

NO BIZ LIKE SHOW BIZ—



SOPHIE TUCKER

"AS show biz rolls into the second half of the 20th Century, it harks back and wonders. First it was vaude. Pix knocked that off. Sound knocked off the silents. Radio almost dittoed, but, somehow pix and other general entertainment entities were able to capitalise on radio ballyhoo and build-up for b.o. benefit. Now comes video, something unique in itself. Sight value, added to sound, brought into the home, and what it does to baby-sitting problems, are all staggering plusses for TV."

IN short, if you follow the reasoning—and the patois—show business has changed in the last half-century. The authors of the above statement, Abel Green and Joe Laurie, Jun., believe, in fact, that there is nothing more permanent than change, and this is particularly true of the entertainment industry. In their book *Show Biz*, subtitled *From Vaude to Video*, they compressed an account of 50 years of change in theatrical history. Now, their chronicle has been further compressed. It will be heard shortly from the main Commercial stations in the form of an hour-long LP recording, featuring many of the artists whose names have made the business there-is-no-business-like.

According to Green and Laurie a nation's musical mood, be it the turkey trot, ragtime, swing or bop, reflects the tenor of the times: "Irving Berlin's *Alexander's Ragtime Band* sets a U.S. jazz pattern. George M. Cohan's *Over There* keynotes World War I. *Brother Can You Spare a Dime?* reflects the depression. And so on down through the years. Even a catchphrase such as 'I Like Ike' (again Berlin) virtually 'theme-songs' a Presidential candidate into the White House."

Like the book on which it is patterned, the *Show Biz* record is a "living newspaper" of a half-century of international entertainment highlights. The roster of talent reads like an all-time hit parade of all segments of the amusement industry: Caruso and Cohan, Sir Harry Lauder and Morton Downey, Will Rogers and Fanny Brice, Cantor and Jessel, Gershwin and Whiteman, Cole Porter and Hildegard, Jimmy Durante and Maurice Chevalier, Sophie Tucker and Helen Morgan, Bing Crosby and Ben Bernie, Rudy Vallee and The Street Singer, Kate Smith and Dale, Wendell Hall and Cab Calloway, Glenn Miller and Dinah Shore, Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey, Beatrice Lillie and Vaughn de Leath, Charles King and The Happiness Boys, the original Dixieland Jazz Band and Gene Austin. Because of the limited time, not much will be heard of each player, but some of the outstanding ones—including our cover girl, Hildegard—have time for more than the minimum number of bars.

The *Show Biz* album was produced under the supervision of Steve Carlin, of RCA Victor, who did more than a year's research to obtain the right material. The narrator is George Jessel, famed actor, comedian and toastmaster. Jessel's own association with variety goes back to the beginning of the century, when he appeared in vocal numbers with the Imperial Trio. Jessel's companions in the trio were Jack Weiner (now a Hollywood agent) and Walter Winchell (now one of America's top columnists). He got his first billing then, when a theatre announced: "It's



GEORGE JESSEL
"Born for the stage"

worth five cents alone to hear little Georgie Jessel sing." Some thirty years later, Winchell wrote: "And that still goes." Brooks Atkinson has said of him: "At his best . . . he is a master entertainer. If there ever was a man born for the stage it is Mrs. Jessel's comic and sentimental son Georgie, who can make an audience sit back and enjoy itself." As a toastmaster and master of ceremonies, Jessel has an unsurpassed reputation. He is adept at what he considers the dying art of after-dinner speaking. "Every time Jessel sees half a grapefruit," Will Rogers said, "he automatically rises and says: 'Ladies and gentlemen, we have here tonight . . .'"

Needless to say, Jessel's narration for the recording is not in the style of Green and Laurie's book. Green is editor of *Variety*, and the book is in the unique jargon known as *Varietyese*. True, Jessel mentions a few of the headings from the "Bible of Show Business" (Sample: "Sticks Nix Hick Pix," which translates as "Country people dislike poor movies"). But apart from these tributes to the programme's source, there is no prose of the kind quoted in our introduction. All in all, many listeners whose experience ranges all or part of the way from "Vaude" to "Video" will find that the programme is a pleasant kaleidoscope which will recall times spent in the theatre, the concert hall, the cinema, or by the radio.

Show Biz will be broadcast in *Sunday Showcase* from all ZB stations at 9.35 p.m. on July 25.



BEATRICE LILLIE



DINAH SHORE



COLE PORTER



CHEVALIER



CANTOR



DURANTE