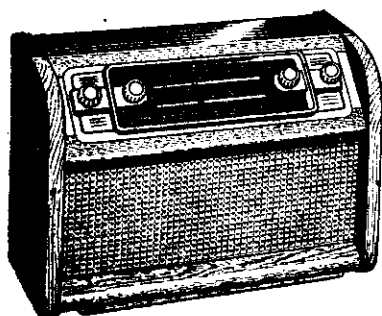


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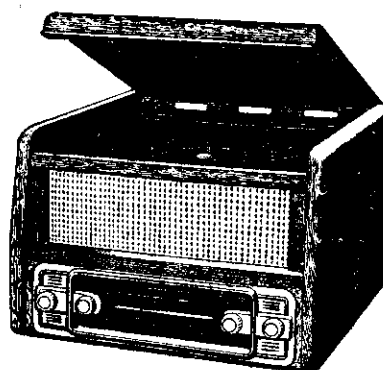
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Auckland Notebook

TIME BY THE ELBOW

AUCKLAND may not be like the rest of New Zealand and may be indifferent about it, but the North Shore is proud to be unlike the rest of Auckland. It's a great place for developing intuition when you want to travel. Intuitive travelling is the opposite of travelling by timetable, and is nice for those who already have something on the ball there—water diviners and amateur telepathists, for instance. They know when the bus is coming because their elbow twitches. In the Birkenhead region it is necessary to have an intuitive elbow, because you can't buy a bus timetable because enough advertising couldn't be sold to pay for a timetable to be printed. This is a very bitter old joke newspaper proprietors have been going broke on for centuries, usually the newspaper proprietors who were short of intuition. So living at Birkenhead you intuitively catch a bus to catch a ferry to get to town. You can get a ferry timetable. The passenger ferries often run to it, near enough. But the Birkenhead vehicular ferry has become fearfully involved with the North Shore end of the bridge building operations. This is at Northcote, which is not Birkenhead, but there is no vehicular ferry landing stage at Northcote, so all the trucks involved have to take the Birkenhead ferry. So during the day the Birkenhead vehicular ferry loads up as fast as possible and pulls out, irrespective of timetable. The ferry company likes to call this a shuttle service, but for the customers it's guess when and follow your elbow. Because of the rush, even the most intuitive elbow leads only to a queue of waiting vehicles, where you may pass a quiet hour contemplating your growing intuition.

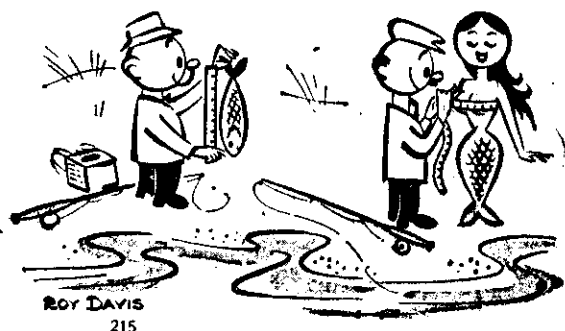
Lack of Local Rioting

NOTE takers, or small chroniclers anywhere, not necessarily only in Auckland, should have strong stomachs and much persistence, otherwise the notes they gather will be fainting trifles, hardly worthy of the life of their surroundings. I am persistent only in a few pursuits, and I am un-stomached by the smell of a cluster of empty dustbins or by a lady abusing a sales girl. No wonder a rugged phenomenon like rock 'n' roll makes me hesitant in my approach. I was most hesitant about seeing a rock 'n' roll movie (no doubt the first of a series) which is on in Auckland at the time of writing. A real pursuit note-taker would have seen it several times, studying audience reaction carefully, for it was this movie which was reported to have set off young people into riotous action in places like London, Blackpool and Melbourne. Some older people in Auckland were afraid it might happen here, but so far it hasn't. If you jam a lot of people close together it doesn't take much to start a bit of a riot. According to the town planners, we've chosen urban sprawl instead of a continuous crush. In time we may have both these types of city life, as I'm told they have in Melbourne, and then our riots will be just as good as any

others. What is it, anyway, this phenomenon, and where does it come from? Rock 'n' roll is dance music commercially debauched by the star system (that's young Mr. Elvis Presley). Jazz has let the young dancers down in the last few years. Nothing much exciting has turned up in the way of dance bands. It's not done to dance to the cool stuff: big bands like Stan Kenton and Sauter-Finegan have gone crashing and screaming through a series of concerts: Guy Lombardo or Meyer Davis are always available, but Schmaltz is no good to kids who want a strenuous work out. Some of them took to square dancing; energetic enough and guaranteed pure by church leaders, but man, that hill billy music is strictly for the birds! You gotta have a tin ear to take a whole evening of that type corn. So there was a public waiting for rock 'n' roll, no doubt helping it evolve. The way it comes out now seems to point to five lines of derivation. First, the Sunday shouters, the Holy Roller Southern Baptists. Second, a strain of Mountain hill billy, which has differences from the third line, Western (cowboy) music. Fourth, a verbal obscurity which seems to derive from a cult of a few years back led by Slim Gaillard and Harry the Hipster Gibson, whose best-known record was probably *Cement Mixer*. Their war cry was Vout! and all their lyrics seemed equally incomprehensible until you learned enough to pick the puns and the gags. However, this was comedy, whereas most rock 'n' roll lyrics are terribly serious, if you can believe young Mr. Presley. And fifthly, binding it all together, and providing what the keen kids were waiting for, is the solid, remorseless, four-four beat of the swing bands. All right. Go, man, go!

I stayed away from the movie because I don't care much for rock 'n' roll, but I did see an audience leave the theatre after a performance. They looked about the same as the audience leaving *Richard III* further down the street. That's the sort of thing that makes it very hard for small chroniclers in New Zealand. Lastly, rock 'n' roll has been accused of rousing sexual passion, a charge which worries some Aucklanders and should be examined. For dancers, I don't think so: far too athletic. Worried Aucklanders should reserve their anxiety for tangoes and Viennese waltzes. Star performers do their best to use sex as a commercial asset. This is no new endeavour. Young Mr. Presley, who has made shorts but is not in this particular

(continued on next page)



ROY DAVIS
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