.

A Personality Show

Work is being started this week on another musical production, "Reflections in a Wine Glass," a personality show starring "The Two Bohemians," who in private life are Bill and Nellie Clinch. They are well known in vaudeville in this country, and their new show will consist for the most part of Hawaiian songs.

The first serial feature attempted by the department is a series of "Real Life Stories" which are now in production. These are based on "Aunt Jenny's Real Life Stories," which are a very popular programme in the U.S.A. The scripts have been adapted to suit the taste of New Zealand radio audiences, and production is in the hands of Bryan O'Brien. Not only have many well-known Wellington repertory players been engaged, but a series of auditions has also brought to light several promising players who have never been on the air before.

Another, and an important aspect of the production department's work, is the recording of traffic songs and other aids to national campaigns such as those for road safety and national savings. The traffic song, played every morning at 8.15, became a time signal for thousands of listeners throughout the country.