

TALKING OF TALKIES.

Love In A Broadcasting Studio

"Twenty Million Sweethearts" is a Musical Talkie With a Radio Background — Manager of Wellington's Majestic Theatre Has Some Bright Ideas — "Strike Me Lucky" Opens.

★★THERE'S a story told of a girl who introduced her boy friend to her father thus: "Dad, I want you to meet Jack. He croons over the air." Replied the father: "You coward, you!"

But then everyone doesn't feel the same way about crooners (or why would Bing Crosby be earning umpteen thousands a week?), and "Twenty Million Sweethearts," the new Warner Brothers' talkie that was privately screened in Wellington last week, proves that a radio crooner can set a million hearts fluttering madly in all sorts of places. But then perhaps Dick Powell is more than a crooner—he has rather a fine voice and this film gives him plenty of opportunity to use it. "Twenty Million Sweethearts" sets a new record—it is a musical talkie with scarcely a chorus girl in it, and not a sign of Mr. Busby Berkeley's staggering stage spectacles. Most of the action takes place in a New York broadcasting studio where the Carlotta Soap hour rubs shoulders with the Toasties-Weeties cereal hour, and Uncle Pete talks to the children through the courtesy of the Stickfast Chewing Gum Company.

Pat O'Brien plays the part of a seeker of talent for the broadcasting company, and the picture opens with him in Hollywood, very much in dis-favour for having engaged a tight-rope walker and a sword-swallower for radio turns. In Hollywood he comes across Dick Powell as a singing waiter in a cheap restaurant. Powell sings "The Man on the Flying Trapeze," and O'Brien decides to hustle him across to New York, where he feels certain the broadcasting company will engage him. Powell sings his song in the studios, and is such a complete "wash-out" that both he and O'Brien are given unceremonious marching orders. Into the scene comes Ginger Rogers, the "Carlotta Soap Girl," who is a big success on the air. She falls for Powell, and between them they stage a stunt which gets Powell on the air in a successful number. From that moment his fortune is made, and soon he finds himself with the twenty million sweethearts that give the film its name. (To avoid disappointing the prospective picture-goer it is only fair to point out that only the veriest fraction of that number is shown on the screen!) But with Powell's success his love affair with Ginger Rogers runs into rough waters, and it takes the rest of the film to straighten matters out.

But "Twenty Million Sweethearts" is good entertainment, not the least contributors to the evening's fun being the Four Mills Brothers, who sing and play in the most amazing manner. The setting is novel and the songs, especially "I'll Swing Along With You," catchy.

WELLINGTON'S Majestic Theatre has broken with the "all-shadow" tradition, and now presents a bright stage act half-way through the programme. This new form of entertainment came into being when Mr. Ian Donald, the Majestic's bright young manager, came down from St. James in Auckland. "New Zealand theatres can't afford to put on the elaborate stage presentations that one sees in other parts of the world," said Mr. Donald to a "Radio Record" representative, "but at the same time a flesh and blood act on the programme does give that personal touch that audiences like. It is sometimes difficult to get just the right act, and picture-goers nowadays are pretty critical as they have come to expect a lot after seeing so



many super-musical spectacles on the screen. We've managed to put on a stage act every week since June, and now our patrons have come to look forward to them. Of course, I've been very lucky in having Fred Webster and his band to call on." Mr. Donald has also concentrated on improving the appearance of the somewhat barn-like entrance to the Majestic. He has had several colourful "sets" made, and these, with varied lighting, have helped to make the lobby of the theatre particularly bright and attractive. When "Wild Cargo" was screening there, the lobby was arranged with cages of birds, and their songs and chatter attracted interested passers-by for many days. During the school holidays in August, Mr. Donald turned on a children's revue in connection with the screening of "Alice in Wonderland." There were more than 40 children in this show, which was one of the most elaborate and successful staged in New Zealand. Its popularity, too, was reflected in the box office takings.

IT will be interesting to see how "Strike Me Lucky," Australia's latest enterprise in the film industry, is received by the New Zealand public. Mo. Roy Rene, a Jew, said to be "Australia's greatest comedian" in the movies is certainly not great, but the bright young film fans may find the film worth while, if only to gaze in rapture upon the Bondi surf sheiks. Instead of concentrating on one or two phases of Australian life, there is a miscellaneous collection of Australia's

"trade marks," including the above-mentioned Bondi attractions, and also bush scenes with kangaroos and imitation aborigines. The hero and heroine give the most natural performances. The interior scenes are worth seeing, especially the ones at the party (some party!), where the classical ballet is a feature. Australia needs every encouragement to help her along in her film industry, which is well on the road to success.

A CASTING director's life (like a policeman's) is not a happy one, says an English journal. But even the job of casting director has its compensations. Mal Ballerino, for example, who holds the position of casting director at the Paramount studios, is said to possess the telephone numbers of as many as 500 girls—all of which he can memorise "without a miss." Casanova would have been envious of Ballerino (apparently a fellow-countryman); for, in addition to the phone statistics, he can tell you without hesitation the height, weight, temperament and colouring of all these girls.

REUNITED for the first time since their initial co-starring venture, "State Fair," Janet Gaynor and Lew Ayres will be seen again as the gay young sweethearts of "Servants' Entrance."

A STORY of imprisonment of the spirit, of the body, and of the soul, is "The Fountain," starring Ann Harding. In this R.K.O. Radio version of the literary classic, by Charles Morgan, Miss Harding is seen as a German countess whose love for an English aviator is handicapped by her spiritual love for her husband. Brian Aherne and Paul Lukas have the male romantic roles with the star.

SONGS for R.K.O. Radio Pictures' new musical comedy, "The Gay Divorce," with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, famous dancing team of "Flying Down to Rio," are being provided by five internationally known music makers.

ALBERTO VALENTINO, brother and heir of the late Rudolph, has returned to major films as an Italian opera singer in Paramount's "Enter Madame," a story that features Elissa Landi, Cary Grant and others. For the past few years Valentino has been starring in independent pictures and foreign versions.

THE success of Jan Kiepura in "Tell Me To-night" invests his latest Gaumont picture with more than ordinary interest. "My Song For You" is a worthy successor to the comedy-musical which ran so successfully in Australia and New Zealand. An additional point of interest in "My Song For You" is the fact that Sonnie Hale is again associated with Kiepura.