

FROM DRAFTBOARD TO FINISHED STUDIOS

IT was nearly three years ago that Alva Bartley, well known Auckland architect, drew the first rough plan for a new block of studios and offices for Station 1ZB. He had a long and arduous job before him; the Commercial Broadcasting Service was exacting in its requirements; the new studios were to be everything that the old studios were not; it was essential that they should meet not only the present but the future needs of a service which was growing like a mushroom.

Mr. Bartley had had some previous experience of designing for broadcasting (he was associated with the planning of Station 1YA's fine studios) and in addition he had the benefit of the advice of B. T. Sheil, deputy-Controller of the CBS, who was largely responsible for the design of 3ZB and 4ZB.

It was months before the architectural plans were completed—there were 260 of them, from detail drawings to plans measuring 4 feet by 2 feet 6 inches—and the contractors, N. Cole, Ltd., of Auckland, were able to get on with the actual construction. Since then progress has been steady, but at times slow, for the reason, as Mr. Cole pointed out at the opening ceremony, that it was sometimes necessary to give priority to urgent defence contracts.

But now the last scaffolding has been removed, and although there are minor details still to attend to, the 1ZB building stands triumphant. It is a long, narrow structure, dominated by a futuristic tower boldly inscribed with the station's call sign, which, when there are no more lighting restrictions, will be outlined in neon lighting. The main doors give entrance to a foyer from which leads the main staircase, one of the most striking architectural offices and reception desks, while straight ahead are large roomy offices for the sales staff and copy department. At the right again is the radio theatre, covering an area of 35 feet by 80 feet and rising the height of two stories.

The Science of Acoustics

The radio theatre is a concrete demonstration of the science of acoustics. To use the correct technical language, brilliancy and proper diffusion of sound in the theatre are achieved by the use of non-parallel opposite surfaces and serrated walls and ceiling, this eliminating "dead spots," "slaps," and echoes. A feature of the radio theatre is the use of "acoustivanes" at the rear of the stage and controlled from the theatre's special control room. These, again to use technical language, resonate at pre-determined frequencies and add definition, character, and realism to programmes broadcast from the theatre.

The stage has ample space to accommodate Theo. Walters's 1ZB Orchestra, the Novachord, and any number of guest artists, and there is full theatre lighting. The walls and ceiling are finished in cream, the rear wall carrying a mural, and the carpet and lounge chair are in a distinctive claret colour.

The winding circular staircase is flanked on one side by a wall of glass bricks, of which extensive use is made throughout the building, and further up the stairs is a mural representing Perseus astride the winged horse Pegasus and grasping a fork of lightning. The balustrade



is of glass, with sand-glassed musical and broadcasting motifs, and is lit from a concealed trough running the length of the balustrade. The effect at night is to throw the motifs on the glass into sharp relief.

On the Mezzanine Floor

The corridor on the mezzanine floor is flanked on one side by observation panels giving a full view of the radio theatre. At the rear of the theatre are



Alan Blakey photograph

Top: Alva Bartley, who designed the new 1ZB building. At left: B. T. Sheil and Mr. Bartley make a last-minute check before the opening. Below: The foreman, Frank Reeve, screws in the plaque which commemorates the opening—another last-minute detail. At bottom: The novel gold-plated microphonic inkstand which was presented to the Hon. David Wilson, Minister in Charge of Broadcasting, by Mr. Bartley and N. C. Cole, of N. Cole Ltd., the builders

offices for the station director and visiting executives, while directly at the rear of the theatre and looking down on the stage and auditorium is a comfortable sponsors' lounge. On the same floor are general administrative and accounting offices, several retiring rooms and the theatre's control room.

On the next floor the staircase opens out on to a wide foyer from which two glass observation panels give a full view of the main studio, which is 30 feet by 20 feet. At one end of the foyer is the illuminated photographic panel which indicates which personalities are on the air, and at one side are several rooms, walled with coloured glass bricks, serving to accommodate visiting artists.

One wall of the foyer is decorated with an incised cameo effect mural illustrating the birth of music.

Centrally placed on this floor is the master control room, from which, through observation panels, a view can be had of the main studio, the commercial studio, the children's studio, and the service session studio. Adjacent to the children's studio, with its cream piano and gaily figured carpet, is the

audition room, a tastefully furnished room which can be used either for auditioning programmes or as a talks studio.

On this floor, too, are offices for the programme organiser and the programme department; they are light and airy and fitted with long rows of steel files for records and wide benches for collating and auditioning programmes. Alongside are further technical department offices and at the rear of the building on the same floor are offices and a rehearsal studio for Uncle Tom's Choir.

Reducing Extraneous Noise

Throughout the building the walls and floors are constructed with a special view to reducing extraneous noises. The exterior walls are constructed of cavity brickwork, with an air space, a layer of Thermax, a further air space, wood framing, one inch timber sheeting, asbestos cement sheeting and insulating board or "acoustic" tiles inside this. The observation panels have three separate sheets of glass of different thickness, and various other ingenious devices to reduce noise are found in almost every corner of the building.

Designed with equal care are the offices on the two upper floors which will very shortly accommodate several Government departments. The top floor contains a suite of spacious and elaborately equipped laboratories for the Government analyst, with fume cupboards, library, weighing rooms, and several testing rooms. Other offices will house the Valuation Department, the Physical Welfare branch of the Internal Affairs Department, and the Forestry Department. There is a well-equipped cafeteria for the use of occupants of the building.