

LOOK right . . . The camera of a New York reporter catches a strange scene. "Swing"-maddened dancers in a night club are storming the orchestra, embracing the performers, swaying their bodies to the rhythm of jungle music.

That sort of thing doesn't happen in New Zealand. For some reason, racial or otherwise, our emotions are not stirred up to the same pitch. We don't lose control. We—those of us who are "swing" addicts—merely close our eyes and tap our feet.

But what ingredient is there in "swing" that maddens mobs in America? and how much does that same ingredient affect "swing" fans nearer home?



THE psychiatrists—the mental specialists—of America have at last begun to sit up and take notice of a new epidemic that is sweeping the country—"swing" hysteria.

Fortunately (perhaps inevitably) few of the symptoms have yet appeared in British countries.

We have yet to see half-crazed dancers mob a dance orchestra and embrace performers, others making grimaces that would frighten a professional medicine man in deepest Africa, still others seized with convulsion-like paroxysms that are a fair imitation of an epileptic fit. . . .

Such things are possible only in an amazing society that tolerates Hollywood "religions," Reno divorce laws, negro lynchings, and elected judges.

There seems little doubt that the people who are so powerfully affected are in themselves unbalanced emotionally and mentally.

Nevertheless, American scientists have thought it worth while to consider the nature of the stimulus as well as the weaknesses of the victim. Here, more or less, is what they have found out:

SWING music—in common with the music of African ritual dances—is strongly and insistently rhythmical. In tone it is monotonous, with frequently recurring cadences in a minor key that elaborate a simple, emotionally exciting theme.

But rhythm is the basis of swing. This rhythm is cunningly designed in a tempo slightly faster than the average human heart beat—72 per minute.

Faster respiration and eventually a faster heart-beat are induced by aural suggestion. This speeding up of bodily functions—a kind of musical hypnosis—tends to break down normal reserve and to dull the faculty of self-criticism. Where there is a pro-

IT'S THE OLD ADAM COMING OUT!

nounced mental unbalance the intoxication is aggravated to a degree that approximates musical D.T.'s.

But here you ask: "What about normal people—surely swing does not have that effect on them? Anyway, what harm is there in experiencing this musical excitement?"

TAKING the questions in order, the American League of Music Students, which recently issued a paper on the subject of swing, is satisfied that normal people, once they have become familiar with swing music, experience exactly the same reactions as abnormal people, but in a very much

modified degree. They do not lose control of themselves.

The harm, if any?

The American League of Music Students has satisfied itself that swing music is aphrodisiac.

Ritual dancing among African negroes is admitted by observers to be aphrodisiac, and it is a reasonable supposition that the related "swing" has the same effect, but in a degree very largely modified by civilisation.

But do not leave the supposition merely to logic by the American investigators and the anthropologist. Professor Arthur Cremin, president of the society, conducted one of those nasty experiments American psychologists are given to. He told a reporter about it unblushingly in these words:

"**WE** placed a young man and a girl in a room where we could watch them without being observed. First, we provided a programme of good music, classical pieces and popular songs, such as waltzes. They were friendly, but that was all.

"Later we arranged another meeting. This time the radio played swing music. They were much bolder, both of them. The boy took much more leeway in his actions and the girl didn't object."

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