



JOY NICHOLS and DICK BENTLEY prepare JIMMY EDWARDS for a session of "Take It From Here," which has its New Zealand premiere from 4YZ next week

TAKE IT FROM INVERCARGILL

First Broadcast of New BBC Show

LISTENERS who have been looking forward to the first appearance of the new BBC variety show *Take It From Here* (which was the subject of a special article in *The Listener* just before Christmas) will be able to take it from 4YZ Invercargill as from 8.30 p.m. on Monday, February 6. *Take It From Here* had some 12,000,000 followers at the time of the last popularity poll run by Britain's Mass Observation survey (it occupied third place—*Much-Binding* came first, followed by *Have a Go!*), and when the third series began a month or two ago the programme showed signs of becoming the new season's most popular comedy turn.

The producer, and to some extent the originating genius of the show, is Charles Maxwell, who started his broadcasting career in the Scottish studios of the BBC. During the war he served in the R.A.F. and on his return to broadcasting was appointed a variety producer. For three and a-half years he put *Navy Mixture* on the air, then, given the task of producing a new show to succeed it, he decided to try a more sophisticated comedy style. First he picked two of the old *Navy Mixture* team—Joy Nichols, the twenty-three-year-old Australian who had compered the show, and Jimmy Edwards (the "Professor"), who has made such rapid strides as a radio comedian. It happened that Dick Bentley, one of the ABC's top wartime comedians, had recently arrived in England from Australia, where Joy Nichols had once been a guest star in one of his programmes. Maxwell sought him out, and the team was complete.

What makes *Take It From Here* so successful? Maxwell thinks it is because the programme breaks away from war-

time "location" shows. He says "It's a mixture of sophistication and corn. Listeners seem to appreciate having to think about a gag."

But when the show started, it had to make its own stars. Each of the three principals has developed an individual character. Nichols with her bashful giggle and whipped-cream voice contributes charm with a sardonic overtone. Edwards's particular brand of erudite nonsense—to say nothing of his trombone—accounts for much of the programme's popularity, along with Bentley's characterisation of the man-about-town who has been about town too long.

Take It From Here has been described by addicts as the wittiest show on the air in Britain. Nichols, Edwards and Bentley are praised by listeners, not for fun, but for adult wit. They assume that the listening public possesses a normal I.Q. and the listening public is delighted.

The script-writers, Denis Norden and Frank Muir, learnt a good deal of their job from Ted Kavanagh, of *ITMA*. These two six-foot backroom boys are both ex-R.A.F. and have a comic inventiveness that matches their height. Although both practised the craft in the R.A.F., until Maxwell teamed them together they had not met. Now the show's catch-phrases (like "Black mark!" and "Oh, Mavis!") are passing into the language. And some of the gags have a flavour reminiscent of that other language (or idiom) which the R.A.F. evolved during World War II—and reflect, too, that insouciant attitude to life so carefully cultivated by R.A.F. types.

Muir and Norden admit their scripts are written tongue-in-cheek and assert, not without justification, that the actors love it.



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