

## HILLBILLIES

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FAR from being a passing fancy, hillbilly music is deep-rooted in the life and traditions of America, stemming from the folk music of the earlier days. It is no Johnny-come-lately, but, like other music, its phenomenal growth to present colossal proportions has come about thru the medium of radio and the juke boxes during the last two decades. Even with these two powerful mediums it could not have developed its full potentialities had it not been for the smart showmanship of farsighted men who saw the possibilities of presenting the hillbilly artists in the flesh before the hundreds of thousands to whom they were familiar on the air and on records.

THE personal-appearance field, highly developed only in the last few years, has proved a gold mine to many artists, as well as to the promoters handling the shows. While there have been many new entrants into the field, the more important shows still are handled by a few men who have made a specialty of hillbilly personal appearances. Earl Kurtze, George Ferguson and Dick Bergen, of WLS Artists' Bureau, probably provide more talent than any others. With the stars of the National Barn Dance to draw upon, they are in an advantageous position and have been very successful. In the South the leaders have been Oscar Davis and Hal Burns, whose units, built with two or three widely known radio artists surrounded by lesser known people, often from stations in the territory played, have played to phenomenal business. Usually a large auditorium is necessary to handle the crowds who clamor to see their favorites. One of the Davis-Burns shows in Dallas grossed \$2,970 the first day and \$3,780 the second. At Nashville the unit drew 20,000 people to four shows in one day. A Davis jamboree in the Auditorium at Little Rock, Ark., last fall played to \$8,200 in one day, giving three shows. Foreman Phillips has been highly successful on the West Coast. His Los Angeles County Barn Dance at Venice Pier ballroom gained such popularity that Phillips has extended his activities to other California cities. WLW Promotions, Cincinnati, has had many amazing one-day stands, biggest of which was at the Lyric Theater, Indianapolis, with a gross of \$16,768.40.

Promotional policy of all of these shows is very similar. Little billing is used. A fair amount of newspaper advertising is carried, but main dependence is upon radio announcements, as radio listeners are the chief audience potential.

### Capacity Crowds and Astonishing Grosses

THE daily "take" of some radio hillbilly artists is astonishing. The Hoosier Hot Shots, five-person combo using homemade musical instruments, frequently gross from \$3,000 to \$5,000 on one-day stands. On a repeat date at a Baltimore park last year they played to \$4,200, and at the small town of Reedbury, N. H., their one-day gross was \$5,600. Lulu Belle and Scotty, who for years have gravitated between WLS, Chicago, and WLW, Cincinnati, are in constant demand for p. a.'s, for which they command \$500 a day and transportation. Roy Acuff, featured on the "Grand Ole Opry" on WSM, Nashville, has a tremendous following, and last year had a gross income of close to \$200,000. Louise Massey and the Westerners, Patsy Montana, Girls of the Golden West, Roy Rogers, Sons of Pioneers and John Lair's picture for Columbia and are to make several more this year. Weaver Brothers and Elvir,



They Stand in Block-Long Lines for the Boone County Jamboree

Renfro Valley Boys are among the top money-getters who draw capacity crowds wherever they appear. The list could be extended to include several score of other artists all of whose available time away from radio is taken up with personal appearances.

NEW favorites are constantly developing on the air, and their sources of revenue are by no means confined to radio and personal appearances. Bob Atcher, heard on WJJD, Chicago, and WIND, Gary, Ind., has been recording since 1937. He has made more than 150 sides, and more than 3,000,000 of his platters have been sold.

The Hoosier Hot Shots have many records to their credit and sales are well over the million mark. The boys have just completed a one of the few hillbilly groups whose fame

was made in vaude rather than radio, are favorites on records and in pictures.

An idea of the popularity of hillbillies on records may be gained from a perusal of the list of 608 recording artists and groups of artists listed in *The Billboard* in 1941. Of the total, 198 were listed as hillbilly, 171 classical, 158 popular, 77 international and 4 foreign. Many of the artists listed are well known on the air only sectionally, but their platters enjoy popularity thruout the country.

That the audience for folk music is increasing is evident in the popularity of folk singers with name bands. Judy Canova is an outstanding example, and there are many others. Far from showing any sign of waning, hillbilly popularity continues to grow, and it bids fair to remain one of the stand-bys of show business.

The Hoosier Hot Shots Have Plenty Devotees

