

Radio Road House



LEFT: Barry Linehan (at right) and his assistant scribe Syd. Jackson, cook up a script for "Radio Roadhouse"

LAUGHTER is the best tonic. There's no doubt about that, but the trouble is to find a good recipe. Not every concoction labelled "comedy" seems to have the required effect. However, considerable numbers of Army, Navy and Air Force members camped near Auckland are prepared to wager that in *Radio Roadhouse* the NZBS has achieved a potent product. Listeners will be able to try this mixture for themselves, in half-hour doses every week for the next sixteen weeks, beginning at 8.30 p.m. on Monday, October 4. It will be broadcast on link from the four YA stations.

Radio Roadhouse is directed by Don Patton and produced by Barry Linehan, who is co-script writer with Syd. Jackson, and also takes a leading role; the compere is Athol Coats, music is supplied by Crombie Murdoch, Pat McMinn is the resident vocalist, and the leading female role is taken by Noeline Pritchard. Other personalities listeners will meet include Mervyn Smith, Delme Hope and Ronald Montague, with a guest artist for each show.

The programme is designed essentially for radio—there are no jokes depending on visual aids—but it is being recorded with live audiences, mainly at armed services establishments in and about Auckland, and for all the half dozen or so programmes already completed the applause has been "considerably better than just enthusiastic."

"We set out to produce a really fast-moving comedy show with an authentic New Zealand atmosphere," Mr. Linehan told *The Listener*. "We have adopted a more or less fixed pattern, opening with an exchange of verbal fireworks between Page Boy Percy Chips (Mervyn Smith) and myself as male lead. Then there is a glimpse of New Zealand a thousand years hence, as seen through

the *Radio Roadhouse* crystal bowl (and believe me, it's some crystal bowl), complete with weather report suitable to the times, latest news, and the sponsor's up-to-the-minute commercial. Two character sketches follow, and the whole is neatly parcelled up with songs, music, and, of course, wisecracks galore," Mr. Linehan continued.

"This pattern is not wholly achieved until the fifth programme, at which stage the Page Boy enters, and in the first few broadcasts Pat McMinn will be heard as both female lead and resident vocalist. There are five or six musical items in these earlier shows, but we later present mainly comedy with musical interludes. 'Love the World Over' is the theme of the boy-girl sketch following the crystal bowl. In later shows this is replaced by a few sidelights on the adventures of Ma, Pa and Little Junior, a family from the mighty U.S.A., tackling the local tourist problem. Our main sketch deals with a personality, a profession, or a sport. So far Dick Turpin, Robin Hood and Napoleon have been kind enough to provide some intimate information of a kind listeners are hardly likely to learn anywhere else; we have provided an insight into Journalism, and such sacred matters as wrestling, Rugby and racing have been reverently examined. I must say the results should prove astonishing — particularly to people who may hap-

pen to know something about these particular subjects.

"All in all," Mr. Linehan concluded, "*Radio Roadhouse* is an attempt at purely radio comedy designed to appeal to more or less sophisticated adult listeners, and to present an authentic local background. We've got high hopes—but, of course, it's over to listeners to decide just how far we've gone on the way to success."

Barry Linehan is an Englishman who joined the wartime Royal Navy at 17, and used most of his spare time writing and producing shows wherever and whenever he had a chance, aboard vessels of all kinds, and at shore establish-

ments in many parts of the world. The aircraft-carrier *Colossus* was his best berth, from the producer's point of view, "but my official business for the navy was anti-aircraft gunnery." Shortly after discharge from the navy he came to New Zealand, and promptly became immersed in show business. He had a leading part in Elliot's *The Cocktail Party*, produced for the first Auckland Festival of the Arts, joined the Community Arts Service Theatre in Auckland, and toured the North Island with the name part in *Captain Carvello*, and as the wizard in *Beauty and the Beast*. He toured again with the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Company, and was one of the foundation members of the New Zealand Players. More recently he has been concentrating on radio work, including commercials and parts in several NZBS productions.

The co-script writer, Syd. Jackson, is New Zealand-born, but has had considerable experience in Australian radio, writing and taking part in comedy productions. He has been a "gag" writer, and "gag"-minded all his life, he says, and is finding *Radio Roadhouse* a first-class outlet for an exuberant sense of fun.

Noeline Pritchard's interest in theatre began when she joined the Drama Club at Auckland University College. One of her most important roles was the lead in *The Lady's Not For Burning*. She has spent a year with the C.A.S. Theatre, and has taken part in several Amateur Operatic Society and radio productions.

Pat McMinn, resident vocalist, is among Auckland's best-known radio personalities, while Mervyn Smith is also no stranger to the microphone, and Athol Coats is a broadcaster with wide experience both in this country and in Australia. Delme Hope, who takes a variety of character roles, has had three tours with the N.Z. Players.

One of New Zealand's top pianists and radio dance band leaders, Crombie Murdoch, leads a small group of musicians for playing fanfares, the opening and closing theme, and accompaniments. He writes his own musical arrangements.



THE MUSIC OF CROMBIE MURDOCH (with Mr. M. at the piano) will be heard in each broadcast of "Radio Roadhouse"