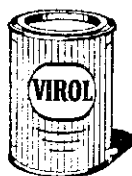




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Jazz at Auckland

AUCKLAND jazzmen were given a fillip recently by the remarks of a judge at the Competitions Festival. After a men's aria contest he told patrons he was disappointed at the sparse audience in the Concert Chamber. "Aucklanders should have packed the Town Hall, with singing of this description," he said. But there's the rub. The Town Hall (in the same building) was packed—for Jock Nesbit's Miller-Goodman jazz concert. And the jazz boys wore big round smiles, not only because the popularity of jazz concerts had been reaffirmed, but because there was more than a little suspicion that some of the Competitions' patrons had subscribed at the wrong ticket box.

In fact there was a larger than usual sprinkling of older and more conservatively-dressed people at Jock Nesbit's one-night stand. Most of them proved stayers and one couple who survived the first dixie bracket walked out only when they found, in the second half, that jazz treble forte is not as easily toned down in the auditorium as it is on the radio. Others who were possibly introduced to jazz under false pretences found things to amuse them besides the music. There was the screaming of the hep cats and jiving in the aisles; and there was an erotic wiggling among the female vocalists that made grandpa's eyes just boggle.

Jock Nesbit is by no means zealous about his music. His programme was sufficiently varied to satisfy most of the jazz fans and the style was smooth enough to carry newcomers over the transition line. The Glenn Miller-Benny Goodman style is old and tried, almost dated in fact; but it remains popular with the multitude, and films have recommended it to the more conservative. But any devotee who went to this concert in the hope of hearing some natty improvisations and progressive jazz would have been disappointed. These same devotees, however, have long since learned to expect little, if anything, of their chosen style from a so-called jazz concert and wisely invest their money in LPs.

There's a solid core of fine musicians in Auckland centring on Bart Stokes, Colin Martin, and the Crombie Murdoch Trio. Around this core revolve most of the bands and combinations heard on the radio and publicly, other than at dances. Among them is the Jock Nesbit 16-piece All-Star Show Band. Despite the high-sounding title there are only two stars in it. For execution, particularly on clarinet and sax, Stokes is tops. Murdoch's talents are more diverse and harder to pinpoint. He is a brilliant pianist, but is rarely heard in virtuoso pieces; he is a better-than-average arranger and leader; for originality in composition there is no one in New Zealand to touch him; but pre-eminently there is in Crombie Murdoch a fund of good taste which, combined with his special skills, achieves music before noise and a deft touch before hamminess.

On stage there is little personal magnetism in Crombie Murdoch or, for that matter, in Jock Nesbit. But Stokes has a surer touch born of complete mastery of his instruments and



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