

a sure command of two-channel skills.

It also shows a keen striving for "authenticity" in attempting to reproduce the spirit and tempi that prevailed when the pieces were new, thirty and more years ago. Presumably, preliminary soundings were taken by means of contemporary recordings, in addition to which Bert Shefter, a pianist who collaborated with Morton Gould in performances during Gershwin's lifetime, added his knowledge to Heindorf's.

The result, to my taste, is both archaic and a little uncomfortable. It is easy enough to restore some tempi, which have grown slack with age, to the pace (mostly quicker) that prevailed in the Twenties. But to revive the muscle tone of the original, to impart the breezy, almost casual air which characterized Gershwin's own piano playing is another matter. There is a bearing on this in an RCA Victor release of midsummer (LPM 2058, \$3.98), in which Gershwin's performance of a piano solo version of the "Rhapsody" is reproduced from a piano roll. One doesn't have to accept everything about it as accurate to find unmistakable indications that Gershwin played his own music with a lighter hand, a less portentous air, than a good many contemporaries. (The disc also contains a delightful tribute from Gershwin to Kern in a version of the latter's "Whose Baby Are You?," as well as other characteristic items performed by such favorite piano roll performers as Zez Confrey, Fats Waller, James P. Johnson, Felix Arndt, Lee S. Roberts, etc.). The best we can ask, it seems to me, is for today's performers to understand the composer's enduring matter rather than trying to mimic his (or anyone else's) bygone manner.

For another aspect of the *annus mirabilis*, consult Verve (MG V 2115, \$4.98), whose title is "Mitzi Gaynor Sings the Lyrics of Ira Gershwin." This might

lead to the impression that Miss Gaynor has found a new source of material with which to celebrate the author of "Lyrics on Several Occasions," but no—it is the same "old" repertory for which the composers were such estimable but otherwise obscure chaps as Kurt Weill, Vernon Duke, Harold Arlen, and Ira's younger brother.

Though Miss Gaynor's singing, in contra-distinction to the usual cliché, is the least of her talents (she is something of a Jennie-One-Note where stylistic variety or dynamic range is concerned) her catalogue is amply varied. It is especially good to have, at full length and with relevant instrumental detail, "I've Got the 'You Don't Know the Half of It Dearie' Blues" not only a tasty bit of word-matching by the author of "Lyrics on Several Occasions," but also a deftly characteristic tune. Further rarities from the Gershwin-Gershwin file are "Treat Me Rough" (from "Girl Crazy"), and "Isn't It a Pity" (out of "Pardon My English").

However, as "Lyrics on Several Occasions" attests, its author was no one-collaboration man. Vernon Duke's "I Can't Get Started" would hardly be the same without its classic text, and the engaging, little-known "Spring Again" and "Island in the West Indies" are equally refreshed by the well-bred words. Harold Arlen's "Gotta Have Me Go With You" and "Here's What I'm Here For" ("A Star Is Born") are hardly his best tunes, but it is no fault of the lyrics. Completing the collection are "My Ship," in which Kurt Weill's compositional talent is shown at its popular best. And to round out the credits for "The Gershwin Years," the explanatory comment here is by its co-author Lawrence D. Stewart. No mention is made of the clearly superior jazz personnel, which is as anonymous as the arranger or conductor. —IRVING KOLODIN.

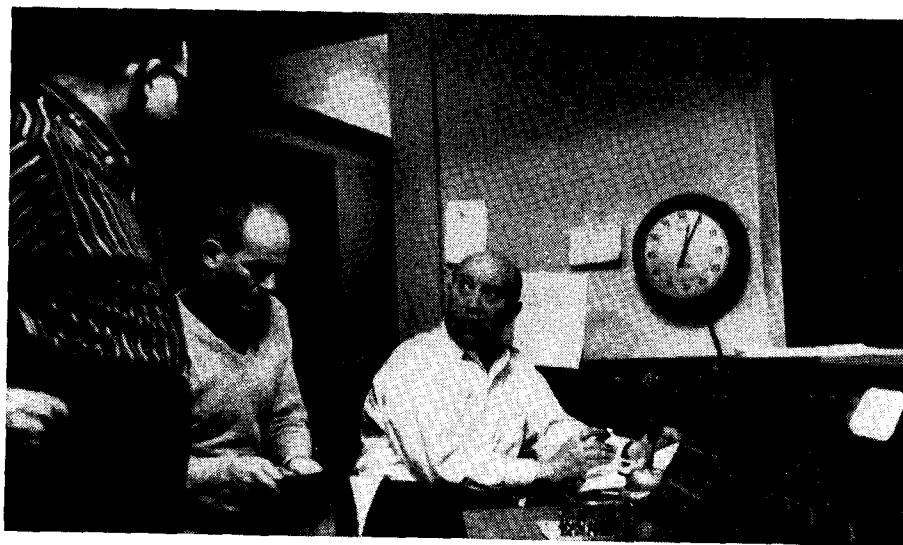
Holbrook as Mark Twain

SHORT of a return to the earthly arena of the author himself, there can hardly be as satisfactory a way of enjoying the wit and wisdom of Mark Twain as is contained in the disk just issued (Columbia OS 2019, \$5.98) entitled "Hal Holbrook in 'Mark Twain Tonight.'" Covering such subjects as "Journalism on Horseback," "My Encounter with an Interviewer," "How to Be Seventy," and "Huck Battles His Conscience," the disc presents the high points of the evening-long entertainment which Holbrook introduced at New York's Forty-first Street Theatre last April.

Having missed attendance at Holbrook's live performance, the recorded version came to me as a new, unpredictable experience. It was reasonable to anticipate something lively and amusing in the way of a "reading," but nothing so detailed, picturesque, or absorbing as a characterization. If the slightly rasping, deliberately calculating delivery is not a replica of the original, it suits the material so well as to be altogether believable.

"Mind you," says Twain, in discussing smoking, "I have no objection to abstinence. I practise it myself on occasions. I make it a rule never to smoke when asleep." The words as read have their quota of self-ridicule. But as delivered by Holbrook, with the punctuated laughter (well-controlled) of his audience, it becomes a small essay on the technique of humor. Similarly in the case of "My Encounter with an Interviewer."

What establishes Holbrook's feat as something more than a form of intellectual ventriloquism becomes apparent in the lengthy selection from "Huckleberry Finn." In addition to personifying the boy through the cracked voice of the elderly author, he achieves a climax of touching sentiment in delivering Jim's reason for wanting to escape to a "free state." "He was gonna work savin' up money and never spend a single cent and when he got enough he would . . . he would buy his wife . . . and they would both go to work and buy the two children." Like most great humorists, Twain's laughter was the product of an essentially serious view of life. Holbrook has made a fascinating combination of the two elements in a project ideally suited to the recorded medium. —I.K.



—Decca Records.

George Bassman (l.) goes over some music with Decca producer Milt Gabler.

Recordings Reports: Jazz

WORK, PERFORMER, DATA

REPORT

"Lee Konitz Meets Jimmy Giuffre." Verve MGV 8335, \$4.98. "Palo Alto"; "Darn That Dream"; "When Your Lover Has Gone"; "Cork 'n Bib"; "Somp'n outa Nothin'"; "Someone to Watch Over Me"; "Uncharted"; "Moonlight in Vermont"; "The Song is You."

Jimmy Giuffre's liner notes refer to scoring for the date, which he describes as "a sort of contrapuntal harmony, giving each member of the section a lyrical line to play at all times." There is stride and depth to achievements of this particular session; room was provided for solos by Konitz, and these are delivered with generous ease against the scoring as described. "Cork 'n Bid" sets up some amusing interplay between members of the group; "Uncharted" provides fine moments with a light, tripping rhythm section.

"The Fabulous Eartha Kitt." Orch. cond. by Maurice Levine. Kapp KL 1162, \$4.98. Also stereo. "Sholem"; "Love is a Game"; "Lamplight"; "Yellow Bird"; "Mack the Knife"; "Shango"; "Tierra va Tembla"; "Jambo Hippopotami"; others.

There's a line to one of Miss Kitt's songs, "Lamplight," that might be taken as clue to what she's about: "the Hudson looked just like the Nile." Perhaps it's her way of setting out to say that she intends to transfigure nearly every familiar object to something less cozy. From first to last band, there is hardly a moment of letdown as Miss Kitt strives for her transformations. Sometimes, as with "Mack the Knife" or "In the Evening," her flair for the dramatic doesn't get in the way; at other moments, as with "I'd Rather be Burned as a Witch," it grates on the teeth, like an overdose of spinach.

"Pete Kelly's Blues." Band under Musical Direction Dick Cathcart. Warner Brothers WS 1303, \$4.98. "Pete Kelly's Blues"; "Charleston"; "Fat Annie's Place"; "I Might be Your Once-in-a-While"; "17 Cherry"; "Ain't We Got Fun"; "Hot Pizza Rag"; "Tea for Two"; "The Riff Song"; "Savannah's Tears"; "A Cup of Coffee, a Sandwich and You"; "Chinatown, my Chinatown"; "Lupo's Lament"; "Mountain Greenery"; others.

With the exception of the band assembled for the "The Boy Friend," groups put together to provide a backward look at the twenties have been doing an utterly miserable job of recreating any musical feeling of the period. Some relief from this annoying minor vogue of the rooty-toot skiddo school is vouchsafed in this LP by a group known as the Tuxedo Band. It plays tunes from this era as if it cared. Try their "Charleston." The other band, "Pete Kelly's Big 7," is the same unit minus Frank Beach, trumpet. Eddie Miller, tenor saxophone; Matty Matlock, clarinet; Moe Schneider, trombone are in the reed and wind line-up. It has the sound of Bob Crosby's Bobcats, or of any competent Dixieland band; they are heard "exactly" as in the television series of the same title.

"50th State Jazz." Lyle Ritz and His Jazz Ensemble. Verve MGV 8333, \$4.98. "Leis of Jazz"; "Rose Room"; "Polka Dots and Moonbeams"; "Blue Hawaii"; "Clean from Porterville"; "The Song is You"; "Per-jazz"; "Hana Maui"; "Blue Lou"; "Sky-lark"; "On the Beach at Waikiki"; etc.

This is not jazz from Hawaii, but jazz as a group of west coast musicians would like to export it. Their leader, Lyle Ritz, plays a ukulele. The particular ukulele employed here is a tenor, tuned a fourth below the standard, smaller instrument. In action, it sounds somewhat like an electric guitar, and seems to take over its role in the various instrumental combinations of each track. There are some moments of contemporary jazz, featuring solos by Paul Horn, (tenor saxophone, clarinet, and flute) and John Bambridge, Jr. (tenor and soprano saxes).

"Louis and Keely." Louis Prima, Keely Smith, Orchestra. Dot DLP 3210, \$3.98. "Night and Day"; "All I do is Dream of You"; "Make Love to Me"; "I Don't Know Why"; "Tea for Two"; "And the Angels Sing"; "I'm Confessin'"; others.

Louis Prima and Keely Smith have worked out a number of blasting vocal routines that have to be classified as duets of love. The restraint usually accompanying announcements of tender intention, even on the operatic level, is missing here. There is not much variation to the routine; the duo shouts, into a microphone, that it loves. Once the point is established, there doesn't seem much to do but sit by helplessly and wait for the next declaration. We couldn't get beyond the third track.

"Justin Gordon Swings." Dot DLP 3214, \$3.98. "My Foolish Heart"; "Stars Fell on Alabama"; "Moonglow"; "Laura"; "I'm in the Mood for Love"; "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"; others.

The whole structure depends on one instrumentalist, Justin Gordon, tenor-saxophonist. The selection of material is appealing and the orchestra that plays along with it is entirely competent, although not identified by the producer of the record. Just as with the Jonah Jones LP's, it's fine for any one who cares to sit through a long session with one instrumentalist.

"Things to Come." Ted Heath and His Music. London J.L. 3047, \$3.98. "Four Fours"; "I'll Remember April"; "Sometimes I'm Happy"; "Ringside Suite"; "Stompin' at the Savoy"; "Waterloo Bridge"; "Just You, Just Me"; "Out of Nowhere"; "Taboo."

A brisk rouser after Prima and Gordon, above. There are so many musicians present that don't play regularly with Heath that it's hard to tell whether this is meant to be a sampler of the Heath band, or a vast spread of all the goodies of contemporary British jazz. Thick or not, the spread comes out as palatable. The reed and brass sections are big—eight saxophones, eight trombones, and as many trumpets romp around several of the tracks—and the wonder of it all is that the music doesn't sound overworked. Perhaps this is because the section work is so clean.

"The Cool Scene." Warner Brothers WS 1328, \$4.98. Stereo. "Dues Blues"; "I Love Paris"; "The D.A.'s Man"; "Deserted Harem"; "It's a Lonesome Old Town"; "Improvisation"; "Manteca"; "Invitation"; "The Stu Bailey Blues"; others.

A number of vocal and instrumental combinations gather to make this a somewhat eclectic survey of what goes on, day after day, in American jazz circles. Trombones, Inc.; Marty Paich; Frank Comstock and Orchestra; Don Rakke; The Smart Set; Robert Prince and His Orchestra; and Chico Hamilton are among those represented.

"Como Swings." With Mitchell Ayres' Orchestra and the Ray Charles Singers. RCA Victor LPM 2010, \$3.98. "I've Got You Under my Skin"; "Donkey Serenade"; "Dear Hearts and Gentle People"; others.

Mr. Como takes a crack at "St. Louis Blues," "Route 66," and "Mood Indigo," among others. These are a little outside his ken, and to our ears, he doesn't understand them as well as either Crosby or Sinatra. His voice is pleasant and he is impeccable as singer of the other pop tunes; he is distinguished, among contemporary vocalists, for an approach that is straight-forward and lyric.

"Late Date with Ruth Brown." Arranger-conductor Richard Wess. Atlantic SD 1308, \$4.98. "It Could Happen to You"; "Why Don't You do Right"; "Bewitched"; "I'm Just a Lucky So and So"; "I Can Dream, Can't I"; others.

We'd be more inclined to want to listen to Miss Brown if she wouldn't try quite so hard to be Ella (Fitzgerald) and Lena (Horne) and Sarah (Vaughan) all at once, and if she displayed some entirely bewitching vocal quality or styling of her own. As it is, she does well enough with a variety of tunes, perhaps best of all with those of Ellington, and maybe this indicates a vein to be worked.

"Flames, Flappers and Flasks." Joe Glover and his Collegians. Epic Stereo BN 503, \$4.98. "Collegiate"; "Just Like a Butterfly"; "San"; "Last Night on the Back Porch"; "I Wanna be Loved by You"; "Barney Google"; "Sweet Lady"; others.

If any group has the right to shell out the corn of the twenties, it's probably this one assembled by Joe Glover for a re-make of some of its classics. Several of the musicians really played in dance bands of the period, and they've not lost their touch. As the tunes and words emerge—the emphasis is on melody—it seems like a remarkable age of innocence, characterized by a curious blend of sentiment, faith, and hard drinking.

—FREDERIC RAMSEY, JR.