

JAZZ: Hot and Hybrid

By OWEN JENSEN

WELL, maybe not so hot. The jazz boys seem to be a mixed-up bunch these days. Is it that the possibilities of the basic rhythmic elements of jazz are about exhausted? Is it that jazz, at the moment, is out of coin in the way of original exponents of its patterns? No matter. The fact is that new directions don't seem to get them very far, and those ensembles seem most comfortable who play safe with classic turns of Dixie and the like.

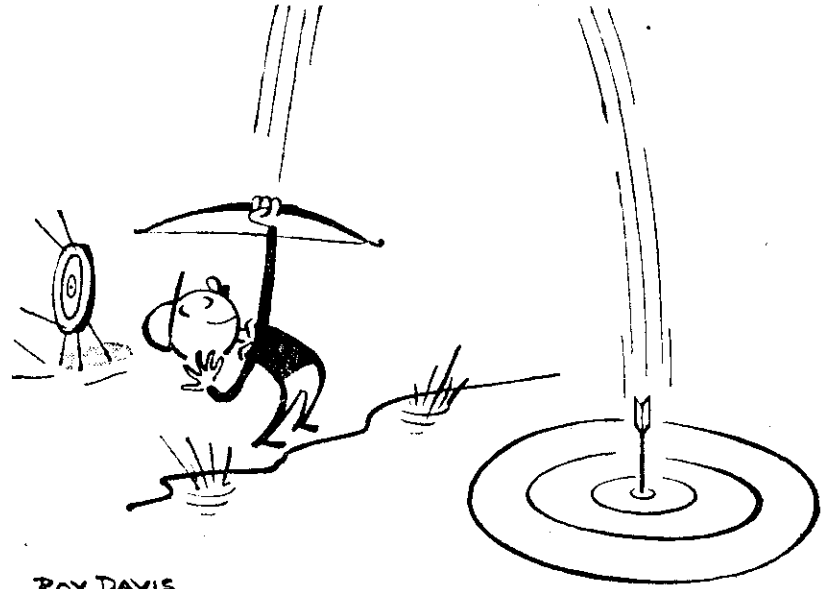
There's a lot to be said for the ingenuousness of old-time jazz. One thing is that it's cheerful and without inhibitions or complexes. That's the way it is with the Merseysippi Jazz Band playing "West Coast Shout" and a few other tasty morsels from yesterday's larder (Esquire 20-063). The rhythm runs along happily enough and there is some expert clarinet playing from one Don Lydiatt. Another of the ilk is Eric Silk and his Southern Jazz Band (Esquire 20-065). They give us warm versions of "Bobby Shaftoe," "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise," "Hiawatha," "Maryland, My Maryland," and so on. Both these bands are English. One can hardly expect them to have the genuine New Orleans touch, but conservative though they may be there's still plenty of bounce in the playing.

For music, however, that steps right off the disc, there's *Moody Hi Fi*, with James Moody and his band (Esquire

20-071)—fine rhapsodic sax work from Mr. Moody himself and some not uncommonly swinging vocals from Eddie Jefferson. This style is quite a long march ahead of New Orleans, music that swings.

Further along the road brings us to the New Directions Quartet (Esquire 20-043), with Teddy Charles (vibes), Bob Brookmeyer (trombone), Teddy Kotick (bass), and Ed Shaughnessy (drums). This quartet has tried to add something original to the repertoire of jazz and, in parts, pleasant enough it is, too; but their work is colourless beside that of the Modern Jazz Quartet (Esquire EP 109). This pocket-size "45," which contains "Concorde," "All of You," and "Ralph's New Blues," really goes places with ideas that are bright with originality.

But, after all, whether it's a symphony, a sonata or a spot of swing, what lifts the music out of the ruck is something more than mere technique. Call it heart, soul, imagination or, if you like, personality; it is this that makes the music sing. It is both imagination and personality that has made Ella Fitzgerald a swing singer out of the groove. You can hear this in *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Cole Porter Song Book* (Verve MG 4001-2), where Cole Por-



ROY DAVIS

ter's suave tunes make an excellent vehicle both for Miss Fitzgerald's voice and style. To be well recommended.

The Concert Hall

The performance of Brahms's Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98, by Paul Paray and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (Mercury MG 50057) grows on one. At first hearing, the patches of flat-footed playing, particularly by sections of the wind, seem to stick out. But the final impression, after another run through, is one of quite considerable

rhythmic drive. Not as spacious an interpretation as Brahms's music seems to ask for, but nevertheless not a performance to be dismissed lightly.

Nor may the first reaction to a piano recital by Constance Keene (Mercury MG 10138) be an altogether enthusiastic one. Miss Keene opens her recital with Bach's French Suite No. 5 in G Major. She does not identify herself as closely with the Bach style as one would hope for. But when she embarks on Beethoven's 32 Variations in C Minor

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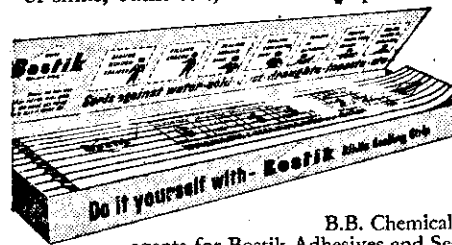
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