

The Harvard Crimson

From the Pit

The Krokodiloes

By [E. PARKER Hayden jr.](#), April 23, 1949

There's a small-print clause in the Cambridge liquor license which prohibits singing in public saloons. This infringement upon a fundamental right of man is most distressing; some of America's best folk music was chased down the ways with the aid of suitable refreshment. Fortunately, the advent of the Cambridge ordinance has not succeeded in extinguishing these venerable ballads. For the past three years, a group of Harvard undergraduates known as the Krokodiloes has met regularly to perpetuate the American tradition of the informal male quartet.

The Krokodiloes are far from content with "Sweet Adeline," however. In addition to chestnuts like "Johnny O'Connor," its 13 members sing modern arrangements from Tin Pan Alley, and if coaxed will even pull from the bag a garlincy Italian love song. The Kroks try to get away from run-of-the-mill college singing; their repertoire contains a wide variety of unusual numbers, each one specially arranged for the Krokodiloes with an eye to originality and entertainment.

These songs are scored mainly by three undergraduates, but the Kroks' prize arrangements come from Mr. Foster Trainer, a retired Boston businessman. Mr. Trainer appeared on the scene last December, and immediately delighted the Krokodiloes with his skill at jazz piano, and an endless store of lesser-known cabaret songs. Since then, he has contributed arrangements of everything from the saucy "Winter Nights" to the perennial "You Can Tell a Harvard Man"--all skillfully constructed with taste and contrapuntal deftness.

Rehearsals are held regularly three evenings each week in the Hasty Pudding Clubhouse. The Kroks aren't quite sure how they manage to learn a new song; for a while the Pudding barroom is pandemonium as members peck out their parts on an antique piano, cursing the over-enthusiastic arranger. Once the music is memorized, however, the rest is easy. Any Krok who has an idea or a gimmick speaks up, and the idea is tried. If the rest of the Kroks like it, it stays; if not, it is thrown out. In this way, the final interpretation represents the combined efforts of every member.

Since its organization in 1946, the group has given frequent concerts at nearby social functions, journeyed to Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, Smith, and Vassar, appeared on television, and sung in the Band concert at Symphony Hall. Plans for the future include weekly informal concerts in the Yard and at Radcliffe, and negotiations are in process to make an album of records. Best of all, the City of Cambridge is helpless--the Pudding bar still ranks as a private club.