

The Era of Sock

By Tempo

HERE are those who believe that it originated with Paul Whiteman. And there are others who hark back to the Original Dixieland Jazz Band as the source of this rhythmic novelty which has spread like wild-fire from one corner of the country to the other. But it would seem that this latest development of jazz might claim a more remote source than either Whiteman or the pre-war exponents of "Livery Stable Blues." The truth must be that in the long, long ago, even before Irving Berlin wrote his first song or Sophie Tucker discovered that she could not sing, some primitive tympanist stretched the hide of a dinosaur across the concavity of a boulder and beat on it while his mate shuffled to the rhythm of Mesozoic sock! So from such antecedents have evolved the modern wailings of the saxophone which call the dervishes of the campus to the dance. And it is this return to a primal cadence which has been hailed as the era of sock!

Sock is rhythm exploited to the nth. degree. It is an accentuation of the off-beat of the measure—and it is probably the most dance-compelling effect that has been introduced to modern popular music. From Pawtucket to Pasadena, the youth and age of the land are stepping to the meter of this newest syncopation. Sock is the vogue in dance music; and nowhere is it more divinely worshipped than in the American university. The suave masculinity and bobbed-haired femininity of almost every campus in these United States sways to the pulsation of sock while hectic musicians play wild-eyed for imposing wages. So overwhelming has the demand for sock become that collegians with abilities to manipulate various musical instruments are enthroned as the dictators of jazz in their respective institutions. And in our own university there are contemporaries of Zez Confrey who are contributing in no small way to the exuberance of a jazz age. In the state of Indiana there is probably no better known exponent of sock than Hoagland Carmichael.

Several years ago a young man seated himself at a piano and with no knowledge of the mechanics of music played a hesi-

tant, discordant chorus of "Indiana." That young man was the Hoagland Carmichael who a few years later traveled over a goodly portion of this country playing his syncopated refrains for dancing hundreds. And today, Hoagland Carmichael is socking his way towards a degree from the Indiana University School of Law. But his ambitions to practice law have not lessened his interest in music, for at recurrent intervals he has left Maxwell Hall behind him to play at Palm Beach or New York or elsewhere; and even while pursuing his scholastic endeavors Carmichael pats his foot to some imaginary tune. His technical knowledge of music is limited but his ability is nevertheless extraordinary for he accomplishes movements and improvisations which few trained pianists could master. And more than all he plays sock with that genuine feeling which has enabled Paul Whiteman to gain his tremendous popularity. Music is Hoagland Carmichael's hobby—music and argumentation. But recently he became the "proud possessor" of an antediluvian Ford which he affectionately calls his "open job." It is but the mere fossil of a Ford, without windshield or top or headlights or fenders, but by some miracle the motor is still intact and it provides its owner with a medium of transportation not to his dislike. Carmichael's friends, however, have repeatedly expressed grave fears that his antiquated roadster might suffer from exposure and contract a fatal siege of asthma. Others have avowed that the ancient Ford develops a high-gear, sympathetic syncopation as it rattles along in company with its owner. Albeit, though, Hoagland Carmichael knows sock; and knowing sock he plays it with inimitable style. Hence he deserves to be listed among the Kings of Jazz.

But there are students other than Hoagland Carmichael who have helped to meet the needs of this new-born era of sock. There are others, several of them; and there is Paul McCarthy. McCarthy is an erstwhile cornetist who discovered a tardy ability at the piano. For several years he has been playing with various recognized musical organizations but recently was moved by a desire to cut his way into the medical profession. So he entered the portals of Owen Hall to be seen only in the evenings at the Princess Theatre where he has held forth for several months. McCarthy, unlike Carmichael, is a trained and experienced musician with a knowledge of quite a few instruments. But he nevertheless plays with a feeling for the infectious cadence of sock.

That his ability is established is proved by his recent engagement with Gene Rodemich, in St. Louis.

Then there is Charles Robertson, composer, pianist and a student-lawyer. Robertson is the Irving Berlin of Indiana University. He plays indifferently and accepts sock as one of the many necessary evils of popular music. But though he pretends a limpid interest in jazz he has conducted an exceptionally popular orchestra which has been featured at the Indiana Theatre. Robertson, however, is by nature a composer. What he may lack in rendition he more than regains in composition. And he has the distinction of writing tunes that have been played and sung in many parts of the country. His hobbies are pipes and puzzles. Robertson boasts the largest collection of pipes in the world and a journey to his study well nigh substantiates his vaunt, for in that room are to be found pipes of all descriptions. There are evil-looking pipes of Turkish designs and short, unsmoked ones with dapper stems. It is rumored that Robertson is in the employ of certain cigarette manufacture and that he is attempting to further their interests by buying up the pipe stock of the country. But he has another hobby, equally conspicuous. He adores puzzles—puzzles of all kinds—and he even carries them in his pockets! As Robertson himself once remarked: "My dear friend, there is nothing I would rather do than puzzle over puzzles." Which is perhaps explanatory of the enigma which shrouds his every activity for those who know him. He can never be located. This hour he may be wandering through some remote section of the city, and the next he may be sitting in his study with a particularly enticing picture-puzzle before him. His one, exasperating habit is that of slinking through Rose Hill Cemetery at some late night hour or drinking coffee and reminiscing at some hole-in-the-wall restaurant while the less adventurous citizenry are asleep.

And so sock is not without its campus exponents. Carmichael, McCarthy, Robertson and many others are all alert to grasp the ever-changing vogue of popular music and enhance it with their own improvisations and arrangements. They are, these young men, the influences which keep jazz and sock and syncopation in a firm-rooted position before the public of today.