

TV REVIEW

'Swinging Years' Lacks Old Zing

A lot of nostalgia was packed into "The Swinging Years" on Ford Startime over the NBC-TV network last Tuesday Night (9), 8:30-9:30 p.m. EST. The show was dedicated to the great swing bands of the late 1930's and early 1940's, and even the bands such as Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, and the Dorsey Brothers were absent, there were enough stars on hand to help recreate some of these bands and those great days. In the cast were Gene Krupa, the Bob Crosby Bobcats, Count Basie, Tex Beneke and his ork, Glen Gray and his band, the Woody Herman band, Guy Lombardo (the one sweet band), Helen O'Connell, Bob Eberle, Jack Leonard and Anita O'Day.

And the music was good, very good in fact. Ronald Regan handled his emcee chores ably, and the continuity stayed away from too much sentimentality. It is now two decades since the great days of swing, and many of the musicians looked a bit older than many swing fans remembered them, except for Helen O'Connell, who still looks as slim and pert and sings as well as she did when she had 10,000 fan clubs from coast to coast, and Anita O'Day, who also has outwitted Father Time.

But after all these things it must be said that as a TV show, "The Swinging Years" was dull stuff. The glamour, the excitement, the riots, the dancing in the streets and on the stage of the New York Paramount, the wild scramble for autographs of the Sinatras and Comos and other singers in those wild days of swing, were glossed over. A few film clips of the swingin' 30's could have added needed oomph to the show. A factual documentary of "The Swinging Years" might make the current rock and rollers appear prim youngsters indeed. Bob Rolontz.

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LEGIT REVIEW

'Sunshine' Happy Operetta Spoof

Capitol Records, which recently released the original cast recording of "Little Mary Sunshine," should have another blockbuster of an album. For the cast recording, the singing is done over full orchestra, instead of two pianos as performed in the theater.

Rick Besoyan proves an American counterpart of Sandy Wilson ("The Boy Friend"), having contributed the book and music and for the off-Broadway show which has settled down for a long run at New York's Orpheum Theater.

The show is a delightful spoof of operetta. It is excellently performed by an energetic and attractive cast with an especially standout sint by Eileen Brennan as "Little Mary." Setting for the musical is Colorado early in the 20th century, and the action involves the capture of an outlaw Indian by a group of American mounties.

In this framework, Besoyan has an opportunity to parody the music of all of the famed writers of operettas. The music and lyrics are charming. The augmented cast album perfectly captures the light-hearted flavor and mood of the very amusing and entertaining show. Howard Cook.

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CONCERT REVIEWS

Lotta Lenya in Weill Recital

Lotte Lenya, widow of composer Kurt Weill, was featured last Sunday (7) at Carnegie Hall in a concert of favorites from Weill's many musical shows, European as well as American, presented by Felix Gerstman and Gert von Gontard. The entire second half consisted of a concert version of "Threepenny Opera," performed in German.

There's no doubt, as record buyers in great numbers can attest, that Miss Lenya is the interpreter par excellence of Weill's highly stylized efforts. Her various LP's of Weill's songs and shows all have sizable sales. It must also be said that she is less effective in some types of numbers. She is at her best when "in character" as the cynical, fate-buffed females from such Weill shows as "Mahagonny" and "Threepenny Opera." Where subtler colors are called for, as in the two songs she did from "Das Beliner Requim" and some of the American shows, Miss Lenya was not always able to provide a sufficiently wide range of expression.

But when she interpreted the "Saga of Jenny," from "Lady in the Dark," or tenderly sold "September Song" from "Knickerbocker Holiday," or thrillingly interpreted the "Pirate Jenny" number from "Threepenny Opera," she was at her best. And that was untippable in this genre. Sam Chase.

New Sponsor For Clark

NEW YORK — Dick Clark's potential appearance before the Washington investigation committees evidently hasn't hurt his sponsor appeal. The Western Tablet and Stationery Corporation, Dayton, O., last week signed on as a sponsor of Clark's ABC-TV show, "American Bandstand," starting "at

the height of the late summer back-to-school season."

The firm — largest in its field — is the first company in the paper industry to launch a national TV campaign on school supplies. After a two-year survey of the TV market, Western Tablet and Stationery decided to sponsor "American Bandstand," because "we were eager to reach the greatest possible number of customers for our teenage supplies, who of course, are in the upper grammar school and high school brackets."

M-G-M Swings On 3 Fronts

NEW YORK — M-G-M Records was operating in terms of dozens this week with 12 new albums announced for immediate release and new artist pacts also amounting to an even 12. The label continued to swing in the singles field, as well, with three disks among the top eight in the current Billboard Hot 100 chart.

On the album side, there are new sets by Joni James, Tommy Edwards, orkster Robert Farnon, Debbie Reynolds, Billy Mure, Dick Hyman, Charlie Shavers, Andre Previn and David Rose and former Miss America, Bess Myerson. On the low-priced Lion label will be a set by Lani McIntire and Hal Aloma while Metrojazz will feature a new package by trombonist Melba Liston.

Quantities of album samples are going out to radio stations via distributors and a special promotion is being prepared for "Joni James Sings Irish Favorites," involving tie-ins with St. Patrick's Day celebrations from coast to coast. There will also be a volume of point of sale material made available to dealers.

In the new artist department, the company signed the Sheiks as part of a deal whereby they purchased the group's master of "Baghdad Rock." Also acquired for M-G-M were Lovelace Watkins and Johnny Russell. The subsidiary Cub label acquired U. S. distribution rights for the British disks of Adam Faith, whose initial outing, "What Do You Want," has been riding charts in England. Also new on Cub are the Crystals, Steve Karmen, the Strollers, the Hoffman Siegel Ork and Johnny Ribers.

Signed for Metro, another subsidiary, are Freddy Kelley, the Royal Jokers and Shirley Jackson.

WLW's 'Hayriders' Honor Bonnie Lou

CINCINNATI — Bonnie Lou, star of WLW's "Midwestern Hayride," was honored with a special Bonnie Lou Night Saturday (13) on the start of her ninth year with the show, which is colorcast each Saturday, 6:30 -7:30 p.m., originating in the Crosley Square studio here and fed to Crosley Broadcasting outlets in Indianapolis, Dayton, O., and Columbus, O.

A switch-hitter on both c.&w. and pops, Bonnie Lou for the last two years also has held a co-starring job with Paul Dixon on the "Paul Dixon Show," colorcast over WLW-T weekday mornings, 9-10 a.m. She also appears as a regular guest vocalist on the Ruth Lyons "50-50 Club," colorcast and aired via radio over WLW, 12 noon-1:30 p.m., Monday thru Friday, and fed to the Crosley TV outlets in Dayton, Columbus and Indianapolis.

Other regulars on "Midwestern Hayride" are Dean Richards, emcee; the Lucky Pennies, the Home-towners, the Midwesterners, Bobby Bobo, Nanch Dawn, Helen and Billy Scott and Slim and Zeke.

PICS GRABBING SAN REMO STARS

ROME — Singing stars who appeared at the San Remo Song Festival are finding a new outlet for their talents. Half a dozen new films have been started with various forms of the festival idea as part of their stories. Each features from four to six recording stars and presents a minimum of a dozen pop songs. Some are being backed by Italian disk companies.

C&W PAY-DIRT LODE

Dealer Mines Vast Grass Root Market in Chi Area

CHICAGO—Evidence of a vast subterranean market for old-style country music in Northern cities has been unearthed by a disk shop here.

Several weeks ago, Alexander's Stereo Shop, in the heart of the industrial Southwest Side, learned that a small station in a steel and oil producing suburb, WJOB, Hammond, Ind., has turned over 35 hours a week to the airing of down-home music. Its aim was to cater to the masses of Southerners who have migrated north for jobs. Alexander's bought five spot announcements a day on the distant station to advertise its stock of country disks.

New faces by the hundreds began to appear in the shop. Owner Sam Alexander began to ask customers where they lived and was surprised to learn they were coming to his neighborhood shop from Hammond, Gary and East Chicago, Ind., all southeast of the city, from western suburbs as far as 20 miles away and from all parts of

Chicago. All of them wanted "bluegrass" style records that they said they could find nowhere else. LP's on such country labels such as Starday, Hickory and Acme began to move in substantial quantities.

Alexander had begun putting together a stock of traditional country music 15 years ago when his neighborhood was a residential center for railroad workers. Many of them were transients or had been uprooted from other places. They continually asked for talents that were obscure in the North, such as the Carter Family and the Monroe Brothers. Soon Alexander had one of the best country stocks north of the Mason-Dixon line—just in time for the neighborhood to collapse as a railroad center. But by this time other country music aficionados had learned of the shop and supported the country music department.

Never, however, has there been such a rush to deplete this stock as there has been since the WJOB commercials. Today, Alexander's store manager, Dale Shonrock, spends much of his time maintaining the bluegrass music bins that include 1,500 titles of singles and 450 LP titles.

Capitol Ups Frank Brooks

HOLLYWOOD — Frank Brooks, former assistant to Capitol Records International Department Administrator Sandor Porges, last week was named assistant to International Repertoire Director Dave Dexter. Brooks will work with Dexter in selecting and producing "Capitol - of - the - World" albums and importing singles for release on the U. S. market.

His experience embraces 28 years in the record business. He joined England's Electrical and Musical Industries, Ltd., the Capitol parent firm, in 1932. His first assignment was in EMI's accounting department, later serving as Far East area manager, manager of the international records group and general export manager. He was transferred to Capitol's Hollywood Tower in July, 1958.

Capitol Signs Al Newman

HOLLYWOOD — Alfred Newman, who recorded three packages for Capitol on a free-lance basis, last week was signed by the label to an exclusive long-term pact as both a pop and classical artist. Ralph O'Connor will produce the longhair sessions while Bill Miller will handle Newman on the pop side.

During his two decades in the film city, Newman has more than 100 movie scores, 39 Academy Award nominations and eight Oscars to his credit. His current Academy Nominations include scores for "The Diary of Anne Frank" and "The Best of Everything."

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