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RADIO REVIEW

ONE of the more respectable of my adolescent pursuits was the reading of *Amazing Stories*, that wonderful magazine in whose pages the "Skylark of Space" swept forth to distant universes, to cope with silicon men and intelligent plants, and in which post-Wellsian explorers took possession of whole galaxies in the name of the Terrestrial Federation. The intervening years, which have seen Kafka's world come alive in Europe, have also brought scientific advances which make science-fiction fantasies seem rather tame. But I never dreamt that the austere BBC would take us on a trip to the moon. To be sure, in *Focus on Interplanetary Travel* there were no Selenites or man-eating protoplasm, and great pains were taken to explain the exact stage rocket research had reached and the problems yet to be solved. But the rocket-noises, the incidents inside the projectile and the landing were so realistically simulated that for half an hour I recaptured the thrill I knew when—how many years ago?—I followed, with full conviction, the first tragic flight to the moon of Cavor's marvellous sphere.

Milestones

RECALLING and listing some of the "highlights" (to borrow a 12B cliché) of last year's listening, I feel there is more occasion for modified rapture than there has been for years. The three Auckland stations have settled down to clear patterns of programming. Despite a few anomalies—*Classical Requests* from 1YD and some lowish-browed plays from 1YC—we tune in nowadays to a particular station knowing well what to expect. And 1951 brought me more moments of pleasure and interest than causes for grouching—an increasing number of good NZBS plays, the BBC *World Theatre*, *The Dark Tower*, *Zuleika Dobson* and the *Focus* series, *Me and Gus*, *Jazz Club*, *U.S.A.*, the 1YA light musical sessions and the new 1YA orchestra, Bernard Pflaum on Philosophy, Professor Piddington on Anthropology, Brown and Middleton on Houses, Nixon on the Family, Owen Jensen on all things musical, and R. W. Roach on all things animal, Jack Aylesbury's Farming sessions, the National Orchestra and the Auckland Choral Group, and much else to entertain and instruct. Noteworthy, too, is the growing amount of unfamiliar music 1YC is giving us. It was a good year, indeed, and, while I doubt that the movies are better than ever, I am sure that radio is.

—J.C.R.

It Takes You Back

SOMETIMES I toy with the idea of a not-surprising affinity between radio programmes and the early talkies, in the days when producers did not

realise that you could do your talking equally well outside and restricted us to simple interiors of stage or courtroom—assuming that the mere pleasure of hearing would keep us safely in our seats without our accustomed visual excitements. Many a Voice of America light musical programme takes me right back to the agony of "Sonny Boy." Many a courtroom drama regenerates in me the less embarrassed emotion I experienced at *The Trial of Mary Duggan*. *The Case of Emile Désiré Landru* was an excellent example of the beautiful dramatic economy of the processes of the law, its made-to-measure suitability for aural presentation. The rigid framework of the trial seems to preserve human personality and human emotion in convenient form, sufficiently fossilised for easy handling, and at the same time can present these emotions to an audience at sufficient remove to free us from the stigma of assisting at a Roman holiday.

—M.B.

Fruitful Listening

THOUGH I am not one of the intellectually damned who listen to the

radio only when they themselves are on the air, the practice of reviewing has made me realise how little I got from my radio before. One became so accustomed to reading that often it was irksome to lay aside a book to listen, and yet reading gropes where listening soars. This is particularly true of plays where the character is already interpreted in the voice instead of having to be discerned in the quiet print, and it is true, though to a less degree for me, in the many excellent poetry sessions given during 1951. In this connection the series called *The Rustic Muse* opened up new worlds which will be more thoroughly explored when I've bought copies of William Barnes's, and John Clare's poems. It has been suggested by some people that the radio is one of those many things which make us more self-contained, more able to do without other people. But in using the most intimate of all our faculties, the voice, and in skilfully interpreting things of which we might have remained ignorant it seems to me that the radio increases the sense of interdependence and of gratitude.

Liberty, Equality, Sorority

FEW things could be better produced or more amusing than the session on the woman's franchise in the series *What They Said at the Time*. Speeches in the House, accompanied by laughter, ranged from the weight and convolutions of the brain to the divine ordering of nature. While Sir John Hall pointed to various eminent women like Queen Elizabeth his opponent cited all the "heretics" and "infidels," from Voltaire to George Eliot and Shelley, who had advocated woman's rights. Why an issue so intrinsically serious should have caused so much mirth it is difficult to say, but perhaps a natural and healthy tension between the sexes is best kept in proportion by the adamant way in which the male, even to this day, refuses to deal with such matters in any other than a jocular spirit. Although the compères assumed that nothing could