

# Riding the Outback with Smoky Dawson

"THE kangaroos with leap and bound go 20 feet at a stride"—that was how the poet Will H. Ogilvie celebrated, some years ago, the kangaroo hunt on the "wild Australian plains," and that part of his poem may still be true today. But if he had been on Long Island—yes, the New York one—for the kangaroo hunt they held there a year or two ago he would have had to agree rather sadly that the next bit that came into his head was sheer poetic licence. For neither the "lean blue hounds" nor the lean blue cops, the "bushmen" nor the helicopters were any match for the dinkum Aussie kangaroo whose hopping kept everyone else on the hop for five days. Zip was his name and zig his strategy—so much so that one American newspaper was able to tell the whole story of one day's chase in one line: "Zip Zigs as Police Zag."

The funny thing about this kangaroo story is that Zip had already been successfully hunted once. What thoughts were passing through his head as he drove in an open convertible from Long Island to Manhattan we can't say, but it seems that one of the million-acre estates he was passing must have reminded him of the Never-Never, for without so much as a by-your-leave to his guardian, Smoky Dawson, he took one 20-foot bound and in the land of the free was a free kangaroo.

Zip was one of three kangaroos that Smoky Dawson, the Australian outback entertainer, took to America with him in 1951. Besides the kangaroos, Smoky took his Australian cowboy clothes, his throwing knives, his stockwhip, his snakeskin tie, his Spanish guitar and his Hawaiian guitar, his tin whistle and his "jaw harp," as he calls it. Mrs. Smoky—Dottie's her name, though she used to be well-known to Melbourne radio listeners as "June" of 3KZ—also went along. They toured through several States in which Smoky visited high schools and colleges giving lecture-recitals on Australian outback life. He sang songs, threw knives, cracked his stockwhip. Once, in New Jersey, he even appeared as a guest star in *Kiss Me, Kate*.

But like many another entertainer Smoky dreamed of hypnotising the American millions from a TV screen. With Dottie he went to New York, where he saw an advertisement for the premiere of *Kangaroo*, a movie made in Australia with Maureen O'Hara and Peter Lawford.

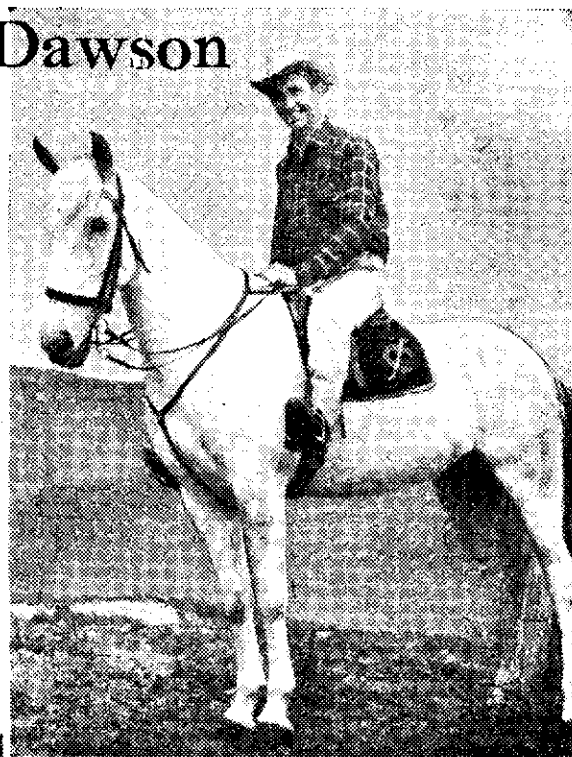
When he called on the distributors he was wearing his cowboy clothes, knives, snakeskin tie and was ready to crack his whip. He was given a contract, and one of the kangaroos he had left in California was flown to New York to appear in his act. American-style, Smoky met Zip at the airport in a Rolls-Royce. Reporters scribbled and flash-bulbs flashed. Next morning as they were leaving their Long Island hide-out for Manhattan Zip was startled by a tooting horn and leapt to freedom.

"A huge squad of police was alerted in the chase," Smoky says. "Even a helicopter was used in an effort to spot Zip." The TV studios were wide open then, as Smoky was offered 10 different spots on guest shows. Meanwhile New York police, helicopters and Boy Scouts searched for Zip.

To please television audiences Smoky dropped such dinkum Aussie words as bush, beaut, sheila, mate and bonza from his lingo. To please himself he turned down film and stage offers on behalf of his recaptured kangaroo and turned Zip over to the New York Central Park Zoo.

Smoky Dawson, whose name is already well known to New Zealand

radio listeners from broadcasts of his recordings, made Australian radio history as the first local cowboy to go on the air. He has written many songs of his own—sheet music and recordings of these have had big sales. His frequent personal appearances draw huge crowds and have made him specially popular with children. Best known of his recent radio work is his serial *Smoky Dawson*, a story of the Australian outback, produced in Australia by Associated Programmes. This is now to be heard from stations of the NZBS. The first broadcast will be from 3YZ at 6.0 p.m. on Monday, April 18, and after that from the same station at the same time every Monday and Wednesday.



SMOKY DAWSON AND PALS: "His frequent personal appearances draw huge crowds and have made him specially popular with children"