



ARTIE SHAW

His music is buried before him

THE biggest event so far in the musical memory of many swing fans in New Zealand has been the visit of one of America's foremost dance-band leaders, Artie Shaw. Petty-Officer Shaw is leading a United States Navy Band which has been touring the South-west Pacific, entertaining servicemen. Nearly 2,400 people crowded into a Wellington theatre the other day when a performance was given for the benefit of U.S. Marines and other personnel; and Petty-Officer Shaw would be mobbed by autograph-hunters if he gave them the chance. But he has made it known that he is of a retiring disposition, and when *The Listener* sought an interview, we learned that he had neither the inclination nor the permission.

Of the few things we have found out about him while he has been here, the most interesting is that when he goes off duty this arch-clarinetist, second only to Benny Goodman among dance-band clarinetists, asks either for quiet or for Beethoven. His job is a noisy one

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but too late. This is what was written about her rival:

A CERTAIN lady I won't name
Must take an active part, sir,
To show that Devon's beauteous dame
Should not engage each heart, sir.

SHE canvassed all both great and small
And thundered at each door, sir,
She rummaged every shop and stall—
The Duchess had been before her.

A report that the Duchess purchased the vote of an obstinate butcher with a kiss was accepted by the caricaturists of the time, and has not been disputed since. It was on one of these occasions that the well known compliment is said to have been made her by an Irish mechanic: "I could light my pipe at your eyes."

But these elections belong to the days when government was the hobby of the few, and generally speaking, of the well-to-do. With the movement for Parliamentary reform came also the appearance of electors to whom political issues mattered more than pot ale or five pounds or kisses from Duchesses. Throughout the 19th century, elections were fiercely fought, and at times marked by riots. By the beginning of the 20th century, the battles had become mainly wordy. To-day, if you want to annihilate an opponent, you throw a hundredweight of print at him.

BLUES FOR BUSINESS BUT BEETHOVEN FOR PLEASURE

Artie Shaw On Duty And Off

—the music that excites and stimulates people who can come and go from it as they please exhausts the man who directs its production. Not only that, but a genuine liking for the lasting joys of serious music makes Artie Shaw retire to Beethoven's pianoforte sonatas—preferably as recorded by Artur Schnabel—when he wants to forget "St. Louis Blues" or "Begin the Beguine" (two of the most popular items played here).

Music in a Vault

He would have been an interesting subject for interview. We could have asked him, for instance, what it felt like to put away a recording made under his baton for the edification of the civilisation that is expected to exist in 6000 years' time.

For in 1939, a collection of representative samples of 20th century music was sealed up in a "century-proof" vault in the Crypt of Civilisation at Oglethorpe University, Georgia. Symphony, swing and "straight" popular tunes will be bedfellows for all that time, since the records chosen included a Haydn Symphony (conducted by Arturo Toscanini) some Richard Himber dance records, and four by Artie Shaw. "Begin the Beguine," "Nightmare," "Deep Purple" and "Jungle Drums."

However, failing an interview, we have secured a few details of Shaw's career. He was born in New York 29 years ago, and haunted vaudeville shows in his childhood. He heard a saxophonist take a solo in the Palace Theatre, and started saving to buy himself an instrument. With it came five free lessons

—the only instruction he ever had. In his teens, he won an essay contest which gave him a free trip to Hollywood, where he joined Irving Aaronson's orchestra, and finally returned to New York. In 1936, at a big swing concert he created a sensation with a small dance group featuring strings, and was booked for engagements where he might have "made the big time," but his hopes were premature. The band was reorganised, and clicked. With recordings of "Begin the Beguine" and "Indian Love Call," the "big time" was made.

Once, after playing for the inmates of San Quentin prison, Artie Shaw said it was the best audience he had ever had. Wags promptly christened the prison "Swing Swing."

A Leader with Convictions

Artie Shaw cultivates no "individual style" such as other bands have actually patented. He believes that each number makes its own demands on the manner of arrangement. One thing that distinguishes his own band is its use of strings. His feeling about this was so strong that he disbanded his own organisation at the peak of its popularity and returned with a 30-piece orchestra which includes (besides the regular saxophones, brass, and "traps"), eight violis, four violas, and three cellos. With such a group he holds out for polished work, and refuses to record with less than a week's rehearsal.

Shaw was married to, but divorced the film star Lana Turner, and has since married a daughter of the composer Jerome Kern. He is father of a month-old baby which he hasn't yet seen.

"Mr. Thunder"— And An Echo In Wellington

EARLIER this year in an article on the Sten gun, *The Listener* mentioned a Mr. Thunder of Wellington who is connected with production of the weapon in New Zealand. And just recently Station 2YD began a new serial called *Mr. Thunder* and the telephones began to bother our acquaintance in the Munitions section of the Railway Department. But the curious thing is that this Mr. Thunder (his initials are L.W.V.) claims that he is in fact connected with the original hero of the story on which the George Edwards Company based the serial (heard from 2YD at 7.33 p.m. on Sundays).

Anyone who knows his Macaulay may know of the tale of the "Maids of Taunton," who supported the Monmouth rebellion in 1685. They made a silk flag with a device worked in gold, and gold edging, and presented it to the Duke of Monmouth; when the rebellion was suppressed, the donors of the flag were brought before the infamous Judge Jeffreys, who ordered their execution. The "Maids of Taunton" were the daughters of some well-known families, including the Thunders, who not only gave the services of their menfolk, but also melted down the family plate to support the rebellion, so that with the subsequent confiscation of the estates, they were



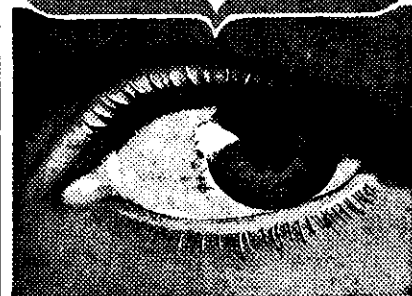
L. W. V. THUNDER
An aunt has Monmouth's flag

completely impoverished by their reverses.

The flag, when Mr. Thunder left England 17 years ago, was in the possession of an aunt—"the last remaining aunt" is how he describes her.

Mr. Thunder is based on facts, but according to its hero's descendant, some license has been taken with them by the adaptors. In the serial, the name of Thunder is applied to the hero, Charles, as a nickname, whereas in fact the name goes back well beyond the Monmouth rebellion.

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