

This Week's Special Article

Who Can Buy Radio Comedy a New Suit?

BLOOD dribbling out of the speaker on to the carpet in the sitting-room; crooners calling to the moon about love, and wisecrackers shaving the whiskers off old jokes, lifting their faces, and trotting them out in modern garb.

All these things I had nightly for 25/- a year. But what have I had of comedy?—Nothing. Is it that listeners prefer bloody serials and all the rest? Or is it that comedy, per se, is out of the range of the microphone?

There are comedians. Oh, yes. There are humorous serials. Oh, yes, too. But in the final analysis they are merely transplanted music hall comics depending on nuances instead of red noses and baggy pants. They are outside the pale of this argument, for real comedy is something that has to be written into a script before it can be put through the mike.

Every time I ask a radio writer I get the same answer: "Oh, it's easy enough to write the stuff, old boy. I've written yards of it, but they don't want it."

I wonder. And the more I think about it the more I am convinced that it is one of those things that just cannot be done, at least not until television comes along to help us. For, as matters stand to-day, it is seemingly the lack of visual contact between the

IN this article, John Sydney accuses radio comedy of being cheap in more ways than one. What do YOU think? Does the "mike" give you as many laughs as thrills?

artist and his audience that is necessary for comedy to live.

One of the greatest obstacles is that the artist cannot see what particular line tickles the funny bone of his listeners and he cannot give that pause

to allow them to get their laugh over and come up for more. The line he thinks a scream passes over their heads, and the fill-up gets the laugh. None of which can be foreseen, even if rehearsed in the studio. The consequence is that whenever comedy is attempted it is in the first place hampered because the listener can't laugh for fear of missing some of the dialogue necessary to an understanding of the whole show.

So, after a first glance, we give it up, shrug our shoulders with the remark: "Just too bad," and let it go at that.

But should we do so? Are our first cursory impressions right, or does the fault lie deeper—with the script writers themselves?

I am not suggesting that radio script writers are incapable of creating radio comedy of quality. There are one or two professionals who know their job, and a dozen or so outside the two services who can turn out top-grade material. But these men write for money. They don't care what happens to comedy—or, if anything happens to it at all. So they write what will sell—cheap drama; wisecracks and inane nothings. They are shockingly paid but apparently think a quarter-loaf better than a tight belt.

Good comedy, with that subtle something in it

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In the Wake of the Week's Broadcasts

From a London station the other night I heard a pianoforte recital by the young New Zealand pianist, Marjorie Alexander, who went overseas to study some time ago. The reception

NEW ZEALAND PIANIST FROM LONDON

was good, the performance was admirable, and many Christchurch musicians told me later that they also had tuned in and been delighted with Miss Alexander's improvement in technique. Will she be like one of the few musicians who come back to their homeland, or will she, like the others, forget New Zealand when success comes her way?

On the recently discussed subject of NBS talks, I must have my wall. Why on earth should SYA, in the middle of Carnival Week, decide to go all American? What people want to hear at that gala time

DO THEY WANT TO GO "ALL SPORTY"?

is sporting stuff—not the impressions of folk who have potted about the world a bit. Last week Mrs. M. M. Burns talked about America's gardens, and Mr. A. L. M. Perry about travelling by railroad and track and highway across America. Something nearer home would, perhaps, have been welcomed by sporting folk, and the undoubtedly interesting talks could have come later.

Whatever the holes, there was timely sense in Mr. L. A. Macintyre's argument against NBS talks, which appeared in the "Record" special article of July 29. There definitely is room for

BARRISTER WHO HOLDS COURT

brighter talks from the New Zealand Nationals, for the present tendency toward the stolidly boring is attracting, like the "Whirligig of Time" series, very few listeners indeed. As an example of what is wanted, I would cite the brief series, "Crimes, Curious and Sensational" which has been handled by 4YA recently. These talks, really part of a long series spread over many months,