

# PRESENTING - THE NOVACHORD

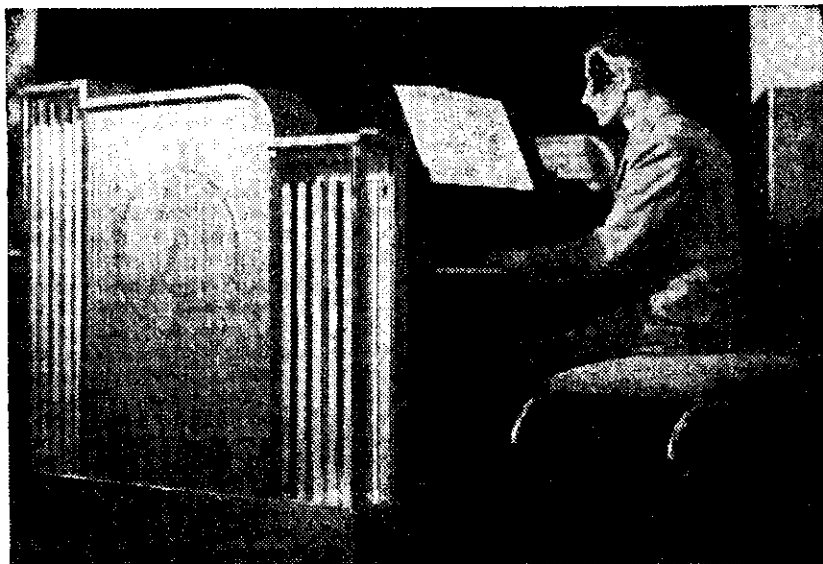
A NOVELTY at 12B which is attracting a good deal of attention among Auckland musicians is the Novachord, the first instrument of its kind to be imported into New Zealand. Unobtrusively housed in a console at the right of the radio theatre stage, the Novachord will be played by Eric Bell, and 12B listeners will have frequent opportunity of admiring its versatility.

Like the modern flat, the Novachord is all-electric. In place of pipes, pedals and half a dozen manuals, it has a single five-and-a-half octave keyboard and a series of electrical circuits (167 valves in all) by means of which the tones of almost any instrument or combination of instruments can be faithfully reproduced. The Novachord is made by the makers of the Hammond electric organ, but is a more versatile instrument, and can be put to more uses than the Hammond.

## Demonstrating It

The various combinations are governed by an array of switches on the manual, and Eric Bell, who had to master its intricacies with no help beyond a few elementary instructions in a handbook published by the makers, is a past-master now at demonstrating the Novachord's versatility.

He may be playing it as a straight church organ. "Let's hear you play a harp and flute duet," someone will challenge him. A flick of a few keys and there is the duet. "How about a violin solo with a 'cello obbligato and a string ensemble background?" someone else will ask. That is accomplished just as simply. Piano, violin, viola, 'cello, music box, banjo, French horn, oboe, trumpet, clarinet, harmonium, bassoon, percussion instruments, are all there at the touch of a switch.



ERIC BELL AT THE NOVACHORD. The handsome console was specially constructed in Auckland to house the instrument

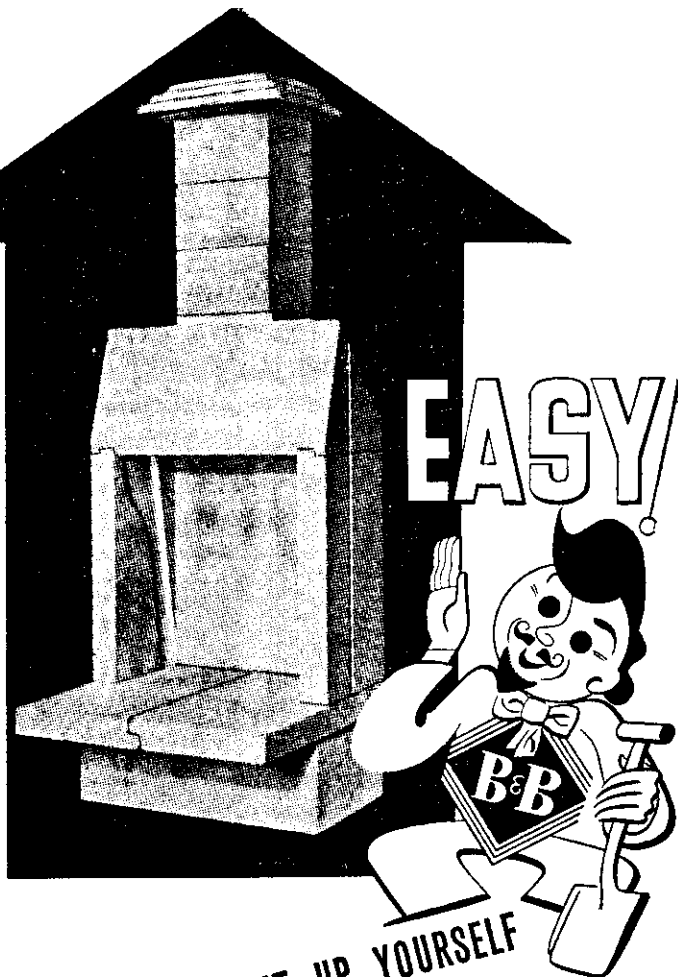
Visitors to 12B's radio theatre will at first be jolted out of their deep armchairs by the sight of a microphone emerging mysteriously from the floor of the stage. The invention of 12B's technicians, this microphone is manipulated from the control room behind and above the radio theatre stage. A turn of a wheel, and it slides up into view; another turn and it disappears.

The radio theatre has full stage lighting, including "spots" and "floods," and the control technician, working in near-darkness, can at a touch of a switch, command any effect he desires. Sound effects can also be controlled by means of acoustic vanes at the rear of the stage. Almost any sound conditions can be produced, from the "dead" effect of a studio to the echo of a concert hall.

As a rule, the Novachord player is content to reproduce simple and familiar combinations, usually those which will demonstrate the Novachord's clear, distinctive singing tone. When it is used as a solo instrument, the electrical impulses can be fed straight through to the transmitter without a sound, apparently, coming from it; used in ensemble work or to accompany vocalists, the sound is produced and picked up by microphones in the usual way.

Eric Bell will give Novachord recitals at 6.30 every night from Monday to Friday, these comprising Novachord solos with a number contributed by a guest artist. In addition, he will be heard between 8.30 p.m. and 9.0 p.m. on week days in special CBS musical productions, in some of them with the 12B Orchestra. On Saturday nights, Novachord music will contribute "theme" and "bridge" music to the regular half-hour dramatic productions.

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