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the commentary by Norman Brokenshire. The film was probably made around 1924, judging from the clothing of both the Soviet people and the tourists, the 1917-vintage Renaults on the streets, and the rudimentary appearance of factories and industries as compared with those in recent clips.

Much of the footage is taken with blurred shots from train windows, beautiful but badly photographed scenery, and people rushing around in the jerky manner of those in early nickelodeon films. However, you will see some interesting things: the beginnings of collectivization, the unveiling of Oriental women (imagine how long ago this was shot!), the early creches and workers' schools being established on farms and in factories; the delegates from the various constituent republics of the Union; the emphasis on opportunity for all. Compare these shots with the new reels from the USSR and you will realize how far the Soviets have progressed toward their collective goals.

ALVAH BESSIE.

Ellington's Music

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Take "Concerto for Cootie," for example. A song for solo trumpet accompanied by full band, it is a long, single, continuously developing melodic line, from the lamenting phrase with which it opens to the three stabbing notes of its coda, a beautiful example of Ellington's lyricism. Or there is "Cottontail," a fast stomp which opens with a tune of whose wide intervals and solid impact Stravinsky or Bartok would be proud, and continues breathlessly through an exciting series of dissonant clashes of melody and counterposed rhythms—a remarkably subtle and exciting



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May 7, 1940 ISSUE for our own files. Please send to Circulation Department, 461 Fourth Avenue, Room 1204, New York City.

GOINGS ON

MARXIST ANALYSIS OF THE WEEK'S NEWS by Oakley Johnson, Daily Worker staff writer, Sun., Aug. 31, 8:30 P. M., Workers School, 50 E. 13 Street, Admission 25 cents.

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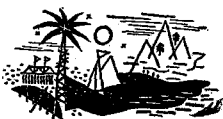
piece of music. For charm there is "Jack the Bear," in which scraps of melody are engagingly thrown from saxes to piano, then to clarinet, trumpet, and string bass. For boldness there is "Mobile Bay," a blues perfect in its starkness, its economy of statement, and, for humor there is the jolly, affectionately written "Portrait of Bert Williams." "Mobile Bay," under the name of Rex Stewart and Orchestra, is Bluebird; the others are Victor.

It is a cooperative music. The guiding spirit is always that of Ellington, but the final product would be impossible without the contributions of artists like Cootie Williams and Rex Stewart on trumpet, Ben Webster on tenor sax, Barney Bigard on clarinet, Lawrence Brown on trombone, Jimmy Blanton on string bass. They are not only fine performers but rich in creative ideas themselves. The idea of collective creation may startle some critics, but is there any reason why a work of art may not be the product of many creative minds? This is one of the ideas opened up by Ellington's music.

It is also a music small in scope, with no piece lasting over three minutes. This limitation is forced upon Ellington, since his livelihood comes from dance halls, one-night stands, and records made for dancing. There is precious little time left to work out music in larger forms. Yet the consistent level of good music is surprisingly high. The inconclusive pieces are usually those in which the Duke is working out his ideas, and the good ones, short as they may be, are fine music with no reservations, a considerable contribution of Negro talent to our national culture. And the integrity with which Ellington has worked throughout his career, avoiding the insipidities of Tin Pan Alley song plugging, creating as fine and original music as he knew how, puts to shame the large-band leaders, with their cry, "We have to be commercial to make a living."

American music may take a variety of forms, but the power of Ellington's work raises many questions. Is there any reason why American composers must always feel constrained to work in forms suitable for Carnegie Hall or Town Hall presentation, for symphony orchestra or string quartet or virtuoso pianist? These are forms created by nineteenth century Europe for its own needs. They are not necessarily permanent or eternally perfect. Study of the records mentioned above will confirm the wealth of color in the interplay of solo voice and full choir, the capacity for sweetness and strength latent in the fifteen-piece jazz band. And while Ellington's band is composed of extraordinary players, his music can be satisfactorily performed by others, as Benny Goodman has shown. It is also about time we gave Ellington proper recognition with a series of full length concerts.

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