

Past Times

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George and Gracie's Vintage Films on VHS



MCA/Universal Home Video continues to bring forth treasures from the vault, and three recent VHS releases are early '30s romps with Burns and Allen, originally made for Paramount.

In *Here Comes Cookie* (#82718; \$14.95), Gracie's millionaire father transfers the control of his estate to her, in order to keep fortune-hunting gigolo Rafael Storm from marrying Gracie's sister (Betty Furness). Gracie misinterprets this to mean that she should spend all the money, so the gigolo can marry Sis without

getting the fortune. To that end, she takes in a whole raft of unemployed vaudevillians, and plans to produce a flop show to ensure that all the money goes down the drain. Of course, the show is a big hit, and the family's fortunes are restored. Unfortunately, Gracie is so very dumb in this film that the viewer becomes even more exasperated than the film's other characters, and only Gracie's personal charm keeps her from coming off as totally obnoxious. George B. is wonderful in this—not George Burns, who has little to do as the family's business manager—but George Barbier, who growls and grumbles magnificently as Gracie's apopleptic pa. It's also hard to dislike a film with Irving Bacon, Del Henderson, Eddie Dunn and William Gargan—and the brief moments of authentic vaudeville make us wish the filmmakers had jettisoned the plot and just filmed a revue.

Love in Bloom (#82720; \$14.95) doesn't feature the well-known song (it debuted in Bing Crosby's *She Loves Me Not*), but it does have Gracie singing "Here Comes Cookie" in a delightful opening scene. (The song is only *whistled* in the film named after it!) The story revolves around former carnival girl Dixie Lee, who's in love with struggling songwriter Joe Morrison. George and Gracie, a calliope player and a Turkish dancer in the carnival, find Dixie and ask her to help them save the faltering business. Thinking that her less than prim past might be a hindrance to Joe's career, Dixie leaves. Joe's new song becomes a hit, but he's miserable without Dixie and is determined to find her. Lee and Morrison are both personable, and George and Gracie's material is a bit more in line with their radio patter, thanks to the assistance of their longtime writer J.P. Medbury.

There are also a few moments of authentic Burns & Allen humor in *Six of a Kind* (#82721; \$14.95), even though the plot requires them to be a little irritating. The best moments are provided by the wonderful Charlie Ruggles and Mary Boland as Pinky and Flora Whinney, a couple about to drive to California for a second honeymoon. Their romantic idyll is shattered by George and Gracie, who have responded to Mrs. Whinney's newspaper ad for another couple to share the ride and expenses. W.C. Fields and Alison Skipworth are the sheriff and innkeeper in a small Nevada town where the two couples end up, thanks to a Gracie detour; Fields does his great pool-table routine, and Ms. Skipworth's dry humor is always a delight. Directed by Leo McCarey, this very funny film packs many wonderful moments into its 63 minutes. The print quality is superb on all three titles.

It's Oh So Quiet--Until Betty Hutton Sings on New CD

She's remembered primarily as the brassy heroine of '40s and early '50s films such as *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek*, *Annie Get Your Gun* and *The Greatest Show on Earth*, but Betty Hutton also had quite a career as a recording artist.

Most of her hits were made for Capitol between 1944 and '49 and are available on *Spotlight on Betty Hutton* (Capitol CDP 0777 7 89942 2 0), but she also made some fine records before and after that '40s peak, as demonstrated on the new CD *Betty Hutton: The Best of the RCA Years* (One Way Records OW34490; \$12.98).

Two of the three sides she made in 1939 while a vocalist with Vincent Lopez are here, the bouncy novelty "Igloo" and the deleted song from *The Wizard of Oz*, "The Jitterbug." Most of the other tracks—including the hilarious "It's Oh So Quiet," recently a hit again in a note-for-note remake by rock vocalist Björk—appear to have been made in May 1951 with pianist Pete Rugolo's swinging band backing Betty's cyclonic vocals. Others sound as if they might be from 1949-50 or thereabouts. There are, unfortunately, no liner notes providing information on the 15 tracks.

Most of the tracks are uptempo, and they vary from gently funny ("My Fickle Eye") to broadly zany ("Can't Stop Talking," "Orange Colored Sky"). Miss Hutton is a deft vocalist, making lightning-quick changes from sincere romantic ardor to growly goofiness while remaining true to the melody at all times.

Her years at the top were far too few, but this CD is a fine reminder of her very genuine talent. (Available at retail outlets; information: One Way Records, P.O. Box 6429, Albany NY 12206.)

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NOSTALGIA NEWSWIRE

Just as we were going to press, we learned that longtime producer **George Feltenstein** is no longer with MGM/UA Home Video—certainly sad news to those of us who have long enjoyed the expertise and creativity he brought to the firm's video releases, among them deluxe laserdisc packages such as *The Ultimate Oz* and the recent Vitaphone shorts box (reviewed in this issue). We can't reveal details of his new job, but he will continue to work in related fields; he's producing 20 CDs of vintage soundtracks for Rhino in '97. We look forward to his future projects eagerly. MGM/UA Home Video will continue to lease the video rights to the vintage MGM and Warners films from Turner/Time-Warner for the next few years, but we fear that the great days of the lavish releases—with extra goodies such as trailers, deleted scenes and additional audio tracks—are over at that firm. (The forthcoming *Golden Age of Looney Tunes Vol. 5*, for example, has been scaled back by new management, and will not have all of the rare cartoons originally planned for it.) It's hard to imagine anyone else at MGM/UA bringing as much talent and care to the home video releases of vintage films as George Feltenstein has....Jazz vibraphonist par excellence **Lionel Hampton**, now confined to a wheelchair, escaped injury from a fire in his high-rise New York apartment on January 7, but many mementos from his lengthy career weren't so fortunate....If you love the sounds of **The Mills Brothers**, you'll be happy to know that Donald Mills (last surviving member of the original quartet) and his son John are still appearing around the country; their harmonizing is lovely and the unique Mills sound comes through. Future engagements will be at the Sundome in Sun City, AZ on March 16, and a date in Merrillville, IN on April 6. Also check out **The Mills Brothers Society** c/o Daniel R. Clemson, 604 N. Market Street, Mechanicsburg PA 17055....Congratulations to **Will Friedwald**, producer of many of our favorite vintage-music CDs, whose liner notes for recent **Mel Tormé** and **Frank Sinatra** compilations have been nominated for Grammy awards....Fans of **The Three Stooges** will likely see a marketing bonanza in the next few years, now that lawsuits between the comedians' families have been resolved; a recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* noted that the stepsons of **Curly Joe DeRita** are planning Stooze-themed stores (à la The Disney Store) and restaurants; their legal representative, by the way, is **Bela Lugosi, Jr.**....In an effort to educate the net-savvy but film-history-ignorant, vintage silent shorts will be accessible on the Web starting January 22, thanks to the **American Film Institute**. The debut short is **Chaplin's The Rink**, to be followed by **Keaton, Lloyd and Griffith** classics. Access it at <http://www.afionline.org/cinema>.... **Fox Video** will release VHS cassettes of *Captain From Castille* in February, *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* in April, *Pigskin Parade* (**Judy Garland's** feature debut) in June and *Lifeboat* in December; however, planned laserdiscs of *Tales of Manhattan* and *The Gang's All Here* have been cancelled due to low pre-orders....**Kino on Video** will be releasing three features starring **Harry Langdon** on VHS cassettes; look for *Tramp Tramp Tramp*, *The Strong Man* and *Long Pants* to make their debuts in March. (You can also join the Harry Langdon Society at P.O. Box 388, Downers Grove IL 60515.) Kino will also release classic '30s and '40s British films, among them *Night Train to Munich* with Rex Harrison; *St. Martin's Lane* with Charles Laughton and Vivien Leigh; *Wings of the Morning* (the first British Technicolor film, starring Henry Fonda); *South Riding* with Ralph Richardson and Edna Best; a 1943 farce entitled *On Approval*, starring Beatrice Lillie and directed by co-star Clive Brook; and Alfred Hitchcock's *Jamaica Inn*, digitally remastered from an archival 35mm print expressly for this video release. For information: Kino on Video, 333 West 39th Street, Suite 503, New York NY 10018; (212) 629-6880 (also accessible on the Web at <http://www.kino.com>).

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CALENDAR

Please send notice of forthcoming events to: Past Times, 7308 Fillmore Drive, Buena Park CA 90620. Be sure to include a phone number for additional information.

FILM EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Cinefest 17, Four Points Convention Center, Liverpool NY, March 6-9. Includes many rare silents, early talkies; special 35mm program from UCLA Archives with guest Bob Gitt. Info: 215 Dawley Rd., Fayetteville NY 13066-2546; (315) 637-8985 evenings and weekends.

National Festival of the West, Scottsdale AZ, March 13-16. Four days of western film celebrities, movies, art, collectibles, food, costume contests. Info: P.O. Box 12966, Scottsdale AZ 85267; (602) 996-4387.

Cinevent, Radisson Hotel Columbus North, Columbus OH, May 23-26. Annual festival of silent and early sound films; huge dealer's room of movie memorabilia. May 24th will see a Vintage Poster Art auction. Info: P.O. Box 13463, Columbus OH 43213; (614) 229-3555.

MUSIC EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Richard Halpern: Master of Tin Pan Alley, Cinegrill, Hollywood CA, February 2. Cabaret singer-dancer Halpern evokes the '20s and '30s with songs of Jolson, Cantor, Brice and Tucker. Reservations: (213) 466-7000.

Atlanta Jazz Party, Doubletree Hotel, Atlanta GA, April 18-20. Jazz in the tradition of Chicago, New York and the Goodman Quartet. Info: 1301 Fort Stephenson Oval, Lookout Mountain TN 37350; (423) 821-4461.

Bessie Smith Traditional Jazz Festival, Chattanooga TN, May 2-4. Jazz fest benefits Bessie Smith Hall. Info: 1425 Heritage Landing Drive, Chattanooga TN 37405; (423) 266-0944.

Sacramento Jazz Jubilee, Sacramento CA, May 23-26. Dixie, Western Swing, Klezmer, Barbershop and other vintage styles; guests include big-band clarinetist Abe Most and Bix's Goldkette bandmate, trombonist Spiggle Willcox. Info: 2787 Del Monte Street, West Sacramento CA 95691; (916) 372-5277.

OLD-TIME RADIO EVENTS

11th Annual OTR and Nostalgia Convention, Marriott Inn, Cincinnati OH, April 18-19. Info: Bob Burchett, (606) 282-0333.

Kate Smith Festival, May 30-June 1; Info: Raymond Wood, Box 368, Jamesville NY 13078.

National Lum and Abner Society Convention, Mena AR, June 28. Info: Tim Hollis, #81 Sharon Blvd., Dora AL 35062.

COLLECTIBLE SHOWS

International Autograph Collector's Fair and Sale, Marriot North, 6650 N. Andrews Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale FL, February 23. Information: Steve Koschal, (561) 736-8409.

For a virtually complete list of vintage film and traditional music festivals, consult *The Nostalgia Entertainment Sourcebook*, available from Past Times (see page 28).

Movies

Jolie, One More Time!

Well, it's a cliché, but we truly found after listening to Rhino/Turner Classic Movies' new CD *Al Jolson at Warner Bros. 1926-1936* (R2 72544) that we ain't heard nothin' yet. That is to say, we ain't heard nothin' before this CD, which has some classic Jolson moments in absolutely pristine sound, and other songs being released on compact disc for the first time.

We recently reviewed a British CD of Jolson soundtracks called *I Love to Sing* (Jasmine JASCD 100). This and the Rhino CD compliment each other rather than compete, since the Rhino disc shares only nine titles (out of 23) with the Jasmine. However, on those nine titles, the sound quality is far superior on the new Rhino disc.

It starts off with two songs from the recently restored Vitaphone short *Al Jolson in A Plantation Act* ("April Showers" and "Rock-a-bye Your Baby"; if you want to hear "When the Red, Red, Robin," you'll have to buy the new Vitaphone 70th Anniversary laserdisc set). These are making their debut on CD, as are most of the other tracks. Next up: five songs from *The Jazz Singer*, including the epochal "Toot, Toot, Tootsie!" and "Blue Skies" which made everyone take real notice of the Talkies. The sound quality of these is stunning; they're taken from special vinyl pressings made by Victor in the early '30s when Warner Bros. decided to make a "married" negative, with the soundtrack optically printed on the film. You've never heard authentic '20s music as beautifully captured as it is here—and it's a bonus to hear Jolson performing before a live audience. Ditto for the excerpts from *The Singing Fool*, notably "The Spaniard That Blighted My Life," a great number which no longer exists in prints of the film.

Other songs from *Say It With Songs*, *Mammy*, *Big Boy*, *Go Into Your Dance* and *The Singing Kid* provide plenty of highlights, all in excellent sound quality, thanks to audio wizards Jim Bedom and Doug Schwartz. The accompanying booklet is beautifully illustrated and has some very entertaining notes by producer Ian Whitcomb, written in his usual enthusiastic and agreeably florid style. (Rhino Direct, 1-800-432-0020.)

Critics' Choice Silent Videos Warrant Criticism

Critics' Choice Home Video, a mail order firm with a healthy selection of classic films manufactured by major distributors, has recently begun an exclusive "Video Masterpiece Collection" series which includes several silent features not sold elsewhere. The source material for these VHS videocassettes derives from Killiam Shows, a firm which has been providing silent films for home, theatrical and video use since the late '40s. While it's very gratifying to see these sometimes obscure films being made available, the quality varies greatly from tape to tape, as the following four examples show.

Lilac Time (No. SKTMC004010; \$19.95) is a 1928 romantic drama of the World War I era, starring Gary Cooper as an English pilot and Colleen Moore as a French girl, who fall in love when a British airdrome is built on her family's farm. The visual quality, alas, is not good. The black and white print, with no tints or tones, is very dupey, with printed-in scratches and spots, and tight cropping that appears to be off center (the main titles have a left border cut off). The focus is soft and the contrast is a bit murky. The main titles and intertitles are not the original design, and are slightly off-balance (so, we suspect, is the entire film). There is some video "trailing" on bright subjects which move rapidly.

The film was transferred at sound speed; an organ score by Therese Meyer does include the film's hit tune "Jeannine, I Dream of Lilac Time," but the sound quality is rather fuzzy with much optical-track noise. The picture defects are especially frustrating because superior source material exists for this film. Moore's and Cooper's performances are so engaging that they can surmount the defects of this video version, but it surely isn't the best way to see this film.

World War I also provides the setting for **What Price Glory** (SKTMC004020; \$19.95), in which Captain Flagg and Sergeant Quirt (Victor McLaglen and Edmund Lowe) engage in a good-natured rivalry for the affections of the vivacious Charmaine (Dolores Del Rio, whose character's name inspired another hit song from a silent film). As the reality of the Great War becomes more grim, the officers put their jealousies aside and band together to help win the fight. The source used for this tape is a 1973 Killiam Shows print with a piano score by William Perry. The tints are happily rather subtle, without the gaudy oranges and bright blues common to Killiam "restorations." The original main titles are included; the print is not razor sharp but generally quite good, although the occasional soft focus on the edges of some shots doesn't always appear to be intentional. There's lots of rowdy comedy here, and extra surprises for lip-readers; this would've been rated R, had talkies and the ratings system been in use in 1926.

An obscure silent feature directed by John Ford in 1928, **Hangman's House** (SKTMC004022; \$19.95), has a few similarities to Ford's later classic *The Quiet Man*. June Collyer stars as an Irish lass, Connaught, whose dying father insists that she marry the man he has chosen for her. But D'Arcy (Victor McLaglen) is an evil drunkard, and only after he self-destructs can Connaught marry her true love (Larry Kent). A very young John Wayne appears as a spectator during a steeplechase race sequence. This appears to be a very nice transfer, reasonably sharp, with good contrast, no overdone tinting, and original titles. Unfortunately, the copy we viewed had tracking problems and refused to run smoothly.

Finally, Tom Mix can be seen at his peak in **Riders of the Purple Sage** (SKTMC004023; \$19.95), a 1925 Fox western in which he plays a Texas Ranger searching for his kidnapped sister. Mix's charisma and the beautiful locations make this an enjoyable 56 minutes. The Killiam print has the trademark tints; the blue used for night shots is a little extreme, but otherwise the film is in sepia tones or slightly orangey variations. The print has sharp focus, excellent contrast, and original main titles; the cropping of the image in this video transfer is a little tight, but not really a problem. William Perry provides a piano score. This was the nicest looking tape of the four (although *Hangman's House* might've been the best had our copy tracked properly).

Critics' Choice has recently added several more rare silents, including Marlene Dietrich's 1929 German feature *Ship of Lost Men*; the long lost 1915 Theda Bara epic *A Fool There Was*; a 1926 college football drama, *Brown of Harvard*, with William Haines, Mary Brian and John Wayne in a cameo; and the exotic 1927 thriller *The Love of Sunya*, starring Gloria Swanson and John Boles. We plan to review these in forthcoming issues of *Past Times*, and we hope the print quality is uniformly improved. (Critics' Choice Video, P.O. Box 749, Itasca, IL 60143-0749; (800) 367-7765.)

Gone With the Wind Score Complete on CD

Nearly 57 years after producer David O. Selznick gave us his adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's saga of the Old South, Rhino Records has released Max Steiner's immortal film score for **Gone With the Wind** (Rhino R2 72269; \$29.95) in its entirety as part of the label's ongoing "Turner Movie Music" series of definitive soundtrack reissues. Re-recordings of the score conducted by Victor Young, Al Goodman and others were released on LPs as long ago as 1954, and parts of these original soundtrack recordings were first released in 1967, to coincide with a major reissue of the film. But now the entire two and one half hour score can be heard, taken directly from the 1939 optical music masters.

The package consists of two CDs, each containing nearly 75 minutes, with the music break occurring neatly at the film's intermission point. In addition, a 52-page booklet, filled with beautiful illustrations, provides a background of the film's history.

Brief articles on Selznick and Mitchell provide an overview of how both talents were fused to make what many consider the consummate work of studio filmmaking from its golden age. But as important as these two foremost creators of the epic film are, the emphasis in this album rightly belongs to Max Steiner and his score.

Steiner had come to Hollywood and RKO pictures to recreate his stage orchestrations for the film version of *Rio Rita* in 1929. He worked closely with Selznick at RKO, and joined the producer when he formed Selznick International Pictures in 1936. However, he soon discovered that the new studio was not producing enough pictures to keep him busy. Selznick sold his contract to Warner Bros. in 1937 on the understanding that Steiner would be available to score *Gone With the Wind* and three other films.

Inasmuch as this is possibly the most famous score ever written, it seems incredible that Steiner was one of few participants in the production to go home empty-handed at *GWTW*'s Oscar triumph. (He lost out to Herbert Stothart for *The Wizard of Oz*.) But Steiner's 30-year association with Warner Bros. was triumph enough, with scores for *The Life of Emile Zola*, *Jezebel*, *Dark Victory*, *The Letter*, *Sergeant York*, *Casablanca*, *Mildred Pierce*, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and an Academy Award winning score for *Now Voyager*. He won the 1944 Oscar for Selznick's *Since You Went Away* and his "Theme from *A Summer Place*" was a best-selling record in 1959.

Despite his long association with Selznick, the partnership was fraught with friction. During *GWTW*'s production, a deluge of memos constantly spewed forth from the front office, such as "Stop having the music try to tell the dialogue, and use music for what it's supposed to be used for, which is mood." Still, the collaboration resulted in a masterful score. Period melodies by Stephen Foster and others are mixed with Steiner's original themes for the main characters. Fans will recognize the marching "Rhett Butler Theme", the graceful theme for Melanie, the rollicking music for Mammy, and gentle "Belle Watling Theme". There are contrasting themes for the love of "Ashley and Scarlett" and "Ashley and Melanie," the former yearning, the latter soaring. And, of course, there's the majestic "Tara Theme," which until *Star Wars* had no rival as the most famous dramatic theme ever written.

Jeffrey Selznick, in his introduction tells how these tracks, once though lost, were discovered while organizing his father's film vaults following his death in 1965. "Amazingly," he says, 36 of 37 cans of master music negative had survived." He doesn't say which segment of music did not survive; however, during a portion of the "Death of Melanie" selection, sounds of clothes rustling can be heard, suggesting that portions of this cut were taken from the "international tracks" (music and effects, without dialogue) made for foreign language prints.

The sound has been digitally remastered and is presented in its original monaural form. Given its age, it sounds fine and this CD gives it a bright immediacy lost in the 1967 stereo "enhancement". The 56 tracks are listed in the booklet, and Rudy Behlmer contributes an outline of the various themes and period melodies contained therein. (This in addition to his concise yet full history of the film's production.)

Producers George Feltenstein and Bradley Flanagan are to be congratulated on another remarkable achievement; if such a release is long overdue, it was well worth the wait. This package is a must for *GWTW* fans; it's a beautiful presentation of Golden-Age Hollywood's best-loved film score and an aural recollection of its greatest achievement.

—Rob Ray

Steiner: None Finer

Max Steiner was a mighty prolific film composer; in 1939 alone he worked on twelve scores—among them *Intermezzo*, *Each Dawn I Die*, *Daughters Courageous*, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *The Oklahoma Kid*, *Dark Victory* and, of course, *Gone With the Wind*. Another memorable Steiner score of '39 was written for Warner Bros.' Technicolor Western epic, *Dodge City*, directed by Michael Curtiz and starring Errol Flynn and Olivia De Havilland.



If the new two-CD soundtrack of *Gone With the Wind* whets your appetite for more Max Steiner, you'll be happy to know that *Dodge City* (SPFM CD 103) is newly available in a limited edition from

the Society for the Preservation of Film Music. Lovingly transferred by audio engineer Chris Lembesis from the original 12" acetates, the sound quality is superb. Steiner's bravura score, orchestrated for the magnificent WB orchestra by Hugo Friedhofer, leaps and bounds out of your speakers with such impact that you might think you've turned into Errol Flynn.

Steiner's music may be dramatic, romantic or comic, but it's *always* intense. Steiner paints every scene with a vivid hue no matter what its mood; proof of that is in track 9, which in 4 minutes ranges from the almost deliriously happy "The Children" to the sprightly but intensely romantic "Abbie" to the overwhelming "The Fight." This may not be the ideal music to play around the office, but as a musical narrative it's very effective. The informative notes are by James V. D'Arc, curator of the Max Steiner Collection at Brigham Young University. This is a beautifully realized project, and we hope that further entries soon follow. (For information, write the Society for the Preservation of Film Music, P.O. Box 93536, Hollywood CA 90093-9536.)

Soon forthcoming will be a limited edition CD of another epic Steiner score that for *The Searchers* (1956). The 65 minute disc will include a 32-page booklet with extensive notes and rare photos. Info: Brigham Young Univ. Film Music Archive, P.O. Box 26877, Provo UT 84602.

Garland Gems Unearthed

We must sound mighty monotonous in our hoorays and hosannahs for the Rhino/Turner Classic Movies series of compact discs which revisit (and in most cases, make available for the first time) music from classic MGM and Warner Bros. films—but each entry in the series is so splendid, what else can one do but cheer?

The latest case in point is **Judy Garland: Collectors' Gems From the MGM Films** (Rhino/TCM R2 72543; \$29.98), a two-disc, 46-track set which consists almost entirely of previously unreleased material.

Not too many of the songs in this set are what you'd call standards, although Judy does perform "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen" (from 1938's *Love Finds Andy Hardy*), "Singin' in the Rain" (recorded for 1940's *Little Nellie Kelly*), and a *Presenting Lily Mars* medley of vintage hits. The collection concludes with eight tracks which Judy recorded for the film of *Annie Get Your Gun*, ultimately completed with Betty Hutton recast in the lead.

While several of the songs are obscure to all but the most devoted Garland fans, there's not a track that isn't a joy to hear. Many of them have never before escaped from the studio vaults—among them "Sun Showers" (deleted from *Thoroughbreds Don't Cry*), "All I Do is Dream of You" (cut from *Andy Hardy Meets Debutante*) and "We Must Have Music" (left out of *Ziegfeld Girl*). Several of the songs which did make it into the finished films are heard here in alternate arrangements: "Zing! Went the Strings Of My Heart"—performed as a ballad in *Listen, Darling*—is given an uptempo treatment here. Sixteen of the tracks have been remixed into true stereo from multiple monaural recordings of a given performance, made simultaneously but "miked" from different perspectives.

As usual, the booklet documents the history of the films and recordings thoroughly, with Garland expert supreme John Fricke providing a history and appreciation of her career, and George Feltenstein giving us a very detailed—and very entertaining—account of the films, focusing on the deleted or otherwise unusual sequences. Feltenstein and co-producer Bradley Flanagan have, yet again, given vintage-musical fans another treasure, and we'll keep praising them as long as they keep producing them. (Available from Rhino, (800) 432-0020.)

Korngold, *Robin Hood* and Flynn on CD

Prolific as he was, Max Steiner was not the only composer at Warner Bros. during the '30s and '40s. Many other fine scores from the same studio and era are revisited in the new Rhino Records 2-CD set **Erich Wolfgang Korngold: The Warner Bros. Years** (R2 72243; \$29.98). Sixteen films are represented in 61 tracks on the two discs; they range from early classics such as *Captain Blood* and *Anthony Adverse* (both of which won Oscars for Korngold) to later titles such as *Devotion* and *Deception*. Occasionally, the selections are brief cues (the 22-second "Coronation" from *Prince and the Pauper*, or 16 seconds of fanfares from *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*), but more frequently the tracks run between two and four minutes and describe an entire sequence. The original tracks were rescued from a Warners house-cleaning by the composer's son, George, and exist now only on quarter-inch tape; the sound is still fine. (Available from Rhino Direct, (800) 432-0020.)

Korngold had an epic, exuberant, operatic style, and for good reason—he had been a composer of operas in Vienna until being brought to Hollywood by producer Max Reinhardt to arrange and conduct the score for Warners' *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1935. Korngold won acclaim for his work and began working more frequently in Hollywood, although still thinking of himself as being based in Vienna, and not a mere "film composer." World events in 1938 changed matters, and Korngold settled down in California for an extended stay, occasionally conducting selections from his film scores in concert.

One of those concerts was a suite from the *Robin Hood* score, broadcast by NBC in May 1938 and narrated by Basil Rathbone. It can be heard on **The Adventures of Robin Hood/Requiem for a Cavalier** (Facet 8104; \$9.98), a compact disc which combines the half-hour program with a radio documentary about Errol Flynn, narrated and produced by Tony Thomas—who, with Marilee Bradford, is also co-producer of the Rhino Korngold set. Flynn comments wryly on his career in an interview from February 1958, and is remembered by friends such as David Niven and director Vincent Sherman. It's an insightful tribute to a man who was more complex, and more talented, than he let on. (Available from Delos International, 1645 N. Vine Street, Suite 340, Hollywood CA 90028; (213) 962-2626.)

A History of *Real* Film Piracy

If the recent release on video of Douglas Fairbanks' *The Black Pirate* has left you eager for more adventure on the high seas, you'd do well to consult James Robert Parish's recent book **Pirates and Seafaring Swashbucklers on the Hollywood Screen** (McFarland & Co., 228 pages, hardcover; \$42.95 postpaid).

The book provides very detailed credits and plot information for 137 features, from 1914's four-reel epic *The Corsair* to Disney's 1992 feature comedy *Captain Ron*. Even made-for-TV movies are included, so the book appears to be all-inclusive for feature-length films. Unfortunately, no shorts are among the entries, so don't look for Harold Lloyd's *Captain Kidd's Kids*, Our Gang's *Shiver My Timbers*, and, no doubt, a number of early dramatic shorts with a pirate theme. However, serials such as Universal's 1934 *Pirate Treasure* and Columbia's 1938 *The Secret of Treasure Island* are included.

Parish provides a chronology at the book's outset, which is very helpful in tracking the rise and fall in popularity of the genre over the years. (This is a feature which we'd like to see more frequently in books about a given film genre.) The pirate movie has gone through several cycles of popularity over the years; in the silent era, 42 related features were produced, most of them in 1917-18 and 1926. The genre had another lengthy revival in 1950-54, and has limped along (with one wooden leg, we gather) to the present day. Parish's introduction is also absorbing; he succinctly details the history of piracy, assesses its popularity as a subject for fiction, and gives an overview of the film genre's trends. Sadly, there are no illustrations, but there is a full index.

Parish chronicles the films in admirable detail, giving actor and character names, lengthy accounts of the plots, generous quotes from period reviews, and background information about the stars and each production. We'd love to see *Clothes Make the Pirate*, a 1925 First National feature starring Leon Errol and Dorothy Gish, or *The River Pirate*, a 1928 Fox epic with Victor McLaglen and Donald Crisp. If the opportunity to see these doesn't arise, at least Mr. Parish's written accounts make for absorbing reading. (McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (919) 246-4460.)

Tex Avery: (Not So) Still Life

Tex Avery's cartoons are zany, violent, breathtaking, and so dynamic that a sense of their swift exuberance can be gleaned just by looking at preparatory drawings for the films—a whole gorgeous truckload of which can be found in John Canemaker's new book **Tex Avery: The Great Animation Director From the Golden Age of the Hollywood Cartoon** (Turner Publishing; 224 pages, hardcover; \$34.95).

The book focuses on Avery's peak years, his tenure at MGM from 1942 to 1955. Avery had worked at Warner Bros. from 1936 to '42 and had crystallized the personalities of Daffy Duck and Bugs Bunny, but never really hit his stride before entering the domain of Leo the Lion. The bigger budgets and fuller animation made all the difference for a precision craftsman such as Avery, whose humor needed not just split-second timing, but one-twenty-fourth-of-a-second timing.



Even without the benefit of 24 frames per second and the snappy scores of Scott Bradley, Avery's characters practically leap off the page. The paranoia of the *Slap Happy Lion*, *Screwy Squirrel's Happy-Go-Nutty* attitude, and the malevolence of the *King Size Canary* are vividly conveyed in a cornucopia of pencil sketches, original cel paintings, model sheets, backgrounds, promotional drawings, frame blow-ups and posters which prove the brilliance of Avery's animators and artists.

After Canemaker's concise biographical essay, the book progresses through Avery's MGM tenure with a brief but illuminating description of each year's output. The beautifully reproduced artworks come from a variety of auction houses and private collections. Pierre Lambert assembled the illustrations and provided many of them, and Chuck Jones and William Hanna, contributed introductory pieces. The book has a listing of credits for Avery's MGM films (but not for his Warners or Walter Lantz epics; for that, you'll have to see Joe Adamson's *Tex Avery: King of Cartoons*, published by Da Capo). Avery was notoriously insecure about his work, but this book affirms the greatness of his legacy.

Betty Boop Strips! (Comic Strips, That Is)

By Joe Moore



in 1986-87 reprinted 18 months of 1935-36 Sunday strips (again in black and white, and reduced) as well as four months of the daily strip.

The latest reprint is **Betty Boop's Sunday Best: The Complete Color Comic 1934-1936** by Max Fleischer; edited by Bill Blackbeard (Kitchen Sink Press; 112 pages, full color; \$19.95, paperback; \$34.95, limited edition hardcover.) It is easily the most attractive yet, which is not surprising, considering the consistent high quality of Kitchen Sink's previous comic strip reprint collections of *Li'l Abner*, *Steve Canyon*, *Alley Oop*, *Batman* and others. The beautiful cover illustration by Fleischer biographer Leslie Cabarga is almost worth the price by itself as we see Betty reclining in bed, looking sweet and sexy in all her airbrushed glory.

Inside, an informative introduction to Ms. Boop by comics historian Bill Blackbeard provides background on Betty's screen and newsprint careers. Next, we see some Sunday samples of two short-lived but intriguing strips: *Out of the Inkwell*, featuring Betty's animated pal and predecessor Koko the Clown, and a strip showcasing the real-life Boop inspiration, Helen Kane, entitled *The Original Boop-Boop-a-Doop Girl*. The latter, judging from the sampling, is actually a bit better than Betty's strip in this author's opinion.

Part of the problem with the *Betty Boop* strip is that although Betty's popularity took off soon after her screen debut in 1930, it was several years before she made what would seem to be a natural transition to the printed page. Apparently delays were caused by Helen Kane's suit against Fleischer over the character, and by Fleischer's high asking price for comic strip rights. Just as negotiations were finally being completed for her strip debut, Betty's screen character was beginning to undergo the transformation wrought by the strict motion picture code adopted in 1934. All of Betty's winsome sexiness was to vanish, along with her buddies Koko and Bimbo. The cartoons became very saccharine, and although Betty lasted on screen to the end of the decade, little of the old Boop was left when she took her last animated breath.

So, none of Betty's sexy escapades were allowed into the strip (aside from her provocative costumes, which probably would have gone too if the strip had lasted longer). There are none of the surreal images which had marked her early film adventures. Instead, Betty of the printed page is (surprise!) a Hollywood star. Not much is done with the concept, either, and Betty has to share much of the space with supporting characters like her Aunt Tillie and little brother Bubby Boop, who eventually dominate the strip with pedestrian gags much as the screen Boop was usurped by the oh-so-cute Pudgy.



Continued on Page 3

PRODUCTION #1
"SNOW WHITE"
COMPARATIVE SIZES
DWARFS AND SNOW WHITE

NOTE:
DOE IS ABOUT
1/4 HEAD TALLER
THAN ALL OTHER
DWARFS -



A model sheet for Snow White
(©Walt Disney Productions)

Walt Disney, Master Chef

*The following is an excerpt from David Koenig's **Mouse Under Glass**, due soon from Bonaventure Press (P.O. Box 51961, Irvine CA 92619). Mr. Koenig analyzes the making of the classic Disney features, likening Walt to a Master Chef. In this excerpt, he details the studio's modus operandi.*

Through the 1920s and early 1930s, Walt Disney pioneered, popularized and revolutionized animation. Viewing the fledgling medium not as a novelty but as serious entertainment on par with the live action comedies of Charlie Chaplin, he introduced careful planning and meticulous attention to detail in every phase of producing his cartoons.

The quality gap between Disney cartoons and the primitive products of other studios was not lost on audiences, who demanded movie theaters show only Disney, giving rise to the slogan, "What—no Mickey Mouse?" Noted the late Dick Huemer, who animated his first character for the Raoul Barre Studio in 1916: "Disney was the first person who really analyzed cartoon action. Old animation was done from pose to pose without much thought. It was almost like it was a design. Without any weight. Whereas Disney immediately gave his characters weight, and life and breath, and naturalness. In Disney, it flowed from thing to thing, and (other studios') stuff went from extreme to extreme."

While live action studio heads looked down on Disney, calling him the "Mickey Mouse Man," Walt tried to bring respect to the craft of animation. But, into the 1930s, even live action shorts were looked down upon. One by one, the movies' great comedians made the switch to features. Chaplin hadn't released a short since 1923. If anybody could make a 90-minute cartoon, it was Disney.

He saw feature length as another way to make his work better. Storyman Joe Grant, who started at the Disney Studios in the early 1930s and still reported to work five days a week at age 87, remembers, "When he first started as a young man, he did a series of Alice comedies, then *Flowers and Trees* and other Silly Symphonies. Everything became something else: the Silly Symphonies became *Fantasia*, Alice became *Alice in Wonderland*. Everything had some connection to his past, something he wanted to complete."

But could Walt sustain an audience's attention, let alone entertain them, for more than ten times the length of his other cartoons? "*Snow White* was his adventure," Grant recalls. "People were afraid the audience would run into the lobby, that an hour of color would make them dizzy." The actual repercussions of his experiment were far more profound.

Nowadays, more people are familiar with the Disney Version than the classic tale that inspired it. Walt's first step in making a Disney adaptation was to disassemble the story to locate its heart—and if it didn't have one, to install one.

In an entertaining way, Disney's movies would teach a life lesson about honesty, responsibility, or some other core value.

"Walt felt every story should have a moral," explains Joe Grant. "Then you had to create reasons for each character to act a particular way. You introduced humor, and so on."

After adapting or creating and then fleshing out the characters, the writers and sketch artists went to work on the story, piling idea on top of idea. The picture grew like a snowball, drifting into often unexpected directions.

Since an animated story is best told visually, the writing process traditionally began with a basic treatment followed not by assigning a screenwriter to draft a full screenplay, but by pinning series of drawings and captions onto six-foot sheets of corkboard. These "storyboards" helped everyone to better visualize characters and sequences and allowed ideas to be easily added, subtracted or rearranged.

Visual impact was always a higher priority for Walt than the story. During planning for one picture, after viewing more than half the storyboards, volatile animator Milt Kahl exploded, "Come on, Walt, what the hell's the story about?" "Don't worry about it," Walt replied. "It'll come."

"One of (Walt's) tricks was to never leave a thing until it had been milked in every possible way, and worked out in the best possible way no matter how much time it took or how much money it cost. He built his pictures that way," according to Dick Huemer. "He made many sequences just to see if they would work. Even though they weren't essential to the story, he'd go ahead just to see, to try, always to try for the touchdown play."

Disney held gag contests, offering cash prizes to anyone who could come up with funny bits that got used. Week after week, the studio gardener went home with the most money. (He never became a gag man because, according to Huemer, he was a heck of a gardener.)

Walt served not only as participant but also judge and jury. "The story for *Snow White*, in a sense, was written in Walt Disney's head," Joe Grant says. "He was a storyteller, and he'd go from room to room. Everybody knows the story; it's a simple outline. But as Walt went he added the Dwarfs and so on.

"That method died with him. Today, the writers in here—we use them up like Kleenex. Walt's control was total. Nothing got too far away from him. In order for Walt to put his thumb on everything, he had separate departments. He had to know where everything was." Usually that meant going through everyone's work after they had gone home, sometimes salvaging crumpled-up drawings from their wastebaskets.

Huemer recalled, "He was always working on story. He was forever picking your brain, even if you were at a social affair with him or something. Anything you said he'd be listening to, cocking his ear, you know, and remembering everything you said with that marvelous brain that never forgot a thing. Not a single thing!

"This I venture to guess was at the core of his genius, this wonderful memory, and, of course, his way of reaching back into that memory and picking out things and applying them right to the heart of any subject. He could go right to the nub of the problem, no matter what it was. Nothing was too small for him to venture an opinion on and his was generally the best one."

Remembering Silent Comedienne Laura La Plante

By Jordan R. Young

Laura La Plante, who died last October 14 (two weeks shy of her 92nd birthday), is best remembered for her light comedy roles in pictures like *Skinner's Dress Suit* with Reginald Denny, and the 1927 "old dark house" classic, *The Cat and the Canary*. She was a rare bird in the silent era.

Unlike many of her fellow actresses, her "girl next door" image was not a manufactured one. "Kellogg's cereal put up a huge billboard of me, calling me 'The Typical American Girl.' I suppose I was more or less typical," she recalled. "I was very, very unsophisticated. I tried to be as natural as possible."

La Plante was born in St. Louis, November 1, 1904. She was a naive schoolgirl when she made her movie debut as an extra in 1918. Twelve years later she was earning \$3500 a week at Universal when she quit because "I just didn't want to work any more. I didn't really walk out on my contract [as has been reported], I just got tired."

Among her silent films were *The Old Swimmin' Hole* with Charles Ray, *The Ramblin' Kid* with Hoot Gibson, *Sporting Youth* with Denny, *Poker Faces* with Edward Everett Horton, and her personal favorite, *Finders Keepers* with Johnny Harron. She departed from her wholesome blonde look as the brunette Magnolia in the 1929 *Show Boat*.

After leaving Universal, she divorced her first husband, director William Seiter, and in 1934 married producer Irving Asher. They made their home for several years in London, where La Plante kept busy with stage and film work until she retired to raise a family. She returned to the stage in 1956 to "redeem myself," appearing in a series of stage vehicles with Horton, including *The White Sheep of the Family* and his oft-revived *Springtime for Henry*. On screen, she played Betty Hutton's mother in *Spring Reunion*, prompting more than one observer to remark that she looked too young for the role.

Not long after I interviewed Laura La Plante in 1978 at her home in Rancho Mirage, California, she was spotlighted in a *Life* magazine feature on former screen stars. She was not happy with the result: "It didn't occur to me that they were going to use a picture of you as you were in your youth, and a big color one of you as you are now. I wouldn't have been caught dead in that photograph if I could have avoided it."

My family came from Missouri. I was going to school in San Diego, California, and I had a cousin in Hollywood, so I came up for the school holidays. I was not quite 14. My cousin saw an ad in the paper for children to be in a crowd scene in a film, so I went down and I was in that.

Later my cousin moved to a house around the corner from Christie Studios. She said, "Just walk down there and ask them if they need anybody." So I went down to the studio offices and I saw a woman in a little cubbyhole. I said, "I came to see if anybody needed anybody in a film." A man came running out and said one of the bridesmaids didn't show up for a wedding scene. He sent me over to wardrobe and told them to put my hair up, to make me look more grown up; I was still only 14. I didn't even know where the

camera was — the first thing I did was walk right through the background of a shot while they were filming.

I worked two or three days on the first picture there, at \$ a day. I kept going down to the studio and they put me in things. One day I saw Al Christie talking to a carpenter and I went over and said, "Hey, how do you get in stock around here?" He said, "From now on, you're in it — Monday through Friday." In stock I was guaranteed five days a week. Al Christie was often down on the set to see how things were going. One time he went over to Dorothy Devore and put his arm around her and gave her a tight squeeze and whispered something in her ear. I thought that was absolutely lewd; I thought Christie Studios was really a den of iniquity. But he was just giving her a friendly hug.

I was The Baby at Christie. Al called me that. We used to put on our own makeup there — it was long before they had an

rules about that. I think I got an agent while I was there. I didn't think about being a star; I was just starstruck, but I was usually by the camera watching other people's scenes.

I felt I was doing satisfactory as long as they didn't throw me out. Eventually I began to get a little confidence in myself; I was getting the approval of others. I started getting interested in getting better parts; I figured it was a better way to make a living than working in a department store and it was more fun.

Christie specialized in domestic comedies. They didn't do any slapstick. Their two-reelers were quality films; they were the elite of that type of comedy. The films were broad, but not nearly as crude as Mack Sennett Comedies. They used to have the men do a "double wings" where they

fall down, jump up and kick their legs out — they'd say, "do double wings and scam." What was special about the silent film was the pantomime. You had to get over the story without words. The scripts actually had dialog in those days. We didn't learn our lines but we got over the idea. The director gave us the situation who said what to who, and we pretty much conveyed it.

After Christie I did two-reel westerns over at Universal. Then I was signed to a five-year contract there. I was absolutely thrilled to come home and tell the family I was making \$25 a week. I got up as high as \$3500 a week at Universal. The idea that anybody would pay me that much was paralyzing. I didn't have anything to say about what films I did, or script approval — I was being paid, and I did what they told me.

Irving Thalberg, who was Carl Laemmle's secretary at Universal, was the one who suggested they sign me. Later when I went to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer he wanted me to go with him and said I was under contract, and he said, "We'll fix that." I didn't know he was going to buy out the contract; I thought it was something crooked. MGM wanted to develop me into a big star. You were yourself at Universal; there was no encouragement to develop as an actress, to take singing or dancing lessons. I'm sure I misunderstood Thalberg. But I felt I was honorbound; I thought he was asking me to do something shady. Talk about the age of innocence!

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Keeping the Movies Clean

Despite the existence of some surprisingly racy vintage films from the “pre-Code” era—the period before the Production Code was enforced in 1934—the Catholic Church’s battle to suppress objectionable films began early in the century, as detailed by Frank Walsh in his recent book **Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry** (Yale University Press; 385 pages, hardcover; \$28.50).

The Arbuckle, Reid and Taylor scandals of the early ‘20s prompted motion picture producers to install Will Hays, formerly Harding’s postmaster general, as the head of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. While appearing to be a guardian of the public’s morals, Hays actually worked to block a national trend toward state censorship, so that the producers would retain the ability to police themselves. The MPPDA’s Production Code was instigated on March 31, 1930, and it was largely formulated by leading Chicago Catholics.

For the next few years, however, the Code had virtually no effect on motion picture content. Cecil B. DeMille’s 1932 epic *The Sign of the Cross* contained a number of gratuitous scenes which the church considered lewd, and church leaders began complaining that Hays had betrayed them. Hays installed a tough, no-nonsense Irish Catholic, Joe Breen, to help producers eliminate the objectionable elements from their scripts. Furthermore, the Legion of Decency was formed on April 11, 1934, a Catholic group which systematically rated films’ morality. A ban on any film by the Legion would spell financial disaster, and so producers finally decided to get serious about cleaning up the movies. In July 1934, the new Production Code Administration, headed by Breen, went into effect. From this period through the late ‘40s, the combined efforts of the Legion of Decency and Breen’s PCA ensured that movies were wholesome.

Walsh’s text is very well researched, and it’s surprisingly absorbing. Some of the battles waged seem pretty trivial today; it’s easy to see why after World War II, more sophisticated audiences sought grittier pictures, and the Legion began losing its influence. While understanding the desire for film censorship, Walsh warns that sometimes the cure was worse than the disease. (Yale University Press, 302 Temple Street, New Haven CT 06511.)



publications in his quest for art not intended for public consumption. Among the highlights: Aubrey Beardsley-inspired drawings from the ‘20s; Al Hirschfeld’s caricature of the Marx Brothers; Albert Vargas’ pastel of Shirley Temple; Norman Rockwell’s sketch of Gary Cooper; Jacques Kapralik’s fabric-and-paper collages of ‘40s MGM stars. Biographical sketches of the artists are an unexpected bonus. One wishes there were more — I’ve got fabulous remnants from shredded exhibitor’s journals in my own collection, so I know this is the proverbial tip of the iceberg — but this 192-page compilation is a tasty appetizer.

New York to Hollywood: The Photography of Karl Struss by Barbara McCandless, Bonnie Yochelson and Richard Koszarski (University of New Mexico Press, \$35 paper; \$60 cloth) surveys the work of a consummate artist who was a master of still photography as well as cinematography. Karl Struss (1886-1981) was a successful commercial photographer before he “went Hollywood” in 1919 and began anew, shooting promotional portraits for Cecil B. De Mille. He shared the first Academy Award for cinematography with Charles Rosher for their stunning work on F.W. Murnau’s *Sunrise* and photographed over 100 films in all, including Fred Niblo’s *Ben Hur* (second unit, including the chariot race, which he shot with a special newsreel camera), Mary Pickford’s *Coquette* (she chose him to replace Rosher, whom Struss later criticized for “putting her in a rut in how she had to look”), D.W. Griffith’s *Lady of the Pavements*, Mamoulian’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; and later classics such as *Journey Into Fear*, *Limelight* and *The Fly* (which he felt was “just plain ridiculous”). Koszarski details Struss’ innovations in lighting, early talkies, Technicolor, widescreen, 3-D and TV commercials, and provides a detailed filmography. This handsome retrospective is illustrated with Struss’ artistry throughout; the dazzling portraits of Gloria Swanson and other stars are less surprising than his earlier New York pictorial work, including the 1910-17 experiments in color.

Chasen’s: Where Hollywood Dined by Betty Goodwin (Angel City Press, \$18.95 cloth) chronicles the legacy of restaurateur to the stars Dave Chasen, who emigrated as a boy from Odessa, Russia, with his parents and won his first renown as second banana to vaudeville comedian Joe Cook. The team enjoyed success on Broadway and headlined a Frank Capra film before Cook fell ill and died, whereupon Chasen parlayed his talent for concocting backstage chili into a new career. Capra’s fireplace became Chasen’s personal barbecue pit while the latter fine-tuned his recipes (the director’s wife, Lucille, filled in as a dishwasher when the establishment was short-handed in its early years). The recipe for Dave’s chili — once so closely guarded that Eleanor Roosevelt’s request for it was refused — is reprinted here, along with many others. (A bowl sold for two bits when the famed eatery first opened in 1936; Jack Benny liked it so much he bought it by the quart).

Hollywood Haunted: A Ghostly Tour of Filmland by Laurie Jacobson and Marc Wanamaker (Angel City Press, \$16.95 cloth) provides a paranormal twist on “lives of the rich and famous.” Did the ghost of Clifton Webb haunt his former house in Beverly Hills (which he bought from character actor Gene Lockhart)? Did Bela Lugosi’s hearse pass his beloved Hollywood & Vine intersection — where the apparition of Lon Chaney Sr. was often sighted after his death — by intervention from beyond the grave? Does the spirit of pioneer film producer Thomas Ince prowl his old studio lot? There’s a ghost of a chance.

— Jordan R. Young

Movie Bookshelf

The Lost Artwork of Hollywood

by Fred E. Basten (Watson-Guptill, \$40 cloth) is a cornucopia of obscure, seldom-seen advertisements and illustrations culled from the pages of vintage trade journals. If you’ve ever had the opportunity to look at old magazines that were designed to promote movies within the industry — such as those in the archives of various motion picture libraries — you have a rough idea of this book’s contents. If not, you’re in for an even bigger treat. Basten has combed through *Variety*, *Hollywood Reporter*, *Motion Picture Daily*, *Moving Picture World* and other

Film's First Preservationists

Before cable television, video tapes and laserdiscs provided a financial incentive for movie studios to preserve their films, not much reason was seen for keeping a movie around past its initial release. Many of the studios were almost criminal in their treatment of old films. Fortunately, there were a few wise men and women who, often at odds with the studios, took it upon themselves to preserve our rich film heritage.

In Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives (BFI Publishing; 176 pages, hardcover, \$45; softcover, \$21.95) Penelope Houston traces the evolution of film archives from their beginnings and struggles, up to the present and continuing struggles. It is an often disturbing study of waste, missed opportunity, politics, and battling egos. Ms. Houston was the long-time editor of the British Film Institute's magazine *Sight and Sound* and centers much of her study around the BFI's National Film and Television Archive. She does so not because the NFTA is a typical archive (there really is no such thing), but because it is the one with which she is most familiar.

The first half of the book centers around two major figures of the early film preservation movement: England's Ernest Lindgren and France's Henri Langlois. Lindgren established the British National Film Library (an earlier name for the NFTA) and Langlois was the driving force behind the Paris-based Cinematheque Francaise. Lindgren strove to select films, catalog them, preserve them and keep them safely stored. Conversely, Langlois was much less discriminating in what he acquired, neglected proper storage of the films and was secretive about what films he had, but was always eager to put on a program of films. While Langlois was guilty of shoddy archival practices, he was well before his time in believing that the films in the archives should not just be stored away, but shown, even exploited—now common practice. In comparing the two men, Ms. Houston most often sides with Lindgren, with whom she worked at the BFI.

The remainder of the book takes a look at some of the other film archives and current issues concerning film preservation. The book lacks the passion of Anthony Slide's *Nitrate Won't Wait* and the practicality of Paolo Cherchi Usai's *Burning Passions*; while Ms. Houston's writing is a bit dry, it sheds much light on how film archives have arrived at their present state. A useful appendix lists the total number of films held by each archive and what percentage of its home country's product is maintained in its collection.

—Rob Stone

Vitaphone Shorts Too Marvelous For Words

In our last issue, we were eagerly anticipating MGM/UA Home Video's new **Cavalcade of Vitaphone Shorts, Vol. II** (ML 105220; \$139.98). The set has finally arrived, and we're thrilled with it. Producer George Feltenstein has skillfully chosen a program which includes vaudeville acts, dance bands, vintage comedy and radio stars, a lot of them in films which, for the most part, haven't been seen in decades.

We knew this set was going to be wonderful, but it still yielded a number of happy surprises. Enthusiasts of 1920s hot jazz will be thrilled to watch Gus Arnheim's band in two shorts which demonstrate the visual aspects of a '20s band performance. (Percussionists of that period play in an entirely different style, and often with different equipment, from drummers of today.) One short for which we're particularly grateful is *Stoll, Flynn and Company in The Jazzmania Quintet* from 1928, which features jazz violinist Georgie Stoll and his superb little combo (stand-up bass, piano and a guy playing a single drum cymbal). It brings home the fact that this music not only sounds different from jazz of the swing era and beyond, it *looks* different. All-girl bands appear in surprising abundance here, with the astonishing Ingenues (not just a great all-girl band, but a great band), Green's Twentieth Century Faydetts, Frances Carroll and the Coquettes, and Phil Spitalny's Musical Queen.

Of course, there are great performers whose art survives in its purest form in these short films. The long-lost *Al Jolson in A Plantation Act* from 1926 provides a better example than any other film of Jolson's mesmerizing power onstage. Baby Rose Marie is indeed *The Child Wonder* as the six year old pours her heart into songs with all the finesse of a lifelong trouser. Burns and Allen prove themselves not just fine comedians but excellent dancers in *Lambchops* from 1929. Vivian and Rosetta Duncan might be a tad too old to play college girls, but the 1935 short included here preserves their "Topsy and Eva" routine, their gorgeous singing voices, and several moments of inspired comedy.

Sound on disc: a vintage Vitaphone label



Radio performers of the early '30s make rare onscreen appearances in three *Rambling 'Round Radio Row* shorts—and those up and coming comics Bob Hope and Red Skelton are also seen to good advantage. (The Skelton short, *Seeing Red* from 1939 unfortunately exists only in a battered print with poor sound, but is still well worth watching. The print quality on all other entries is excellent, although a couple of the earliest shorts have brief moments of nitrate decomposition.)

Two shorts are genuinely odd—the musical satire *20,000 Cheers for the Chairman of the Gang* from 1933, and a 1940 film which teams society hostess Elsa Maxwell and boxer comedian Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom as *The Lady and the Lug*. (Ms. Maxwell is a born comic; with her priceless expressions and down-to-earth personality, she could've been the next Marie Dressler.) *The Royal Rodeo* (1939) is an oddity, too, but gives us gorgeous color footage of Cliff "Ukulele Ike" Edwards and Scotty Beckett. Technicolor is also a prime asset of *Quiet, Please*, which stars Fritz Feld as the domineering movie director Mr. Nitvitch, and which co-stars Tom Kennedy as a gorilla impersonator.

Comedy of an earlier vintage is saluted in *A Small Town Idol*, originally a 1921 Ben Turpin-Mack Sennett feature which now exists only in this two-reel abridgement with narration. *Happy Faces* from 1941 is likewise a re-edited version of Turpin's *Bright Eyes* and *Happy Times and Jolly Moments* uses footage from Sennett-First National shorts of 1920-22 with Turpin, James Finlayson, Billy Bevan and others. One of Fatty Arbuckle's handful of talkie shorts, 1933's *Buzzin' Around*, proves that he could have made a successful comeback had he lived to complete the series.

It appears that this five-disc, ten-hour set will only be issued on laserdisc and not on VHS cassettes. If you don't have a laserdisc player yet, this box (along with other gems such as *The Ultimate Oz*) ought to justify the purchase. Hock something. Let the phone bill go. You'll be having so much fun watching these shorts that you won't want to be bothered with talking on the telephone anyway. (Available from retail outlets including Ken Crane LaserDisc, 15251 Beach Blvd., Westminster, CA 92683; Phone: 1-800-624-3078.)

Continued Next Week: Books on Serials

From the '30s through the '50s, many studios produced serials—more properly known as weekly “chapterplays” and referred to in the trade as “cliffhangers.” Universal, Mascot, Columbia and a small army of independent studios ground out over 500 different serials until Columbia finally headed for home after *Blazing the Overland Trail* in 1956. But the greatest of the serials, according to many buffs, were those produced by Republic. In his book **The Republic Chapterplays** (McFarland & Co.; 165 pages, hardcover; \$34.50 postpaid), R.M. Hayes notes the distinctive traits of the Republic serial: “Fast paced, cheaply made, unmistakable sound effects, excellent miniature and mechanical effects work, spectacular stunt gags, thrilling musical scores, slick photography, fine performances by a stock company of likable actors and actresses...exciting storylines, and a ‘studio look’ which had been missing in both Universal and Mascot [releases].”

All 68 Republic serials, from 1935's *The Fighting Marines* to 1955's *King of the Carnival*, are documented here with amazingly full credits and cast listings, with character and actor names given for even the smallest bit part. The names and running times for each chapter are provided, along with copyright information and notes on reissues, feature-length condensations, sequels and remakes. Mr. Hayes introduces the book with an overview of the serial format (beginning with the silent era) and a concise history of the Republic corporation. Each serial is represented by at least one illustration—either a still or an original poster or advertisement. The character names, chapter titles and photographs capture the gaudy fun of the serials; however, the book does not provide plotline summaries, which would seem to be an essential component for a book such as this. Perhaps the author didn't want to ruin the surprises for those who haven't yet seen a given serial, but it seems that he could have found a way to describe the action without spoiling the fun.

There's lots of fun, however, in **Serials-ly Speaking** (McFarland; 257 pages, hardcover; \$31.95 postpaid), a collection of essays written by William C. Cline for the film-collector publication *The Big Reel*. It's a very personal look at the serials—opinionated, folksy, occasionally long-winded but always interesting. If you're a serial buff, this book is like a good, heightened, after-film discussion with a buddy who shares your interest but perhaps not your tastes. The essays are grouped into ten thematic chapters, and new commentaries precede each piece, often detailing reader reaction upon the initial publication. The essays cover everything from tributes to the greats (director Spencer G. Bennett; stunt man supreme Yakima Canutt), to reflections on varied aspects of serial fandom (conventions, fanzines, collecting on film and video) to re-evaluations of serials Cline first saw as a child. Cline—the author of *In the Nick of Time*, a history and reference work about the serials—obviously knows about all aspects of this genre and loves being in the fraternity of serial fans. These warmly-written pieces—which are accompanied by a goodly number of stills—communicate his enthusiasm and will help light the fire of interest in people who haven't yet experienced the serials.

From books by scholar Hayes and devoted fan Cline, we go to a first-hand account of working in the serials by William Witney, who directed or co-directed 23 of Republic's chapterplays from 1937 through '43 before moving on to feature films and television shows. The title of his memoir, **In a Door, Into a Fight, Out a Door, Into a Chase: Moviemaking Remembered by the Guy at the Door** (McFarland; 246 pages, hardcover; \$32.95 postpaid) should give you an idea of the breezy humor which fills every page of this book. Mr. Witney evidently has something close to total recall, judging by the remarkable and colorful detail in his writing. This is nitty-gritty, nuts-and-bolts filmmaking, recounted vividly by someone who worked in many aspects of the business. You'd probably expect the story of someone who spent many years making serials like *Fighting Devil Dogs*, *Zorro's Fighting Men*, *Spy Smasher* and *Adventures of Captain Marvel* to be a colorful one, and Mr. Witney surely delivers. His memoir is full of stories about stunts that went wrong, cantankerous animals, crazy location shoots, practical jokes, studio parties and a truckload of colorful characters, be they well known (producer Nat Levine, stuntman Yakima Canutt) or obscure (such as Lone Pine Mame, grizzled Madam of a whorehouse called The Goat Ranch). Just like a good serial, this book has action, adventure, lots of humor and a little romance. You'll also find that it provides a great education about the movie business, and about people, from a man who obviously knows both subjects very well. (All available from McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (910) 246-4460.)

The Movie Cowboy Myth

Buck Rainey's book **The Reel Cowboy** (McFarland & Co.; 309 pages, hardcover; \$42.95 postpaid) wanders a bit from the trail. Subtitled “Essays on the Myth in Movies and Literature,” this topic is really addressed only in the book's first section (about 35 pages).

There are some illuminating and very amusing comparisons here between the true cowboy and his celluloid counterpart. Rainey's list of the standard ingredients in Western films made from the '20s on is also insightful and hilarious—for example, “Clean, unlingering, unsuffering deaths,” “Cowless Cowboys,” and “Perpetual-firing six-shooters.”

Part two of the book, running 130 pages, is a biographical dictionary of authors of western novels or screenplays. Zane Grey's life and career is recounted in detail, followed by a list of his novels and a filmography with basic cast and credit information. Dozens of other western writers are profiled briefly, but full information about their writings and films is still provided. This is helpful if you want to know the source material of many western films, but it has little to do with detailing the “myth” of the “reel cowboy.”

The third section, profiling writers whose specialty was sagas of the Great Northwest, seems to have even less to do with movie cowboys—James Oliver Curwood and Jack London were fine writers, and it's gratifying to see the amount of biographical detail which Mr. Rainey has packed into relatively short essays, but it's hard to see what *The Call of the Wild* has to do with the archetypal movie cowboy.

The phenomenon of movie cowboys touring in wild west shows and circuses during the '20s through the '40s is examined in the fourth and last section. It would appear that this has been included because it was a case of “mythological” cowboys from the movies being put into a position where they would experience some semblance of the real cowboy life. Unfortunately, this key point is not stressed; instead we get biographies of Tom Mix, Jack Hoxie, and other western stars who toured at various points in their careers.

There's no doubt that this book contains much interesting information, but the lack of a focused topic or theme renders it little more than a miscellany. (McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640.)

Music

We Cotton to Billy's Band

Here at *Past Times*, we have a special affection for the great British dance bands, and we heartily encourage all of you who've only heard the Stateside bands to give the Brits a try. Billy Cotton was one of the jolliest of the English bandleaders—literally, because his jovial personality made the band a top radio and TV attraction in the UK for 20 years. Cotton's high-pitched cry of "Wakey, Waaaaakey" at the beginning of his shows, and his rough-hewn Cockney accent are still remembered with great affection by the English public.

You won't hear much from the bandleader himself on **Billy Cotton and His Band** (Flapper PAST CD 7085), but the new compact disc does offer his longtime vocalist Alan Breeze—who alternates between crooning on "Dancing With My Shadow" and doing a hilarious North-Country dialect on "Look What I've Got"—and genial singer Ellis Jackson, heard to good effect on "Lazybones". You'll also get two Armstrong impersonators, trumpeter-vocalist Nat Gonella (on "Bessie Couldn't Help It") and Teddy Foster (doing a somewhat more authentic impression on "St. Louis Blues").

The songs, 22 of them made between 1930 and '36, run the gamut from sophisticated ballads such as "What a Difference a Day Made" to slightly salacious novelties along the lines of "Nobody Loves a Fairy When She's Forty" or "Leave the Pretty Girls Alone." The band is always enthusiastic and plays with great verve; their music doesn't exactly swing, but it sure bounces—especially on Cotton's version of "Truckin'," one of the happiest records ever made. The transfers are generally excellent, and our guess is that once you hear this disc, you'll take a tip from the band's theme song and Smile, Darn Ya, Smile. (Available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948)

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Carleton A. Coon, drummer

Sanders had been a concert pianist prior to his service in World War I, he shared a passion for jazz with Coon, who had grown to love the music of the black dock workers in his native Lexington, Missouri.

Coon and Sanders formed a band soon after they met. Before long, they had made their mark in Kansas City, where they had a long residency at the Muehlebach Hotel and broadcast in the very late evening (hence the band's name) over WDAF. In 1924, the group moved to Chicago; engagements at the Lincoln Tavern and then the Congress Hotel were so well received that the band was installed at the Blackhawk Restaurant and given nightly radio exposure over WGN.

The personnel of nine or ten men remained remarkably stable until the group disbanded after Coon's death at 38 from a jaw abscess on May 4, 1932. Trumpeter Bob Pope and saxophonist Orville Knapp, both of whom would later become bandleaders, provided some of the musical fire. Brothers Harold and John Thiell played clarinets or alto saxes in unison, another distinctive sound of the band. Sanders was frequently the arranger, and also composed some instrumentals that were very progressive for their time, among them "The Wail," "High Fever" and "Hallucinations."

One can hear those compositions, along with 21 other titles, in **Everything Hot** (ASV/Living Era AJA 5199), the first compact disc devoted to the band. The new CD has fairly good transfers, but they're not as sparkling as they could be. "Nighthawk Blues" and "Red Hot Mamma," the two acoustic sides from 1924, have surprisingly full sound quality, but "Alone at Last" sounds like it's taken from a mid-generation tape dub. Most of the tracks, such as "Rhythm King" and "Little Orphan Annie," are adequate, but don't have the high frequencies that are present in the original. "Sluefoot," a sly and engaging number, sounds quite good, although not quite as clear as on the 1965 RCA Victor LP which is, to this date, the only reissue which captures the sound of the band's records.

Although the sound quality is somewhat dulled, the performances are uniformly sizzling, and it's a pleasure to hear rarities such as "Mine, All Mine!," "Oh! You Have an Idea," and "We Love Us." It's a pity that some of the band's classics, such as "What a Wonderful Night!" and "Roodles" are not included here—all the more reason for someone to do a definitive, or even a complete, Coon-Sanders set. The band made 75 issued sides, which would fit perfectly on three CDs. Until that dream comes true, this is a good introduction to the band—and at 77:17, it's a lot of hot-dance music for the money. (Available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948.)

Coon-Sanders Nighthawks: A Great '20s Band on CD

"When Coon and Sanders start to play / Those Nighthawk Blues, you'll start to sway / Tune right in on the radio / Grab a telegram and say hello! / From coast to coast and back again / You can hear that syncopated strain / It's fair, you'll declare / Listen to the Nighthawk Blues / Tune in! / Listen to the Nighthawk Blues!"

That jolly lyric was no doubt sung at the start of many a broadcast featuring the hot dance band led by Carleton A. Coon and Joe L. Sanders, who had one of the hottest and most innovative orchestras of the '20s. Coon was a fine drummer, Sanders an inventive pianist, and both of them had magnificent singing voices which blended superbly, a fact which they discovered soon after meeting in a Kansas City music store in 1918. Although



Joe Sanders, pianist



Cliff Edwards Still Strumming

In a better world, Cliff "Ukulele Ike" Edwards wouldn't have died penniless and so forgotten that it took several days before someone at the USC Medical Center's morgue realized who he had been. A nightclub and vaudeville star early in the '20s, Edwards graduated to Broadway in 1924, introducing "Fascinatin' Rhythm" in the Gershwin show *Lady Be Good*, starring Fred Astaire. By 1927 Edwards was a top recording artist for Columbia, and in '29 he was appearing prominently in MGM shorts and features. Unfortunately, Edwards seems always to have been his own worst enemy, and he squandered his earnings through gambling, costly divorces, heavy drinking and neglecting to pay his taxes. The peak years were over by 1931, and by that decade's end he was happy to get jobs such as a brief off-screen voice-over in one scene of *Gone With the Wind*. Knowing Edwards' weaknesses, it's ironic that he came back to the spotlight in 1940 by supplying the voice of Jiminy Cricket, Pinocchio's conscience.

Somehow, he kept working through the '40s and '50s; no matter what new scrapes he'd gotten into, the talent was undimmed. Another Edwards trait that never dimmed was that he was a genuinely nice guy. This fact is amply illustrated in the splendid essay by Leonard Maltin which accompanies a fine new compact disc, **The Vintage Recordings of Cliff Edwards** (Take Two TT419CD; \$15.98). Although this has the same title and cover art as a 1979 LP from the same label, only seven tracks of 20 are duplicated from the earlier release. Those tracks include some of Edwards' finest—his hot rendition of "That's My Weakness Now" (complete with his impressive ukulele playing and his growly falsetto scat-singing, or as he called it, "eeffin"), a tender number called "Halfway to Heaven," and a jolly rendition of "Singin' in the Rain," which he'd introduced in MGM's *Hollywood Revue of 1929*. The new numbers include "Homesick," one of his earliest waxings from 1922, and a hot rendition of "I Want Somebody to Cheer Me Up," which features Red Nichols as part of Cliff's "Hot Combination."

Take Two's other new release is by Lee Morse (see next column), and Edwards had many things in common with her—both recorded prominently for Pathe and then switched to the Columbia label in 1927; their peak years were '27 through '30, with only sporadic recordings thereafter; both had tumultuous private lives and problems with alcohol. Both also had warm, folksy voices which were adaptable to many different kinds of songs (and both used a falsetto for special effects!). Edwards displays his versatility on such diverse numbers as the boisterous "It Goes Like This (That Funny Melody)," the tender "Losing You," and an unusual but great "Hawaiian" version of "Somebody Loves Me," backed by Andy Iona's Islanders. A bonus is the inclusion of four unissued test pressings from 1944; Cliff is backed by a fine little band and has good material such as "It Had to Be You," "Melancholy Baby" and a sprightly number called "Hold On to Your Heart." It's a shame these weren't released, but what a joy to have them now.

The aforementioned essay by Leonard Maltin includes reminiscences of Cliff from pianist-bandleader Skitch Henderson, Disney animator Ward Kimball and voice actor Dick Jones, announcer George Ansbro, guitarist Tony Mottola, and Mouseketeers Bobby Burgess and Tommy Cole. These personal anecdotes are great fun to read; Maltin should be commended for providing this classy little extra touch, just as producer Jim Bedoian and audio engineer George Morrow deserve praise for the superb audio quality throughout. (Take Two Records, P.O. Box 36729, Los Angeles CA 90036.)

Just before presstime, we became aware of another new Edwards CD, simply entitled **Cliff Edwards: Ukulele Ike** (Sony Special Products 26475; \$10.00). This one has ten tracks from 1924 through '33, four of them on the Take Two release. However, the six remaining numbers include Cliff's definitive readings of "Fascinatin' Rhythm," "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "I'll See You in My Dreams" and "It's Only a Paper Moon." Not having heard this CD yet, we can't comment on its sound quality, but more Cliff Edwards on CD is a trend we strongly support. Ukulele Ike might just be in for yet another rediscovery; it would be lovely to think that he wasn't forgotten after all. (Available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA.)

Lee Morse's Many Voices

Lee Morse: A Musical Portrait (Take Two TT420CD; \$15.98) allows us to hear one of the most amazing voices of the '20s, which came from a girl just five feet tall and under 100 pounds. Sometimes she sang in the same range as a male baritone, while still sounding entirely feminine. Then she'd sing the next chorus an octave higher, with a throaty but very sweet sound—and for a finale, she'd yodel and yelp the last few notes an octave higher still. She was no mere novelty act; her remarkable skill in conveying the emotional impact of a song kept her from being gimmicky.

Born in November 1897 as Lena Taylor, she grew up in Oregon and Idaho and embarked upon a singing career in 1920. Revues and vaudeville followed, and in December 1924 she made her first records for the Pathé and Perfect labels. The sound quality of these discs was anything but perfect, which is why producer Jim Bedoian has only included two tracks from this period: "Want a Little Lovin'," which showcases Lee's ballad style, and the uptempo "He's Still My Baby."

Most of the 20 tracks are from Morse's peak period of 1927-32, when she recorded prolifically for Columbia. The first of the electrical tracks used here, Lee's soulful version of "Side By Side," also reveals that she was a very talented guitarist. The preeminent guitar hero of the time, Eddie Lang, is heard in six cuts, and the other studio musicians who made up Lee's "Blue Grass Boys" include at various times Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, and trumpeter Manny Klein. Lee was a pretty fair songwriter, as shown by "Old Fashioned Romance."

Lee's career tapered off dramatically after 1932, thanks to the Depression and Lee's occasional problems with the bottle. She recorded very little after '32, and for that reason the last three tracks are of particular interest. "When I Lost You" and "Careless Love" come from Lee's sole 1938 session for Decca, and "Don't Even Change a Picture on the Wall" is Lee's last record, a self-penned tune waxed in 1951, three years before her sudden death. The booklet has some beautiful photos, and Jim Bedoian's liner notes add much new information about Morse's extremely colorful life. (Available from Take Two Records, P.O. Box 36729, Los Angeles CA 90036.)



The Swingin' Surrealism of Slim and Slam

A lot of today's hit records may seem surreal, or composed of plain nonsense—but the same can be said for a number of recordings made in the '20s through the '40s. A number of joyous meaningless discs—filled with swinging string jazz and a whole dictionary's worth of gibberish lyrics—were concocted between 1938 and 1942 by vocalist-composer-guitarist-pianist-vibraphonist-tap dancer Bulee "Slim" Gaillard and bassist-vocalist Leroy "Slam" Stewart. Twenty-two of them are newly available on Columbia/Legacy's new CD **Slim and Slam: The Groove Juice Special** (CK 64898; \$15.98). Not only are the joys of groove juice musically delineated here, but so are the delights of "Matzoh Balls" and "Swingin' in the Key of C."

The team first came to prominence around 1937, playing the smaller clubs on 52nd Street, starting to make a name for themselves by winning the *Major Bowes Original Amateur Hour* multiple times. Martin Block, host of the immensely popular *Make Believe Ballroom* on WNEB, was covered by Benny Goodman.

became their agent; before long, a song which the pair had recorded for Vocalion, "Flat Foot Floogie," was covered by Benny Goodman and became a national hit, bringing new prominence to its originators.

That tune (actually sung as the "Flat Fleet Floogie" on the record!) and 19 other examples of Slim and Slam's good-natured jive are heard here in crystal-clear transfers, thanks to the restoration work of Harry Coster, a Netherlands-based audio engineer.

For the uninitiated, a typical Slim and Slam waxing will generally include the following: fine acoustic rhythm guitar (and from 1939 on, lead electric guitar) by Mr. Gaillard, who genially sings impenetrable lyrics such as "Vol Vist Du Gaily Star" or "Boot-Ta-La-Za" in a gruff tenor. Mr. Stewart at some point bows a nimble solo on his string bass, proving his virtuosity by humming the same solo in unison, but an octave higher. Along with the jive talk, we're introduced to characters such as Dopey Joe and Sweet Safronia, and we learn about the Palm Springs Jump and the Chitlin' Switch Blues.

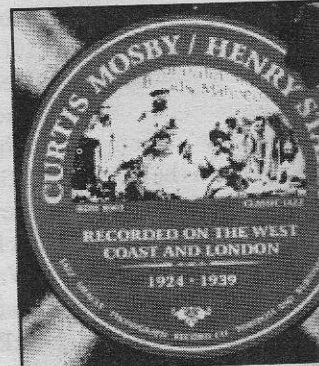
The tracks are sequenced chronologically; the first seven, from January 1938 through November 1938, have a mere trace of surface noise (with the exception of "Oh, Lady Be Good," taken from a somewhat worn copy); the rest, from September 1939 through April 1942, (after which point the act was broken up by the Draft) are remarkably clear. Since this is essentially a quiet brand of jazz, it's good to hear all the nutty nuances, every last "vout-oroonie," coming through clearly. The sidemen, by the way, are of a pretty high caliber, including Ben Webster on tenor sax, Jimmy Rowles on piano, and Leo Watson playing drums.

The booklet includes yet another insightful essay by Richard Sudhalter, a second appreciation by one Eddie Gorodetsky, and full session information on the selections, which include the previously unissued delights "B-19" and "African Jive." This music is light, lively, full of good humor and unfailingly swinging, a welcome souvenir of a few precious years when 52nd Street was enlivened by small combos with high spirits. (Available in retail outlets, and by mail from Worlds Records; see right.)

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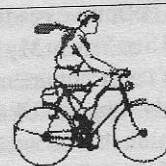
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Weems Team Deemed Supreme

One of the jolliest bands of the '20s was led by one Wilfred Theodore Weymus, better known as Ted Weems. Beginning as a trombonist in the band of Paul Specht in the Reading, Pennsylvania area, Weems formed his own group in 1923 and began recording for Victor in November of that year. His first record, "Somebody Stole My Gal," was an immediate hit, and Weems was launched on a very successful bandleading career. Many remember him from the late '30s period in which he featured a young vocalist named Perry Como; others recall Weems from 1947 or later, after his 1933 record of "Heartaches" suddenly became a hit thanks to a North Carolina disc jockey.

An early peak of Weems' career, however, was the 1926-29 period, when his merry little band (featuring Don Watt's hot clarinet, Country Washburne on tuba and great arrangements by Joe Haymes) made some of the happiest and most danceable records of the era. Eighteen of the best are newly collected on **Marvelous: Ted Weems and His Orchestra 1926-1929** (Memphis Archives MA7013).

If you haven't heard the Weems band of this period, this CD is the perfect introduction. A couple of the songs are standards ("You're the Cream in My Coffee," "Miss Annabelle Lee"), but most of them are long forgotten ("Cobble-Stones," "What a Day," "She's Got 'It'"). Despite their obscurity, these songs are instantly hummable. The inventive arrangements all have a strong jazz flavor, and the folksy voice of saxophonist Parker Gibbs is the perfect compliment.

The only other Weems CD highlighting this period is from the British ASV/Living Era label, and it's entitled *Marvelous* (AJA 5029) (with two l's, as per the British spelling). Nine songs are on both CDs; however, the Memphis Archives release has much clearer sounding transfers. All of the tracks on the new CD have been released before on LPs, but the sound quality here is a significant upgrade.

There's a wealth of equally great Weems material from 1930-33 that's never been reissued, and we hope Memphis Archives will consider a sequel. For now, we'll be content to revisit these great recordings, which are essential to any hot-dance collection. (Available for \$12.99 plus 2.50 postage from Memphis Archives, P.O. Box 171282, Memphis TN 38187.)

Collegiate CD Majors in Rhythm

One of the many fads of the Roaring '20s was a mania for all things collegiate. Maybe the campus life of raccoon coats, flaming youth, football games and endless parties existed only in the popular imagination—after all, those college kids had to study *sometime*—but for a few years, the celebration of Higher Education (and, more to the point, extracurricular activities) made for quite a party. One can revisit that festive time through a new compact disc, **College Rhythm** (Memphis Archives MA7021; \$12.99), with 18 hot dance tracks that will set your feet to tapping even if you never finished grammar school.

George Olsen and his Music contribute three tracks: "Doin' the Raccoon," "All American Girl" in which the title character has a sweetheart on every college football team, and "The Varsity Drag," in which the favorite class teaches the latest hot dance steps. Harry Reser's merry band likewise contributes a trio of goodies—"She's the Sweetheart of Six Other Guys," "Collegiate Sam," and the previously-unreissued "He Ain't Never Been in College." All feature the cheerfully adenoidal vocals of the group's drummer, Tom Stacks. Ted Weems' group supplies some tuneful narratives about the "Sophomore Prom" and "Collegiate Love," while Hal Kemp's group (which formed at the University of North Carolina) provides hot versions of "Washington and Lee Swing" and "Collegiana."

The latter tune was also a hit for Penn State's own Waring's Pennsylvanians, and it seems strange that they're not represented in this collection (after all, their 1925 hit "Collegiate" had kicked off the whole musical craze). Nor is Yale man Rudy Vallee. Scott Vick's brief liner notes question whether any black bands recorded college songs, which would've been answered with "Sophomore," a 1929 track by Andy Kirk's Clouds of Joy.

This may not be the definitive collegiate collection, but it's bolstered by the inclusion of rarities such as "Campus Capers" by Charles Dornberger and "At the Prom" by Irving Mills' Modernists—alongside favorites such as "Freddy the Freshman" by Gene Kardos, and the title track by Johnny Davis. The transfers are crisp and clear and taken mostly from clean copies. All in all, we'd give this disc a rah-rah-rah, and even a couple of boolah-boolahs. (Memphis Archives, P.O. Box 171282, Memphis TN 38187.)

Yazoo Label Remembers Forgotten Jazz

Rare does not equal good, a lesson yet to be learned by some record collectors. Fortunately, the producers of **Jazz the World Forgot, Volume One (Yazoo 2024) and Volume Two (Yazoo 2025; \$13.95 each)** have ensured that the recordings included are well worth hearing. Each volume has 23 tracks recorded between 1923 and 1931, with selections from obscure bands black and white alike. As these CDs show, there was a remarkable diversity of regional jazz styles during this period. Perhaps you've never heard of Floyd Mills and his Marylanders or George McClennon's Jazz Devils, but the concise liner notes by Sherwin Dunner provide a fine introduction. A few evocative and well-reproduced vintage photos decorate each of the booklets.

Volume One features such delights as Ben Tobier and his California Cyclones (actually a New Jersey band) playing their one and only issued side, "Hot and Heavy" from 1930. Another gem is "Slowin' Down Blues," which despite its title is so peppy you could call it caffeinated; it's by Oliver Naylor's Orchestra, one of only two recordings they left us. The aforementioned Mill's Marylanders do a fine hot-dance track called "Hard Luck;" more of the same is provided in the bouncy "Postage Stomp" by Tennessee-based Maynard Baird's Orchestra. Our favorite is "I'll Fly to Hawaii," a corny 1926 song transformed by sizzling performances from trombonist Brad Gowan and his Rhapsody Makers.

Although most of the tracks in this series are electrically recorded, Volume Two has more early acoustics; it also has a less "commercial," more rough-hewn feel to it. We weren't too impressed by J. Neal Montgomery's "Auburn Ave. Stomp," but the disc redeems itself with "I Found a New Baby" by Andy Preer's Cotton Club Orchestra, the only side made by the band which would ultimately become Cab Calloway's first group. Even if you have previous reissues of Paul Howard's "The Ramble" or Sam Morgan's "Everybody's Talking About Sammy," the transfers here are uniformly superior—especially on the few acoustics, which have a remarkable richness. We hope this series will have further entries; these two CDs are a real education—and a whole lotta fun. (Available from Shanachie Entertainment, 37 E. Clinton Street, Newton NJ 07860.)

Classic Jazz, Modern Rhythmists

Being intensely involved in entertainment of the 1920s, '30s and '40s, your editor has often been asked if he'd like to go back in a time machine to, say, 1928. The answer is, only if I could be at the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel for a session with Earl Burtnett and his Orchestra, or maybe at the Cocoanut Grove to see Gus Arnheim. Fortunately, we can have something very near the experience thanks to the superb dance band Mora's Modern Rhythmists, which has just issued its first album.

Pianist-vocalist-leader Dean Mora and his merry crew romp through 17 original "stock" arrangements (vintage 1926-35 but usually pre-1931) in **My Favorite Band!** (Mr. Ace Records MA001; \$15.00 for CDs, \$10 for cassettes.) These charts are so authentically played that it seems as if, by some fluke, we'd just discovered a digitally-recorded, stereo, full fidelity album made by Ted Weems in 1930. The Rhythmists don't play these tunes as museum pieces; there's plenty of heat behind their expert treatments of "Egyptian-Ella" (originally recorded by Weems and Ted Lewis) "Speedy Boy" (a 1928 gem written for a Harold Lloyd feature and recorded by Ben Selvin) and "Stockholm Stomp" (waxed by Ben Bernie in 1926).

What usually ruins '20s re-creations such as this is the drumming, so it's especially gratifying to hear percussionist Larry Wright playing every last beat and cymbal crash authentically. Cornetists Corey Gemme and Jim Ziegler are standouts, the former on tracks such as "Mule Face Blues" and the latter on tunes such as "Steamboat Bill," an almost unbearably hot and happy tune recorded originally by the California Ramblers. A standout track is "Soliloquy - A Musical Thought," composed and arranged by pianist Rube Bloom in 1927. The whole band plays this moody chart superbly, and Mora's piano breaks gallop along nimbly. This is simply one of the best '20s-'30s band re-creations we've ever heard. (Available from Mr. Ace Records, P.O. Box 8291, Universal City, CA 91618-8291; include \$2.00 shipping per order.)

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The No Man's Land Between Ragtime and Jazz



One of American popular music's most important figures has also been one of its least remembered. James Reese Europe was a critical link between Scott Joplin and Louis Armstrong, a conductor and composer who sought to win recognition for black musicians and songwriters. As the co-founder and president of the Clef Club, an organization designed to achieve these goals, Europe gained a surprising measure of success with white society, winning rave reviews for annual concerts he staged at Carnegie Hall. He then had popular collaborations with musical comedy stars Vernon and Irene Castle.

In 1916, he joined the 15th Infantry Regiment (Colored) of the New York National Guard, not for any musical reasons, but to help create an organization that would benefit the entire black community. Soon he was prevailed upon to organize "the best band in the U.S. Army." By the start of 1918, Europe's band of the 15th Infantry Regiment was on French soil, entertaining civilians and soldiers with their exciting, jazz-influenced brass band arrangements. The unit then received its military training and was sent to the front where it fought bravely with the French 161st Division. They battled so heroically that, now reclassified, they were nicknamed the 369th U.S. Infantry "Hellfighters" Band.

After war's end, after being mustered out of the service, the band stayed together by popular demand of the American public. Europe's band began making records for Pathé and began a ten-week tour of the East and Midwest. During an intermission in the band show at the Boston Opera House on May 9, 1919, Europe was fatally stabbed in the neck by his drummer, Herbert Wright; he was only 39.

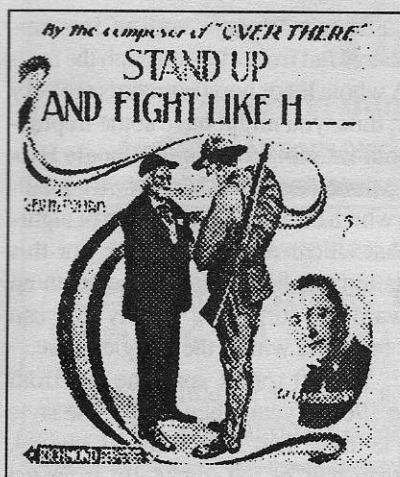
The full details about Europe's life, and the full impact of his work are delineated in **A Life in Ragtime** (Oxford; 328 pages, hardcover; \$30.00), a splendid biography by Reid Badger. Europe's own story comes vibrantly alive in these pages; so does the heretofore shrouded world of the black entertainment world in the years just before jazz took the world by storm. Quotes from Europe's co-workers, among them Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle, make this a lively and absorbing read. (Oxford University Press, 200 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016; (212) 679-7300.)

The 24 recordings made by Europe's band are newly available on two CDs from two different firms. Earlier this year, The International Association of Jazz Record Collectors released **James Reese Europe and the 369th U.S. Infantry "Hellfighters" Band Featuring Noble Sissle** (IAJRC CD1012; \$18.00). All of the band's records made for Pathé between March 3 and May 7, 1919 (just two days before Europe's death) included in chronological order. The booklet by producer Mark Berresford is informative and nicely illustrated, and John R.T. Davies' transfers are quite good, considering the terrible sound quality of original Pathé "hill and dale" 78s. (Available from World Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato, CA 94948.)

The IAJRC disc is clearly a labor of love; thus it's sad to say that it's surpassed by the new Memphis Archives release **James Reese Europe With His 369th U.S. Infantry "Hellfighters" Band: The Complete Recordings** (MA 7020). This CD has been lovingly and creatively transferred by Brad Kay. Instead of providing the tracks in recording order, Kay has programmed them as if we were attending a live concert by Europe's band. To preserve this illusion, the slight surface noise continues uninterruptedly between tracks, as if it were one continuous 69-minute recording.

The booklet that accompanies the Memphis Archives CD is remarkably large, with a biography of Europe, a track-by-track history of the songs (including lyrics), background on the band members, an appreciation of Europe's talents as an arranger, reprints of vintage articles, and a very interesting account of the unusual Pathé "punchy" recording process. Kay explains why the original Pathés had such an unusual sound quality, and details the steps taken to restore the music to the brilliance it has today. The transfers on the Memphis Archives disc run somewhat faster than on the IAJRC disc and sound more natural. They have a much more pronounced bass, which, however, is in a rumble sound which is not on the IAJRC transfers. (Available for \$14.99 plus shipping from Memphis Archives, P.O. Box 171282, Memphis TN 38187.) You may want to spring for both CDs and let your own tastes decide which of the transfers you

Forgotten Music From the Great War



Songs about World War I are not revived much these days, and are unlikely to be unless we renew our hostilities with Kaiser Bill. Even so, a number of them are still remembered, such as "Over There," "Keep the Home Fires Burning," "Pack Up Your Troubles," and that post-war favorite, "How 'Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm (After They've Seen Poree)?"

Hundreds of topical songs about the Great War poured out of Tin Pan Alley, and the definitive book about the genre has recently been published. In **World War I Songs** (McFarland & Co., 530 pages, hardcover; \$88.00 postpaid), Frederick G. Vogel provides a lengthy history of topical songs from 1914 through 1919, putting them in

context of news events and other popular entertainments of the time.

As Vogel notes, the World War I song spawned many sub-genres, such as Anti-War songs, hopeful songs about a quick peace, songs describing life on the home front, and comic songs about revelry in France. It's interesting to note that Al Bryan, a pacifist who wrote the strongly anti-war lyric for "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier" in 1915, modified his viewpoint to "It's Time For Every Boy to Be a Soldier" in 1917 and further to "When Alexander Takes His Ragtime Band to France" in 1918 (with the lyric "He'll capture ev'ry Hun/ And take them one by one"). (The original song prompted many "answer" songs such as "I'm Glad My Boy Grew Up to be a Soldier" and even novelty ditties such as "I Didn't Raise My Ford to Be a Jitney.") It's unfortunate that Mr. Vogel does not analyze "My Dream of the Big Parade," a remarkable 1926 song which ruminates on the loss of life and questions why the war was even fought. (Vogel does, however, mention the song in a section about the wave of late-'20s films about the War.)

Vogel also documents the continuing usage and influence of these songs through the era of the Second World War. However, I'd take issue with his assertion that "Trite and transitory as most of the American World War I songs were, as a whole they exceeded the originality and quality of even the finest hits produced in World War II." Many of the 1914-19 songs are clever and a few are still powerfully affecting, but it's an overstatement to suppose that any of them surpass early '40s classics such as "Long Ago and Far Away," "I Don't Want to Walk Without You" or "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To."

The book's middle section, running almost 140 pages, is a full listing of patriotic and war songs published between August 1914 and August 1919. Most of them have similar jingoistic titles, such as "All Aboard to Can the Kaiser," "The Khaki Lads Are Coming," and "There's a Service Flag in the Window," but occasionally there's a surprise such as "The Kaiser's Pants Afire," "We Don't Want the Bacon (What We Want is a Piece of the Rhine)," or the blunt "To Hell Mit Kaiser Bill." Each title is supplemented with credits for the writers and year of publication.

The book's last section, running over 120 pages, contains complete lyrics of 321 selected songs and many black and white illustrations from original sheet music. While most of these songs are long forgotten, a few of them are still available on CDs, such as "Sister Susie's Sewing Shirts for Soldiers," popularized by Al Jolson. Others are historically valuable (among them "Smile and Show Your Dimple" by Irving Berlin, later reworked into "Easter Parade.") Most of these lyrics can hardly be called poetry, but they express the full range of emotions prompted by the War more vividly than any modern-day account. A full index is included. (McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (910) 246-4460; fax, (910) 246-5018.)



Music Machines on CD



Few of us can afford original antique player pianos or orchestrions—or the available reproductions. Fortunately, a series of very affordable CDs preserves their vintage sounds in beautiful sound quality.

For several years, Marion Roehl Recordings has made cassette albums of these rare music machines (and still does); however, the sound quality is even better on the new CD versions. The newest titles include **Player Piano Memories** (MRR 1043), which has 23 vintage songs played on a Kohler and Campbell Autopiano built around 1923. The stereo audio is excellent, the player has a beautiful, full tone, and the tunes include a passel of favorites such as "Ida, Sweet as Apple Cider," and "Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee," alongside a handful of lesser-remembered numbrs such as "Desecration Rag" and "Polar Bear Rag." Some of the arrangements are surprisingly jazzy, such as the scorching stride-piano treatment of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."

If your ears desire a few more tonal colors than can be provided by a player piano, you'll find a full palette provided by the 1914 Wurlitzer Model CX Orchestrion used for **Roadhouse Razzmatazz, Vol. 1** (MRR 1040). In addition to the sprightly piano, there are bass and snare drums, a cymbal, 38 "violin pipes," 38 flute pipes, a mandolin attachment, a triangle, and a set of orchestra bells. All of this provides some colorful arrangements on tunes such as "Smiles," "Melancholy Baby," "Whispering," and glorious obscurities such as "Rattle-snake Rag," "Chinese Blues," "Cuddles" and "Every Morning She Makes Me Late." The all-digital stereo sound is magnificent, the orchestrion itself is beautifully in tune, and the whole album is enough to make the toes tap and the heart sing. (Available for \$14.95 each plus 3.00 shipping per order from Marion Roehl Recordings, 3533 Stratford Drive, Vestal NY 13850-2222; (607) 797-9062.)

BG, McKinley, Barnet, Forrest on Viper's Nest

The Viper's Nest label has recently released a cornucopia of CDs which should excite any big-band enthusiast. They vary a bit in length and sound quality, but all have the polish that's a hallmark of this label.



Benny Goodman enthusiasts will have a musical feast with the six volume series **The Complete 1937 Madhattan Room Broadcasts** (available separately for \$11.98 each or as a boxed 6-CD set for \$54.95). Recorded in October through December 1937, these remote broadcasts capture the greatest Goodman crew (with Harry James, Ziggy Elman, Jess Stacy, Teddy Wilson, Lionel Hampton, vocalist Martha Tilton et al) at a peak, when it could relax from the rigors of one-night stands and enjoy a three-month residency at home in the Big Apple. Each volume has a generous share of tunes that Goodman never

commercially recorded (some of them surprising titles such as "The Lady Is a Tramp" and "Am I Blue?") The sound quality is certainly acceptable for remote broadcasts. Usually running around 55 minutes, these discs include the original introductions by announcers Mel Allen and John Allan Woolf; occasionally a number is interrupted by a station ID, but the you-are-there quality of these recordings more than compensates. The booklets have full details on the broadcasts, with enjoyable essays by David Weiner.

The Goodman trio and quartet got one tune apiece on each of the Madhattan Room broadcasts, and if you prefer their chamber jazz to the sound of the full band, try **Benny Goodman Trio & Quartet - Live in 1937** (VN 1009). (If you have the full Madhattan Room series, you'll already have these tracks.) Goodman, Wilson, Krupa and sometimes Hampton were musicians who brought out the best in each other, as these 19 tracks (including the unrecorded gems "Nagasaki" and "Limehouse Blues") prove indelibly.

Two of the gutsiest big bands of the '40s are well showcased in **Ray McKinley: McKinley Time!** (VN 1001) and **Charlie Barnet: Wings Over Manhattan** (VN 1002). The 24 tracks feature the leader's swinging percussion and folksy, engaging vocals in 24 exciting tracks from July and December 1949, recorded originally for the Thesaurus radio transcription series. The arrangements by Eddie Sauter, Lou Stein and others are inventive without being too tricky, and the tunes include standards such as "Laura" and "Star Dust," McKinley hits such as "Celery Stalks at Midnight" and "Jiminy Crickets," and great novelties such as "Pancho Maximillian Hernandez" and "I'm Tired of Waiting For You." The Barnet disc has 24 transcriptions recorded (very nicely) from January through June 1941. Although the cover proclaims "the arrangements of Billy May," it appears that his only contribution is the title track, with most of the charts written by Horace Henderson or Billy Moore, Jr. Likewise, the touted Lena Horne sings on only one track, "Haunted Town." (Vocalist Bob Carroll does four songs; the other 19 are instrumentals.) Nevertheless, this is a fine Barnet outing, with eight otherwise unrecorded pieces. The band was at its height during this period, and longtime Barnet collectors will enjoy new performances of "Ponce De Leon," "Wild Mab of the Fish Pond," "Phyllyse" and other classics.

Real classics are the stuff of **Swingin' the Classics** (VN 1010), a 15-track collection of Liszt, Strauss, Rachmaninoff et al as interpreted by Teagarden, Dorsey, Berigan, Beneke et al. Taken from broadcasts and transcriptions made between 1938 and '47, the whole disc is a delight, with highlights such as the Nat King Cole Trio's "Liebestraum" and "Blue Danube," Teagarden's "Prelude in C# Minor," and Tommy Dorsey's swinging version of the Victor Herbert "March of the Toys."

Finally, the seemingly ageless Helen Forrest proved that her pipes were still in fine condition 40 years after the big-band heyday when she recorded some **1983 Studio Sessions** newly released 13 years later (VN 1006). In nine tracks and 39 minutes, Miss Forrest shows that her talent and some great songs are still mighty powerful. "I've Heard That Song Before," "I Don't Want to Walk Without You," "More Than You Know" and other evergreens sound as good as ever (or even better, thanks to the gorgeous stereo sound), with Miss Forrest abetted by Hank Jones, Frank Wess, Grady Tate, George Duvivier and fine charts by trombonist-arranger Hale Rood. (All CDs are available for \$11.98 each plus 4.95 shipping per order from 21st Century Music, 140 W. 22nd Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10011; 1-800-666-5277.)

Here Comes the Boogie, Man

Boogie Woogie was an inescapable musical fad from 1938 through the mid-'40s. A whole lot of boogie records are very similar; thus, you might have some trepidation about listening to **Boogie Woogie Hits** (Good Music DMC2-1326; \$24.98), a collection which offers *two* CDs worth of eight-to-the-bar. Fear not, dear reader, for this compilation has been put together with an ear toward the surprising variety that can indeed be found within the boogie genre.

The 40 tracks span the era from 1936 to 1961, a year when the boogie style seems to have had a substantial revival. More than half of the tracks are from the mid-'40s or before, and a handful are from the early '50s, such as Stan Kenton's inventive "Stardust Boogie" from 1951, and Billy Maxted's "Careless Love" from '53. It does seem a mite perplexing that the record which started it all, "Pinetop's Boogie Woogie" by Clarence Pine Top Smith from 1928, isn't here, but Tommy Dorsey's 1938 big band arrangement of the tune (retitled simply "Boogie Woogie") kicks off the album in fine style.

The producers have wisely chosen popular hits with varied melodies—some of them even based on classical pieces, such as Freddy Martin's "Sabre Dance Boogie," or Carmen Cavallaro's "Anitra's Boogie." Along with expected hits such as Louis Jordan's "Choo Choo Ch' Boogie" and Earl Hines' great "Boogie Woogie on St. Louis Blues" (in which he yells, "Play it until 1951!" — mind you, this is a 1940 record) there are a few rarities, such as "Cow Cow Blues" by pianist Bob Zurke. There are even several novelties, such as Phil Harris's great version of "There Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens." In a piano-dominated genre, Freddy Slack is the keyboard man heard most frequently, twice with the Will Bradley-Ray McKinley big band, twice in support of sultry vocalist Ella Mae Morse, and once as a soloist—on "Kitten on the Keys," a great record which unfortunately is the only track taken from a worn copy. Otherwise, the transfers are generally fine.

The liner notes identify the artists and composers and provide the year of each disc's release, but that's about all. However, this is a suprisingly listenable introduction to a form of music which had more variety than we remembered. (Available from Good Music Record Co., 223 Katonah Avenue, Katonah NY 10536.)

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DJ David Plotkin shares his rare paper records which were sold weekly from the newsstands of America in the early 1930s [broadcast format]. Great music, great fun. All were hits!

BH cas 3010 The Forgotten Music of the Great Depression

Features the bands of Louis Armstrong, Joe Reichman, Frank Trumbauer, Ray Noble, Cab Calloway and more.

BH cas 3060 Berigan on the Air 1936-37

Radio transcriptions of the great trumpeter Bunny Berigan at his best. Selections include: *Now it Can Be Told*, *That's A-Plenty*, *You've Got to Eat Your Spinach*, *Baby* and more.

BH cas 3033 The Elegant Style of Hotel Dance Bands 1927-36 Vol. 1

Features the society dance bands of Henry King, Ambrose, Ben Black, Richard Himber, Fred Culley, Eddy Duchin and many more.

BH cas 3035 Paul Whiteman: The Victor Years 1925-28

Paul Whiteman at his best. *Among My Souvenirs*, *Honey I'm in Love With You*, *Just Once Again*, *Pretty Lips*, *Charleston* and more.

BH cas 3099 One Hour of Guilty Or Not Guilty

Revisit America's first radio court in rare episodes of this early series.

BH cas 3030 An Evening at the Cotton Club 1925-32

Features Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway and the Cotton Club Orchestra.

BH cas 3091 Yuletide Holidays 1928-34

From Ray Noble's London to Freddy Martin's Winter Wonderland, Betty Boop (Mae Questel) singing *I Want You for Christmas* and historic 1929 broadcasts from KHJ-Los Angeles, this is a unique collection of light holiday melodies!

BH cas 3009 The Mysterious Music of George Olsen

From *Doin' the Raccoon* to songs sung by Ethel Shutta, this is a special recording ending with a commercial show for Oldsmobile--great music and humor of the time!

BH cas 3055 Harry Richman On the Air: The 1936 Dodge Radio Shows

Harry at his best, singing favorites from *Puttin' on the Ritz* to *The Sunny Side of the Street*.

From the collection of Garry Hammond:

BH cas 9999 Classic Jazz 1924-36 v. 1
Musicologist Garry Hammond shares his recordings from his collection of rare, historic jazz. A must for jazz collectors!

From the collection of Joe Monte:

BH cas 4000 Songs from Forgotten Films 1928-1934 v1

Features music from the collection of radio host Joe Monte, from films such as *The Singing Fool*, *Hot for Paris* and *Broadway*....with great music by Paul Whiteman, The Rhythm Boys, Jay Whidden, Henry Busse, and songs like *Little By Little*, *Singin' in the Bathtub* and *Love Thy Neighbor*.

BH cas 4003 Cab Calloway - The Dime Store Recordings 1930-33 v1

A great collection of hard to find classic Calloway. Selections include Fats Waller's tune *Viper's Drag*, *Happy Feet* from the film *King of Jazz*, *Sweet Jenny Lee*, *It Looks Like Suzy*, *Stardust*, *Kickin' the Gong Around*, *You Gotta Ho-de-Ho* and more.

BH cas 4004 Rah Rah Rhythm: Collegiate Music 1926-32

Hot dance steps, snappy tunes, songs about fraternities. This rare tuneful collection pays homage to the era of the collegiate. Selections include: *College Days*, *Yale Blues*, *The Harvard Hop*, *He Ain't Never Been In College*, *Flapperette* and more. Features bands from Ted Wallace and his Campus Boys to Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians, Monroe's Dance Band to Guy Lombardo....a fun caper for all!

From the Bermuda House Collection:

**BH cas 1003 Orrin Tucker From the
Edgewater Beach Hotel, Chicago 1948**
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Waldorf-Astoria, New York City 1940**
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**BH cas 1012 Orrin Tucker and the
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SB 001 Frank Scott Swings with the Big Band All Stars

This is a major studio production which recreates the great music of the big bands as it actually sounded by the people who actually played it! Greats of the big band era such as Art Depew, Larry McGuire and Arnold Fishkind at their best.

BH cas 8010 Maldonado Plays Rodgers and Hart

Great piano renditions of a special kind of music from the '20s & '30s.

BH K101 Kenn's Music of the '30s v1
Kenn plays popular hits of the time on his piano and keyboard. Great sound! Great reminiscing!

Radio/TV

A (Belated) OTR Christmas

We didn't find too many nostalgia-themed Christmas CDs this year (after a couple of bumper crops in '94 and '95), but one item we found in our stocking, and which you'll want to purchase for next year's Yuletide, is **Merry Christmas From the Golden Age of Radio** (LaserLight 12 772; \$6.98), a budget-priced disc which offers 69 minutes of holiday laughter from 1946-52.

The six sketches vary in length (from 6:46 to 16:45) and in audio quality, but all are amusing and generally quite listenable. The disc starts off with a Jack Benny excerpt from 1954 in which Jack and the gang are spending the holiday in Palm Springs. Dennis Day gets on Jack's nerves by *not* talking nonsense, and later sings a lovely medley of traditional carols. Mr. Kitzel (not someone you'd generally expect to meet in a Christmas show) also enlivens the proceedings.

Next, we're off to a 1952 sketch with Phil Harris, Alice Faye and Elliot Lewis; Phil is reluctant to play Santa Claus at a home for underprivileged kids, until he gets a load of how cute he is in the Santa suit. Oddly, the excerpt fades out just as the sketch is really getting underway.

However, a 1948 skit with Fred Allen as a Santa on strike is complete, and very funny. Fred as Santa tells a young visitor about all of the grief he's endured over the years, such as the time he visited Paul Revere's house and was shot for being a Redcoat. Another Red is on this CD, too, as Mr. Skelton chats with announcer Rod O'Connor about exchanging Christmas gifts, and then becomes Clem Kadiddlehopper as a Christmas tree salesman wondering why business is so slow on December 26th.

A Mel Blanc excerpt from 1946 is fairly amusing (his Santa sounds more like Yosemite Sam, and Mel at one point describes how Santa sounds in different countries). Jimmy Durante closes the show, engaging in Yuletide banter with Arthur Treacher, Peggy Lee, Candy Candido and guest Margaret O'Brien. The sound quality is somewhat harsh on the Fred Allen excerpt, nicely bright on the Durante and acceptable, if a bit "dupey," on the others. (Info: Delta Music, 2500 Broadway Ave. #380, Santa Monica CA 90404-3061.)

Excellent *Lux* Book Has Us in a Lather

The *Lux Radio Theatre* was a landmark series. It was the prototype for a whole new genre of dramatic radio (surely it was the inspiration for *The Screen Guild Players*, *Academy Award Theatre*, *Screen Director's Playhouse* and other shows); it brought a new emphasis to Hollywood-based radio production; it marked a new maturity in dramatic radio writing; and it began an influx of movie stars into radio.

Such was the quality and popularity of the *Lux* show that it not only predated its competitors but outlasted them. It began on October 14, 1934 and continued through 1955. Even then, *Lux* on the air wasn't quite finished, since a video counterpart (which began October 2, 1950) would continue until September 12, 1957.

In between there was a fascinating story, often just as dramatic as the on-the-air narratives. It's told compellingly in **Lux Presents Hollywood** by Connie Billips and Arthur Pierce (McFarland & Co.; 729 pages, hardcover). It's impossible to imagine a more authoritative book on this subject; indeed, this volume is a model of scholarship and readability. All 926 *Lux* radio shows and 338 television programs are detailed, with full credits for the cast of each show—even including the "intermission guests" and the actors on the commercials! The authors have listened to 655 of the radio shows (out of 844 known to survive), and have gleaned details about the unheard shows from scripts, reviews and other sources. Since only three of the TV shows are currently available, the entries about those broadcasts are understandably less detailed.

The sections about the individual shows are prefaced by lengthy and vivid histories of the two series. Along the way, there are intriguing stories—such as the 1944-45 contretemps between longtime host Cecil B. DeMille and AFRA which resulted in his ouster from the program. Movie buffs will want this volume as well, for its impressive detail on the films which provided most of the series' storylines. Illustrated with dozens of rare, star-studded stills, the book also includes lists of archives and retail sources for the shows, a bibliography, and two full indexes. (Available for \$85.98 plus postage from Radio Spirits, P.O. Box 2141, Schiller Park IL 60176; (800) 723-4648.)

Not Much New in *Big Broadcast* Update

Back in 1966, broadcasters and old-time radio enthusiasts Frank Buxton and Bill Owen compiled a book called *Radio's Golden Age*, a first published attempt to list the cast and production credits for programs of the 1920-1950 era. In 1972, Buxton and Owen expanded their work into a larger book called *The Big Broadcast*, which was published in hardcover by Viking and in paperback by Avon/Plume.

Sometime in the late '70s, the book went out of print, and a greatly expanded version has been promised ever since. Now comes **The Big Broadcast 1920-1950, Second Edition** (Scarecrow Press; 320 pages, hardcover; \$59.50). Frankly, it's a mystifying volume. Although a press release notes that "the authors have added considerable information to the volume which has come to light in the intervening years," a comparison with the '72 edition reveals that very little new information has been added. For example, in the "Line up" section, the new material consists of added credits and a quote from the opening of *The Lone Ranger*, and three brief new paragraphs at the end of the entry for *The Lone Ranger*.

As for the balance of the book, it's still a good reference source—for 1972. The problem is that in the intervening quarter-century, so much research has been done with the OTR community that there's little excuse for the often sketchy information provided here. (The entry for *Starring Boris Karloff* notes only that it was a mystery series, starring Boris Karloff.) While the credits for cast members on programs is often admirably thorough, information about a show's network affiliations, originating city, format and beginning and ending dates is often nonexistent. (One can find more hard information of that sort in J. Hickerson's *The Ultimate History of Network Radio Programming*, available from Bobcat Press, 4321, Hamden CT 06514; (203) 248-2887.)

One might even argue that this new edition offers less than the previous version since the section of photographs is no longer included. As it is, the new edition of *The Big Broadcast* is still a worthwhile book for those new to collecting vintage radio shows, but certainly isn't the major expansion that we had anticipated. (Available from Scarecrow Press, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham MD 20706; (301) 459-3366.)



OTR Sci-Fi in Hi-Fi

Radio Spirits, in association with Smithsonian Institution Press, has produced another in its series of box sets of favorite radio programs. This time, the theme is **Old Time Radio Science Fiction**; the set is available on four CDs (stock number 5007; \$34.98) or four cassettes (#5006; \$24.98); we listened to the compact disc edition.

As with the previous Radio Spirits box sets, the shows have been slightly edited to fit the equivalent of three half hours onto each CD or cassette. Longtime radio-show collectors might lament the loss of the commercials or station breaks. However, the market for which this set is clearly intended is the "books on tape" audience,

many of whom have never heard vintage radio programs and who might well be annoyed by commercials, station breaks or other interruptions in the narrative. Thus, the obvious intention is to reach a new audience for old-time radio shows, certainly a laudable goal.

Even those who might miss the commercials will certainly find much to enjoy here. The 10 programs have been carefully chosen to include the finest science fiction writers of long ago and more recent times. Ray Bradbury—who also contributes a magnificent, heartfelt essay to the lovely 50-page booklet which accompanies the set—is the author of "Zero Hour," a *Suspense* episode in which a child's game of interplanetary invasion turns terrifyingly real, as well as the *X Minus One* episode "Mars is Heaven" and the 1950 *Dimension X* adaptation of "The Martian Chronicles." Arch Oboler contributes a *Lights Out* episode entitled "The Meteor Man," and a 1945 play entitled "Rocket From Manhattan," in which he predicts that the first manned trip to the moon will take place in the year 2000; certainly one of the few times when reality has outpaced fiction. Curt Siodmak (better known as a writer-director of horror films in the '40s) contributes the terrific "Donovan's Brain," originally presented in two half-hour *Suspense* shows starring Orson Welles in May 1944, and edited together here into a single selection running 48:02.

Jules Verne's classic "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" is presented in a 1953 *Family Theatre* starring Gene Lockhart and William Woodson. H.G. Wells' "The Time Machine" is the basis for an *Escape* episode, and of course his "War of the Worlds," as freely adapted by Howard Koch, is here in the classic *Mercury Theatre On the Air* episode.

The audio quality is excellent throughout. "War of the Worlds," edited to 51:22, has been leased from another purveyor of old-time radio shows, Metacom, whose own CD is more complete, running 57:17. However, the new Radio Spirits release sounds noticeably cleaner, with ticks, pops, and other surface noise much reduced; it's also brighter and clearer than any previous issue. The other shows have superb sound—the 1955 *Suspense* "Zero Hour" broadcast is especially breathtaking. The Arch Oboler "Rocket From Manhattan" has very minor traces of surface noise and a little hum, and a *Mysterious Traveler* episode, "Operation Tomorrow," has the slightest hint of a swish noise at the very start. However, one has to listen very carefully for these minor flaws to even perceive them, a mark of the care which has gone into the restoration of these vintage broadcasts.

The aforementioned booklet has also been produced with love and care, including not only the essay by Bradbury, but a marvelous piece by Anthony Tollin which concisely yet fully describes the evolution of science fiction in print and on radio, paying particular tribute to publisher-inventor Hugo Gernsback. The essay is filled with rich detail, and includes quotes from many radio greats, including actors Jackson Beck and Bud Collyer, and producer Van Woodward. The final section provides full credits for each of the included broadcasts, with background information about the program and its participants. The 15 illustrations include several we haven't seen before, including welcome new portraits of radio stalwarts Frank Readick and Maurice Tarplin, and even a shot of Ora Nichols, the head of the CBS sound-effects department. (Available from Radio Spirits, P.O. Box 2141, Schiller Park, IL 60176; (800) 723-4648.)

Radio's Stars Profiled

About five years ago, I came up with what I thought was a terrific idea for a book—*Who Was Who in Radio*. I didn't get very far before I realized it was a mammoth enterprise, and put it aside for the time being. Now Thomas A. DeLong, biographer of Paul Whiteman (*Pops*), has saved me the trouble of going any further.

DeLong's *Radio Stars* (McFarland, 316 pages, hardcover; \$59.50) is an essential reference for any enthusiast of broadcasting's golden era. In addition to such stellar personalities of the airwaves as Fanny Brice and Orson Welles we would expect to find the likes of Rosemary DeCamp, Bert Gordon, Mercedes McCambridge, Frank Nelson, Jeanette Nolan, Elliott Reid and Arnold Stang in such a volume. DeLong gives us these stalwarts of the microphone and a great many more; in fact, he includes over 950 biographical sketches of persons who worked in radio between 1920 and 1960.

Veteran New York-based character actor Robert Dryden and perennial juvenile Dick Beals are conspicuous by their absence, as are those wacky *National Barn Dance* regulars, the Hoosier Hot Shots. But there are some great surprises among the subjects profiled: novelty singer Frank Crumit, recording artist Annette Hanshaw, organist Ann Leaf, bandleader Billy Mills (*Fibber McGee and Molly*), police-investigator-turned-*Gangbusters* narrator Norman Schwarzkopf (father of the Desert Storm commander Norman Jr.) and orchestra leader Harry Sosnik (misspelled "Sosnick," as usual), to name a few.

There are some peculiar omissions of fact—the listing for Arthur Q. Bryan (Doc Gamble on *Fibber McGee*) tells us he played the angel in the radio version of *It's a Wonderful Life*, but neglects to mention that he was best known to audiences as the voice of Elmer Fudd. (Admittedly, this isn't a radio credit, but it was Bryan's primary claim to fame). DeLong has done a admirable job of compiling the data on these disparate personalities, much of which is difficult to find. While he might have listed more credits for some of radio's frenetically busy chameleons, it is a task easier said than done; with actors like Peggy Webber (Ma Friday on *Dragnet*), it would be easier to simply list the few programs she did not appear on. (Available from McFarland & Company, Box 611 Jefferson NC 28640; (910) 246-4460.)

—Jordan R. Young

Two Memoirs Show Why We Love Lucy

Lucille Ball may have become famous as comedy's Queen of Television, but she spent over 20 years working in movies and radio before hitting it big in 1951. The story of those formative years is mostly what you'll find in *Love, Lucy* (Putnam; 286 pages, hardcover; \$24.95). This long-lost manuscript was written by Miss Ball with a writer named Betty Hannah Hoffman in 1966 and was only discovered about a year ago in the office of Lucy's former attorney, Ed Perlstein.

I Love Lucy fans may be a bit disappointed, since the hit TV series doesn't enter into the narrative until its final third. However, those of us who love the world of show business in the '30s and '40s will be absorbed by Lucy's account. Working as a model in New York, by a fluke she won a tiny part in Eddie Cantor's movie *Roman Scandals*, which she parlayed into other small roles, a stock contract at Columbia, and another contract at RKO. Here, she met Ginger Rogers' mother, Lela, who took Lucy under her wing and taught her a great deal about Hollywood—on camera and especially off. Her movie career at RKO was primarily spent working in B pictures with occasional highlights such as *Stage Door* or *The Big Street*. One RKO film, though, was a definite highlight—*Too Many Girls*, the 1940 musical which introduced her to Desi Arnaz.

Moving to MGM didn't improve Lucy's fortunes much, and in 1946 she turned to radio, in a CBS series called *My Favorite Husband*. (She'd first turned to radio as a showcase for her comedy talent in 1938, appearing on Jack Haley's *The Wonder Show* and then winning a weekly supporting part on comedian Phil Baker's series.) And the radio show, of course, led to the television series which is still a worldwide hit 45 years after its debut. Lucy comes across as a disciplined woman, but certainly not an unfeeling one; there were evidently many more emotions going through her than she let on to her co-workers. The stories about '30s Hollywood are filled with rich detail, and one realizes that the lot of a struggling actress was actually much tougher than anything depicted in *Stage Door*.



Lucy with John Hiestand and Richard Denning on *My Favorite Husband*

Before his associate with Ms. Ball began in 1948, Jess was a writer for radio's top stars, among them Jack Benny, Fred Astaire (on *The Packard Hour*), Al Jolson (for *Lifebuoy*), Edgar Bergen and Fanny Brice. Several of the book's early chapters deal with the radio years, including his apprenticeship as a gofer at KFRC, San Francisco, and later work as a writer for *The Gulf Screen Guild Theatre*. Understandably, though, most of the pages are taken up with Oppenheimer's most famous brainchild. Two complete *Lucy* scripts are included, along with the one script that Lucy and Desi refused to perform.

The compact disc which accompanies the book is a real treat, containing a complete *My Favorite Husband* episode, along with selected excerpts (including Lucy's tearful goodbye to the cast and crew on that show's last outing). Two sketches written for the radio show and repeated on the TV series are included in both incarnations, to provide a perspective on the crossover to the new medium. (The radio version of the "Restaurant Scene" is terrific, with Gale Gordon and Bea Benaderet in the Frawley/Vance roles; Frank Nelson is excellent in both versions.)

This is a warm and witty book, filled with anecdotes and insights about the craft of writing comedy in two very demanding media. (Syracuse University Press, 1600 Jamesville Ave., Syracuse NY 13244-5160; (315) 443-5546.)

Unmasking the Lone Ranger

Clayton Moore is one of the most beloved and least recognized of early television's actors—least recognized because during 1949-1957, he portrayed The Lone Ranger, never fully revealing the face behind the mask. Over the years, Moore grew to appreciate the moral qualities of his video character so much that he dedicated his own life to the ideals of the Ranger. Thus, it's not an exaggeration for Moore to title his memoirs *I Was That Masked Man* (by Clayton Moore with Frank Thompson; Taylor Publishing; 304 pages, hardcover; \$22.95), because actor and role have virtually melded into one.

Actually, Moore has had a prolific career apart from the 221 television shows and two features in which he portrayed the masked hero. (The full story of his active career as the Ranger takes only 75 pages of the book.) Moore was a very busy actor in 44 features, ten serials and one Pete Smith short between 1938 and 1959. Fans of Republic serials such as *The Perils of Nyoka* or *Radar Men From the Moon* will find much to enjoy here, as Moore recounts his adventures with serials stalwarts such as Yakima Canutt, Roy Barcroft, Linda Stirling and Tom Steele.

But the heart of the book comes when Moore describes how he won the role of the Ranger in 1949, how he worked to match the vocal delivery of radio's Brace Beemer, why he was fired from the show in 1952 (and reinstated two years later) and how he and Jay Silverheels formed a real-life friendship to match the onscreen partnership. Moore's life paralleled a serial with a real cliffhanger which began in 1975. Moore had been making a living through public appearances as The Lone Ranger, but The Wrather Corporation, owners of the character, decided that he could no longer bill himself as the Ranger—and in 1979 forbade him to wear the trademark mask. In this instance, the fans came to the rescue with hundreds of petitions—and late in 1984, Jack and Bonita Granville Wrather granted Moore the rights to wear the trademark mask again.

Moore's charm, and his commitment to "honesty, decency, respect and patriotism" come through vividly in this book; he's someone who would richly deserve our admiration even if he hadn't been that masked man. (Taylor Publishing, 1550 W. Mockingbird Lane, Dallas TX 75235; (214) 819-8100.)

When Radio Was Program Guide

February - April 1997

When Radio Was is a syndicated radio program broadcast on 300 affiliate radio stations from coast to coast. Up to five hours of *When Radio Was* can be heard in most parts of the country on these 300 affiliates. Some affiliates run the program Monday through Friday, some air the program on weekends and some do both. Check with your local *When Radio Was* affiliate for exact times of broadcast. To find out what radio station in your area carries *When Radio Was*, call 1-847-465-8245 extension 228 (Sarah Anderson), Monday through Friday between 9 AM and 5 PM Central Time.

FEBRUARY 1997

Broadcast Week One

The Green Hornet 1940s "A Question of Time" Starring Al Hodge / **Burns & Allen** 9-14-43 Starring George Burns & Gracie Allen (part 1)

Burns & Allen 9-14-43 Starring George Burns & Gracie Allen (part 1) / **The Whistler** 6-17-46 "Affair At Stony Ridge" Starring Bill Forman

The Amazing Nero Wolfe 2-16-51 "Case of the Party for Death" Starring Sydney Greenstreet / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 5-2-44 "Aunt Sarah Visits" Starring Jim and Marian Jordan (part 1)

Fibber McGee & Molly 5-2-44 "Aunt Sarah Visits" Starring Jim and Marian Jordan (part 2) / **The Shadow** 4-14-46 "The Unburied Dead" Starring Bret Morrison and Grace Matthews

The Jack Benny Program 12-10-50 Starring Jack and all his gang / **Unsolved Mysteries** 1936 "The Writing on the Wall"

Broadcast Week Two

Suspense 12-2-56 "Rim of Terror" Starring Barbara Whiting / **The Abbott & Costello Show** 1-27-44 w/ guest, Janet Blair (part 1)

The Abbott & Costello Show 1-27-44 w/ guest, Janet Blair (part 2) / **Dragnet** 5-15-52 "The Big Mail" Starring Jack Webb

The Lone Ranger 4-24-44 "Story of Sam Bass" Starring Brace Beemer and John Todd / **Our Miss Brooks** 1-16-49 Starring Eve Arden (part 1)

Our Miss Brooks 1-16-49 Starring Eve Arden (part 2) / **Gangbusters** 1940s "The Appointment With Death"

Tales of the Texas Rangers 9-30-51 "Death Shaft" Starring Joel McCrea / **Bob & Ray** 1950s Starring Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding

Broadcast Week Three

The Adventures of Superman 3-7-49 "Mystery of the Flying Monster" Starring Clayton Bud Collyer / **The Life of Riley** 10-22-44 "Honeymoon Flashback" Starring William Bendix (part 1)

The Life of Riley 10-22-44 "Honeymoon Flashback" Starring William Bendix (part 2) / **Gunsmoke** 1-24-53 "The Old Lady" Starring William Conrad

Suspense 11-11-48 "Muddy Track" Starring Edmund O'Brien / **The Phil Harris & Alice Faye Show** 12-4-49 "Woman Wrestler" Starring Phil Harris and Alice Faye (Part 1)

The Phil Harris & Alice Faye Show 12-4-49 "Woman Wrestler" Starring Phil Harris and Alice Faye (Part 2) / **Have Gun, Will Travel** 1-4-59 Starring John Dehner

The Adventures of Philip Marlowe 2-14-50 "Grim Echo" Starring Gerald Mohr / **Lum & Abner** 1945 #371 Starring Chester Lauck and Norris Goff

Broadcast Week Four

Box Thirteen 1949 "The Hare and the Hound" Starring Alan Ladd / **The Great Gildersleeve** 2-10-46 Starring Hal Peary (part 1)

The Great Gildersleeve 2-10-46 Starring Hal Peary (part 2) / **The Lone Ranger** 5-1-44 "Story of Johnny Owens" Starring Brace Beemer and John Todd

Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons 2-17-44 "Mr. Trevor's Secret" w/ Bennett Killpack / **The Great Gildersleeve** 12-16-45 "A Night at the Opera" w/ Hal Peary (part 1)

Dimension X 9-1-50 "The Roads Must Roll" Starring Wendell Holmes / **The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 4-11-43 w/guests Martha Raye and Bill Thompson (part 1)

The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show 4-11-43 w/guests Martha Raye and Bill Thompson (part 2) / **The Shadow** 4-7-46 "The Ghost Wore a Silver Slipper" Starring Bret Morrison and Grace Matthews

The Six Shooter 1-17-54 "The Silver Buckle" Starring James Stewart / Vic & Sade 1945 Starring Art Van Harvey and Bernadine Flynn

MARCH 1997

Broadcast Week One

The Green Hornet 3-9-46 "The Letter" Starring Robert Hall / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 11-13-45 "Teaching Molly to Drive" Starring Jim and Marian Jordan (part 1)

Fibber McGee & Molly 11-13-45 "Teaching Molly to Drive" Starring Jim and Marian Jordan (part 2) / **The Adventures of Sam Spade** 11-17-50 "The Death of Sam Spade" Starring Stephen Dunn

The Whistler 3-18-46 "Smart Boy" Starring Bill Forman / **Burns & Allen** 9-7-43 Starring George Burns & Gracie Allen (part 1)

Burns & Allen 9-7-43 Starring George Burns & Gracie Allen (part 1) / **The Saint** 6-24-51 "Peter the Great" Starring Tom Conway

The Shadow 2-15-42 "Death Speaks Twice" Starring Bill Johnstone / **Tom Mix** 12-15-41 Starring Curley Bradley

Broadcast Week Two

Suspense 4-21-49 "The Copper Tea Strainer" Starring Betty Grable and Raymond Burr / **The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Program** 4-18-43 Starring Edgar Bergen (part 1)

The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Program 4-18-43 Starring Edgar Bergen (part 2) / **Hollywood Startime** 2-15-47 "Talk of the Town" Starring Cary Grant

The Lone Ranger 12-1-43 "Rats, Lice and Chinatown" Starring Brace Beemer / **Abbott & Costello** 10-19-44 Starring Bud Abbott & Lou Costello (part 1)

Abbott & Costello 10-19-44 Starring Bud Abbott & Lou Costello (part 2) / **Dragnet** 5-22-52 "The Big Shakedown" Starring Jack Webb

Gangbusters 1940s "The Cincinnati Narcotics Ring" / **The Dizzy Dean Show** 8-21-48 "Dizzy's Fastball" Starring Dizzy Dean

When Radio Was Program Guide

February - April 1997 Continued

Broadcast Week Three

Tales of the Texas Rangers 7-22-50 "Apache Peak" Starring Joel McCrea / **Johnny Dollar** 10-31-55 "The Valentine Matter" Starring Bob Bailey (part 1 of 5)

The Jack Benny Program 2-11-51 w/ guest, Charles Farrell / **Johnny Dollar** 11-1-55 "The Valentine Matter" Starring Bob Bailey (part 2 of 5)

The Adventures of Maisie 1949 Starring Ann Sothern / **Johnny Dollar** 11-2-55 "The Valentine Matter" Starring Bob Bailey (part 3 of 5)

Gunsmoke 9-13-52 "Home Surgery" Starring William Conrad / **Johnny Dollar** 11-3-55 "The Valentine Matter" Starring Bob Bailey (part 4 of 5)

The Shadow 12-22-46 "The Fine Art of Murder" Starring Bret Morrison / **Johnny Dollar** 11-4-55 "The Valentine Matter" Starring Bob Bailey (part 5 of 5)

Broadcast Week Four

The Adventures of Philip Marlowe 6-21-50 "The Gold Cobra" Starring Gerald Mohr / **The Great Gildersleeve** 5-13-45 "New Boy in Town" Starring Hal Peary (part 1)

The Great Gildersleeve 5-13-45 "New Boy in Town" Starring Hal Peary (part 2) / **The Six Shooter** 4-8-54 "The Wolf" Starring James Stewart

Box Thirteen 6-21-48 "Double Right Cross" Starring Alan Ladd / **The Phil Harris & Alice Faye Show** 2-19-50 "Can't Pay for Taxi" Starring Phil Harris & Alice Faye (part 1)

The Phil Harris & Alice Faye Show 2-19-50 "Can't Pay for Taxi" Starring Phil Harris & Alice Faye (part 2) / **Have Gun, Will Travel** 8-9-59 "Finn Alley" Starring John Dehner

Suspense 5-4-44 "The Dark Tower" Starring Orson Welles / **Lum & Abner** 1945 Starring Chester Lauck and Norris Goff in program #372

Broadcast Week Five

The First Nighter Program 3-11-48 "There's Something in the Air" Starring Olan Soule and Barbara Luddy / **The Life of Riley** 12-8-45 "Promotion Exam" w/ William Bendix (part 1)

APRIL 1997

Broadcast Week One

The Life of Riley 12-8-45 "Promotion" Starring William Bendix (part 2) / **The Green Hornet** 3-16-46 "A Pair of Nylons" Starring Robert Hall

Rocky Fortune 12-1-53 "Art Store Handyman" Starring Frank Sinatra / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 11-20-45 "Neighbor's Colonial Cottage" Starring Jim and Marian Jordan (part 1)

Fibber McGee & Molly 11-20-45 "Neighbor's Colonial Cottage" Starring Jim and Marian Jordan (part 2) / **The Whistler** 3-25-46 "The Trigger Man" Starring Bill Forman

The Shadow 2-3-46 "Murder With Music" Starring Bret Morrison / **Vic & Sade** 1940s Starring Art Van Harvey and Bernadine Flynn

Broadcast Week Two

The Lone Ranger 1-3-44 "Smiley Roysen" Starring Brace Beemer / **Burns & Allen** 6-6-44 Starring George Burns & Gracie Allen (part 1)

Burns & Allen 6-6-44 Starring George Burns & Gracie Allen (part 2) / **Suspense** 1-13-49 "The Too Perfect Alibi" Starring Danny Kaye

Lights Out 1940s "Mr. Freak" Starring Raymond Edward Johnson / **The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 9-5-43 Starring Edgar Bergen (part 1)

The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show 9-5-43 Starring Edgar Bergen (part 2) / **Dragnet** 5-29-52 "The Big 4th" Starring Jack Webb

Gangbusters 1940s "Case of the Oliver Brothers" / **The Strange Dr. Weird** 1944 "Death in the Everglades" Starring Maurice Tarplin

Broadcast Week Three

Tales of the Texas Rangers 4-13-52 "Uncertain Death" Starring Joel McCrea / **The Abbott & Costello Show** 11-15-45 Starring Bud Abbott & Lou Costello (part 1)

The Abbott & Costello Show 11-15-45 Starring Bud Abbott & Lou Costello (part 2) / **The Adventures of Philip Marlowe** 3-14-50 "The Vital Statistic" Starring Gerald Mohr

Gunsmoke 9-20-52 "Drop Dead" Starring William Conrad / **The Phil Harris & Alice Faye Show** 2-26-50 "Phil Makes His Own Picture" Starring Phil Harris & Alice Faye (part 1)

The Phil Harris & Alice Faye Show 2-26-50 Starring Phil Harris & Alice Faye (part 2) / **Box Thirteen** 6-28-48 "Look Pleasant Please" Starring Alan Ladd

Suspense 2-17-49 "Catch Me If You Can" Starring Jane Wyman / **Lum & Abner** 1945 Episode #373 Starring Chester Lauck and Norris Goff

Broadcast Week Four

The Shadow 10-13-46 "Valley of the Living Terror" Starring Bret Morrison / **The Great Gildersleeve** 5-20-45 "Windfall At the House" Starring Hal Peary (part 1)

The Great Gildersleeve 5-20-45 "Windfall At the House" Starring Hal Peary (part 2) / **The Six Shooter** 4-1-54 "Aunt Emma" Starring James Stewart

Boston Blackie 1946 "On the Wrong Track" Starring Dick Kollmar / **The Life of Riley** 12-15-45 "Riley's Mother Visits" Starring William Bendix (part 1)

The Life of Riley 12-15-45 "Riley's Mother Visits" Starring William Bendix (part 2) / **Have Gun, Will Travel** 8-16-59 "The Lady" Starring John Dehner

The Jack Benny Program 4-1-51 "Leaving For New York" Starring Jack and all his gang / **Unsolved Mysteries** 1936 "The Mad Monk"

Broadcast Week Five

The Lone Ranger 1-17-44 "The Murder Kid" Starring Brace Beemer / **Information Please** 9-18-42 Starring Clifton Fadiman (part 1)

Information Please 9-18-42 Starring Clifton Fadiman (part 2) / **The Adventures of Sam Spade** 12-8-50 "The Dry Gulch Caper" Starring Howard Duff

Sergeant Preston of the Yukon 9-20-48 "The Lost Indian Mine" Starring Paul Sutton / **The Adventures of Maisie** 1950s Starring Ann Sothern (part 1)

News in the Air

Jay Hickerson, who continues to publish the excellent bi-monthly old-time radio newsletter *Hello Again* (now in its 27th year) has just published a new, revised version of his *Ultimate History of Network Radio Programming*, a 500-page volume which provides information on 6,000 shows; for information on both, contact Hickerson at Box 4321, Hamden CT 06514.

A fine old-time radio organization is **SPERDVAC**, which has monthly meetings with guests who worked in radio of the golden era, an annual convention, an archive of vintage shows and a newsletter called the *Radiogram*; first year dues are \$25 and \$15 for renewals. Write P.O. Box 7177, Van Nuys, CA 91409.

Sarah Karloff, daughter of **Boris**, is looking for information about her father's radio work, for a planned book; contact her at Box 2424, Rancho Mirage CA 92270.....**Perry Como** (whose radio work is noted on page 30) is celebrated by a Fan Club run by Martha Gerhard, 943 Crawford St., Bethlehem PA 18017.

A lot of the great action-adventure radio shows were also turned into movie serials. Fans of either medium may want to check out a firm called **Liberty Home Video** (11333 East 60th Place, Tulsa OK 74146; 800-331-4077), which carries a healthy compliment of cliffhangers such as *Don Winslow of the Navy* (and the *Coast Guard*, too), *Gang Busters*, and a quartet of *Dick Tracy* serials for \$19.99 each.

Congratulations to **Stan Freberg**, whose recent Rhino album *Stan Freberg Presents the United States of America, Volume Two* was just nominated for a Grammy for the best comedy album of 1996; we hope he'll repeat his winning ways of 1958, when *The Best of The Stan Freberg Shows* won the award. Speaking of **The Stan Freberg Show**, the first seven episodes of the landmark 15-week 1957 series are now available in complete form on cassettes (stock #4107; \$24.98) and compact discs (4108; 34.98) from **Radio Spirits**, along with an exclusive new interview section in which Stan and co-stars **June Foray** and **Peter Leeds** reminisce about the series. To order, call (800) 723-4648; the remaining eight episodes will be forthcoming. You can also join a gaggle of Freberg fans online at a new **Freberg Archive** website; the URL is <http://sapitwa.www.edu/archives/freberg>.



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- Volume 1945 (#4120)** Ozzie and Harriet 9-16-45; Amos 'n' Andy 5-25-45; Boston Blackie 12-23-45; Fred Allen 10-7-45; Life of Riley 2-4-45; The Whistler 2-26-45.
- Volume 1946 (#4128)** Academy Award 11-13-46; Cavalcade of America 11-18-46; The Fat Man 1-21-46; Fred Allen 5-26-46; Fibber McGee and Molly 11-26-46; Great Gildersleeve 12-11-46.
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- Volume 1948 (#4132)** Big Town 11-20-48; Sam Spade 11-12-48; Suspense 9-30-48; Stop the Music 3-21-48; First Nighter 3-11-48.
- Volume 1949 (#4124)** Ozzie and Harriet 3-27-49; The Damon Runyon Theatre 1949; Duffy's Tavern 3-16-49; Great Gildersleeve 2-9-49; Screen Director's Playhouse 7-1-49; Suspense 11-17-49.
- Volume 1950 (#4125)** Dangerous Assignment 6-20-50; Dimension X 4-15-50; Escape 10-15-50; Mysterious Traveler 6-6-50; Nightbeat 8-14-50; Our Miss Brooks 3-19-50.

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OTR on the WWW

Old-Time Radio continues to be represented by a wealth of sites on the World-Wide Web. It's been a while since we've gone surfing for new locales, and we thought we'd let you know about a few recently brought to our attention.

Old Time Radio (<http://www.primenet.com/~daleb/index.html>) features descriptions of shows and individual episodes from great series. There's a plethora of misspellings, unfortunately (Fred Allen somehow winds up as "Fled Alien"!), but there's no denying the enthusiasm and love for OTR here.

One of the most entertaining websites devoted to OTR is **Radio Days: A Soundbite History** (<http://www.otr.com/>) maintained by Jim Widner. It contains a monthly timeline (birthdays of notable radio personalities, with biographical information, downloadable pictures and sound clips), an overview of great moments in radio news, special sections devoted to *Captain Midnight* and *I Love a Mystery*, and a "Drama" section with clips of many great OTR theme songs.

Actual vintage radio sets—along with memorabilia such as magazines and premiums—are the stuff of **Phil's Old Radios** (<http://www.accessone.com/~philn/>), which has some fine graphics.

Original Old Time Radio (OTR) WWW Pages (<http://www.old-time.com/>), maintained by Lou Genco, is a massive site with reference materials about the history of radio, several collections of downloadable graphics (stars of radio programs, vintage radios, advertisements and logos), a listing of clubs and a sample of downloadable sound snippets from several shows. There's even a history of OTR sites on the internet.

The glory of old-time local radio is preserved in **John F. Schneider's San Francisco Radio History** (<http://www.aa.net/~rfs/>), which provides histories of KGO, KPO/KNBR, the NBC Pacific Coast Network, the Don Lee Networks, and many other Bay Area stations. There's also a very healthy selection of vintage photos—many of them dating back to the '20s, and most of them showing transmitters, antennae and other early equipment. The site provides links to other websites with information about local old-time radio in Washington D.C., Chicago, Tampa and Memphis.



Broadcaster-historian Frank Bresee

Radio Great Art Gilmore

By Frank Bresee

As we look back over radio's history (this year marks the 71st anniversary of network radio) we often forget about the personalities that brought the programs on and off the air—the announcers. No doubt they were the most important part of radio, because without their introductions the programs might never have been broadcast.

On the East Coast there was Harry Von Zell, who brought us Fred Allen and Eddie Cantor; Jimmy Wallington with George Burns and Gracie Allen; and Milton Cross, who introduced the prestigious Metropolitan Opera broadcasts. In Chicago, Franklyn McCormack introduced *Jack Armstrong, The All American Boy*, and Pierre Andre sold Ovaltine as he presented *Little Orphan Annie*. Here on the West Coast, a host of announcers became almost as famous as the stars themselves: Ken Carpenter with Bing Crosby; Harlow Wilcox for Fibber McGee and Molly; Don Wilson with Jack Benny, and on and on.

A very important announcer in Southern California and on the national networks was, and still is, Art Gilmore.

He was interested in radio during his school days and became an amateur radio operator at Puget Sound College in Washington. By 1934, he was earning \$15 a month at CBS affiliate KVI in Tacoma, singing, announcing and reading poetry.

In August 1935, he was hired by program director Ivan Ditmars (later one of radio's top composers and conductors) to work at KOL, Seattle. Following staff jobs at various other stations in the Northwest, he came to Los Angeles "in 1936 with \$40 and a Ford." He auditioned at the Warner Bros.-owned station KFWB, and got the job.

One of his duties was announcing the special musical programs at the station. At that time KFWB had a 27-piece staff orchestra which boasted the talents of drummer Spike Jones and guitarist Roy Rogers.

A month or so after he was hired by KFWB, Los Angeles station KNX was purchased by CBS; Art moved to the new network station and became its staff announcer. By 1937, Art was one of the many announcers who was auditioned by motion picture star Jean Hersholt for the *Dr. Christian* show. He won the audition, and the program lasted 17 years.

The first time I met Art was in the 1940s when he was the announcer of the popular western *Red Ryder*. I was privileged, from time to time, to play Red's Indian sidekick "Little Beaver." Over the years, some of Art's other programs included *Amos 'n' Andy*; *Adventures of Frank Race*; *Meet Me at Parky's*; *Stars Over Hollywood*, plus many CBS Special Events and hundreds of dance band remotes—programs broadcast from popular hotels and restaurants in Southern California with orchestras such as Glen Gray, Ted Fio Rito and Tommy Tucker. For most of 1942, Art had acting roles on the Monday night *Lux Radio Theatre*. For a time in the mid-'40s, he somehow found time to teach radio announcing at the University of Southern California, and also co-wrote a book about the topic.

His voice was heard as the voice-over on more than 10,000 "coming attractions" trailers made to promote motion pictures in the '40s and '50s; these continue to be run daily on the AMC, TCM and TNT cable networks. TCM also runs many of the hilarious Joe

McDoakes shorts which Art narrated for Warner Bros. in the '40s. One particularly funny entry, *So You Want to Be a Detective*, is told entirely from his perspective, with Art's viewpoint becoming the audience's. (We don't want to give away any secrets, but Gilmore becomes very important to the resolution of the murder mystery.)

Art is also seen in television re-runs of the first *Dragnet* TV series, where for years he played the Police Captain. Gilmore also narrated the 1955-59 Broderick Crawford TV series *Highway Patrol*, and in the '60s he announced *The Red Skelton Show* for CBS. In 1960, Art was the host of a CBS series, *The Comedy Spot*.

During an interview, Art told me, "In the '80s I announced a program for Katherine Kuhlman, the religious faith healer. Her program was on the air on both radio and television all over the country. Many people have asked me if I thought she was for real. All I can say is that one day I arrived at the studio with a bad cold, and Ms. Kuhlman prayed over me—and within a few hours my cold was completely gone! She was all right in my book."

In 1966, Art Gilmore became the Founding President of the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters, a club with more than 800 members, open to those individuals who have worked professionally in radio and/or television for the past 20 years. (He is currently the Vice Chairman of the club.) It is the custom of PPB to hold five luncheon meetings each year, and pay tribute to those who have made important contributions to the historical development of radio and television.

A true gentleman and one of the greats of his profession, Art makes his home in the San Fernando Valley with his wife of over fifty years, Grace.

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by FRANK BRESEE & BOBB LYNES

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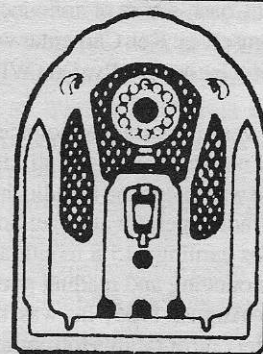


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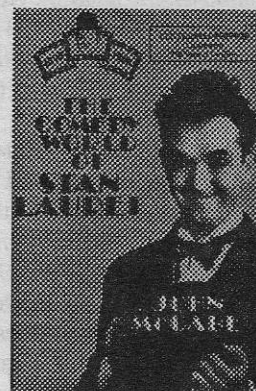
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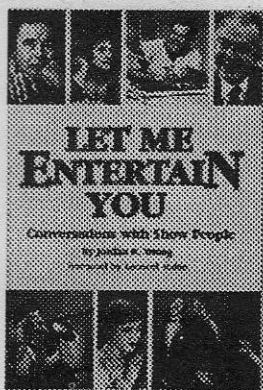
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"Tomorrows" of Radio's Past

After you've listened to the new Radio Spirits Science Fiction collection (see page 21), you might well want to learn more about the genre, virtually the only kind of radio drama which had its heyday in the decade after 1950. **Science Fiction on Radio: A Revised Look at 1950-1975** by James F. Widner and Meade Frierson III (AFAB, 194 pages, spiral bound) is a look at the golden era of science fiction on radio, notably programs such as *Dimension X*, *X Minus One*, *Exploring Tomorrow*, *Tales of Tomorrow*, and the never-aired but CBS-touted *Beyond Tomorrow*. (The titles of these series were not as inventive as the scripts.)

The book briefly notes the pre-1950 series such as *Quiet, Please* and *Escape*, and also documents anthology series which occasionally included Science Fiction-themed stories, among them *Lux Radio Theater*, *Think, Hall of Fantasy* and the *CBS Radio Workshop*. Programs which emanated from England are also documented, as are such oddities as *SF 68*, a 1968 South African sci-fi program. (Available for \$15.00 postpaid (\$20 U.S. for Canadian orders and \$25 for overseas) from AFAB, P.O. Box 130969, Birmingham AL 35213.)



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Como's CBS Origins Revisited on CDs

The past few years haven't exactly provided us with a bumper crop of romantic singers; with the exception of Michael Feinstein, the few crooners we've been blessed with in recent years are largely toiling in obscurity. (We can always hope that the nation will have a great reawakening of good taste, and all of these talents will suddenly burst into prominence.)

Mr. Sinatra and Mr. Tormé have been having their health problems of late, and it's also been far too long since we've heard from Perry Como—although at 84, he probably won't be embarking on any world tours very soon. He's had a long and successful career, which began in 1933 when he quit his barber shop to sing with the Freddie Carlone orchestra, popular in southwestern Pennsylvania. Three years later, he was about to return to barbering when he decided to audition for bandleader Ted Weems, who promptly signed the 24-year old. Perry was featured on dozens of Decca records and on Weems' *Beat the Band* radio show of 1940-41.

Weems disbanded in late 1942, thanks to the Draft—something which Perry didn't have to worry about as a pre-Pearl Harbor father of two. He planned to go open another barber shop, but fate, in the form of CBS stepped in by signing him to a five-a-week fifteen-minute radio series. Appearances at New York's Copacabana and a record contract with Victor soon followed, and from that point Perry could hang up his scissors for good.



Crooner in training:
Perry Como in the early '40s

That early series ran on CBS from April 9 to December 31, 1943, before turning into a Saturday-only 15-minute show, which ran from January 2 through June 18, 1944. Highlights from Perry's first few months as a radio star have recently become available on three CDs from a Portugese label called On the Air. **The Perry Como Shows, 1943, Vol. 1** (OTA 101905), **Vol. 2** (OTA 101906) and **Vol. 3** (OTA 101907) all show Mr. C shedding some of the Crosbyisms which he'd employed while with Weems, and developing his own distinctive—yet still relaxed—style.

The shows feature a crackerjack band, under the direction of Raymond Scott, who'd been leading the house band for CBS for a number of years. (His earlier career as the leader of a quirky Quintette is recalled in instrumental selections on each CD. Volume Three, for example, includes an expanded arrangement of his hit "In an Eighteenth Century Drawing Room.")

The songs are uniformly excellent—maybe it's due to the editors of this series, but there are surprisingly few of the lesser grade pop ditties so common to programs like this. Most of what you hear are Como's early hits ("Goodbye Sue," "Temptation"), standards ("Lazy Bones," "Just Friends") or better than average contemporary songs such as "All or Nothing at All," and "You'll Never Know."

The sound quality, alas, could be a lot better than it is; in an evident effort to remove surface noise, the high frequencies have been all but eliminated, resulting in a very muffled sound. Also, the shows are not complete as broadcast; songs taken from approximately four programs fill up each of the CDs (which do, however, include the opening and sign-off themes). As a result, we can recommend these CDs only to the most ardent Como fans, who will nevertheless enjoy hearing several songs which Perry didn't commercially record. You'll also hear his first halting attempts at being an MC (he makes a little fluff by announcing "Johnny Mercer and Hoagy Miker—*Carmichael!*").

Incidentally, the On the Air label also manufactures two CDs of *Country Radio Shows* with artists such as Patsy Cline, Eddy Arnold and Jim Reeves, as well as three discs of Nat King Cole broadcasts from the mid-'50s. (Available from Qualiton Imports, Ltd., 24-02 40th Avenue, Long Island City, NY 11101; (718) 937-8515.)

Pop Culture

A Look at "The Wish Book"

It's no longer published, but for nearly 100 years, generations of Americans gazed fondly at all sorts of fanciful goods in "The Wish Book," or—as the title of a new videocassette puts it, **Mr. Sears' Catalogue** (Shanachie 949; \$19.95). Not only is this hour-long documentary the chronicle of a businessman's success; it's also an eye-opening account of how one mail-order business transformed the nation.

Raised in rural Minnesota, Richard Warren Sears started out with little except boundless enthusiasm. Working at a railroad station, he found a box of unclaimed watches—and soon discovered that he also had a real gift for salesmanship. Inspired by the booming Montgomery Ward mail-order business, Sears moved to the big town of Chicago. Before long, he'd begun not only selling watches but manufacturing them, and formed an alliance with a watchmaker named Alva Curtis Roebuck. In 1893, the new partners began greatly expanding their offerings—to more than 100,000 products. "We sell everything," Sears boasted, and it was hardly an idle claim.

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Betty Boop Comic Strips

Continued from Page 6

Although the strip carried a Max Fleischer byline, it had as little input from Max as the various Disney strips did from Walt. Instead, the artwork was drawn in a very utilitarian manner by comic strip veteran Bud Counihan. His style fits the content of the strips, which isn't saying much.

Kitchen Sink's reproduction of the strips, the first in full color, is excellent. Since the original art for the strips has most likely long since vanished, they've copied the strips directly from surviving newspapers (although there are a dozen or so strips that look like they may have come from syndicate microfilm or lesser proof sheets).

Although it is billed as the complete Sunday run, there appears to be at least one strip missing, which was in Blackthorne's Volume 3. There are also other strips which may be out of order. This is understandable, however, since newspapers of the '30s often ran the strip in a convoluted chronology, creating confusion for later comic strip historians. Still, this impressive Kitchen Sink volume is the most complete Sunday reprinting, if not absolutely complete. (Kitchen Sink Press, 320 Riverside Drive, North Hampton MA 01060; 1-800-365-SINK.)

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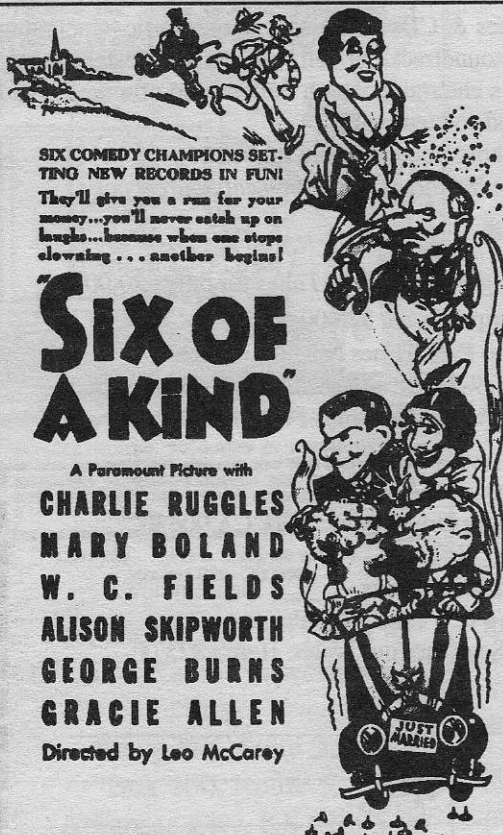


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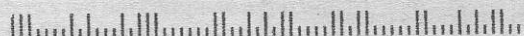
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