New York Showfronts

BY DON DE LEIGHBUD

LUCKY ROBERS PLAYS BETTER THAN EVER, ALTHOUGH MEDICS SAID HE WOULD DIE

NEW YORK — You can't keep a good man down, especially if he's Charles Luckeyth Roberts. In case you didn't know, Lucky Roberts wrote the tremendous but sweet "Moonlight Cocktail Rendezvous." He also wrote many others, and is a piano master, he taught the late Fats Waller how to use his famous left hand. There is some discussion of the matter, but the boys on the corner are almost sure that Roberts taught the noted James P. Johnson, a few things, also, although James P. may not admit it readily.

It was on a hot evening in July 1940, that they took Lucky Roberts to a hospital with both hands and arms and both feet broke. He also had a broken jawbone and mouth and the doctors, taking one look at him, shook their heads and said he couldn't live.

"He just can't make it" they said. But Lucky did. Then the medicos claimed he would never walk or use those famous hands again. But Lucky fooled 'em again. Now he is playing better than ever, and walks as well as he ever did, and in addition, is preparing to produce his new show, "Emmaline," this fall. Luck as lucky as his name, but hard work, and a determinate determination is responsible for his restoration to present physical well-being.

It happened the night Lucky was arriving home from a visit to the Whitney Estate in Fox Hills, N. Y. Dog-tired, he nodded at the wheel. On Gotham's world-famed West Side Hugs, Way at 125th Street, entering Harlem, there was a sudden crash. That is all the pianist-composer remembered.

At the hospital, Lucky listened to the gloomy predictions of the doctors but didn't believe them. Every day they wheeled him to the piano, after he had gotten to the stage where he could be moved, and there he was given physi-therapeutic treatments. They massaged his hands continually, exercised his fingers to work, but all the time, they shook their heads, directly, saying to themselves, all this is of no avail. But after eleven weeks, instead of the 52 as calculated by hospital authorities, Lucky Roberts was home once more.

During 48 weeks in the hospital Lucky had been humming to him self fragments of a song he conceived 23 years before, but had neglected while giving attention to other pressing matters. He began to work after the nation was swing and dancing to "Moonlight Cocktail Rendezvous," one of the truly big hits from the pen of a colored composer.

Back in 1941, the man who was supposed to die, gave a concert at Town Hall. Then he started really moving, and his name soon again established in Tin Pan Alley. A couple of years ago, Lucky operated an inn near Jackson, Miss. In Chicago Restaurant, Sug Harlem, Lucky served Sugg, Hill "The nurse" on 52 Seventh Avenue became a personal friend, excellent at work, service and generally ultimate place where good entertainment. Nowadays, at this place, he plays highly rare and complicated music, then, I guess, "Moonlight Cocktail Rendezvous" and a couple of sure shots, "Land of Nod" and "I Want to Be Exclusively With You." No, you don't keep down a man with the determination of Lucky Roberts.

JOTTINGS

EXCLUSIVE TO ED YATES PUBLICATIONS

The McKinley Theatre in New York's Bronx section opened with Billie Holiday and Don Redman's Orchestra a fortnight ago. Luis Russell's Orchestra is doing swimming at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom. Lead casting via a coast-to-coast American Broadcasting Company network. Claudia McNeil has signed a contract with Gale Agency. Hazel Scott has waxed her Decca "The Man I Love" and is backed by Toots Camarata's 16-piece Orchestra. Ella Fitzgerald has been signed for a series of one-night appearances. Billie Holiday, Bob Merrill succeeds Eddie Vinson the blues song sensation, with Cootie Williams famous orch. Vinson will lead his own band. Savoy signed a contract with Moe Gale. Looks like all the top-ranking stars in show biz have come under the Moe Gale banner. Laurie Maelie off to the coast to open a branch for the Independent Press Service in Hollywood. Duke Pilgrim headlining a USO unit. Currently playing Miami, Florida. The Charlie Bessie Buchanans vacationing in Atlantic City, N. J. Maestro Lucky Millinder who dropped Judy Carroll and blues singing Wynonie Harris and took on Leon Ketchum as vocalist has another good-looking diamond set for his band. New York's Cafe Zanzibar will erect a sign shop the huge skyscraping building to attract the eyes of plane passengers. Evelyn Purvis, femme singing star with the Harlemaires, is anxiously awaiting the return of her soldier-hubby from the wars. The unit is currently playing The Band Box in Baltimore, Maryland. Georgia Henry, Ella Fitzgerald's is an originator of creative hair styles. The Deep River Boys were responsible for the new-all-time box office record set at Washington's Howard Theatre recently. The Unit which was one of the outstanding features of the Sonny Mitchell Festival along with Lionel Hampton's Orchestra and Anne Brown is slated for an appearance at the Royal Theatre in Baltimore, September 14. Louis Robins, the milliner, is opening a chain of "hat box" stores in N. Y. Harlem sector. Erstwhile Sgt. Romare Bearden has reopened his painting studio in the Apollo Theatre building in Harlem. Artists model Stanley Fletcher is a steady weekender at the nation's playground in Atlantic City, N. J. Maurice Sevain graduates from Howard University's dental college in a fortnight. He will thereafter be known as Dr. Sevain, D. D. S. (As if you didn't know). Tab Smith's Orchestra getting set for a tour of one-nighters ... and that's all for now.

— TED YATES

Eddie Vinson

Bob Merrill Goes With Cootie Williams Band

BY TED YATES

NEW YORK (IPS) — Bob Merrill, the charming personality from last star was 'subbed' for Eddie Vinson while the latter was in the army will actually 'take over' next week when Vinson leaves Cootie Williams' Band to form his own orchestra under the Gale banner. Merrill sings so much like Vinson it's hard to tell one from the other. Where Vinson is a sax tooter, Merrill whams with the trumpet — and that's the only difference. They are both top flight musicians.

"Next Door"

By TED SHEARER

"Ah, I've got a reference from my top sarge as to my pleasant disposition — I"

DEEP RIVER BOYS 'SOCKO' IN D. C.

NEW YORK (IPS) — "Encore! Encore!" The crowd whistles, stamps their feet, claps and calls for more! more! more! Gradually the house lights are darkened and a beaming quintet steps once more into the spotlight. They start singing the popular "I Should Care and the audience, with a contented sigh, settle back into their seats to listen again to The Deep River Boys.

The scene is the Howard Theatre, Washington, D. C. The stars are the Deep River Boys who set audiences on fire and drew raves from every columnist in town. Singing in their smooth effortless style, the boys opened with "Caldonia," swung on through "I'm Beginning To See The Light" and finally dished up in their inimitable manner the popular "I Should Care." And the audience loved it.

The Deep River Boys, who recently appeared with Lionel Hampton and Anne Brown, the concert singer, in the Negro Musical Festival in Chicago, St. Louis and Detroit, got their start six years ago when they first sang together in the Hampton Glee Club at Hampton Institute in Virginia. They had formed a quintet in order to get outside engagements to pay their way through college. However, the pleasure of local acclaim soon turned their eyes toward Broadway and it was in New York that they were "discovered" and named The Deep River Boys by Rex Ingram.

What is known as the "big break" didn't occur until they were signed for weekly appearances on a national radio network. Gradually then they spread their engagements following personal appearances, Victor Bluebird recordings, spots in several Broadway musicals—everything in the ladder of success began to appear. And the boys kept climbing.

At the Howard Theatre they proved what a great musical attraction they are.

Versatility is the keynote of the group. Not only do they sing Negro spirituals in the "straight" style of their forebears, but also adapt the technique to renditions of popular songs. With a change of pace, the boys easily swing into a novelty tune — or a ballad. From spiritual and classical to popular and novelty.

And all the way "socko!" From the Howard Theater the boys journey to Baltimore for an engagement at the Royal Theatre on the September 14th. You can be sure the story will be the same — ending up with a cousins shout of another "encore."

—V—

Savannah Churchill, Top Thrust Signs Contract With Moe Gale

NEW YORK — Savannah isn't from Georgia, she's not related to Britain's ex-Prime Minister, Winston — moreover, there is no blood tie between America's leading song stylist and the MGM sepia screen favorite, Lena Horne — although they're look-alikes.

Savannah Churchill was born in Brooklyn, lives there and is proud of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team, dem Bums. Savannah will probably never move from Brooklyn — other than to fill engagements in theatres, ballrooms and nite clubs. She loves Flatbush and can tell you more about The Tree That Grows In Brooklyn than the authoress Betty Smith who wrote the best-seller novel.

Savannah's recordings (for Manor Records) of Irving Berlin's "All Alone" and "Daddy, Daddy" are a hit with the jake box fans.

This good-looking girl who looks good in her clothes and CAN DRESS, recently contracted with the sensational superlative Bill "3" Unit.

Here's the girl you have been waiting to see. She's tall, glamorous and good-looking. Besides singing she likes baseball, prize fights and to witness the best drama plays of the theatre. An ardent photographic student during her leisure hours, Savannah has collected fotos of some of the leading people in every walk of life and compiled them into a scrapbook. What a hobby!

Gale Agency signed Savannah to a long term contract last week.

—V—

Basie Vs. Eckstine For Nation's No. 1 Sepia Band

Detroit, Mich. — Count Basie, the "Jumpin King of Swing," and his foremost challenger for the title of the nation's number one sepia band singing maestro Billy Eckstine, will stage a real battle of the box office in November when they will play successive weeks at the Paradise Theater in Detroit.

Eckstine will tee off in a week's engagement on the Paradise stage starting November 9, and the Count comes in the following week opening Friday, November 16.

For Eckstine and his skyrocketing young jump band the Paradise booking will be their third at that house within the span of a single year, while for Basie it will mark his annual visit to the Motor City, mecca of jump. Last December the Count established a new all-time attendance record at the Paradise, and to date only Eckstine has come close to the Basie mark.

Basie has for a number of years been recognized by theater managers and ballroom promoters as the most potent box office attraction among Negro bands and Eckstine has rapidly been moving up to a position where he is one of the very few race bandleaders who can approach the Count's grosses in theaters and ballrooms.

—V—

Cotton prices declined on August 17 following the end of the war, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

"HOT LIPS" PAGE

Page Is Jive Exponent

BY TED YATES

NEW YORK (IPS) — That Hot Lips Page is a jive exponent — from way back, was recently brought to light when Laurie Maelie — IPS feature writer — came across an age-old scrapbook of the great Hot Lips himself. The "scraps" showed Page on the bandstand at Small's Paradise "back in 1931." There was the trumpet 'ace' thimself leading his band as diversion seekers were whirling about on the dance floor. There was no rug cutting in those days. Just plain Lindy Hop and Big Apple. Not forgetting, of course, the Susie-Q.

From that nitery Page went to the Big Time — Broadway, the bright lights and 52nd Street. At the Onyx Club he thrilled Cafe Society. Page has appeared on many concerts that turned out to be swing festivals at Carnegie Hall with such greats as the late Fats Waller, Eddie Condon, Lionel Hampton, Dizzy Gillespie, et al.

This week Page embarks on a cross-country tour of one-nighters and judging from the advance bookings (we learned through the Gale office) the trumpet king is destined to top his previous record.

Predicts Post-War Sales By State Radio Dealers As War Ends

Baltimore, Md. — North Carolina retail dealers will sell approximately 265,500 radios and radio-phonograph combinations to attain a record volume of nearly $10,092,000 during first year of unrestricted civilian production after the war.

That was the prediction made by Leonard C. Truesdell, general sales manager for radio and television of Bendix Aviation Corp. — Allen's Radio division, on the basis of a nation-wide survey conducted by his company's marketing analysts.

"Our study indicates that national retail radio sales will hit an all-time peak of approximately 15,000,000 sets representing an estimated total retail volume of $600,000,000 in the first full year after resumption of unlimited peacetime manufacture," Truesdell said, pointing out that North Carolina's annual pre-war sales amounted to approximately 1.6 per cent of national volume in the industry.

Several factors will contribute to the highest postwar radio sales in the state's history, Truesdell declared. These will include the number of new homes to be established as a result of war marriages; increased preference for better quality sets including frequency modulation and radio-phonograph combinations; a definite trend toward ownership of supplementary radios for kitchens, recreation rooms and bedrooms and the substantial projected increase in rural electrification.

More than 471,863 — or nearly 62 per cent of North Carolina's 764,144 homes had radios, according to the 1940 census. On the basis of Department of Commerce figures, which fix the useful life of a pre-war set at seven years, more than half the larger console radios in North Carolina and the nation have outlived their peak usefulness and efficiency, a factor which will lead to thousands of postwar replacement sales, Truesdell declared.

The public's expressed preference for better quality sets will account for a slight average increase in unit prices for larger models, he predicted. As a result he estimated, postwar radio prices will probably exceed the 1941 average figure of $38 per unit sold.

To handle with efficiency the coming "flood" of radio, phono- North Carolina retailers, in common with the industry at large, are planning to increase sales and service staffs from 60 to 10 per cent over pre-war levels, surveys indicate. National and local sales campaigns will be backed by record-breaking advertising schedules that will top pre-war peaks by more than 40 per cent, Truesdell predicted.

—V—

Actress Becomes First Of Fair Sex To Do Sports For National Press Chain

NEW YORK (CNS) — When Lou Swarz covered the Jimmy Bivens-Archie Moore bout in Cleveland, Ohio recently she became the first race woman Sports' writer to cover Sports for a National Press Chain — The Calvin's News Service.

Miss Swarz was special guest of Larry Atkins, Cleveland's Fight Promoter and James J. Johnston, manager of Archie Moore, and of New York. She was extended every courtesy as a National Sports' writer. Altho writing Sports is new to the actress and writer, she is doing OK from notices she is receiving, and the rise in the popularity of her fighter — Archie Moore.

Again Lou Swarz scores as a FIRST — having been acclaimed as the first race woman to grace the stage presenting the solo drama in costume, and between acting and writing she is a "busy body."

—V—

CLAUDE McKAY BELIEVES IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIGION

NEW YORK — Writing in The Epistle, published here, Claude McKay, prominent Negro poet and intellectual has announced his conversion to the Roman Catholic religion. From early manhood a confirmed free thinker, Mr. McKay became well known for his frequent contributions to the radical magazines. Years in Europe, however, following a trip to Russia where he was shocked by the extravagances of the Revolution, convinced him of the "grandeur and glory of Catholicism" and prompted him to study extensively about the origin and history of the Catolic Church. His conversion followed last spring when he was baptized in Old St. Mary's Church, Chicago, by Rev. John Roach.

TAN TOPICS

By CHARLES ALLEN

"Don't worry. Grandmother drove father home in this very same car after the war in 1918."

'HARLEM ON PARADE' 1945-46 ALL NEGRO PICTURE PLANNED

NEW YORK — If the plans of the Hollywood Pictures Corp. for the coming season of 1945-46 carry thru, theatre-goers will be guaranteed at least eight all-Negro screen features, the first of which is Harlem On Parade, with Lena Horne.

This was disclosed recently in a Coast radio interview between Adrienne Ames, the famous movie and radio star commentator and Jack Goldberg, one of the pioneers in the production of Negro stage and screen attractions. In the interview Mr. Goldberg explained about many of the difficulties he encountered in the course of his making of Negro screen features. This applied applied particularly to the time when he opened his own studios at Coral Gables, Florida, where members of the Negro race handled the production of the films from the beginning to end. This included writing, directing, acting and mechanics.

Miss Ames in her introduction called Mr. Goldberg the "man of firsts in the Negro field of amusements." She mentioned among his outstanding first was in sending Mamie Smith, originator of the blues, on her first cross-country tour.

Next he produced Josephine Baker's first screen production in Siren of the Tropics to follow this with Bill Robinson's picture debut in Harlem in Heaven. In between times he found the time to begin the first all-Negro newsreel.

Prior to his entrance in the motion picture field he produced such stage attractions as How Come, Put and Take and Deep Harlem. He followed these New York stage shows with Rosanne, starring Charles Gilpin (then Paul Robeson). Next he produced Emperor Jones with Jule Bledsoe who succeeded Charles Gilpin in the role. He also produced "7-11", the first all-Negro show to tour the burlesque circuit, breaking all existant records for attendance.

Among the all-Negro feature pictures Mr. Goldberg has produced, according to his interview with Adrinne Ames, there was Double Deal, Mystery In Swing, Paradise In Harlem, Sunday Sinners and Murder On Lenox Avenue.

Believing that the time was ripe for a motion picture extolling the development and accomplishments of the Negro race, Mr. Goldberg last year produce dand released the feature, "We've Come A Long, Long Way." The picture engaged in a long Broadway run and was then sent on tour of schools, colleges, churches, educational establishments as well as theatres.

In his interview with Miss Ames, Mr. Goldberg stated that this was his most ambitious year. His pictures will be made at a much higher production cost and he intends to make them all-Negro in every sense of the word.

The next picture he plans, which is all prepared for "shooting," is "Negro Boys Town," a comedy drama based on a real town just outside of Pittsburgh that is operated and governed entirely by boys. This is practically the same as the town in Nebraska of which MGM made a feature picture starring Mickey Rooney and Spencer Tracy.

The picture to follow that is a comedy western.

—V—

HAZEL SCOTT HITS THE HEADLINES AGAIN

NEW YORK (IPS) — Lovely Hazel Scott hits the headlines again this week with the release of her first vocal recording for Decca Records. Hazel, noted chiefly for her pianistics, will add a new army of fans to her following with her chirping ability. Backed up by a fifteen piece band led by Toots Camarata, Hazel warbles "The Man I Love" a Gershwin favorite which she featured in "Rhapsody in Blue."

RCA Victor Develops Non-Breakable Record For Home Use

CAMDEN, N. J.—The first non-breakable, high fidelity phonograph record for home use has been developed by RCA Victor, climaxing 11 years of research work in this field. A flexible disc made of synthetic plastic material, the new record, which greatly reduces surface sound, will make its initial appearance in October, according to an announcement by J. W. Murray, General Manager of the RCA Victor Record Division, who called it the greatest improvement in home phonograph records in 45 years.

The first of the new type non-breakable disc available to the public, he will present a performance of Richard Strauss' "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks" by the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. At present, Mr. Murray said, it is planned to release only newly recorded musical works on the new type discs, which will be known as Red Seal De Luxe records. The same musical work, he added, will be made available later on standard, high quality Red Seal shellac records.

The non-breakable home phonograph record, which is ruby red in color, was made possible, according to H. I. Reiskind, chief engineer of the RCA Victor Record Division, by the development of a formula for a compound composed almost entirely of vinyl resin plastic which produces a durable, long-life record.

While vinyl materials have been used for many years in the manufacture of expensive transcription records, particularly for radio broadcasts and for V discs used by our armed forces overseas, they have hitherto been prohibitively costly for use in home phonograph records, Mr. Reiskind said.

The new formula, one of several evolved by RCA Victor record engineers, according to Mr. Reiskind, results in a record that can be dropped or bent without breaking or cracking, has low surface sound and enhances the fidelity of reproduction.

Surface sound reduction he said is made possible because the plastic compound does not require the mineral filler used in shellac records. The new De Luxe records are lighter in weight than the shellac discs. Extensive tests have demonstrated, he added, that they can also be played on practically all types of home phonographs, including those equipped with automatic changers, and with various types of needles.

In declaring that the new non-breakable records would be made available in limited quantities, Mr. Murray emphasized that RCA Victor will not discontinue its production of the standard Red Seal and Victor popular shellac records. He likened the album containing the new type records to limited editions of fine books and pointed out that they offered music lovers a still finer recorded performance than that possible on the best shellac records.

"We anticipate that the use of this material for non-breakable, high fidelity home phonograph records will eventually be expanded to other types of RCA Victor records," Mr. Murray stated. "This will depend in some measure on the building up of facilities to produce the new type records in sufficient quantities."

RCA Victor engineers started their search for a non-breakable, higher quality record in 1934 when they set out to develop a "quiet" disc for the film industry. The final development of the flexible plastic record also suggested the answer to one of the biggest problems of the home phonograph record — the problem of breakage of shellac records. But until now, the high cost of the plastic material used in transcription discs made such records for home use prohibitive. RCA Victor's policy of continued research to bring about technical and manufacturing improvements led to the development of this practical, relatively low cost non-breakable record of the required durability for home use, Mr. Murray said.

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WOODY Herman
AND HIS ORCHESTRA
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Bill Harris, Marjorie Hyams, Chubby Jackson, Pete Candoli
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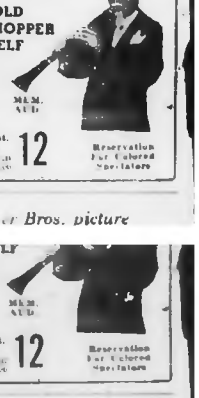

See Anne Brown in "RHAPSODY IN BLUE," *a Warner Bros. picture*

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