

# JAZZ AND THE PRINCESS

THE door of the Daimler shut with a satisfying opulent snap, the constable stepped back and saluted, and Princess Margaret drove off from London's Festival Hall. The time was 8.15 and she had just spent two hours in the royal box tapping her toe to the Negro rhythms of Count Basie and his band.

No one was surprised at her interest or enjoyment because she has made no secret of the fact that for her j-a-z-z spells music and that if it's new it's better. But everyone was surprised three-quarters of an hour later when the black limousine drew up again at the stage door and there was the Princess with some of the same five friends who had accompanied her for the first performance. They sat right through the show again with more tapping by the royal toes, which are sometimes seen against the rail of the dress circle as she slips off her shoes in theatres.

## Royal Boogie

"Wonderful Show. I enjoyed the band," was the message Princess Margaret sent to Count Basie, who is just as much a count as Ellington is a duke.

"Ah'm gonna call ma baby in Noo York and tell her of this great honour," was his reaction. And his baby is his wife.

He said that one item in the first concert had no name, but by the time it was played at the second performance it had been named "H.R.H. Boogie." But why no name before? No music! "We had some, but we forgot it," said the 50-year-old leader of the 16-man orchestra.



COUNT BASIE: "Ah'm gonna call ma baby in Noo York"

No rehearsal either before the opening concert of their 21-day tour. Their plane had been delayed, so they slept instead—"Man, we're clobbered!"—and among the fans who left the Festival Hall disappointed at the announcement was the Queen's jazz-loving cousin, Gerald Lascelles. (By contrast his brother, the Earl of Harewood, is on the board of directors of Covent Garden Opera House.)

From J. W. GOODWIN,  
London

To her collection of records, Princess Margaret has been able to add one which will not be on sale outside the United States for several months, a satire on the Broadway musical hit, *My Fair Lady*—the musical version of Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* in which a Cockney flower-girl is taught to speak upper-class English.

The record, "My Square Laddie," replaces this with perfect Brooklynese in which the song "The Street Where You Live" is now "The Block Where You Rock."

## Respectable to Rock

The "hep-cats" rocked more than one block—though I'm assured that they were careful not to knock the rock—when Bill Haley and his Comets were in London a few weeks ago. Although hundreds of fans were "sent" and thousands gave the American originator of Rock 'n Roll a welcome at Waterloo station ten times more exuberant than the head of any friendly state has received, the Comets were not pursued by the fiery trail of disorder usual across the Atlantic.

The sad truth is that rock 'n roll, which six months ago was sending its martyrs to the juvenile courts, is now recognised as a cure for frustration and boredom. Prince Charles's dancing teacher gives lessons in it, television politicians declare that it proves Britain is still virile and robust. Like Marilyn Monroe after she made a film here with Sir Lawrence Olivier, it is accepted as respectable.

It didn't seem like that when the "hep-cats" boarded Haley's special train with their gang-leaders and sheets of typed instructions: "Don't let your cats follow him through the train; keep their backsides glued to their seats. . . DIG, DIG, DIG."

The *deus ex machina* proved to be the sort of man who would otherwise have passed unnoticed in a crowd, with the harmless wholesome face beloved of those advertisers who rely on the wholesome



"A FEW inches forward, a few inches back"—Police trying to force a passage for Bill Haley's car at Waterloo Station

and profitable American way of life. "Billy! Billy!" shrieked his fans, far less harmless and wholesome, their mouths open and eyes blank in ecstasy. "Billy! Billy!" as they banged on the windows of his car.

With the car moving a few inches forward, then a few inches back, and the normal Waterloo station traffic at a standstill, constables took over with the help of military police. They fought the "hep-cat" circus, good humour on some helmeted faces, temper on others; they fought with savage necessity to prevent a woman being trampled on the ground; they fought, and after five minutes they won. It was better publicity for Bill Haley than for the society which produced his fans.

That night when the scenes were shown on television, the dead-pan commercial TV announcer said: "It's now one minute past 11 and time, I think, to put the cat out." Many agreed.

## Jived in Their Seats

After that it was a surprise that the rock 'n roll concerts were so tame. Musically, of course, it was a perversion of the strongly rhythmic pattern and simple chord sequence of traditional jazz. Instead of melodic ingenuity, there were short, staccato phrases—much the same as Woody Herman tried and abandoned when Haley was still beating his rattle against the bars of his cot in strict four-four time.

Socially the concerts were just as disappointing to the revolutionaries. The guinea-each front stalls were an odd mixture of under-sized teddy-boys and teddy-girls in tight black skirts or tartan trousers and their hair thatched over their foreheads like lettuce. Next to them were sedate elderly people, expense-account businessmen or bored middle-aged couples in search of their lost youth.

Would there be any trouble? The management had announced that if there was any jiving in the aisles the curtain would come down. At least one couple jived deftly without actually leaving their seats. As those around them mouthed every word of the jargon lyrics—"K from the kick of a rim-shot beater"—they swayed lower and lower.

An attendant bent low to ensure that the bodies had not left their seats, and smiled in admiration.

Then suddenly it was all over. Down came the curtain. There was a storm of rhythmic clapping and calls of "We want Bill!" Anxious looking men appeared, taller than the standing crowd. The management had one weapon left, and full strength over the loudspeakers there blared out "God Save the Queen." There was a brief battle. The Queen Won. Britain had won a battle in its war of independence from the United States.

And now Haley's Comet has gone and its leading luminary has invested much of his earnings in European paintings to take to the cultural backwoods.

## MacSatchmo Defeated

Another battle was also lost the other day by a jazz-king. Waiting at Prestwick airport in Scotland, Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong perched a tartan tammie on his head and picked up the pipes. He blew, he huffed, he puffed. Not a squeal came out.

"I don't know where Scotsmen get the puff to blow these things," said the man who had just blown £5,000 into the Hungarian relief fund with his trumpet at the Festival Hall.

There had been a little trouble the previous day during the rehearsal of the Variations on the St Louis Blues. The rumbustious, 56-year-old trumpeter turned to conductor Normal Del Mar:

"Ah don't dig. Somethin' ain't right. At the end of this bar Ah'm supposed to go *bom*—like this. Right?"

He hit a high G with the precision of a cobbler's hammer. "Well, these other cats are going *bom-bom*. They're a *bom* behind. Or am I a *bom* ahead?"

The conductor gravely studied the *boms* on his score. "That's the way it is here," he said. "There wouldn't be time to re-orchestrate it."

"Re-orchestrate nothin'. We're sold. Grab it cats." And Satchmo, who was making the return trip to play without a fee, turned on that glistening grin like the polish on an ebony tabletop.

What's a *bom* between friends, especially in the days of H.R.H. Boogie?