

ON OPENING DAY . . .

THERE is a tradition in the motion picture business that workmen must be adding the final touches to the building and laying down the carpets as the audience enters to attend the first programme at a new theatre. Certainly nothing like that happened at the opening of Station 12B; organisation behind the scenes was nothing if not complete. As always happens, however, there was a certain amount of rush and bustle the last few days before the opening, and many a CBS executive was to be seen striding round the new building with a worried frown and his coat tails flying.

So many final details had to be attended to. So many people had to be instructed and coached in the part they were to play in the opening programmes; there were so many corners to be cleared of debris, so many vases of flowers to be placed in the right corners of so many studios and foyers.

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In the radio theatre, Theo Walters is rehearsing the 12B orchestra, and although he has plenty of other things to attend to, he is only too pleased to put the band through its paces to show what even a week's rehearsal can do. "We'll play three numbers, one sweet, one swingy, and one with a rock," he announces, and off they go. The few people who are privileged to inspect the studios at this stage drift into the theatre to listen and watch, but the carpenters who are still working on the stage pay little attention. It's all part of their job, apparently. One of them saws away busily, adding a novel harmony.

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Another workman is sand-papering the new console for the Novachord. Eric Bell is going through his music in readiness for a rehearsal with Reg. Morgan at the grand piano. Up in the control room a technician is adjusting the dis-

appearing microphone which slides up and down at the front of the stage in a disconcerting imitation of the Indian fakir's mango tree trick.

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At the main entrance, a glazier is polishing the glass doors with loving care; a place is being prepared for the bronze plaque which will commemorate the opening; a bunch of spring flowers is being arranged on the reception desk; two plasterers hurry by in white overalls, bound for the air-conditioning room in the bowels of the building; a schoolboy, head poked in the main door, gazes wide-eyed at the confusion.

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It is nothing, though, to the confusion in the master control room; wires, tools, instruments everywhere; electricians coming and going and calling each other Fred. The panels have been removed from the main desk, revealing a maze of wires and an electrician who has crawled halfway into it, and works doggedly with a screwdriver and mutters to himself. Some one wants to know where Eddie is, because he's wanted urgently for a rehearsal.

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In the audition room are approximately 50 ash trays on stands, waiting to be distributed through the building; a painter is transferring a telephone from black to a bright brown to match the carpet; some one doesn't like the way a water colour painting has been hung.

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In a corridor outside, a visitor is willing to bet Beau Sheil that the station will never open on time. Mr. Sheil grins amiably and hurries off to cope with the next problem. It is, in fact, chaos, but already order is emerging and it is steadily becoming apparent that not only will 12B open to schedule, but the crucial first night programme will go over without a hitch.

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