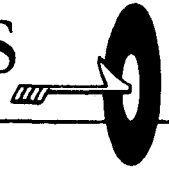


# HITS AND MISSES



**F**ORTHWITH some hot weather suggestions which may leave you hotter than when you started—as well as some cool jazz not bound to be exactly chilling on a summer night.

It is my considered opinion that the best classic-style female jazz shouter to be developed since the death of Bessie Smith is a lady named Claire Austin who practises spasmodically on the Pacific Coast. The evidence is, simply, the one record she has yet released: "Hot Time in the Old Town" with Turk Murphy's little band (Good Time Jazz 62, 89c). I gather that Austin is, unbelievably, a small blonde, but she is a singer of marvelous wallop and surge who will remind you of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey and whose talent, moreover, gives no suggestion that she is merely aping those great women. It is perfectly apparent that she feels that way, and we are all immediately in her debt for a beautiful version of one of the enduring American songs.

My other favorite of the month—and it has been a very decent month—is a superb treatment of Bennie Moten's old tune "South" by Bob Scobey's Frisco Band (Good Time Jazz 60, 89c). The novelty here is a vocal chorus which seems to have been written by the man who sings it—banjoist Clancy Hayes. He has fitted some highly appealing words to the happy strains, and one of his lines supplies me with an appropriate expression for the goings-on in general: "Where the easy way is the right way." Hayes sings like a shuffling angel, and the Scobey band continues to have all sorts of values in the way of punch, relaxation, taste, and all-around New Orleans-style virtue.

They are to be admired again in "St. Louis Blues" and "Pretty Baby" (Good Time Jazz 54, 89c) and "Some of These Days" and "Dippermouth Blues" (Good Time Jazz 53, 89c). On these last four sides the mellifluous Darnell Howard is what the English would call perfectly wizard on the clarinet. The month's southern-style recommendations conclude with a two-sided "Blues for Home" by Kid Ory, Member of the Academy, and his Creole Jazz Band (Good Time Jazz 55, 89c). Ory's trombone growls early in the session and leads on to still more blues playing in the grand manner. It is the kind of record you can pick up, unheard, with the same large confidence you would

repose in a Budapest version of a Haydn Quartet. You may be fooled, but it isn't likely, and only mauve and niggling creatures would carp at your faith.

Some months ago I reported great pleasure from an album by the banjoist Blind Blake and his little string band which holds forth on the terrace of the Royal Victoria Hotel in Nassau. The gem of that collection was "Run-Come-See, Jerusalem," a highly rhythmic, religious plaint about a disaster at sea. It still strikes me as one of the loveliest ballads I know. There is nothing to match it in Blind Blake's new album, "Calypso Ballads" (Art Records AL 4, \$5.95) but there is a great deal of winning music, such as one side containing three light, propulsive songs. I feel anything but expert as to the shades of meaning involved in the lyrics (printed in full, thanks to Art Records), but the first song would seem to concern a donkey who has a fever and wants water. The second number is at least explicit enough in the lines:

And after I jump through the window  
I meet her with her hands akimbo  
She want me for fall down  
Tap my belly, make tamborina.

Blind Blake's outfit reeks of Caribbean sunlight, moonlight, and good nature.

A battle of music in modern jazz



Lester Young—"elegant and restrained."

styles is to be found on the long-playing "The Modern Idiom" (Capitol H325, \$2.98). There are big band offerings by Charlie Barnet, Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Kenton, and Woody Herman, and small band performances under the leadership of Bill Harris and Miles Davis. There is any amount of instrumental virtuosity—and any amount of boring musical theatricalism and orchestrated be-boppery. Some very fine moments proceed, as is usual in jazz, from gifted individuals. What pleases me most is the wonderfully deft, staccato trombone invention of Bill Harris in "Opus 96," followed by some quietly cogent rhythm from string bassist Eddie Safranski and drummer Shelly Manne. The most conservative effort on the record is Woody Herman's treatment of Isham Jones's "Spain," and a very solid, handsome piece of conservatism it is.

**I**N the cool jazz area, the tenor saxophonist Lester Young loafs through "Let's Fall in Love" and "Thou Swell" almost as though he were playing to himself, and it is delightful to overhear him (Mercury 8963, 89c). His phrasing, elegant and restrained, has been notable for many years now, and while he has sometimes seemed rather dry it would generally be more proper to refer to him as sec. The George Shearing Quintet, another cool manifestation give what is for them an unusually thermal effect in "Swedish Pastry," a jumping piece of chamber music (M-G-M 11199, 89c), and the clarinetist Buddy de Franco leads his combination in four sides full of subtle, musicianly virtues: "Pennywhistle Blues" and "Buddy's Blues" (M-G-M 11206, 89c); "Samia Shuffle" and "Get Happy" (M-G-M 11250, 89c).

I have confessed previously to a certain discomfort with that extraordinary pianist, Art Tatum. The profusion of his roulades, his dazzling speed, his suave crowding of practically every inch of the record surface with more notes than any other man could possibly flick in—all this racing mastery seems to me too much. I want more sense of structure and much less sense of ornament. I am no man for musical Gongorism. But Tatum is unquestionably charged with invention, and the fact is brilliantly apparent on a long-player of a public performance at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles in 1949, "Art Tatum Concert" (Columbia GL101, \$3.61). Among the numbers given the full Tatum investiture are "Yesterdays," "The Man I Love," "Someone to Watch Over Me," "Willow Weep for Me," "How High the Moon," and "I Know That You Know."

—WILDER HOBSON.

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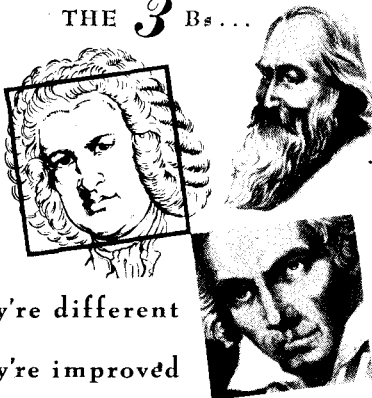
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## Points on Portables

LOOKING over the range of portable phonographs, as we do every year about this time, one thing is easily apparent: the market has narrowed down to a series of readily definable types, and prices are fairly constant among manufacturers producing the several different grades of equipment. Thus, there is a good chance that a purchase this summer is not going to seem an extravagance or a regret twelve months hence.

Top quality in musical reproduction, if not in ease of handling or light portability, still goes to the Rek-o-Kut productions, which are made for quality reproduction and do the job. The Recitalist (\$229.95) and the Rhythm-master (\$269) are both excellent, if a little cumbersome. At \$249.95 the Recitalist offers a variable reluctance pickup instead of the crystal provided at the lower rate. Of similar good design, though not embodying all the advantageous features of the Rek-o-Kut products, is the Webster-Chicago model with changer and separate, detachable speaker (\$130 for crystal pickup, \$160 for variable reluctance). For slightly more (\$179) Haynes-Griffin in New York markets a portable embodying the Markell changer, which plays two sides of the record without flipping or flopping. Once every couple of hours you have to get up, but how much sun can you take at one time?

If what you want is an all-in-one job that will tune in the Dodgers, play a symphony, and watch the dog at the same time, the long-time favorite is still tops: Liberty Music's Libertyphone, which is \$189.50 (in cloth) for record reproducer plus AM and shortwave radio (\$259.50 in leather). No Dodgers? Then you can get the excellent record reproducer without radio for \$109.50 in cloth (fifty dollars more for leather). Of similar specification is the well-regarded Port-O-Matic of which the AC-DC model has special attraction for some summer travelers. In leather, also, at proportionately higher rates.

Dynavox produces something comparable, with fewer tubes and smaller speaker, at \$99.95; AM radio and VM changer. At the same price, without radio, Dynavox offers a ten-inch speaker detachable from the turntable, with sixteen-inch arm. Excellent reproduction is forthcoming from the Netherlands, at \$109.50, embodying a GE pickup and Webster-Chicago changer, eight-inch speaker, six tubes. Coming down the price scale into the area clearly defined as portable (all

of the above, for obviously mechanical reasons, are better kept in one place than dragged around the house) there is a Webster-Chicago at \$83.75 (four tubes, six-inch speaker) and a Duo-sonic at \$69.95 (five-inch speaker and VM changer).

Those in the lower price categories are clearly made for pop records, Johnnie Ray's broken heart, and the Saturday afternoon taffy pull. For example: a Webster-Chicago at \$49, with three tubes, five-inch speaker, and Astatic pickup; a Dynavox much the same at \$42.95; a Music Graf at \$39.95. Of course, if that's what you really want a record player for, the RCA 45 rpm self-contained changer-player in portable case at \$49.95 has a lot of merit. The same model without case goes for \$34.95.

An economical and satisfactory way of solving the music-in-summer problem, is to combine one of the three-way player units with a table-model radio (many of which are now equipped with the necessary "phono" jack). The best of attachments is the Webster-Chicago at \$51.95. There are other makes grading down through automatic and non-automatic types from \$24.95 to \$17.95 and \$12.95. RCA's 45-rpm player is now priced at \$16.95. And if none of these satisfy, we suggest investigation of two Zenith models. Both are phono-radio, with one at \$149.50 offering short wave and AM, a cheaper one AM only. They are not portable in the sense of having snap fasteners and handles, but they are good looking table models which are easily transportable.

