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 Central time). The show was dedicated to the swing bands of the late 1930's and early 1940s, and even the bands such as Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, and the Dorsey Brothers were present, 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 Eberly, Jack Leonard and Anita O'Day.

And the music was good, very good, in fact. Ronald Reagan handled his emcee chores ably, and the continuity stayed away from "swinging." No one is tone-deaf enough to consider this as a great day of swing, and many of the musicians looked a bit older than any swing fans remembered them, except for Helen O'Connell and Anita O'Day, who did not have to make up for the age difference. Helen O'Connell is the only one who was on the bookings list who did when she had 10,000 fans clubs from coast to coast, and Anita O'Day was just an extra in Andy Hardy.

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 music, the dancing in the streets and on the stage of the New York Paramount, the wild scramble for autographs of the Sinatras and Coonsies 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 document of "The Swinging Years" might make for the book market and rock and rollers appear prim youngsters indeed. Bob Rollone.

** LEGIT REVIEW **

"Sunshine" Happy Operetta Spoof

Capped Records, which recently released the original cast recording of "Little Mary Sunshine," should have another block-of-the-week album. For the cast recording, the show is done over full orchestra, instead of two pianos as performed in the theater.

Rick Besanson gives an American counterpart of Sunday Wilson in "Sunshine." Besanson is being credited for his fine work in music and for the off-Broadway show which has set down a few records. He was also in "Sunshine." The show is a delightful spoof of operetta. It is excellently performed by an energetic and attractive cast with an especially outstanding effort by Helen Bremer as "Little Mary." Singing for the occasion he appeared the same day as the last number and the role involves the capture of an outlaw Indian by a group of American manatees.

In this format, Besanson has an opportunity to parody the music of all the famed writers of operettas. The music and lyrics are chirping. The augmented cast album perfectly captures the mood and gives an added charm to the music and entertaining show.

Howard Cook.

CONCERT REVIEWS

Lotta Lnena in Weil Recital

Lotta Lena, widow of composer Kurt Weill, was featured last Sunday (7) at Carnegie Hall in a concert of favorites from Weill's stage productions. The program was presented by the London Symphony conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. It included "Mack the Knife," "The Threepenny Opera," and other well-known songs.

There's no doubt, as record buyers in great numbers can attest, that Miss Lena is the interpreter par excellence of Weill's highly stylized efforts. Her various LP's of Weill songs and albums have sold in sizable sales. It must also be said that she is less effective in those types of numbers. She is at her best when in "character" as the Sygalia, fate-defeated females from such Weill shows as "Mahagonny" and "The Threepenny Opera." Where singer-coloratura comes into play, she dived from "Das Leben Requien" and some of the American shows. Miss Lena was always able to provide a sufficiently wide range of expression.

But when she interpreted the "Song of Jenny," from "Lady in the Dark," "Over the River and Through the Woods," "Climbing the Stairs," "Climbing the Stairs" and "Tiptoe Through the Tulips," thrillingly interpreted the "Pirate Jenny" from "Threepenny Opera," she was at her best. And that was the hit of the evening, perhaps the height of the late summer back-to-school season.

** C&W PAY-DIRT LODE **

Dealers Mines Vast Grass Root Market in Chi Area

CHICAGO—Evidence of a vast subterranean market for old-style country music was unearthed by a disk shop here.

Several weeks ago, Alexander's Stoner Shop, in the heart of the industrial Southwest Side, learned that a small station in a steel and oil producing suburb, WJOI, Hammond, Ind., has turned over 55 hours a week to the airing of home-style 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.

Now faced by the hundreds began to appear in the shop. Owner Sam Alexander began to ask customers where they lived to find out if they thought they could surprise them so they came to the neighborhood shop from Hammond, Gary and East Chicago, Ind., all southeast of the city, and from western suburbs as far as 20 miles away and from all parts of the Chicago area. All of them wanted "bluegrass" styles records that they could not find in the larger chain stores. LP's on such country labels as "Caddish Rock." Also began to move in substantial quantities. Alexander had been putting together a stack 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 talent from the South, the home of the Carolina and the Monroe Brothers. Sam Alexander had the one 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 others country music aficionados had learned of the shop and supported the country music department.

Never, however, has there been time to do this sort of thing already. But there has since been the WJOI commercials. Today, Alexander's store is a kind of country music record store, spends much of his time maintaining it and acquiring the disks that he has in box of 1,500 titles and 450 LP titles.

Capitol Ups Frank Brooks

HOLLYWOOD — Frank Brooks, former assistant to Capitol Records International Department Administrator Sonny Perkes, last week, was promoted to International Repertoire Director in charge of repertoire for Frank Bing in Chicago, and to American Repertoire Director in charge of repertoire to Bing. Brooks will work with Bing in selecting and producing the singer's albums and importing singles for release on the U.S. market.

Brooks' experience extends 25 years in the record business. He has worked with England's Electric and National Records, Ltd., the Capitol parent firm, in 1912. His first assignment there was as assistant to the EMI accounting department, later serving as East Europe manager, manager of the international records group and general export manager. He was transferred to Capitol's Hollywood Tower in July, 1956.

Capitol Signs Al Newman

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

During his two decades in the film city, Newman has more than 100 soundtracks for major studios, spent his time in gaining Academy Award nominations and eight Oscar citations to his credit. His current Academy Nomination include scores for "The Diary of Anne Frank," "It's a Wonderful Life" and "The Best of Everything."

New Sponsor For Clark

NEW YORK—Dick Clark's potential appearance before the Washington investigation committee investigating the networks for possible "vice appeal. The Western Station News maid story that Clark, Head of the station's parents, was dedicated to the TV bandwagon. Dick Clark plans to sponsor "American Bandstand," starting at 8:30, last week signed on as a sponsor of Clark's ABC-TV show, "American Bandstand," starting at 8:30, last week signed on as a sponsor of Clark's ABC-TV show, "American Bandstand," starting at 8:30 on 3 Fronts

NEW YORK—M-G-M Records has announced this week with 12 new albums from 12 immediately released for the first time to radio stations, amounting to an even 12. The labels were selected from the label's fields, as well as with three disks among the top eight in the current contemporary survey.

On the album side, there are two albums by Arthur Grummes, orchestra leader, Bob Flechtin, and Carrie Gross, and former member of the band. The low-priced Lid label will be sent by Lax, Schwarthe and Hal. The album is a feature of the album release by a new track by vocalist Bertha Luken.

Quantities of album samples are going out to radio stations via distributors. A live television promotion is being prepared for "Joni James: The Impossible Dream," and "Steve Lawrence: Out of This World," with the last number in the top eight on the charts.

In the new artist department, the company has signed the Sheils as part of a deal whereby they purchased the group's master of "The Shireley Jones Project" for M-G-M were Lovelese Wells and Wilbert in the story. In the story, the Sheils are signed by the Sunbeams, who have been acquired by the Sheils. The Sheils are the first number to be released by the label, and the label is the only one that has signed the group. The Sheils are the first number to be released by the label, and the label is the only one that has signed the group.

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