

NEW MOOD IN JAZZ

New York, March 4

A NEW mood for American Jazz is in the making. Whether this mood will reflect any trend toward the big-band "swing" of the thirties, or an oblique shift toward chamber-music forms, is something the jazz pundits are now concerned with. The verdict should be in shortly.

As for the large aggregations, much of the current popularity for this type of jazz stems from the never-flagging efforts of William "Count" Basie, one-time Kansas City pianist, who has been knocking at the door of jazzdom's royalty for a good 20 years. His outfit is generally rated at the top of the "swing" heap, for the moment. The core of the Basie band is a tightly-knit rhythm section, inherited originally from the Benny Moten group which Basie took over in 1935 when Moten died.

This first Basie band, whose magnum opus was the popular blues theme, "One O'clock Jump," epitomised the brassy, full-throated pre-war approach to orchestral jazz. Of that vaunted 1935 rhythm section only guitarist Freddy Green survives, but its influence and attack remains. Technically, its work differs from Dixieland (with its accent on the first and third counts of the measure), and other swing bands which stress the second and fourth. Basie's percussionists, led by the Count himself at the piano, rock each beat equally, producing a level, rolling effect that gives a solid flooring both for ensemble work and for his several exciting soloists. This is the Count's major contribution to latter-day swing, although his over-arranged "April in Paris" with its oft-repeated coda is his current trade-mark.

Another impetus to the swing band renaissance has come from the old master himself, Benny Goodman, currently celebrating his 25th anniversary as a jazz maestro. Re-issues of old Goodman records have won him new popularity among the younger set, and he has re-formed an orchestra whose library is built on the brilliant old arrangements—slightly updated for added instrumentation—by Fletcher Henderson, Jimmy Mindy and Eddie Sauter.

Goodman's approach marks an off-shoot trend in itself. Most jazzophiles today use the music purely for aural "kicks." Goodman, however, insists that good "swing" or "jazz," or whatever it's called, should be primarily for dancing. This, he feels, is the real test of his music's rhythmic qualities, the essence of jazz.

Apart from his move to rejuvenate the music of the thirties to fit present-day ideas, Goodman also forms a link with his sextet, definitely the precursor of the current chamber-music style. Just to show the newcomers that he still has much of the old

By NORMAN E. SMITH

suavity and invention, he recorded recently a set of six standards that move easily and with considerable sprightliness, full of Goodmanesque flavour. Drummer Bobby Donaldson, trumpeter Buck Clayton and pianist Claude Thornhill—an old big-band maestro himself—help make it so.

But the other small groups have frankly outdistanced Benny in this genre. The Stan Getz, Chico Hamilton and Mundel Lowe groups are doing much unusual work with their four and five-men combinations. Outstanding in this respect, however, is the modern jazz quartet whose guiding genius is imaginative pianist-composer-arranger John Lewis. Elegant and facile though his pianisms are, Lewis is much more esteemed for his composition, which has put a new face on contemporary jazz.

The opposite of what most people imagine a jazz musician to be, Lewis is deeply serious and industrious. He holds a master's degree from the Manhattan College of Music, sings baritone with the eminently respected Scholar Cantorum Choral Group, and has a number of pupils in composition and orchestration. Lewis represents the new intellectual approach, and because of that his efforts lack much of the spontaneity of the earlier, more emotional jazz bands. Yet he does not disdain either improvisation or a steady beat; as a matter of fact, his latest work gives somewhat greater emphasis to these jazz elements.

Not too long ago, Lewis presented his group—vibraharp, drums, string bass and piano—in concert at Town Hall. The audience, though extremely partisan to the modern jazz quartet and adventurous music, was nevertheless moved to



BENNY GOODMAN

"Good jazz should be primarily for dancing"

obvious appreciation of the more rhythmic portions of the programme. Typical was a tune called "Sun Dance," which provided a fascinating framework for high-flying solos even though written in unique—for jazz—6/8 time.

This concert was a good showcase for Lewis's versatility and talent. In "Fontessa," "Midsummer" and "Little David's Fugue" he shows himself to be an imaginative and melodic composer. Among his best in this vein is "Django," a memorial to the late French guitarist Django Reinhardt, which ranks with the blues-idiom obituaries for such by-gone jazz greats as Johnny Dodds, Bix Beiderbecke, Chu Berry and Fats Waller.

There have been other stimulating outgrowths, too, in the field of instrumentation itself. Bob Cooper and Bud

Shank, both former Stan Kenton saxophonists, have disked some lovely items featuring oboe and flute. Because of the nature of these instruments, the emphasis must be on melodic line to the detriment of the rhythm. This is equally true of other groups which have been experimenting, and rather successfully, with cellos, French horns and some of the other members of the woodwind family.

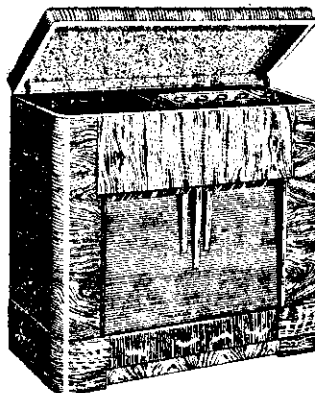
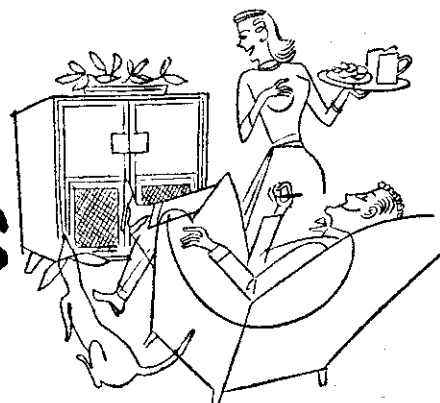
These then, are the ways jazz is going. At the moment, the big band work is much more closely related to the jazz most of us know. But the smaller groups also seem to be climbing back down from the cool heights of intellectual jazz to a more emotional, and hence more universal, music.

family favourites

BY

Ultimate

THE LAST WORD IN RADIO



REX

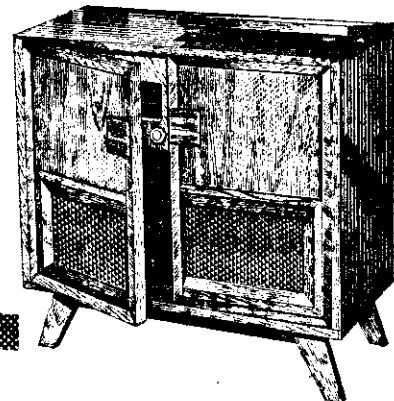
A superb new Ultimate 7-valve handsread Radiogram with 3-speed automatic record player, stereophonic sound, record cupboard, high fidelity switch, power indicator light and rich walnut veneer cabinet.

£129/10/-

WREN

A contemporary design in light or medium oak and featuring a 6-valve broadcast lowboy with 3-speed automatic record player, 12-inch Rola speaker and large record cupboard.

£79/19/6



Manufactured and Distributed by

ULTIMATE - EKCO (N.Z.) CO. LTD., Box 1166, Auckland.

FF 1.16

Representatives:

GORDON D. HYDE LTD.,
P.O. Box 420,
Whangarei.
MR. M. A. INKSTER,
P.O. Box 1581,
Wellington.

G. M. BOWLES,
P.O. Box 44,
Mt. Maunganui.
WELLS FERRIS LTD.,
P.O. Box 1421,
Christchurch.

GRAY & WHEELER LTD.,
P.O. Box 594,
Palmerston North.
H. CHISHOLM LTD.,
P.O. Box 686,
Dunedin.