

AND ALL THAT JAZZ

MØBGX

Most of our members will be familiar with the old adage which tells us that old dogs are not able to learn new tricks. Be that as it may there is also another to the effect that “That the exception proves the rule.” Well, here’s one of the latter.

Readers may be familiar with the name Ken MackIntosh the internationally known saxophonist and band leader and also like many of us, an old soldier.

Ken comes from Yorkshire and started playing the clarinet and the saxophone at the age of 14. December 1939 saw him join the Royal Army Service Corps and he spent some four years in their Mechanical Workshops and was in France when the Germans came storming in. Fortunately he managed to get back to the UK via Cherbourg. To this day he retains an interest in mechanical engineering and has restored several older vehicles in his home garage. In 1944 sensing that the end of the war was not far away, Ken applied for membership of the RASC band and that is where he served until being demobbed in 1945.

Back in civvy street Ken played with most of the leading dance bands of the time: Oscar Rabin, Geraldo, Joe Loss *et al* until 1948 when he formed his own orchestra. So Ken has been leading his own orchestra for some 50 years and continues to take an orchestra on one night stands around the country. In the 50’s and 60’s his name was synonymous with leading-quality British names of the time and he can be regarded as a very important element of nostalgia of that period and to many dancers his is probably the most important.

In the 50s, films, concerts, ballrooms, radio were all media wherein his ability to keep pace with the demands of popular trends in music kept his name and the name of the orchestra to the forefront of the music scene. Wimbledon Palais in South London was opened by Ken’s Band in 1950 and it stayed there for three years. This residency enabled regular broadcasting and recording: Ken’s first big record, “The Creep” was in 1953 and arose from an idea he had for a new kind of dance: it was recorded by no less than seventeen other bands world-wide, including that of Stan Kenton. Ken’s Band also recorded such Big Band favorites as, Hot Toddy, Skyliner, Intermission Riff, Woodchoppers Ball and somewhat slower and sweeter numbers such as Flamingo and The Very Thought of You.

Then followed a bill-topping tour of the Moss Empire Theatre circuit which established him as one of Britain’s foremost bandleaders. Ken’s band stood in for Billy Cotton’s on several occasions on his Sunday lunchtime “Wakey Wakey” show and Ken also had his own TX show “Flying Standards”. After some ten years touring, broadcasting and recording and including an appearance in a Diana Dors movie, he was invited to open the world’s greatest and most expensive ballroom, the “Empire” at Leicester Square, with a guaranteed minimum seven year contract, previously unheard of. Next came a seven year stay at the Hammersmith Palais.

During his outstanding career Ken's orchestra has been responsible for accompanying such artistes as Tom Jones, Shirley Bassey, Max Bygraves, Ann Shelton, Bob Monkhouse, Pat Boone, Matt Munro and others and he helped to launch the careers of Frankie Vaughan and Alma Cogan. To this day he still plays and leads an orchestra.

But what has all of this to do with new tricks and amateur radio?

Well throughout his very successful and busy career Ken has always had an interest in amateur radio but of course "Time did not permit" however, during the past couple of year he has been a member of the South London College ARS which meets once a month in the Mitcham under my chairmanship. South London as the College itself is now closed down. Ken undertook the necessary studies and obtained his licence (2E1GOF) and having done that expressed a determination to learn Morse. The hard work and determination and the perfectionist nature which made him so famous and popular in the music industry, won through again and he recently took an "On Demand" Test and learnt - on his 80th birthday - that he had passed not at 5 wpm as required by the new regulations, but Ken went the Whole Hog with a 12 wpm grade.

So, if anyone ever mentions old dogs and new tricks be sure to remind them of "the exception to the rule" and of course in this instance we are talking about a **very** exceptional person.

There is another old saying "Many a Fine Tune being Played on an Old Fiddle". In this case it's a saxophone and take my word you'd better believe it! I know because I have heard it, "and all that jazz."