

SWING DEFENDED



... Rhythm Club Leader Claims
"Old Adam" Article Was Arrant
Nonsense—Swing Is Respectable!

Special to the "Record"

by

WALTER WALKER

AS president of the Auckland Rhythm Club, one of the objects of which is to encourage an understanding of, and clear up confusion existing in the public mind about, swing music, I think your article headed "It's the Old Adam Coming Out" calls for a frank reply.

It was nonsense.

And such nonsense is doing much to retard the progress of what is now being recognised as a legitimate form of musical art.

Possibly it is still looked on as a low form, but, nevertheless, as an art.

I will take the article as it was written, and deal with each point as it arises.

FIRST, there is a photograph of a crowd mobbing Benny

Goodman's orchestra. Such things, the article says, are possible only in America. I seem to remember reading of crowds mobbing Robert Taylor on his recent visit to England. Exactly the same psychology. Just as the film star is the idol of thousands of film fans, so Benny Goodman is the idol of thousands of swing music fans. When he makes a personal appearance a certain type of person finds it impossible to refrain from embracing him. Any fair-minded person must see how ridiculous it would be to condemn either the whole of the film industry because Robert Taylor is mobbed—or swing music as a whole because Benny Goodman is mobbed.

NEXT, the article claims that the rhythm of swing music is cunningly designed in a tempo slightly faster than the average human heart beat—72 per minute. Where the American scientists you quote obtained their information I have no idea, but they are sadly misinformed. Swing music, as anyone with an elementary musical knowledge knows, is in common time, i.e., four beats in a bar. As the slowest type of swing (blues such as "Mood, Indigo," "Saddest Tale," etc.) is played at about 28 bars per minute (that is, 112 beats a minute) it is considerably faster than the average heart beat. That is the slowest; the average is about 48 bars a minute (192 beats), and some ("Jangled Nerves," etc.) is half as fast again as that.

So much for that question.

IN its issue of June 3 the "Record" published an article on Swing music, designating it as neurotic and aphrodisiac. That article here draws a vigorous reply from Mr. Walter Walker, President of the Auckland Rhythm Club.

AS for Professor Cremin's assertion that swing music is aphrodisiac, Duke Ellington has already refuted this in the American musical journal, "Down Beat."

As Duke Ellington

is, in addition to being the outstanding figure in swing music to-day, a student of psychology from Howard University, I cannot do better than quote his reply to Professor Cremin. Ellington denounced the professor's psychological experiments as totally unfair and completely lacking in authoritative material.

"If this experiment is earnestly offered as proof of the ill effects derived from swing music," said Duke Ellington, "then the facts must be totally discounted as not being a true psychology test, for there was no 'proper constant'—a prerequisite of an accurate experiment of this nature."

Ellington further explained that, in true tests, persons under observation are usually selected because of identical characteristics; but in this case two persons were picked at random. Also, he pointed out, it was an established fact that a body of people will respond to a given act in various manners, and, consequently, a group of persons would not be affected in the same way.

Music is known to be a stimulant, but in recent case histories of convicted and known sex-criminals not one showed preference for music of any sort.

"**MUSIC** invigorates to certain degrees," continued Ellington, "but, on the other hand, so do baseball and football games. If music can be proven a neurotic influence, then I'm certain you will find Stravinsky's 'Le Saere du Printemps' a great deal more emotionally exciting than a slow arrangement of 'Body and Soul,' or even a fast rendition of 'Tiger Rag.'"

To complete his denunciation of Cremin's derogatory statement, Ellington illustrated that, in observing hundreds of audiences in theatres and ballrooms during the last two years, he noticed a transition that has come over mass attendances. Before swing music made such enormous strides in the jazz world, dancers and audiences in general were of a noisier type than is found to-day.

"This recent change to relative quietude may be attributed to the fact," concluded (Continued on p. 55.)

