

Postwar Jazz in France

WAR YEARS were a real trial for jazz lovers in France. The Germans had forbidden all music composed or performed by Americans, and the records by French bands, even if some tried to play real jazz, could hardly make up for the absence of Armstrong, Ellington, Fats Waller, Count Basie, and other jazz great. Since the liberation, American recordings are again issued regularly and a new series, the "Anthologie du Hot Club de France," has been created. This anthology will include several hundred famous jazz classics which are no longer available otherwise, some of which American collectors have subscribed for. The most important records already issued in the anthology are: "Cemetery Blues"/"Any Woman's Blues" and "St. Louis Blues"/"Cold in Hand Blues" by Bessie Smith (Columbia LF 217 & 218), "New Orleans Stomp"/"Chatanooga Stomp" by King Oliver (Columbia LF 225), "I'm Coming Virginia"/"The Whiteman Stomp" by Fletcher Henderson (Columbia LF 227), "Original Jelly Roll Blues"/"Doctor Jazz" and "Georgia Swing"/"Kansas City Stomp" by Jelly Roll Morton (Gramophone DA 4986 & 4987), "Jack the Bellboy"/"Central Avenue Breakdown" by Lionel Hampton (Gramophone K 8646), "Warm Valley"/"In a Mellotone" by Duke Ellington (Gramophone K 8708).

On the other hand, two French companies, Blue Star and Swing, have taken every opportunity to record American musicians who have come to Paris since the end of the war. The first group to be recorded was the nucleus of Don Redman's band which played in Paris during December 1946 and January 1947. The best sides were those made for Blue Star which were issued in two albums of six sides each, the first jazz albums ever sold in France.

Next came Don Byas whose album includes the following numbers: "Dynamo," "How High the Moon," "Red Cross," "Walkin' Around," "Cement Mixer," and "Laura." The band is as follows: Don Byas (tenor sax), Peanuts Holland (trumpet), Billy Taylor (piano), Buford Oliver (drums), all from Redman's band, and two French musicians, Tilché (guitar) and Bouchety (bass). The performances are in a most modern style. The first four sides have a kind of bebop flavor, although they are in no way typical bebop music, such as Dizzy Gillespie's or Charlie Parker's. Most of the solo work is done by Byas and Billy Taylor. Both are very inspired, especially

Byas, who thinks that these records are among the best he has ever made. The rhythm section is very good, thanks to Buford Oliver whose style is similar to that of Big Sid Catlett. The most remarkable side of all is probably "Laura," a tenor sax solo by Don Byas, which is much better than the one he recorded in USA for the "American Record" label. Don plays two choruses in slow tempo. (This is one of the rare ten-inch records which lasts four minutes).

The Tyree Glenn Album presents the same musicians with the addition of Tyree Glenn on trombone and the French alto saxophonist Hubert Rostaing. They play "Billie's Bounce," "Mad Monk," "I Surrender Dear," "I Can't Get Started," "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone," "The Hour of Parting." The first four sides are the best. Again, Don Byas and Billy Taylor are in excellent form, and Buford Oliver "swings" the band. It is significant that Rostaing plays much better with these musicians than he has ever played when backed by a French rhythm section. "The Hour of Parting" is too sweet and sentimental and the solos on "Please Don't Talk" are not as good as in the other numbers, but on the whole it is a very successful album.

Another swing session was made by five musicians only: Byas, Taylor, Buford Oliver, Tilché, Bouchety. Only three sides have been released till now: "Rosetta," which is almost entirely played by Buford as a drum solo—and a very good one—, "I'm Beginning to See the Light," and "Body and Soul," featuring mostly Don Byas.

Next to Coleman Hawkins's "Body and Soul," Don's solo is undoubtedly the best tenor sax performance of this famous number.

Another fine colored tenor saxophonist, "Big Boy" Goodie, who had already made many recordings in Europe before the war, recorded some excellent trio sides with piano and drums for Swing towards the end of 1946. The titles are "Big Boy Boogie," "Dizzie Boogie," "Blue Drag," "What Is This Thing Called Love?" The pianist is Charlie "Dizzie" Lewis, who has been living in France for many years and was put in a concentration camp during the war by the Germans. The drummer Mac Kac, a French Gypsy, has amazing speed and a nice beat.

Rex Stewart, of Ellingtonia fame, made no less than twenty sides for Blue Star in December 1947, with the small band he brought from the States. This band includes Sandy Williams on trombone and two very gifted young musicians: Ted Curry (drums) and Vernon Story (tenor sax). Among the best sides are "Georgia on My Mind," a trumpet solo by Rex in slow tempo; "Madeleine," dedicated to the French jazz critic Madeleine Gautier, a charming tune composed by Stewart himself; "Bebop Boogie," featuring Vernon Story; "Just Squeeze Me," "Don't Get Much Around Anymore," both featuring Rex Stewart's "wa-wa" trumpet; "I Cried for You," almost entirely played by Sandy Williams on trombone. Two sides, "Night and Day" and "Confessin'," were not recorded by the regular band but only by Rex on trumpet, Django Rheinhardt on guitar, Hubert Rostaing on alto sax, and Ted Curry on drums.

Rex was also recorded by Blue Star during his concert at the Salle

(Continued on page 54)



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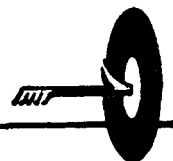
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HITS AND MISSES



ANY gentle-mannered addict of the phonograph must have had the galling experience of playing records for friends who enthusiastically asked to hear this or that—and who then yammered on unmercifully during the music. Such friends really deserve short shrift, but it is hard to shorten the shrift without imperiling the friendship. One sound maneuver, if the friends' disposition can be spotted far enough in advance, is to pretend that the phonograph exploded the day before yesterday. Another is to whip the conversation quickly toward some such irresistible topic as the sexual theories of Wilhelm Reich. Still another is to stock up on records which, so far as you are concerned, could be played in the midst of a Henry Wallace caucus, and to get them spinning before the friends have time to think of anything else. This is always precarious, however, for at least one of the callers is always likely to make specific demand for one of your favorite discs (how does he always manage to remember them?) which he will presently accompany with a roar of commentary and general observation.

Yet there are, undoubtedly, many purposes served by the kind of music which cannot be damaged by the cocktail party's clamor or the more intimate dither of family gossip. It was Erik Satie, I think, who composed what he called *musique d'ameublement*—"furniture music"—which fitted a room as pleasantly but unassertively as a handsome *escritoire*. It could be attended to or not, as one wished. Among this department's choices in this regard have long been the piano solos of Eddy Duchin. And this month's popular-record lists furnish still more admirable *musique d'ameublement*. From abroad comes a subdued, judicious album called "Rhythm on Reeds" (London LA-26, \$3.94) in which the British ensemble of Phil Green, featuring flute, oboe, and clarinet, addresses itself to such delightful material as "Fascinating Rhythm," "Moonglow," "Mood Indigo," "Babette," "Smoke Rings," "Creole Love Song," "Cherokee," and "Caravan." Not only are the tunes first class; the arrangements are bland and tasteful, and while the musical gentility of the whole effect makes it perfectly possible to go on shaking daiquiris or aspersing Stalin, the sophisticated ear may gather that the oboe is none other than the London Philharmonic's mas-

terly Leon Goossens—our nomination for the job these many years—while the clarinet is the distinguished Reginald Kell.

Except for a few rhetorical passages and agitations in the brass, another imported album also makes splendid furniture music; this is the "Cole Porter Suite" (London LA-19, \$4.20) in which Louis Levy's Concert Orchestra gives discreet, handsome publication to several of the master's most famous tunes—"Begin the Beguine" and "In the Still of the Night" are especially satisfying. The orchestration is free from the whipped-cream sculptures and popcorn festoons of Andre Kostelanetz and suggests, rather, a rich plush on which any mannerly social occasion might be glad to rest itself.

But voices, too, can lend themselves to *musique d'ameublement*. In the album of Benny Goodman-Peggy Lee revivals (Columbia C170, \$3.90) there are three wistful, quiescent efforts by Miss Lee which will do very well indeed: "Where or When," "On the Sunny Side of the Street," and "The Way You Look Tonight." In these she is accompanied by the Goodman Sextet in such delicate and appealing fashion that the musical furniture may even stimulate general silence and close inspection.

Among the month's records which, so far as we are concerned, call for direct attention there is, chiefly, a giant double offer by Frank Sinatra: "Kiss Me Again" and "Melancholy Baby" (Columbia 38287, 75¢). Seldom do our leading singers favor us with two such classics on a single disc. This department admits to a slight fatigue with "Melancholy" but is especially glad to have Sinatra's relaxed artistry in "Kiss Me," which is usually sung under a pressure smacking of the boiler room. Which reminds us that the country has recently been treated to the resurrection of a genuine, old-style, concert-hall love song, "Because," composed for tenor, kid gloves, and potted palm. The version most commonly heard is Perry Como's but his dulcet manner is not at all the caper. Como has been bred to colloquial romancing, at which he is a master, but the formal nose-gays of "Because" require the barrel-chested, Red Seal protestations of Jan Peerce (RCA Victor, 10-1454, \$1). Mr. Peerce gives the song just what it deserves: the real apoplectic lift, the true force of Gigli in the shower.

WILDER HOBSON.