

Minstrel Boys Now Play the Sax.

NO harp for the modern minstrel — he plays the saxophone! Listen in to 2YA any Thursday evening to the Melody Makers and you will hear proof that the itinerant musician now plays a new sort of ballad, mostly about blue moons and bright eyes, and makes a new sort of sound with a new sort of instrument.

To investigate the reason for this weekly atmospheric disturbance, *The Listener* last week walked cautiously into the main studio of 2YA to see the bards rehearsing.

Behind the piano was Jack Roberts, who finds the piano a big enough handful and keeps one eye on the look out for inspiration, the other on Bob Girvan, directing the band in its mazy way with cryptic movements of the saxophone.

Near to the door sits Bill Sinclair, producing percussion or concussion as required, with the dreamy look of the wide open spaces in his blue Canadian eyes and his hat bobbing in syncopated rhythm on the back of his head.

Ted Hall and his bass are notably absent, but Girvan and Art Rosoman between them can play enough instruments for two bands and there seems to be enough sound anyway. Ted and Maurice Hayvice were the only members who played for the baby band that grew into this big dance ensemble. Ted Hall started his broadcasting life in the Exhibition Studio (remember the Rhythm Makers?) and now plunks for 2YA's bigger ten-bit swing system.

Anything But The Flute

To get back to Rosoman: Rosoman's a genius in his own right. Give him an instrument for a week and he has mastered it. In fact, about the only thing he can't play is the flute, and with



JEAN MCPHERSON
"She just walked in"

that he can't even make a noise. He comes from Alberta, has played in Vancouver, on summer tourist cruises to Alaska, and arrived in New Zealand about two years ago to offer his services to grateful band leaders as any one of the following: saxophonist, pianist, clarinettist, trumpeter, vocalist, bass-player, or arranger.

He reminds us that Bill Sinclair is also a Canadian. A native of Ontario is Bill. He spent six and a-half years bronco busting. He bought himself a set of drums, and when he recovered from the resulting financial crisis he went to Vancouver and established a band, of which Rosoman became a member.

Sound Proof Cabins

The Melody Makers is not an old pupils' reunion society, but Peter McMurray also made Vancouver his stepping-off place for New Zealand. Manitoba produced Peter, who trumpeted his way over here with encouragement from Sammy Lee, whose "Americans" were first of all responsible for making it necessary for the Pacific steamship companies to provide special sound-proof cabins for dance band passengers.

However, they don't all come from Canada. Bob Girvan is a New Zealander by adoption, and Irish by origin. Like all the other dance band players we hear tell of he has travelled widely on a saxophone ticket. In Napier he learned to play, went to Australia, returned to New Zealand, developed his musicianship until he can play all the instruments which Rosoman claims, and the flute, and now helps R. G. Bothamley to keep the Melody Makers making melody.

Keeping Up Circulation

Bob Bothamley, now, is not a big noise in the Melody Makers, so far as the listeners are concerned, but he has a lot to say in deciding what they listen to. From a ragtime band, which he started for the Star Boating Club in Wellington, he graduated to the first radio-sponsored dance band in New Zealand. For the Vacuum Oil Company he ran the Plume Melody Boys and played for 2ZW. One thing led to another. His band grew until it played for big balls and dances in Wellington, and four years ago he began organising the dance music sections of the NBS programmes. He now supervises dance music over all stations and gives swing-loving listeners a feast of the right stuff straight from its source. Three weeks after the production companies issue a set of records, he has them in New Zealand and playing from 2YA in a special feature which precedes their immediate circulation around the other stations.

Records of dance band music are not the only currency Mr. Bothamley sets in circulation. The modern compy-doo ex-

perts really are wandering minstrels, without the rags and patches of that restless musician in *The Mikado*.

Improving Standards

Since Sammy Lee came to New Zealand and set a new standard in local band playing, the performances of home-grown talent have steadily improved. The exodus of Sammy Lee has by no means meant the removal of all outside influence, as the presence of overseas players in the Melody Makers proves.

In fact, so great has been the boost given to dance music in New Zealand, that New Zealanders are gaining a fine reputation in other countries.

Jack Boyce, who once played with Bob Bothamley, was the youngest bandmaster in the British Navy before he died. He served with H.M.S. Diomedé. Eddy Edmonds and Ray Smith are playing with first-class bands in England. Jim Gussy has taken over the Australian Broadcasting Commission's Dance Band, while Jim Davidson is in the Australian Army. Denis Collinson has the ABC's Melbourne dance band. Abe Romains played in England for Harry Roy and is now in Australia with his own band at the Trocadero. Craig Crawford, Maurice Gilman, Sid French, Charlie Lees, Tommy Hughes, are some among many who are doing well across the water.

All this information comes from Mr. Bothamley, whose business it is to keep track of this wandering company. We might mention that he has had eleven years on the fiddle himself, nine on the sax.

Another saxophonist is Maurice Hayvice, who plays the tenor sax in the Melody Makers, and has also visited Australia several times. "You make up the rest of the story," he suggested; but we're not so inventive as all that in *The Listener*.

Closer Home

To come nearer home — there's Lauri Paddi, who keeps the floor busy at the Majestic Cabaret in Wellington with a band that has provided many a traveller with a welcome stopping-place. Lauri Paddi migrated from Christchurch to Auckland "way back," and about 1926 or '27 promoted himself from work as an electrician or a grocer to crossing the T for dancing feet. The Rhythm Kings and Orpheans in Auckland, the San Toy Cabaret, the Adelphi Band, the Ritz in Wellington, all felt his influence.

He went back to Auckland to the Peter Pan Band, returned to Wellington to run his own band at the Majestic, then back to Auckland to the Peter Pan, then back to Wellington to play for Bob Girvan at the Majestic and for Hyman at the Exhibition, then back to the Majestic with his own band. As if this did not repre-



BOB GIRVAN
"The snake charmer"

sent enough travelling, he has also toured New Zealand with his own band.

Another purely local player is Bill Pritchard, who began with the Ponsonby Boys' Band in Auckland. He plays the trumpet. And from Feilding comes Norman D'Ath, who doubles from the alto saxophone to the mellophone and plays the lead trumpet for the Melody Makers.

The Girl in the Band

"She just walked in," said Bob Girvan, when Jean McPherson appeared before the reporter's now dazzled eyes. Miss McPherson is the band's girl vocalist. She has been heard over the ZB stations occasionally, but this was her first big chance. It came when a friend suggested she should apply for a singing job with the Melody Makers. So she just walked in and asked for a job and was given one. And it was necessary last week for her to have a publicity photograph taken. Spencer Digby did the job, as our reproduction shows. The other photographs, with the exception of those of Bob Girvan and Art Rosoman, are also by Spencer Digby.

No stereotyped music is offered listeners when the band assembles each Thursday for the broadcast from 2YA. All the work is specially arranged. Girvan, Rosoman, and lately Roberts as well, do the arranging. The combination of instruments is unusual—four saxophones and three trumpets, so orchestrations would have to be adjusted in any case; but the Melody Makers go further than that and make their broadcasts a specialty of their own.

SWING TIME



JACK ROBERTS