

PROGRAM REVIEWS

EWT Unless Otherwise Indicated

Joseph Dunninger

Reviewed Friday, 6:11-6:30 p.m. Style—Mentalist. Sustaining on KYW (Philadelphia).

Strictly as a one-shot stunt, the National Concert and Artists' Corporation, New York, brought Joseph Dunninger to Philadelphia on March 5 for a unique mental telepathy test. Local radio, at least, has had in the past such experiments in magic and hypnotism, sight unseen. But this is the first time, believed to be a first for radio all over, that a mentalist was called before the mike to demonstrate his prowess.

Novelty element for such a stint is exceedingly high, and in Dunninger the broadcast offered a capable master. A vet of the vaude wheels, Dunninger has in recent years placed his magic and "mind-reading" talents on a concert basis, and it is understood that the local test was to examine the feasibility of a regular radio program highlighting his telepathic skill.

Came out on top in two tests in mind projection, and from the standpoint of the listener, chief interest was Dunninger's long-distance telepathy. Demonstrated faultlessly his ability to read the mind of the assistant managing editor of *The Philadelphia Record*, who sat at his desk in the paper's newsroom. Committee from the newspaper, in the studio, telephoned the editor, asking him to concentrate on the next edition's headline. The committee was unaware of the headline, and when it was finally disclosed as "150 Warships Built in Month," it was exactly what Dunninger had written on a slip of paper previously.

For a warmer-upper Dunninger called out, close enough, the name and address of a local citizen, selected by a committee of three, who was to receive a \$25 War Bond. Committee included prominent townfolk. No reason for listeners to doubt the veracity of the folks in the studio, considering that they accept regular commercial announcements at face value. Plucking the very thoughts of the group in the studio, in spite of the theatrical build-up, brings little excitement out of the loud-speaker. However, the telephoned telepathy is a terrific attention-getter.

To start off the experiment, staff announcer gave Dunninger a heavy word builder-upper on "mind reading" in general and the reader's accomplishments in particular.

Apart from the novel note, Dunninger definitely has something to sell for radio. Given story continuity and production body, his mentalism capabilities serve as a fertile nucleus. *Maurie Orodener.*

"Victory Caravan"

Reviewed Monday, 9:15-9:45 p.m. Style—Variety. Sustaining on WIP (Philadelphia).

The trend in radio entertainment being toward variety shows, station can take a gracious bow for whipping together this *Victory Caravan*. Apart from the fact that it listens as the brightest diversified song and melody show on local ariplanes, stanza serves double duty. Skedded for fortnightly listening, show hits the kilocycles from the Naval Hospital, providing spirit-stimulating entertainment for bed-ridden servicemen, and a rollicking half hour out of the top drawer for those seated around the parlor sets.

Talent round-up by program chief Ed Wallace hit a high-water mark for local originations. Most significant is that *Caravan* marks the return to assured vocal glory for Edythe Wright, former Tommy Dorsey canary. Gal has been in sort of hiding for several years. And she ain't done right by taking her vocal talents out of circulation. With a true torch quality to her pipes, and terrific sense of lyric projection, Miss Wright's liquid chanting dropped out of the speaker as smoothly as balsam on the ears. Took command of the mike for *That Old Black Magic* and *He's My Guy*, and it was pure vocal sorcery on both counts.

Also noteworthy was singing in romance register by baritone Jack Hunter, his warbling for *I Heard That Song Before* being the kind of voice timber that brushes against femme ears the right way.

For the jump and jive singing, also

adding much to the show's peppery pace, are The Four Blues, septa combo culled from the musical bars. Held fast to the Harlem tradition for their singing of *Ride, Red, Ride and Amen*, sprucing up the selections with their instrumental licks on guitar, vibes and string bass.

Weakest link in the talent chain, the Merry Malones, femme trio of rhythm singers. Failed to keep in step with such fast vocal company in their singing of *Misier Five by Five*, altho managing to make it thoroly rhythmic.

Last, but far from least, was the music making of Joe Frassetto and His WIP Orchestra. Save for service songs to start and shut the stanza, band confined its talents to weaving a colorful harmonic setting for the singers. Devoted to the toe-tapping rhythms, band rates at least one solo spot.

Apart from the musical and vocal talents, credit for keeping the show moving at a fast clip goes to staff announcers John Facenda and Howard Jones. In spite of some extra-corny quips in their copy, both boys are very fast on the pick-up and never let the program sag in their exchange of patter. Half hour runs out all too soon and there is enough on deck to keep up the punch for another quarter hour.

Maurie Orodener.

Victor Borge

Reviewed Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, 7-7:05 p.m. Style—Humor pianist. Sponsor—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Agency—Donahue & Coe. Station—WJZ (New York) and the Blue Network.

From the Bing Crosby program, where he was a smash, MGM brought the Danish pianist-humorist to replace Colonel Stoopnagle on its five-minute across-the-board slot. The humor is still there, as is the ability with the ivories, but the sock appeal has gone. It's pleasant but by no means "must" listening which, in view of the competition, makes this a questionable move on the part of the sponsor. Unless, of course, Metro wants to give Borge a quick build-up before spotting him in pix.

Without detracting from Borge's ability and appeal, there is no gainsaying that what was an outstanding bit on the star-studded *Kraft Music Hall* is just a quickie as now presented. If he were the type of comic who delivered a fast routine of sock belly laughs or had a full 15-minute spot the future might be brighter.

Woven thru his comedy patter are

COMMENT

Brief reviews of continuing programs and shows already reviewed which rate further mention. Basis is that one review is inadequate for a production that varies each time it is presented.

The Man Behind the Gun is a better show as a commercial than it was as a sustainer. And as a sustainer it was off the top of the deck for hard-hitting drama and suspense based on the war. Now thanks to commercials that dovetailed into the program pattern, the show is stronger, since the plugs plugged the show as well as the product, Elgin Watch. The opening mention, for example, used a dramatic bit wherein a sub loosed a trio of torpedos with the name of the product following the time check—5 second, 10 seconds, etc.—and if nothing happens after a pre-determined number of seconds, the torpedoes missed. This only whet listeners' appetite for what followed.

What followed was the story of the pharmacist's mate who performed an appendectomy while the sub was submerged in Jap waters. The factual account of this true story, as reported in the daily papers, was dramatic reading. The broadcast was even better, thanks to Ranauld MacDougall's scripting, Bill Robson's direction, Jackson Beck's narration and the expert work of the cast.

The Man Behind the Gun preemed on CBS in October of last year, was reviewed in *The Billboard* October 24, was on Wednesday evenings, is now heard on Sundays, 10:30-11 p.m. J. Walter Thompson is the agency. *L. F.*

plugs for the sponsor and product, which is okay, but someone has muffed the fact that Gracie Fields, who started this vogue for five-minute spots is a socko singer and got across in the time allotted just as she always did.

Right now the listener just about gets set when the show is all over. ("So, what the hell, tomorrow we'll listen to Fred Waring from the start and not have to move the dial.") *Lou Frankel.*

"Three-Ring Time"

Reviewed Monday, 10:30-11 p.m. Style—Variety. Sponsor—P. Ballantine & Sons. Agency—J. Walter Thompson. Station—WABC (New York) and CBS.

Guy Lombardo's ork and vocal crew and Ogden Nash, "the confused rhymster," are featured on the new Ballantine beer show which attempts to combine sweet music with wacky verse. With a good many of the younger beer drinkers gone to war, sponsor probably figures on catching older listeners with Lombardo's relaxing arrangements and encourage beer drinking at home.

The musical portion of the show took up most of the half hour, with the Lombardo repertoire ranging from *Brazil* and *There Are Such Things as Tea for Two* and *Make Believe*. Billy Leach, Rose Marie and the trio supplied the words.

Nash helped introduce the numbers and recited some of his poetry in the brief pauses between music. A few of his lines went over, but his stuff as a whole didn't take well to air. Plugs for beer were subdued and emphasized that sponsor's product fulfilled the American search for something better.

Show uses old-time formula of straight music introduced by a few witty remarks and lacks the punch that a more varied format might afford. Altho program as a whole won't cause any rush of dial twisters switching from *Information Please*, aired at the same time on NBC, it will undoubtedly please the numerous Lombardo fans who will find their favorite band back with the same musical style that has won him a large and faithful following. *Marion Radloff.*

"The Lion's Roar"

Reviewed Tuesday, 6:15-6:30 p.m. Style—Music and gossip. Sponsor—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Station—WWJ (Detroit).

This new one turned out to be an intelligently written presentation of material on current MGM films, with dialog at a minimum by subordinating it to musical recordings from the films. It carefully avoids unsatisfactory competition with any of the supertime serials by not using any dialog from the sound track.

The commentator, Herschell Hart, in

brief bits between numbers, stressed interesting facts such as the length of a Hepburn speech and the number of times another unseen character is mentioned in one film. All interesting to the average audience because of its Hollywood connotation.

Introduction and close is by the famed Leo, familiar from the sponsor's films, and Hart delivers with a pleasing deep-voiced, sincere style. *Haviland F. Reeves.*

"Boone County Jamboree"

Reviewed Saturday, 8-8:30 p.m. Style—Hillbilly. Sponsor—Pinex Company (Cough Sirup). Station—WLW (Cincinnati).

Jamboree, regular WLW Saturday night feature, now aired from Emery Auditorium, Cincinnati, and utilized the last several winters, beginning in October, to expound the cold-relieving qualities of Pinex, offers a hillbilly program predominantly on the vocal and guitar side. It's a potpourri aimed at the ruralities and makes for good early-evening listening. Commercials and announcements are brief and neatly handled by Paul Jones.

Capably and personally emceed by Bob Lacey and produced by Harold Carr, program moves rapidly. Gets under way with a neat rural arrangement of *Are You From Dixie?* by Boone County Buccaneers, who provide most of the accompaniment for the show. Sunshine Sue and Her Rangers register well in their *Hallelujah* offering, after which Joanna, rural thrush and comedienne, does nicely with *The Right Kind of Boy*.

After Emcee Lacey cleverly appeals to listeners to attend church services the following Sabbath, the Happy Valley Girls come thru in good style with the hymn, *Stumers Run to the Lord*, followed by some ace vocalizing by the Pinex Boys on *I Love You Truly*, memory song feature, the audience's hearty reception being audible over the air. Buccaneers clik with *Let's All Sing Like the Birdies Sing*, and Tiny Stoaks, in easy-to-listen vein, offers *Pioneer Mother of Mine*.

Comedy angle is supplied, but good, by Merle Travis, velled under the cognomen of Possum Gossip. Millie and Dolly Good (Girls of the Golden West) have an infectious style and do nobly with their *Night in the West*, in which they handle their own accompaniment. Show wins going away with a medley of *Deep in the Heart of Texas*, *Yellow Rose of Texas* and *Touch of Texas*. *Bob Doepker.*

Big Feuds Were Born That Way

NEW YORK, March 13.—The trend which has network comies ribbing each other's programs hit local radio when Maxine Keith, of WMCA, gave Budd Hulick, of WOR, a light needling during her program. Both Keith and Hulick do the same type of show—screwball, rib-the-sponsor stuff popularized by Henry Morgan on WOR—and air at the same hour.

Keith not only mentioned her competitor, his station and his sponsor, but she tuned in and broadcast part of Hulick's show (that's how come she was able to do the needling), during which time he got off a plug for his sponsor.

Strictly a one-way rib so far, with Hulick having no plans for similar treatment of the WMCA show. Now if only the disk jockeys would start nodding to each other it would approach Utopia.

Newscasts Direct To War Workers By Phila. WCAU

PHILADELPHIA, March 13.—With wired music now used extensively by defense industries to pep up war workers, WCAU is introducing a news service for such plants in this area. Philadelphia Navy Yard is the first to avail itself of the service, WCAU providing the public-address system with daily five-minute newscasts.

News comes to workers at the yard direct from the newsrooms at the station by wire and carried over the p.-a. system to keep all hands informed as to important developments on the war fronts. News programs spotted at 12:20 during the usual lunch hour musical program, so that it means no dropping of work to lend an ear.