

# His Jazz Blues Come Out Yellow

## ENGINEER CHANGES SOUND INTO COLOR

KURT SCHEISSER is probably the only person in Detroit, perhaps in the world, with a fish bowl that plays music in color. He sees, as well as hears, the deep yellow of Dixieland jazz; he finds the color of Enesco's Romanian Rhapsody even more exciting than its notes.

Schmeisser, a WXYZ-TV engineer by day, wanted something different from Arthur Godfrey to relax by when he got home at night.

His set in his home at 13117 LaSalle resembles an ordinary television cabinet. But in place of a screen there is a fish bowl, complete with tropical fish and aquarium plants.

WHEN SCHEISSER snaps on a switch, music starts flowing around the aquarium at the same time that exotic color combinations begin to form.

A deep red gradually changes to purples, blues, greens and yellows. Then a burst of trumpets shoots a pink shaft of light through the bowl.

There is a roll of kettle drums. A green pyramid rises, as if from the bottom of the sea.

WHATEVER the mood of the music, there are hues to blend with it.

If the music switches from Bach to Basin Street, the colors grow livelier until they literally are dancing in tempo.

Schmeisser's idea of teaming music and color is not new. Man has been seeking for centuries to depict music in terms of color harmony as well as sound patterns. But Schmeisser has used his musician's eye and ear to determine which color goes with which tone.

HE USES six tubes to change sound into color.

Three are tuned to pick up different sets of sound frequencies. Thus trumpet sounds change into electrical impulses

which light up certain color bulbs concealed behind the aquarium.

The other three tubes are activated by loudness. Loud booms are yellow; soft music a "quiet" deep red.

IT TOOK 20 years of "fiddling around" before Schmeisser got a satisfactory set of tone colors.

He had many difficulties. For one thing, there are many more notes in the musical scale than there are colors in the spectrum.

"I had to compromise considerably, to let one shade represent a fairly wide bloc of music," he said.

SCHEISSER, son and grandson of orchestra conductors, is an amateur pianist.

At night he likes to shoo his television-loving daughters to their own set in a bedroom.

Then, stretched out on a divan, his wife nearby, he looks at and listens to his extensive library of recordings.

FRIENDS INVITED to see music for the first time, usually ask: "Do the fish dance to the music?"

Sometimes when he's alone, Schmeisser sits down at his piano and plays along with a recorded orchestra.

There in the darkened room, with an avalanche of music thundering out, with an automatic kaleidoscope turning one corner into a series of rainbows, with sea life silhouetted against alternating sunbursts and moonbeams, Schmeisser murmurs to himself:

"This is really living."



KURT SCHEISSER'S MUSICAL-COLOR BOWL  
Sunbursts and moonbeams dance to the music's mood

Clipped By:



AZOffers  
Mon, Jul 26, 2021