

# More Goings-on at Radio Roadhouse

**RADIO ROADHOUSE**, New Zealand's only radio comedy show, will be back on the air next week for its third successive winter season. It will start from all YA and YZ stations on Wednesday, May 2, at 9.15 p.m. In many respects it will be a new and different *Roadhouse* that listeners will hear this year. The reason for this lies not so much in the one or two changes in the cast as the way in which the whole show has been streamlined. The presentation is improved, the show moves faster and there are, judging from the reactions of studio audiences, more laughs. There also seems to be a closer integration of cast and orchestra. The music fits the show better than ever. The result of these improvements is that *Radio Roadhouse*, by exploiting to the full all the resources of the company, has an impact that it did not have before.

During the summer recess the musical director, Crombie Murdoch, and the script-writer, Barry Linehan, decided to do some renovating. It was more a matter of planing down a few rough edges and mortising in suitable themes than putting a hammer and saw to work, so Barry Linehan told *The Listener*. Composing the new theme

music was, of course, strictly in the province of Mr. Murdoch, and a bright, catchy little tune it is—sparkling with something like the verve of its *TIFH* counterpart.

The *Radio Roadhouse* Orchestra is not a big one, like those used in BBC variety shows. It comprises Jack Roberts (piano), John MacKenzie (novachord), Dale Alderton (trombone), George Campbell (bass), and three trumpets—Lew Campbell, Neville Blanchett, Neil Bruce. Lockie Jamieson is on drums. In the past, Barry explained, this combination tended to sound rather thin in full-bodied efforts such as the opening and closing themes, but for the best of reasons—expense—it could not be enlarged. The new themes, therefore, use all the available musical resources by including the Stardusters and Pat McMinn. John Rainer, who has joined the cast in place



THE MUSIC MAKERS: Crombie Murdoch (left) directs the Stardusters (at microphone) and his orchestra

of Athol Coats, handles the announcements with an aplomb rivalling that of David Dunhill. It is all very fine and professional.

The Stardusters and Pat McMinn also provide the two musical interludes that separate the sketches. Since *The Listener* reported the Stardusters' arrival on the musical scene last August they have gone from one success to another. There must be few people who listen to the radio who have not heard their version of "It's a Sin to Tell a Lie." Their recording of it proved a hot favourite with pops fans and it stood high on the hit parades for several weeks. The Stardusters gave the last series of *Roadhouse* quite a fillip and they contribute even more to the present series. In contrast to their zany style, Pat McMinn's voice comes as a cool and restful pause amidst the gags.

Those who remember the skits on the Harris family are unlikely to associate shrewish Mrs. 'Arris with the charming Noeline Pritchard. Yet heavy characterisation of this sort is just her forte. The domestic crises of the 'Arris household are all set in the washhouse, and it is here that Barry Linehan claims to produce for his show a typical New Zealand flavour. For it is Fred 'Arris's principal vice that he should be experimentally inclined, especially with his perennial home brew. Thus he makes

champagne from his brew, making it bubbly with a bike pump. Sometimes it explodes and it invariably smells. In all this Fred is aided and abetted by Charlie (Eddie Hegan), whom Ermytrude 'Arris has dubbed "that silly old fossil from next door." Here, then, is depicted the life of a typical henpecked husband. His unfortunate propensity for saying the right thing at the wrong time is matched only by his wife's distressing habit of dropping all her aitches and uttering malapropisms.

In the Maori sketch Barry Linehan has stepped into the part that Athol Coats made popular, as Hori's father. As Hori, Mervyn Smith is not only an excellent foil to his Dad's antics, but the creator of such mischief as only a Maori youngster would dream of.

And so, on to the main sketch. Here the subjects are varied, but they normally call for the participation in one way or another of the whole cast. Yet the rule is the same as it is throughout the show—a laugh every thirty seconds, at least. There are other rules, too. For example, Mr. Linehan must not look cross-eyed at Miss Pritchard during the performance, as it disturbs the continuity of recording. Again, it is an unwritten rule that Miss Pritchard should discover for herself all the gags in the show at rehearsals. Should she stumble on a subtlety during recording a breakdown is almost certain.



THE FUN MAKERS (from left): Noeline Pritchard, Eddie Hegan, Mervyn Smith, Barry Linehan



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