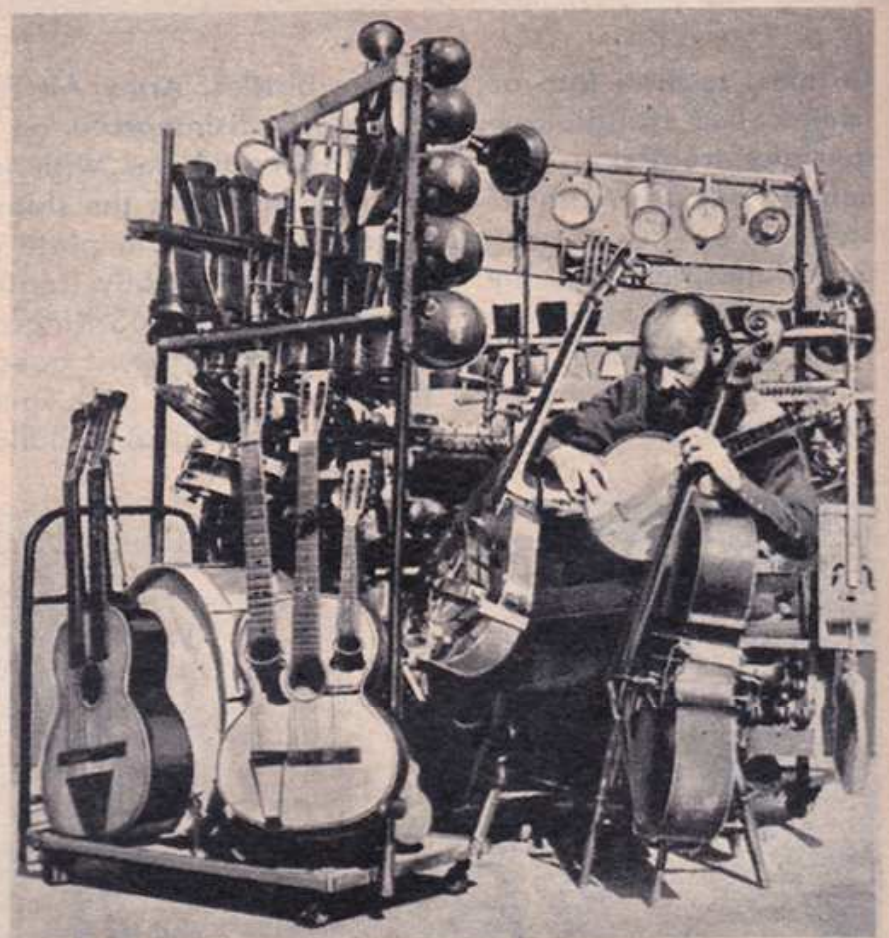




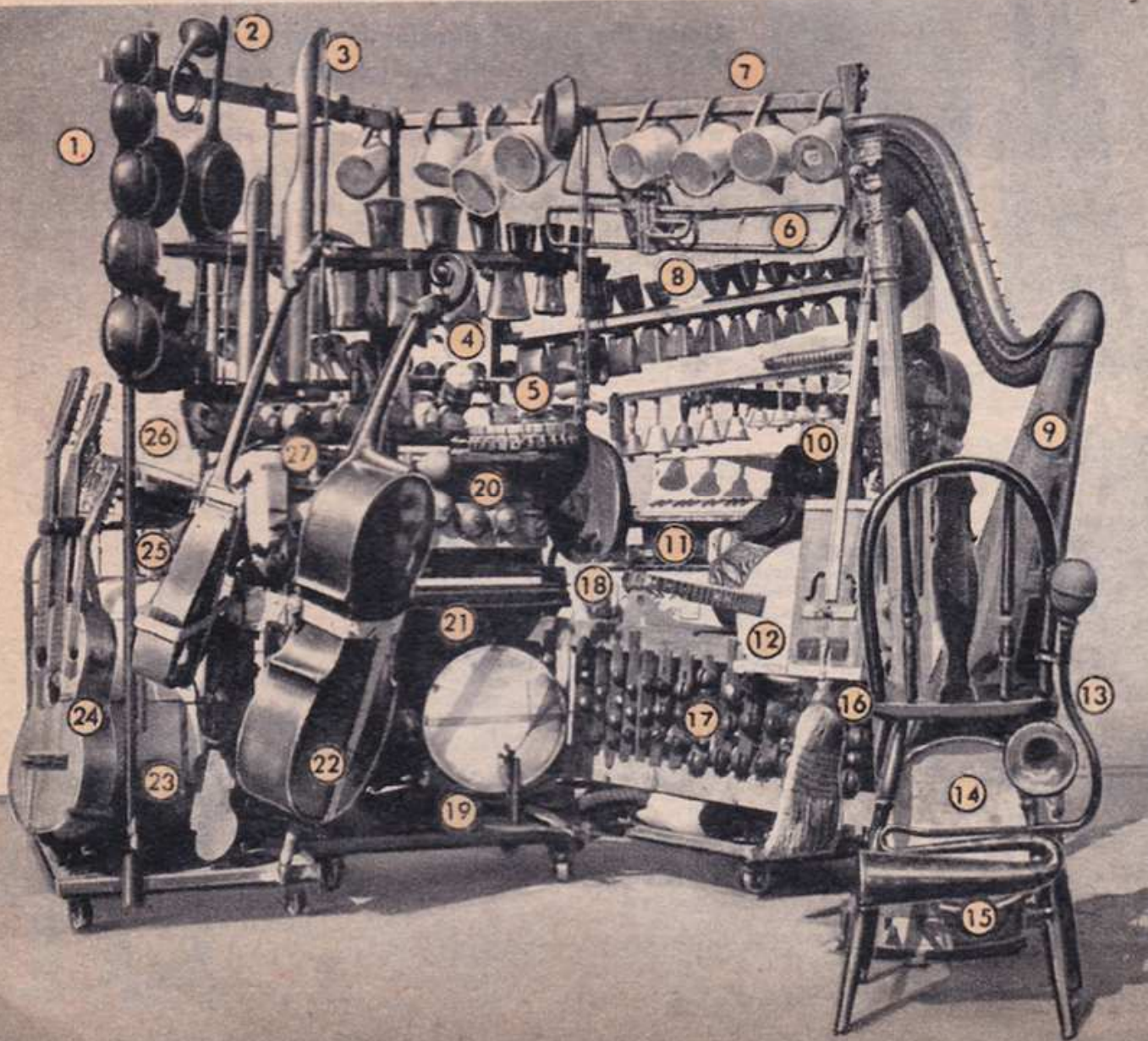
HOMEMADE MOUNTAIN MUSIC

POSSIBLY you've never heard of a "gooch gadget" or a "hootnanny," but chances are you've listened to them, or their equivalent, on the radio. Most hill-billy and cowboy bands have some such queer devices among their instruments.

Country songs and tunes have attained such popularity in recent years that nearly every radio station broadcasts at least a few every day. Some bands are heard on national radio hookups. "New San Antonio Rose" and "You Are My Sunshine" are only two of a long list of western songs in



"Herman the Hermit" plays his three-necked combination of mandolin, steel and standard guitar. Right, he tunes electrified one-man band before broadcast. Key identifies the instruments, below



- 1—Tuned temple blocks
- 2—Tuned frying pans
- 3—Shakaphone chimes
- 4—Horse's hoofs
- 5—Ten-string banjo
- 6—Valve trombone
- 7—Tuned coffee pots
- 8—Tuned sheep bells
- 9—Harp
- 10—Tuned dinner bells
- 11—Accordion
- 12—Banjorine
- 13—Cornet with bulb horn
- 14—Tom-tom drum
- 15—Bass bulb horn
- 16—Single string instrument consists of comb, old broom and cigar box
- 17—Tuned sleigh bells
- 18—Chinese lute
- 19—Brush snare drum
- 20—Door bells, etc.
- 21—Piano
- 22—Cello, doubles as bass fiddle
- 23—Bass drum
- 24—Triple-necked mandolin-guitar
- 25—Banjola
- 26—Snare drum
- 27—Tuned bulb horns

POPULAR MECHANICS

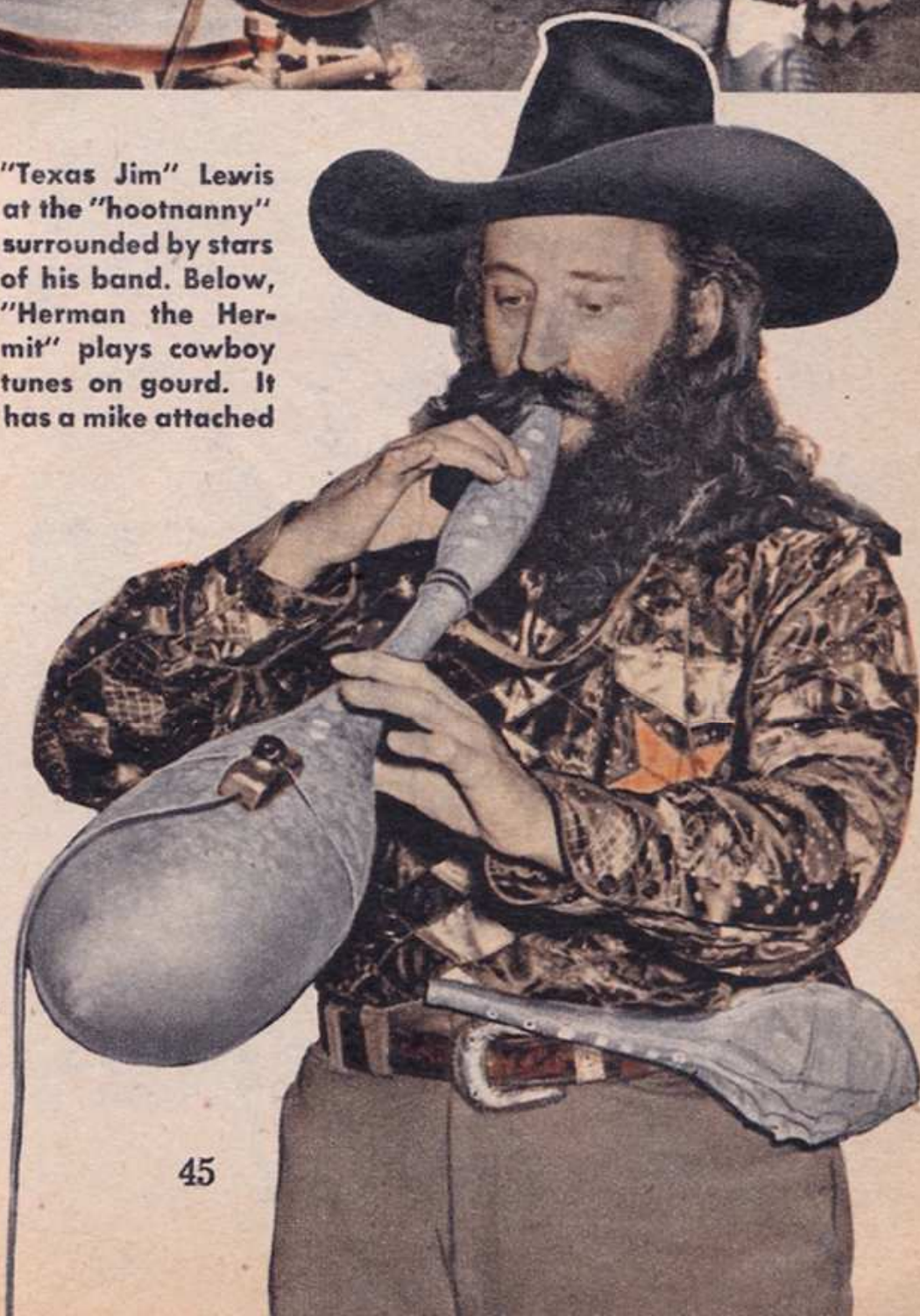


the hit class. As many as 10,000 persons dance to the Saturday night music of cow-hand orchestras at county barn dances put on by "Foreman" Phillips in Los Angeles. Chicago's National Barn Dance on Saturday nights is a long-established favorite with radio listeners across the country.

Basically, a western or hillbilly band is a five or six-piece string group with fiddles, bass fiddles, steel guitars, rhythm guitars, and single-string guitars. Drums and a piano usually are added for dancing. But nearly every band is augmented by a variety of other instruments—standard types, foreign instruments or antiques, and home-made musical devices.

The gooch gadget built by one of the "3 Shiftless Skonks" trio of Happy Perryman's "Happy-Go-Lucky Mountaineers" is one of these homemade contraptions, consisting of novelty instruments and noisemakers arranged so several may be played at the same time. A foot-operated bellows provides air which blows various horns while the operator beats out tunes on a set of hollow temple blocks.

"Texas Jim" Lewis at the "hootnanny" surrounded by stars of his band. Below, "Herman the Hermit" plays cowboy tunes on gourd. It has a mike attached





Herman plays Chinese lute with one hand while he operates keyboard of antique dolceola. Playing a baling wire job below are two Perryman hill boys



Just as curious is "Texas Jim" Lewis's hootnanny which he operates from a bicycle seat. Hanging on a framework are press-bulb horns, gongs, bells, sirens, and other noisemakers. Lewis and his hootnanny can carry a tune with the rest of his musicians. It also provides novelty sound effects.

Other hillbilly and cowboy musicians extract music from dried gourds drilled for mouthpieces and finger holes. A tambourine, a stick of timber, a strand of baling wire, and a pump handle to control tension of the wire form a one-string instrument. A broomstick, a strand of wire and a cigar box make another hillbilly instrument. Tones akin to a bass viol's are obtained from an iron tub, a washboard and a piece of heavy wire.

Champion maker of homemade instruments and a dean of all hillbilly musicians is "Herman the Hermit" who, in the last 12 years or so, has broadcast some 300,000 songs and tunes in 15,000 hours on the air. This bewhiskered singing musician has appeared in more than 100 motion pictures. He is proficient with about 60 standard types of instruments and nearly 40 additional foreign and homemade instruments.

"Herman the Hermit" plays a banjo with his feet, he obtains musical notes from a "suitcase," he carries a tune with his "musical teeth," and he draws notes from tuned sets of bottles, coffee pots, and frying pans.

He devised his foot banjo so he could play other instruments with his hands at the same time. A foot treadle turns a wheel, and special steel picks attached to the circumference of the wheel strike the banjo strings. Meanwhile, his left foot presses against wooden levers that hold down the strings on the banjo's finger board. The picks are spaced for fox trot time.

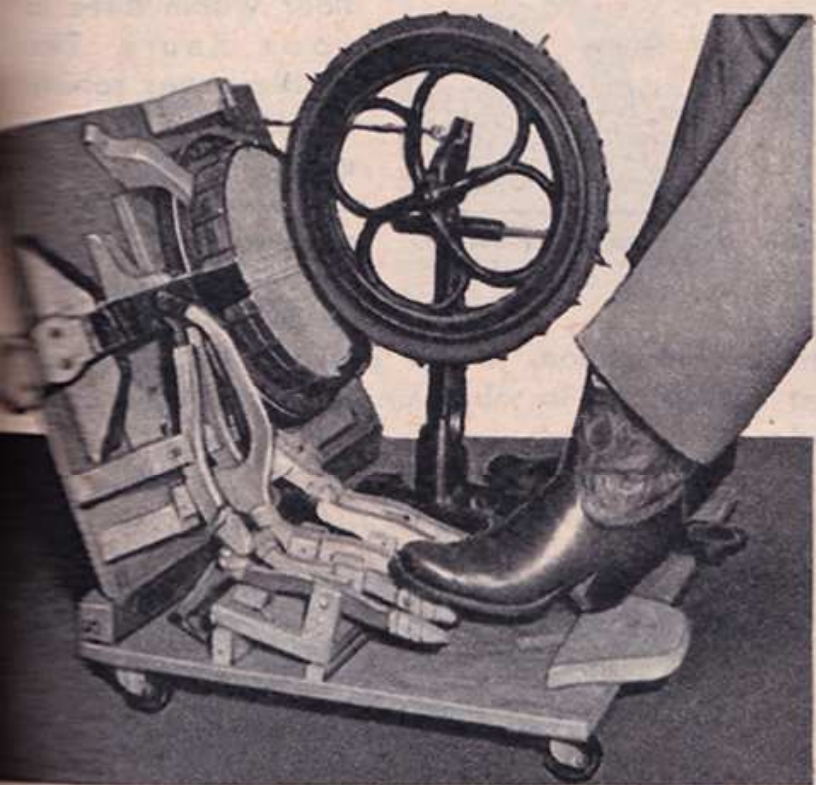
Ingenious as it is, the foot banjo doesn't compare with "Herman the Hermit's" one-man band, a conglomeration of 60 or more musical and noise-making devices mounted on a three-sided framework and placed so all may be reached from a central chair.

This "poor man's orchestra" is built around a small piano, a tiny organ, an accordion, and a set of foot-operated drums. An air machine furnishes suction for the organ and another air pump provides pressure for the accordion, allowing each to be played with one hand. Included are tuned sets of sleigh bells, sheep bells, cow bells, bull bells, frying pans, coffee pots, dinner bells and temple blocks. Guitars, banjos, mandolins and other stringed instruments are all within reach. Attached to the chair in which "Herman the Hermit" sits is an additional drum, a bass horn and a cornet, the last two operated by pressing an air bulb. Electrical pickups attached to instruments are used instead of ordinary microphones, both for

recordings and radio broadcasts.

Surrounded by his instruments, Herman may begin a tune by using his left foot to carry the down beat on a bass drum, his right foot for the after beat, his left hand for the piano, and his right hand playing a 10-string banjo that is securely mounted above the piano keyboard. Meanwhile he sings. He can play as many as five instruments at once and make six complete changes before he finishes, playing a total of some 30 instruments during a song. To acquire certainty and speed in his changes he practices in the dark.

Incidental effects include a klaxon, a cuckoo, tuned tonettes, a police whistle blown by pressing an air bulb, horse's hoofs, foot-operated castanets and door bells. A three-necked instrument that is



a combination mandolin, steel guitar and standard guitar, and an old device called a dolceola, a sort of combination accordion and piano, are among Herman's other novel contraptions.

Hillbilly songs and western laments used to be considered low-brow music, principally because the melodies are simple. Many of the oldest of these songs and tunes, some brought across by the early settlers, were handed down from generation to generation without ever having been put on paper. In recent years most of these old songs have been recorded, taking their place in the musical history of the country. The western songs being written and sung today are the modern offspring of the original old-time tunes.



Ned Ward, 5, gets early training from "Hezzie" Trietsch, above, washboard virtuoso of Hoosier Hot Shots of National Barn Dance. At left is foot banjo devised by "Herman the Hermit." Right foot turns wheel to which picks are attached as left foot controls wooden fingers on keyboard. Below, the "3 Shiftless Skunks" perform with the "gooch gadget," mixing horns, whistles and what have you

