

to be almost static. It seems to me that we have become accustomed—or possibly drugged—to expect the pace and high-speed quips of the Burns and Allen Show and *I Love Lucy*, or the crazy nonsense of the Goons. Comedies which rely upon situations alone have less appeal, unless played with expert "character" interpretations. This, however, requires the presence of actors of the calibre of Alec Guinness, Peter Ustinov or Cecil Parker.

GOONATICS

THE short seasons we have had of the Goons on *Idiot's Weekly*—*Price Twopence* and *A Show Called Fred* started a new era in crazy humour, which seems to be breaking out in various other programmes, particularly on commercial TV. Harry Secombe has left the gang, but Harry himself, Peter Sellers, Spike Milligan and others seem to bob up in all kinds of shows to provide the quota of new style comedy. Peter Sellers appeared as a phoney operatic singer and performed a riotous duet with Dicky Valentine in his own TV Show. Dicky co-operated with engaging good humour and even took part in an amusing simultaneous dance with Peter Sellers. The song was "I'm walking backwards for Christmas," a burlesque of the sentimental ballads of which we hear so many. The crazy goon song has become quite a best-selling gramophone record, and this in itself has increased the public taste for goonatic humour.

"RATS TO YOU!"

THE series of vaudeville programmes specially arranged for the BBC by that unique organisation, the Grand Order of Water Rats, has come to a dismal end, carrying with it evidence of the troubles and trials which beset its organisation. It started off hopefully, but not too successfully, with the veteran music hall star Wee Georgie Wood looking after the interests of the Water Rats, supported by a committee of fellow music hall artists. Following a few bad press notices of the first show there was considerable bad feeling about the choice of artists and the general production arrangements and Georgie Wood was asked to hand the reins elsewhere. The internal strife was made public in the theatrical newspapers and many artists weren't too keen in taking part, and the

show degenerated into a conventional cabaret show of a type which is now considered by viewers to be of the "corny" variety. This is a pity, because there is an enormous range of talent available in the Water Rats fellowship of music hall artists, and their Rats Revel Shows for charity given at theatres or at banquets at the big hotels have always sparkled with fun, even if that fun was what might be termed "robust." Most of these shows have been produced by Wee Georgie Wood whose knowledge of the business and whose flair for giving scope for such famous "ad-libbers" as Tommy Trinder, Bud Flanagan and the Crazy Gang has been an enormous asset. Let us hope that the BBC appoint someone to take the show thoroughly in hand before the next series commences, making use also of the people who made contributions in ideas, scripting and production which were such a bright feature of the Rats Revels.

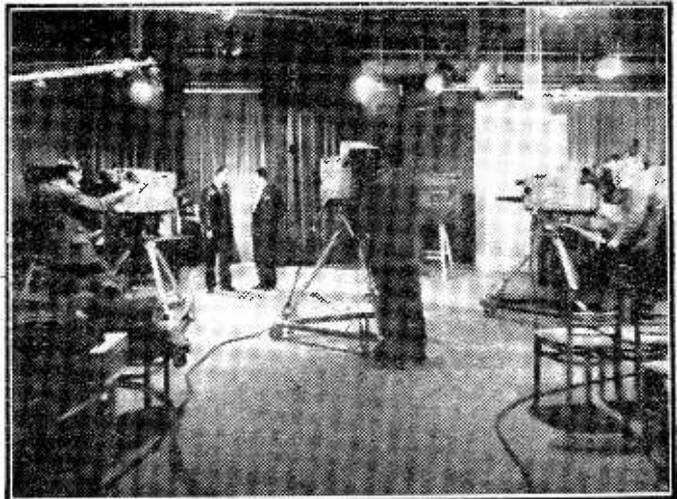
AMERICAN TV FILMS

THERE is no official quota for British TV films or British live TV features on commercial television. In the cinema, the quota calls for 25 per cent. of the films shown to be of British origin. In commercial TV the I.T.A. have the delicate responsibility of maintaining a "reasonable" proportion of items, filmed and live, which is of British origin. This seems to work out at about 85 per cent. of the total transmission hours. In other

words, the screen time of foreign (mostly American) features which is transmitted seems to be about 15 per cent. This American material looms prominently because it is the cream of the items considered suitable for British TV audiences and it achieves peak viewing times here. If the percentage of imported material grows greater, I have no doubt that the trade unions will nudge Sir Robert Fraser's arm as a reminder. All the same, a little more latitude in this matter would give all TV organisations—both I.T.A. and BBC—a much needed relief, creatively and financially. The consumption of new ideas is prodigious. No wonder there is a tendency to fall back upon amateur talent shows and parlour games.

"THE LAST ENEMY"

ANOTHER outstanding TV play, this time from AR-TV, was *The Last Enemy*, a dramatisation of Richard Hillary's wartime biography. Technically, this was a very skilled mixture of filmed and live television. For the plane sequences and montages, official and newsreel sources must have been drawn upon in a big way. All fitted in perfectly with the narrative, spoken by Peter Murray, who also portrayed Hillary. Of all of the TV plays or features which have depicted the lives of pilots who took part in the Battle of Britain, this, I thought, was the most moving: Peter Murray is a young actor who should be watched—here is another TV star.



Shooting a live scene on No. 1 stage of the Granada centre, a description of which will be found on pages 171 to 173.