



COL. JULIAN G. HEARNE
Honorary New Zealander

Ziegler and Webster Booth. In fact, of the five composers with most recordings to their credit, three are Maori: Erima Kaihau, Hemi Piripata, and Karaitiana.

The two most prolific composers, however, are Sam Freedman and Les Wilson. Freedman is a "popular song" specialist; Wilson concentrates on "cowboy" songs. Wilson (or the Otago Rambler as he is called) started his yodelling career when 12 years old. At 14 he had a six-months' contract with 42B, and a tremendous fan mail. In 1948 he made his first records, and since then has added to the numbers, performing his works ("Shadows on the Trail," "Trail Herder," "Rambling Rose" are examples) either solo, or with his wife, Jean Calder. Though the most productive in his own field, Les Wilson is only one of the New Zealanders writing this kind of music. Cole Wilson, of the Tumbleweeds, Reg Stuart, Johnny Cooper, each have written a number of "cowboy" songs.

There are a few recordings which do not fit into any category, most of them "oneers," where a special event seems to have produced both composer and tune. "Opo the Crazy Dolphin," and "The Hillary Song," both very popular for a short period, seem to fit into this category.

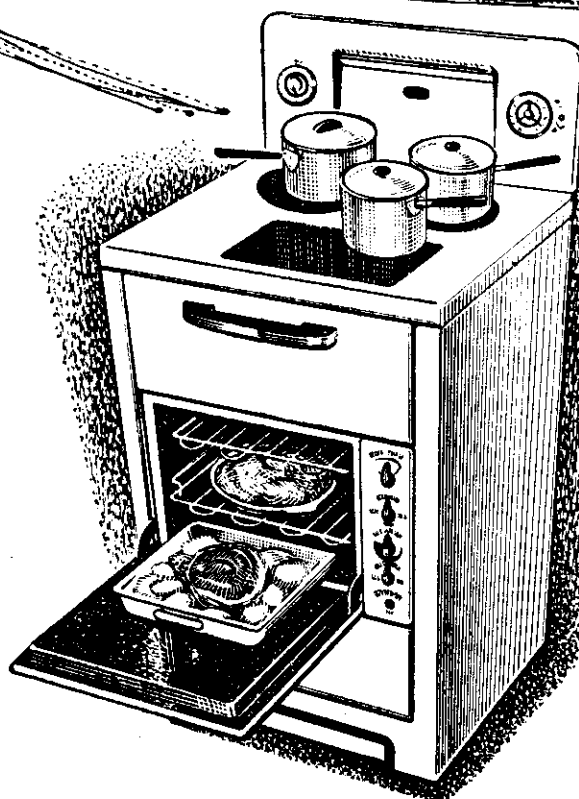
Top composer in number of recordings is undoubtedly Sam Freedman, with about 25 releases to his credit, including the catchy "Haere Mai," which sold 30,000 recordings in New Zealand. He is also the first New Zealand composer to get his works on LP.

"I'm really sorry for you classical boys," he was reported as having remarked at the composers' convention in Wellington early this year; "the way's tough enough for us. It must be hopeless for you." He was maintaining that composing was not a way to get rich quickly, and that popular music, though a surer thing for a recording company to handle, still brought small dividends. He continued composing, he admitted, because it brought a lot of satisfaction.

So it seems that though producing a lot of music, New Zealand has not yet produced a large enough population to support the full-time composer. He must do all sorts of other jobs besides composing (and perhaps performing); jobs that would provide dubious musical inspiration. How else could one regard Johnny ("Lonely, Lonely Blues") Cooper's past stint as a part-time worker in a cemetery?

N.Z. LISTENER, JULY 26, 1957.

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