

banister music, walking-across-the-plaza music, telegraph, monkey and throwing-bric-a-brac music. This is no substitute for real invention, even when heard in the spacious luxuriance of Warner Brothers' incomparable recording. There was a degree of dramatic justness, again, in Hanns Eisler's score for *Spanish Main*. This suited the picture well enough, but only in the most general and mechanical way. And it did not suit the composer at all. Grudgingly – and the grudge is apparent – he gave himself over to an old-fashioned idiom, certainly abandoned in all his other music and frequently anathematized by him in speech and in print, as wanting in freshness and originality. The score is wholly without enthusiasm for the picture, without vitality and without the grand sweep of the drama. And so it appears insincere, although this is difficult to accept if one remembers that the same studio, with the same composer and the same music department, produced *None But The Lonely Heart* only a year ago.

In a completely different way there was dramatic validity in Werner Janssen's music for *Captain Kidd*.

Janssen sketched his score in the lightest possible manner, leaving lots of white space and then probably erasing half of what he had put down. He depended less upon formally constructed music than upon sounds and timbres like flutter-tongued trumpets, ostinatos, strings pizzicato or in high harmonics. What there was of music (besides the unresourceful use of *Fingal's Cave* for the main-title) was an astounding mixture of atonal passages, whole-tone sequences, fragments of *Rule, Britannia* and *Westminster Chimes*, and apparently anything else that popped into Janssen's head – all of it badly recorded and insensitively dubbed. In spite of all this, and whether or not it was so intended, the score frequently gave us a kind of psychological insight, its method being pin-point accentuation and a rather weird commentary from the side-lines. If this was an intentional technique, it still needs vigorous development. And if Janssen does develop it, he will be my candidate for the scoring of pictures like *Spellbound* and *The Lost Weekend*, in which Miklos Rozsa seems to have missed the point completely.

THE TORRID ZONE

By COLIN McPHEE

IT is not because of any fixation on the early New Orleans style that I found the playing of Bunk Johnson's band at the Stuyvesant Casino so satisfying, but because of the simple integrity of the music, the

absence of any pretentiousness or confusion of styles. Bunk, although in his sixties, still plays with that indefinable exuberance and exaltation which are the heart and soul of trumpet, the kind of fervor you hear in Louis Arm-

strong or Lips Page. I wouldn't go so far as to describe this group (to quote the *Herald Tribune*) as "developing improvisationally on the highest creative plane," but it is indeed a pleasure as well as a miracle to have so early a musical style so beautifully preserved, and to be able to hear it, today, in actual performance rather than early recordings. Why is this primitive manner still so appealing, so eloquent? Partly because of the music's essentially melodic character, the lack of harmonic padding and dolling-up. Also because of its functional quality, since it was surely meant for dancing rather than for listening to with esthetic ears.

Town Hall continues this season to be the scene for jazz concerts, some excellent, like the Condon and Blue Note affairs, others fair, like the BIAJ (Best in American Jazz)—strictly 52nd Street in atmosphere—and others extraordinarily weak, like the recent one by Mary Lou Williams.

When Mary Lou sits down at the piano to play some classic like Jelly Roll Morton's *The Pearls* or *Mr. Freddy Blues*, she is extremely satisfying; when she "composes" in the traditional way such numbers as *Drag 'Em* or *Mary's Boogie* her style is straightforward and vigorous. When she begins "arranging" pieces, like *Lullaby of the Leaves*, her style grows fancy and inconsequential (it is partly the fault of the material) and when she turns to composing in a "modern,

experimental" way, the results are naive and unfortunate.

Now to records. From Decca we have an album of four re-issues of that pioneer jazz pianist, Jelly Roll Morton, who recorded for the Library of Congress shortly before he died. There is also the news that Decca has cut four sides by Bunk Johnson, which are to be released shortly. The same company also gives us a new Sister Tharpe recording, *Singin' in My Soul*, with *I Claim Jesus First* on the reverse, two numbers which show that this remarkable singer of "swung spirituals" is still at her best; *I Left a Good Deal in Mobile* and *Did You Ever Love a Woman?*, sung by Josh White with fine support from Edmond Hall and his band; and *Beulah's Boogie*, a new though not too inspired Hampton. A new King Cole, *Come to Baby* (Capitol), would be more exciting if it were less of an echo of the Trio's previous work. Additional items are an exhilarating Count Basie, *Queer Street* (Columbia); a series of blues and ballads by Josh White under Musicraft; and excellent traditional blues by Big Maceo and Tampa Red (Bluebird). Commodore and Blue Note continue to produce the best in small ensembles by outstanding musicians, of which I mention only two: *If I Had You*, by Ike Quebec's Swingtet, and *It's Been So Long* by Edmond Hall's group. Both are Blue Note and both are a delight.