

**THE WORLD**

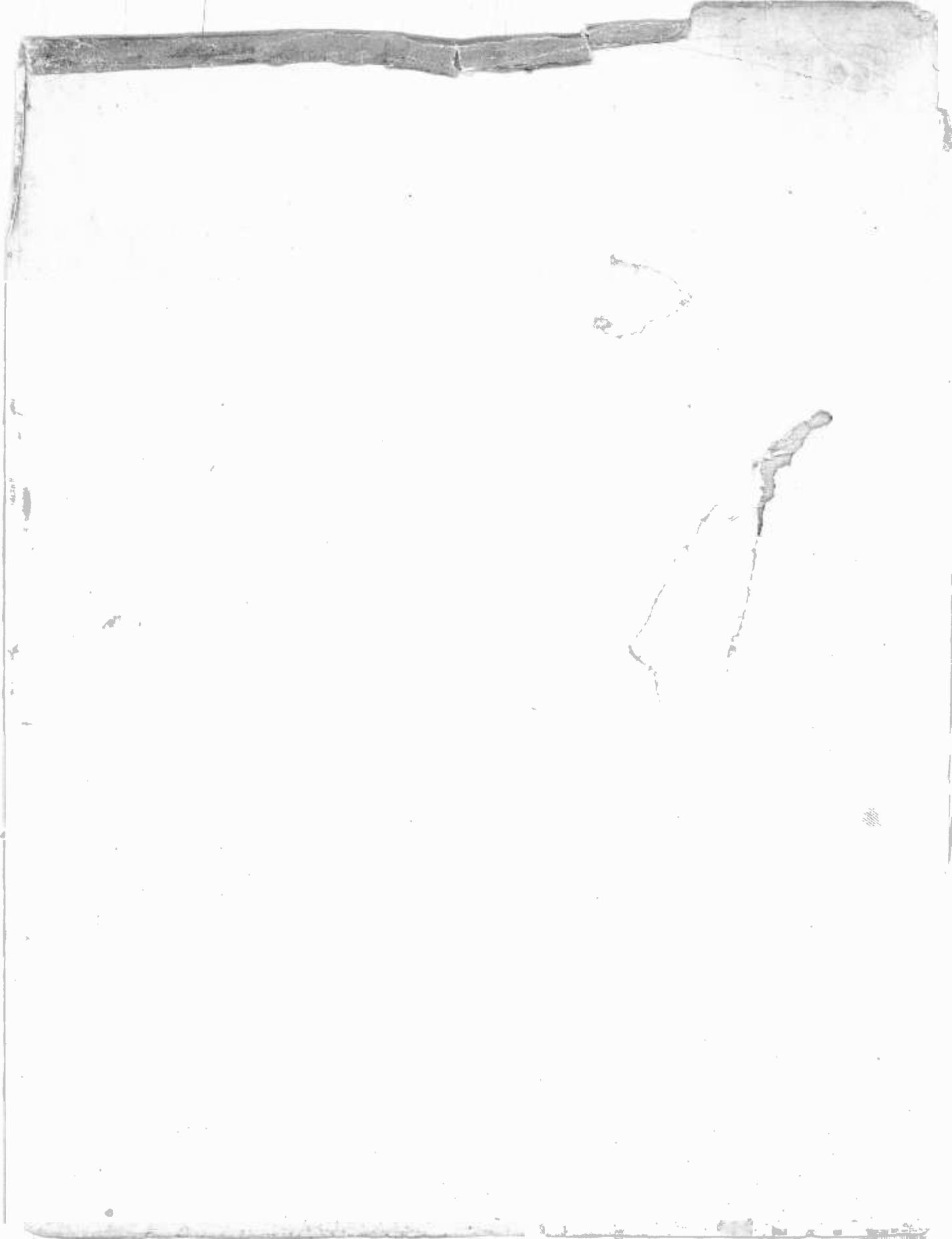
# Radio and Television

JUBILEE ISSUE

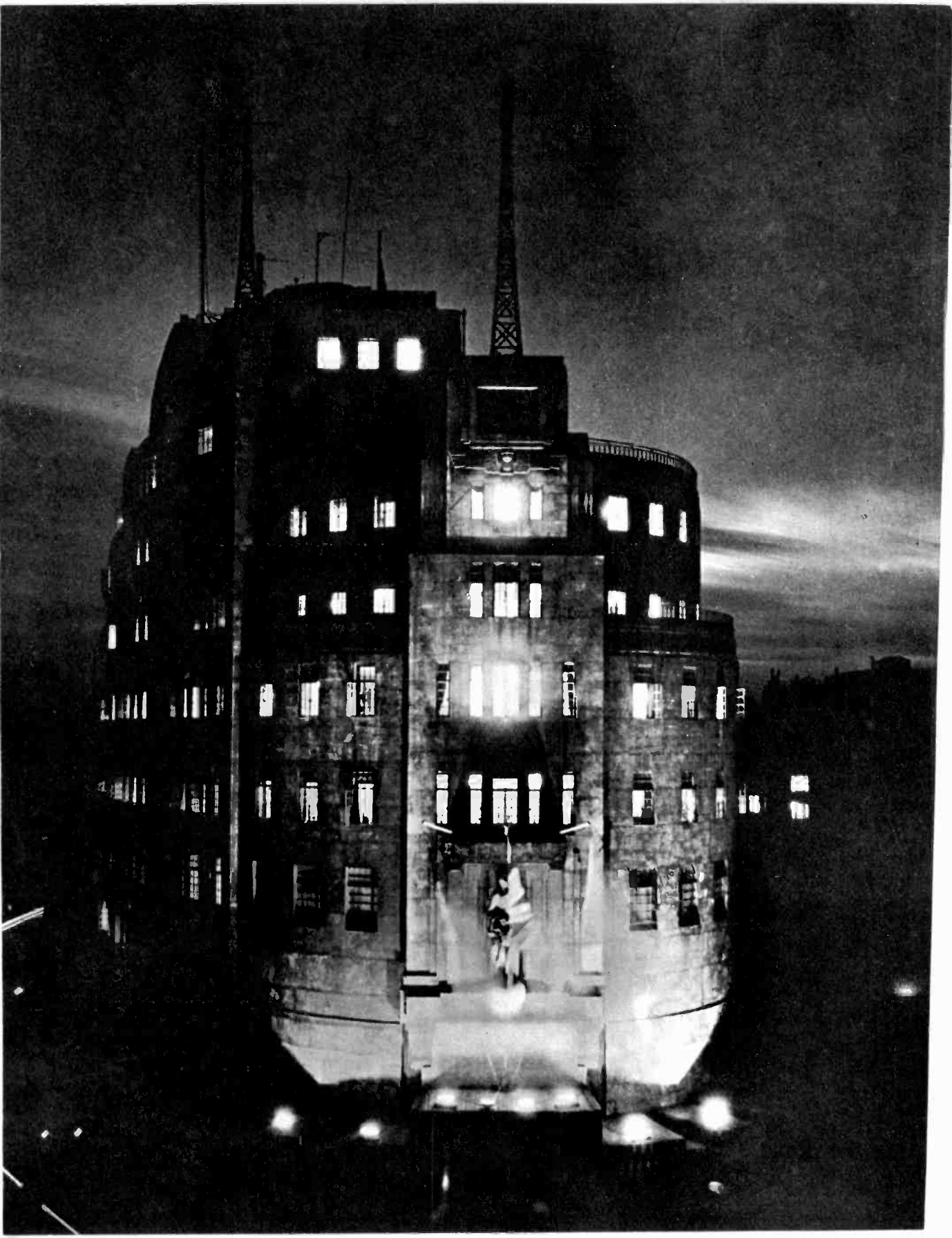
**ANNUAL**

Edited by **GALE PEDRICK**





*The*  
WORLD RADIO  
*and*  
TELEVISION ANNUAL  
*Jubilee Issue*



*The*  
WORLD RADIO  
*and*  
TELEVISION ANNUAL

Jubilee Issue



EDITED BY  
*Gale Pedrick*

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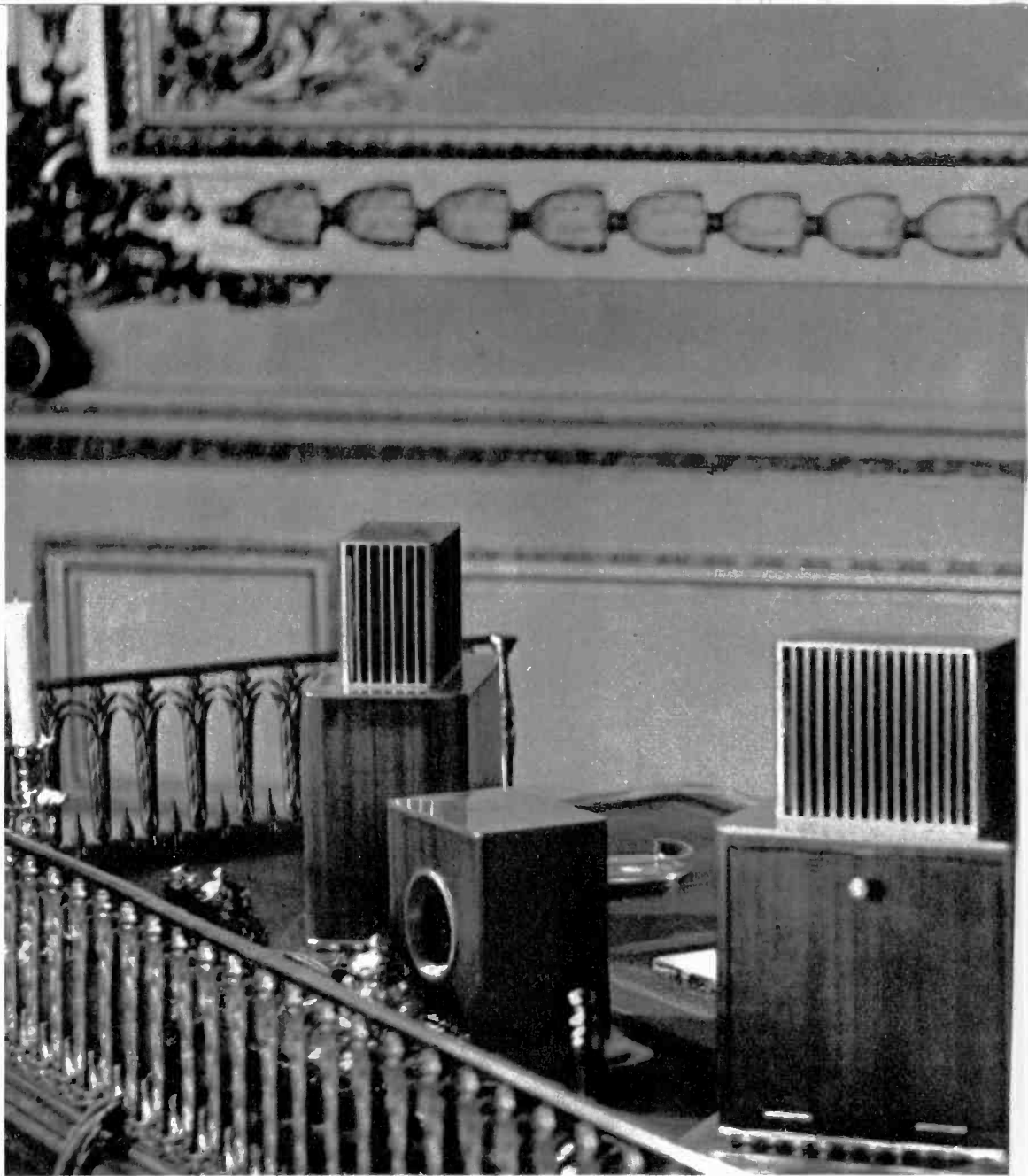
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“Never before has a newly-crowned King been able to talk to all his





peoples in their own homes on the day of his Coronation.”

—HIS MAJESTY KING GEORGE VI.

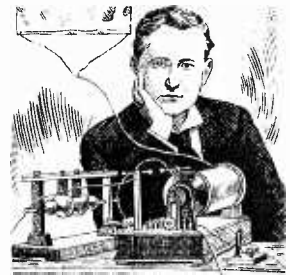
# RADIO'S YEARS

## EXPERIMENT AND TELEGRAPHY

- 1864 : Clerk Maxwell mathematically proved the existence of electro-magnetic waves.
- 1887 : Heinrich Hertz generated and received an electro-magnetic wave.
- 1892 : Edouard Branly invented a device—the “coherer”—for detecting electro-magnetic waves.
- 1894 : Oliver Lodge showed how the waves might be used as carriers of communication signals.
- 1896 : Guglielmo Marconi came to Britain, demonstrated his apparatus for radio transmission and reception to G.P.O. engineers, and took out his first British patent.
- 1897 : First Marconi station set up at The Needles, Isle of Wight. Oliver Lodge invented the tuned circuit.
- 1898 : First paid-for message sent from the Isle of Wight ; Queen Victoria used radio to communicate with the Prince of Wales.
- 1899 : First report by radio of a mishap at sea, sent by the East Goodwin Lightship ; first message transmitted across the English Channel ; Marconi apparatus sent to the South African War.
- 1901 : Marconi achieved the first transatlantic signal : transmission of the letter “S” from Cornwall to Newfoundland ; apparatus first installed aboard a British sea-going vessel—the s.s. *Lake Champlain*.
- 1902 : First wireless message transmitted from America to Britain ; Oliver Heaviside of Britain and A. E. Kennelly of the U.S.A. suggested—independently but almost simultaneously—the existence of atmospheric layers of value to radio communication.
- 1903 : Radio officially adopted for use by the Royal Navy ; the first International Conference on Radio Telegraphy held in Berlin.



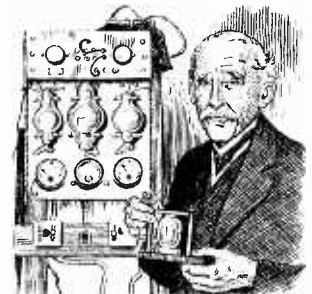
*Heinrich Hertz.*



*Guglielmo Marconi.*



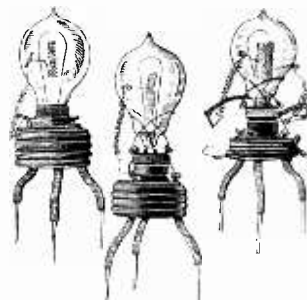
*Oliver Heaviside.*



*Sir Ambrose Fleming.*

# **BETWEEN**: 1896-1946

- 1904 : British Parliament legislated for the control of radio telegraphy ; Sir Ambrose Fleming invented his two-electrode thermionic valve.
- 1907 : Dr. Lee de Forest (U.S.A.) invented the three-electrode valve.
- 1908 : Radio service between Britain and Canada opened for public use.
- 1911 : Imperial Conference approved a proposal for linking the Empire by radio.
- 1916 : All British ships of over 3,000 tons compelled to carry radio apparatus.
- 1918 : First radio message from Britain to Australia.
- 1921 : First Imperial beam station opened at Leafield, Oxfordshire.
- 1925 : Sir Edward Appleton proved the existence of the Kennelly-Heaviside layers and measured their height above the earth.
- 1926 : First plan for international allocation of wavelengths agreed at Geneva.



*Thermionic Valves.*



*Dr. Lee de Forest.*

## SOUND AND VISION

- 1906 : R. A. Fessenden (U.S.A.) transmitted speech and music over a distance of 25 miles.
- 1907 : Fessenden increased radio-telephonic range to 100 miles.
- 1908 : A. A. Campbell Swinton (Britain) suggested the use of the cathode-ray tube for television.
- 1910 : Radio-telephony achieved over 500 miles.
- 1914 : Marconi successfully experimented with radio-telephony between Italian war vessels up to 44 miles apart.



*Reginald Fessenden.*

1915 : American Telegraph and Telephone Company, using a valve transmitter, radiated speech and music over 4,800 miles.

1919 : Captain Round (Britain) transmitted speech and music from Ireland to Nova Scotia ; with the removal of war-time restrictions, amateur enthusiasts on both sides of the Atlantic developed their activities and thereby greatly stimulated radio-telephonic progress.

1920 : First experimental broadcasts from Marconi Company's transmitter at Chelmsford, Essex ; first regular broadcasting station in the world (KDKA) opened at East Pittsburgh, U.S.A.

1921 : Demonstration of two-way telephony on the short waves between England and Holland.

1922 : First regular broadcasting programmes in Britain transmitted from Writtle, near Chelmsford ; British Broadcasting Company Limited formed, and first programme transmitted.

1923 : J. L. Baird (Britain) and C. F. Jenkins (U.S.A.) developed disc-scanning systems of television.

1926 : Baird demonstrated his television system.

1927 : British Broadcasting Corporation constituted by Royal Charter.

1929 : B.B.C. began transmission of low-definition pictures by the Baird process.

1932 : After five years of experiment, B.B.C. inaugurated a regular short-wave service to the Empire.

1934 : Television Advisory Committee officially appointed.

1936 : B.B.C. began the world's first regular television service, from Alexandra Palace, London.

1938 : Introduction of first regular transmission from Britain in a foreign language (Arabic).

1939 : Broadcasting universally recognised and applied as a weapon of war ; B.B.C. Television Service closed down.

1940 : Frequency-modulation experiments began in the U.S.A.

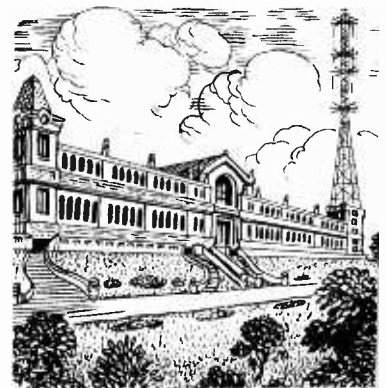
1946 : London Television Service restored ; triple programme service for British listeners introduced.



*Madame Melba.*



*J. L. Baird.*



*Alexandra Palace.*

# Forty First Nights in a Row are all in the year's work

TOMMY HANDLEY

---

*"It should be written somewhere for all to read that Tommy Handley, in the fiendish 'forties of our century, made more folk laugh than any other native comedian. And by laugh I do not mean smile. Tom is unselfish, friendly and fizzling with fun—the radio comedian par excellence, beloved equally by children and centenarians."*—TED KAVANAGH.

**Y**ES, it is true enough that I have recently come of age as a broadcaster, and the Editor says he thinks you may be interested in some random reflections of an old hand.

People often ask me the secret of success in radio. My reply to that is: I think it's because I *like* broadcasting. I just enjoy being on the air, and find it all very natural and pleasant.

It also helps to possess a voice that people like. I don't claim any special merit for this. It is just a matter of luck. You either have a microphone voice or you haven't.

Any artist whose name is before the public, week after week, for many years, is bound to collect a fan-mail. But the one letter that gave me more pleasure, I think, than any other, came from a woman whose sons were fighting overseas during the war. "You *sound* like a nice man," she wrote. "I am sure my boys would like you. You seem to me just as though you were talking to a few of us in one small room."

That's something like a compliment: and I like to think that that last bit is true.

I always try to remember that I am playing *not to the audience in the studio*, but to the people who are listening at home, and who are paying a pound a year to hear us do our best for them.

I have always believed it fatal to let listeners imagine for a moment that one is reading from a script. In fact, I don't think comedians should ever crack a gag about their script, or even hint that they're holding one in their hands.

I don't go down to the studio where my particular show is produced and just read the words. Three solid days of



*"He don't tell nobody nothing these days, do he?" Francis Worsley (producer), Tommy Handley and Ted Kavanagh (script-writer).*





*"Water, Sir? I never touch it!" Jack Train and Tommy Handley.*

work at least go into each script. You've heard and read a good deal about the "Itma" team I expect, so I won't go into details. I'll just say I've been fortunate to work with such a brilliant writer as Ted Kavanagh, and such a receptive and imaginative producer as Francis Worsley.

Year after year, "Itma" was revived, and we knew each year that we were committed to thirty-nine "first nights" in a row. For every performance is a "first night" when you are putting over fresh material.

Harmony among his artistes is among the greatest assets a producer can have. Ted and Francis and I have been lucky in this respect. I have had loyal support from my fellow-actors in "Itma"—as you know, each of them has his or her own special niche in the show—they are happy, their happiness is reflected in their work. Don't you agree?

Of course, I go back to the days of the cat's whisker radio—when your favourite comedian was John Henry. I know all of you who were listening 'way back in the 'twenties will remember

1. JACK: Nearer mic  
A light ale, sir? I'll join you -
2. HUGH: ~~you~~ I've only seen you sober  
Hello Uncle - ~~only once in my life have I seen~~  
~~you~~ - once in my life
3. JACK: And my boy only twice in my life have I seen you  
once -
4. HUGH: LOUDER Disgusting - my mater would have a fit -
5. TOM: Colonel  
What - Crafty Clara - she'd love it. Do you  
remember the time she played in pantomime at the  
old Tivoli?
6. JACK: Gad sir, yes - she rubbed the lamp and the spirit  
appeared -
7. TOM: Yes - you jumped on the stage and tried to put  
it back in the bottle - Clara played the  
principal girl - got mixed up in the flying ballet -  
collided in mid-air with the Fairy Queen, fell  
head-first through the trap-door and the band  
played "It's a long way to Tipperary"  
old brown hal-on  
There must be some mistake -
8. HUGH: That's what the demon king said when he shot up  
two minutes later with Clara's tights round his  
neck -
9. TOM: Come Uncle - ~~as it's Boxing Day~~ I'll stand you a  
glass of lemonade -
10. HUGH: Alright sir - if you'll top it with gin -
11. JACK: And while you're at it lace his boots with brandy -
12. TOM: goodbye -

QUICKER (Door closes)





*Tommy Handley welcomes three new members to the "Itma" cast. Tony Francis, Tommy Handley, Molly Weir and Deryck Guyler.*

John Henry and "Blossom." I had been a singer and a straight actor—yes, the Governor of Tomtopia once played Dick Phenyl in "Sweet Lavender." To this day, my mother (who, by general consent, stole the show when she spoke in

my "Monday Night at Eight" Birthday Party!) is quite upset if I "guy" Shakespeare.

Have I ever told you how I got my first engagement with the B.B.C. over twenty-one years ago? When somebody asked me if I would like to broadcast I thought it was a joke. But I popped along to one of the studios, just for the fun of it.

"Just stand in front of the microphone and do something," they told me. "Do what?" I asked. "Oh, anything you like" one chap said. I didn't know what on earth that meant, so I just began talking to myself and singing "Thirty Days hath September." When I looked up I saw to my astonishment that everybody in the studio was doubled up with laughter.

I was booked right away and appeared in many sketches and revues. One of my first broadcasts was a surprise item. I'd seen the Boat Race that day, and a few hours later I went on the air to do a humorous commentary about it.

My friendship with Ted Kavanagh has lasted longer than most people imagine—the best part of twenty years, I suppose. Ted wrote a number of revues for me, but our partnership was well and truly sealed the night before Hitler marched. That was also the night on which the B.B.C. broadcast a new show from the Maida Vale studios. It was called: "It's That Man Again."

One question my friends fire at me from time to time. They want to know what I think about the filming or televising of "Itma" characters, or similar fantastic creations. My view is that each listener has his own mental picture of how these folk look; any attempt to show them on the stage or screen would destroy these personal pictures.

# I like Radio Comedy you can believe in

## ARTHUR ASKEY

"The best radio," says Big-hearted Arthur in this article, "is that which makes it possible for the listeners to say: 'Those voices belong to lovable, amusing people who are real to me, however fantastic the things they may be doing.'"



**B**EING funny on the air is one of the most difficult of all trades (or pastimes)—but at the same time there is nothing to equal the satisfaction which comes from giving a good broadcast.

Radio comedy is a fascinating subject, and like many others in my profession, I don't mind telling you I have given it a good deal of pretty serious thought. The Editor asked me to talk to you about it without pulling any punches—so here goes. I know I am going to put some points of view which won't evoke 100 per cent agreement from my fellow comedians, but it would be a pretty dull world if everybody were of the same way of thinking, wouldn't it?

To my mind, there is one man above all others who has perfected the ideal method of comic broadcasting. His name—Jack Benny. I am an out-and-out admirer of Benny—he's terrific. And one of the vital reasons for his success on the air is that *he acts everything*. In other words, he is always a believable person and the situations in which he finds himself week by week are credible situations. Within the limits of the licence to which a comedian is entitled, they might really happen. His supporting actors are *real* people.

To bring this home more clearly, let me remind you that the tendency on this side of the Atlantic is for characters to be eccentric, even grotesque. Jack Benny, whatever strange happenings he lets himself in for, is himself and nobody else. On the other hand, when our old friend, that most likeable comedian Jack Train, appears in "Itma," it's never Jack Train listeners are thinking of. It's Colonel Chinstrap; and all the other roles in that classic of radio humour are "acting" parts, except for "That Man" himself.

Now my preference for believable characters dates back to that old favourite "Band Waggon" in which "Big" (Arthur Askey) appeared for so long with "Stinker" (Richard Murdoch).

I believe that was the first show of its kind to call for acting as distinct from slapstick. In "Band Waggon" I was myself and Dickie was himself—and millions of listeners believed in us and in our flat "over the B.B.C." Do you remember our famous char, Mrs. Bagwash, and her daughter Nausea?

Well, it was in that show that we really began to use effects with care and imagination.

Doors really did open and windows rattled, and you heard the sound of water in the bath. It was crazy, perhaps, but there was a link, a unity between the things that happened to Dickie and me and the things which might happen to anybody in their flat.

There was even a reason why we lived over the B.B.C. You see, it was our job to look after the six pips that were used for the time signal. We used to keep them in a little box and they had to be polished every day. All our listeners knew about the geyser and the instructions on the label: "Light the blue paper and retire immediately"—to say nothing of the famous motto on the wall: "It isn't the people who make the most noise who do the most work." Then there was the "rug," I cut a pair of "combs" out of it. Dickie bought me a pattern with instructions: "Cut from A to Band then go to L." Then there was the clock on the mantelpiece which gave way when we rehearsed "Romeo and Juliet." Dickie said: "Careful, Arthur, you'll knock it off" and I said: "Never mind, that's how we got it."

I mention these things just to show how we built up a setting for our nonsense that had an atmosphere of reality about it. Lots of people really did believe we lived in that flat and sent hundreds of letters there. For the rest of the show we always tried to get real people and plenty of "new voices." To say nothing of Syd Walker, "The Wandering Junk-man" who ran into such a lot of "queer how-de-dos." Syd was real and down to earth, right enough, and if he wasn't appreciated by all the wise guys, the other folk all said: "He's on our side and we like him."

It was in "Band Waggon," of course, that I first used the famous line "Ay-Thang-Yew"—the daddy of all catch-phrases. I did not realise at the time that I was saying anything particularly comic or that people would take any notice of the words, but in no time they were on everybody's lips and the phrase passed into the language.



*The Big Hearted One with Kenneth Horne in  
"Forever Arthur."*



*Arthur Askey and Carroll Gibbons.*

By the way, I am a great believer in the value and the humour of topical jokes. That means "gagging"—to which some people raise a great many objections. They say it "kills the illusion," but I cannot see that argument at all. In the theatre, I have been in shows which have run more than a year and I can honestly say I don't think I ever did the show the same way twice. Putting in those up-to-the-minute, spontaneous jokes makes the whole show fresher and crisper.

That is one of the reasons why I am not in favour of the policy of recording radio programmes. When possible I like to make a few quips about things which have happened the same day. After all, a radio comedian should be something more than a voice.

Radio technique, I agree, is in many ways poles apart from that of the stage or screen.

By intelligent cutting of the film, you can improve a picture; you cannot cut ten minutes out of a broadcast. But then, radio has magnificent comic possibilities which simply cannot be realised in other forms of entertainment.

When you are reading a thrilling novel you get worked up and can imagine yourself in the situations described on the printed page. Something of the kind can happen when you are listening to radio—especially when the effects are used with ingenuity. There's nothing a radio character cannot do on the air. When all's said and done, radio is the only medium in which you can say: "I'm going to walk on the ceiling or jump sixty feet in the air." If you want to do that in a broadcast there's nothing to stop you.

One other point which strikes me about our British radio shows is that I wish there was more co-operation between the different programmes. I'm afraid I'm going to drag Jack Benny into the picture again, but he and his fellow-comedians in America frequently "visit" each other's programmes and indulge in a good deal of friendly leg-pulling. It all adds to the fun.

To sum up, I would say that the best radio—comic or otherwise—is that which makes it possible for the listener to say: "Those voices belong to lovable, amusing people who are *real* to me, however fantastic the things they may be doing."

The finest films are those in which the situations are right and the same, to my mind, goes for radio.

*Askey and his favourite instrument.*



# Fun on the Air

## GALE PEDRICK

“IT’S comedy that pays the rent” say those who are wise in the world of entertainment and its ways.

In radio, comedy certainly pays big dividends when it comes to the vital business of collecting an audience. Your “Saturday Night Theatre” and the celebrity concerts draw millions of listeners in the course of an evening, but the most popular shows are those which make us laugh. A great many hard things have been said about broadcast humour. The censure is sometimes deserved, but the miracle is that the quality, taking it all round, stands as high as it does.

A good act or a good idea is precious property—it always was—but the comedian of 1947-48 has a task that would have appalled his forerunners in the old, pre-microphone days. Once upon a time, an artiste would meet a hack writer in a tavern, and buy a song, an act, or both, for a few guineas. He would then proceed to sing that song and play that act for anything from four to forty years. In those days, a joke which was funny in Plymouth this week was still just as funny in Sunderland next week. Not so today. The gag that is cracked on the air tonight by tomorrow is the property of every comedian with ears to hear.

It is true to say that our native humour has undergone a great change because British comics have been able to hear and imitate the work of the American funny-men.

The Bob Hope-Jack Benny technique has openly been copied. Hence there came a spate of those jokes in which the star makes capital from his short-comings.

In every Benny programme we know we shall hear something about his reputation for meanness: there never was such a “tight-wad.” In the Bob Hope Programme, Bob was always the nicest kind of “wolf” with a roving eye. Endless gags were made about Bing Crosby’s thinning locks, and so forth.

It was a technique new to Britain, but we took our portion of it, and more. Two wars in a quarter of a century changed our values in humour, and we became accustomed to the

*Richard Murdoch.*



*Suzette Tarri.*



*Wilfred Pickles.*





Left: Squadron Leader Richard (Stinker) Murdoch and Wing Commander Kenneth Horne. The Western Brothers, Clapham and Dwyer. Forsythe, Seamon and Farrell. Vic Oliver, Rebe Daniels and Ben Lyon.



smart, cynical, quick fire, wise-cracking, over-sophisticated comedian. And it was radio, of course, that did more than anything else to help him widen his audience.

As time went by, the B.B.C. increased its output of laughter shows, especially at the weekend. It hardly seems possible, but before the last war the only so-called "variety" programme on a Sunday was "Scrap Book." Good listening as these programmes were, they could hardly be described as riotously comic. Today, we find on a Sunday afternoon and evening there is a practically uninterrupted flow of light, and even flippant, fare.

Quite slowly, the "make-a-date-with-your-radio" policy was introduced. For the first time, with the coming of "Band Waggon," "Itma," and "Monday Night at Seven" (yes, 7 o'clock was the original time), and "Danger, Men at Work," listeners knew that they could switch on their sets at a given moment and hear a favourite item. The last three survived the war, and collected on the way such famous companions as "Merry-Go-Round," "Stand Easy," "Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh," and a whole catalogue of less memorable programmes.

By 1946, it was clear that the strictly professional, high-speed show, with its gags and often crazy situations, was to be rivalled by a different type of comedy altogether.



Right: Claude Hulbert. George Benson. Jack Warner. Gillie Potter. Jeanne de Casalis.



The “spontaneous and unrehearsed” comedy of the inexperienced “ordinary” listener himself—the intrepid man-in-the-street who had respect for the microphone but no fear of it.

The late George Black, one of the greatest showmen of the century, told me more than once that the secret of success in entertainment was to let the customers amuse themselves. Radio has heavily underlined this shrewd comment.

Quiz programmes show that nothing pleases listeners more than to hear their fellow creatures facing up to the microphone. When “Radio Forfeits” was introduced by that genial Colonial, Michael Miles, his programme shot in record time to the top of the poll. His victims, nervous or confident—it didn’t matter which—provided huge entertainment for the world at large. And all without a script. The old favourites began to find themselves left behind.

Then to beat even the “Forfeits” came that friendly lad from the West Riding, Wilfred Pickles, with his “Have a Go!” series. After running a year in the North of England, the show came south, was heard everywhere, and broke all records. The Pickles touch seemed irresistible.

But—and this was the key to it—although Pickles is himself no mean comedian, he let his audience make the jokes. Millions laughed when the old-aged-pensioner from Blackburn was asked: “What is your favourite drink?” replied in a split second: “Tea wi’ senna pods in.” They roared approval again when Pickles asked one of his volunteers what he disliked most. The man, a Naval Commander at Portsmouth, answered: “Strictly between ourselves, Wilfred, bow-legged Wrens.” Britain rocked.

This particular show provided comedy with a touch of sentiment, the elixir of success in entertainment. Cheers soared up, tears poured down, when a young fellow at Canning Town, asked who he would like to be if he were not himself, replied: “My father—because he had the good luck to marry my mother.” And then went on to explain that his mother was an invalid, and had been bed-fast for many years.

Radio has its caprices. Some comedians have found it a bountiful master. Others have made a brief bow and vanished before they knew what it was all about. The best comics on the air are big enough to admit their debt to broadcasting—such men as Tommy Handley, Arthur Askey, Eric Barker, Charlie Chester, and the inimitable Murdoch-Horne team.

Laughter has been called man’s best and cheapest tonic. The B.B.C. does its best to keep up a constant supply of this precious stimulant.

*Enid Trevor and Claude Hulbert. Ronald Frankau. Kate Smith. Bryan Michie. John Sharman.*



# *If Every Listener Laughed at the Same Kind of Joke—*

LIFE WOULD BE MUCH EASIER FOR

## ERIC BARKER

**T**HE rules of radio humour are exactly the same as the rules of any other form of humour. That is to say, the recipe for writing it is to put down what you imagine will make your audience laugh in as effective a way as possible.

What is your audience? In the theatre, it is (as a rule) uniform, and nicely conditioned by the fact that it is often celebrating some happy domestic event, and having paid through its nose for its seat, is determined ruggedly to enjoy itself. This is no exaggeration. The more the average person pays for a thing, the better he thinks it is.

Your radio audience, though consisting ostensibly of similar people, is in a totally different frame of mind. It is neither dressed in its glad-rags, nor buoyed up with the satisfying feeling of doing something unusual. For the most part it is in its setting of dull daily drudgery. It is scraping the last film of lard off the paper, watching the baby practise legerdemain with the cut-glass sugar bowl, darning socks, ironing shapeless pants. You laugh far more easily when you're in a plush stall in evening dress, after a good meal that you haven't had to plan and cook, than when you're ironing pants.

Therefore, I do think radio humour is perhaps a trickier proposition than any other form of commercial fun. There are so many things to consider. Your audience includes also people under sentence of death in hospitals and sanatoriums; the blind; those who have just been bereaved; the crippled; the unhappy. All these must be borne in mind and considered.

Then you have an overseas public—an Empire one, and a surprisingly large foreign one. They mustn't be left out in the general design. And then there's the policy angle. On the stage you can lampoon a public personality in gag form; on the radio, the same gag, emanating from

a public institution like the B.B.C., may sound like party propaganda. Therefore, it must be cast in careful form that will not give the impression that one is taking sides.

Having weighed all this up carefully, all you have to do is write funny lines. These are designed on the scientific principle that the humour-appreciation quotient of the public is in a rough relation to the intelligent quotient. Thus, the would-be radio laughter manufacturer works with a triangular chart in front of him. The large base



*Eric Barker and his wife,  
Pearl Hackney.*



of the triangle represents the mental hoi polloi, for want of a more tactful term—that wodge of unimaginative sterility, whose minds are ill-attuned to anything more complex than the basic facts of existence—trade, food, and promulgation of the species; whose eyes are insensitive to any but the brightest colours; to whom an Oscar Wilde epigram is incomprehensible unless underlined heavily by a shrewdly timed fall upon the posterior.



*Top : Eric Barker and Richard Gray.  
Right : Humphrey Lestocq (Flying Officer  
Kyte)  
Left : Jon Pertwee and Eric Barker.*

In the centre of the triangle is the large but smaller number of the average mind. And at the top Professor Joad and one or two others. You can't make all three types laugh at the same things. Therefore you cater and plan in proportion to the numbers. Therefore, for every occasion when you might be tempted to use a subtle line of wit, there must be a dozen that are simple and obvious, and five or six that fall between the two extremes.

Of course, other script-writers may disagree, and I can only speak with the one-track mind of a man who has been soaked for a long time in one show—"Merry-Go-Round." My primary aim in this show is originality, which is the proven commercially successful attitude. The other is sincerity. In my opinion a character can be as eccentric as you like, so long as the situation permits him to act with his comparative sincerity.



*Merry-Go-Round.*

At the time of writing the listening figure shows that approximately 12 million people listen to the programme every Friday night. The mail and appreciation index show that of these about 70% think it is excellent ; 23% reasonably good ; and 7% very poor. The script takes about forty-eight hours of concentrated thought.

I've also been asked to describe my very first broadcast. This was fourteen years ago, when I was twenty. I went along to give an audition with scores of others to the then Director of Variety. When I'd done my party-piece, he told me confidentially " We like your style, but your material's quite unsuitable for radio ! If you'd like to get some suitable material, and come along again, we might be able to give you a broadcast ! "

That was very worrying, as I hadn't the faintest idea why my material wasn't microphonic, nor what to do about it. I was in the depths of depression when my agent rang me up, and said, " I've managed to get a broadcast for you next Saturday." I told her that it was impossible, as I hadn't got any ideas on suitable material. She said, " Don't worry about that. Do exactly what you did for the audition."

And so it was. But just as I was about to go on the air, in itself a terrifying enough experience, I saw the Director go into the control room. How I got through I don't know. Then, when it was all over, and I was thinking out various schemes of escaping from the country in disguise, he came up, shook hands, and said, " Now that was first rate. You're on the right lines with *that* material ! "

# Radio Humour

## CHARLIE CHESTER

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I SUPPOSE Dame Humour is as old as time, for they do say that Adam was “ribbed” for Eve’s benefit. Be that as it may, radio is today producing a new era of “type humour;” and for a lead in this field of strange professions I look to America.

I won’t say America has everything. After all, it didn’t have Shakespeare or Sir Alexander Fleming . . . but I will say that they have a little less reserve, and in show business that seems to be no detriment. In fact, the less his reserve, the greater the showman.

Although I am a radio comedian, let me dwell for a moment on my other self and the serious business of writing my material. And after that, I would like to analyse my recipe for what proved to be one of the most successful radio shows in recent years.

It is certainly a queer trade, with its own code of rules and regulations. For instance, on the British air, one must not even inadvertently “advertise any commodity.” You can see why: if a commodity were mentioned, it would be a wedge which might start a landslide of undesirable “understanding” (undesirable from the B.B.C.’s point of view) between the artist and the commodity-owner. The right market for such advertising is of course, Commercial Radio.

Naturally, too, one must conform to the laws of good taste. We may not make, in jest, any reference to religious denominations. If we did, it is obvious that in a radio audience of ten million, many people are likely to be distressed.

Another thing to remember is that although one is allowed (I have done it myself) to “rib”

*Charlie Chester Show.*





*Charlie Chester.*

political circles, it is dangerous to go too far. It is a different matter altogether to have a certain amount of leg-pulling between rival comedians. I have had lots of fun in cracking gags about, or ridiculing my "opposition." In the case of Arthur Askey (bless him), he can certainly hit back, and this can only make a show the more enjoyable. I wish this type of banter (so long as it is good-natured) would grow to larger proportions in this country, for repartee is the life-blood of humour.

Do you agree that double acts often seem to be more entertaining than the single ones? The reason is, not so much that there are two people trying to be funny, but that with a team, the repartee can be "direct." When the single-act comedian tells a story, he has to waste time with "And I said to her . . . so She said to me," etc.

There comes a time in every comedian's life, I suppose, when he feels that he must have heard "every gag in the book." Personally, I can read a gag-book through and

hardly crack a grin, and yet I know, as soon as I read certain quips and comical wheezes, that, brought up to date, they can bring howls of laughter from the audience. I suppose it becomes second nature to know that a certain line is better in dialect or spoken with a different inflection of the voice. Yet however good a gag may be, it is killed stone dead if the timing is wrong. All the comics will tell you that, more important than the strength of the tag-line, is the timing of it.

Isn't it funny how certain jokes become dated and others don't? You would groan wouldn't you, if a comedian came on and said, "Who was that lady I saw you with last night?" But the answer, if polished up, might turn your groan into a grin. As an example, "That was no lady, that was my brother . . . he just walks that way." Take the same gag to prove that everything which reads well does not register over the air. "Who was that lady I saw you out with last night?" "That lady outwitted me . . . she's now my wife." And a further comeback with "Ah! Your better half-wit!"

And so we go on—from stereotyped jokes to repartee, from repartee to limericks, from limericks to paronomasia (which means changing words to give them different meanings).

I favour the modern method of delivery, which eliminates as much of the "build-up" as possible and gets straight to the tag-line. This method gives as many laughs as possible in the shortest time. Then I like to switch on to the vocal or band item, while, whether they realise it or not, the listeners are digesting the humour they have just heard.

I don't think the art of getting a big laugh unexpectedly is practised enough in this country. For instance, in many films and radio shows in America, the serious star or dramatic artiste, is given the comedy lines in repartee with the comedian. The comedian will double the laughter by his silence, by the "double take" expression or by some mannerism which is particularly his own.

New ideas are always being sought. You remember those automatic lines that are constantly

repeated as (in my own show), " I say, what a smasher ! " or " Whippit Kwick ! " These help to hall-mark the show. Listeners will find that the lines fit a situation in their life, and get into the habit of repeating them. Very gratifying when it happens, but by no means the end of the journey. The public will eventually tire of this new expression as they did of " Get up them stairs ! " and the rest. So while the present lines remain popular, my job is to look for others before somebody else beats me to it.

Let me tell you how I try to make a half-hour programme run smoothly and quickly. If a thirty-minute show feels as if it is only twenty minutes, that is surely the best sign of all : anyhow, it is my recipe for a good programme.

I like to start with a noisy but entertaining signature-tune which must obviously be like no other. After the music come a number of crazy questions and answers. This is corny, I know, but it gives me a chance to make four of my boys sound like eight, as they alter the tone of their voices. In any case, it is a quick-fire item designed chiefly to get the " feel " of the studio audience, to get a reaction, for ourselves, to put those present in a sparkling mood, and to get them into our stride.

Next, having let the band fly away on a bright number to keep up the tempo of the show, I spring my first block of entertainment. We " murder " a popular song at the piano. In this I use all the boys as gagsters and feature the voice of one. Now I am ready to offer my crazy and exciting comedy opus, " The Amazing Adventures of Whippit Kwick, the Cat Burglar " (an idea I conceived while watching a travelogue of James Fitzpatrick in a news flick). After this noisy " cod " acting, into which I sling all the topical gags I can, I let the vocalist sing a modern song of the kind favoured by the younger generation. This will be a slow number, the only one in the programme. Then comes a comedy argument on some subject, with a great deal of play on words.

After patter, music. We have had a slow number, so it is time to bring on a vivacious girl singer, this time to give us a brighter type of song. Next, I tell a few wisecracks, in a purposely elastic period, so that if we are running late, I can cut, or if the reverse, I can carry on indefinitely.

My plan is to round off the show in a completely different mood from that in which we started. Instead of crazy gags, the boys go into a harmony number, this time taking the older listeners into account. In half an hour, we have tried to cater for all . . . the old, the young, the subtle, and the devotees of the obvious. I must say I get more pleasure from performing the script than writing it.

However, it is all a part of that heart-breaking, exhilarating, happy-go-lucky world of madness called show business.

*Arthur Haynes.*



# Some Reflections

## HANNEN SWAFFER

THE MAN WHO FIRST TOLD GREAT BRITAIN ABOUT RADIO



HANNEN SWAFFER.

**I**T is impossible to credit that British Broadcasting is only a quarter of a century old.

In 1922, we merely knew that in America there was something called "radio." It had been scarcely noticed by our Press. Then, one day, I picked up a copy of the *New York Morning Telegraph*, in which to my amazement I saw two whole pages of radio programmes—containing everything from opera to wheat prices.

It so amazed me that I asked the Editor of the *Daily Graphic* to let me write two columns for him about it. He thought that was too much, but the paper got lost, and it took nearly ten weeks to get another copy from New York. Then, under pressure, he consented to print a column and a half. That story was too long said Authority, with a big "A," the next day. "It is the best article you have ever printed," I replied.

When I returned from lunch, I discovered that the article had been reprinted on the front page of the *Evening News*, with a flattering tribute to me. I knew that my former chief, Northcliffe, had been at work. When the *Daily Graphic* congratulated me I said: "It's no better today than it was ten weeks ago when you wouldn't use it."

Next morning, I heard that Northcliffe, who always turned to the *Daily Graphic* to see what I had written, read the article and ordered the machines to be stopped so that it should be in every possible copy of his paper. That morning, the *Daily Mail* under his orders, talked about radio. The *Evening News* followed suit and then the *Weekly Despatch*, as they called it then, took up the strain.

Within a fortnight at the most, the British Broadcasting Company was born—and John Reith had started on his great task of building up an organisation which remains a monument to his organising genius, and making British radio what, with all its limitations, it still is, the finest in the world.

Now I, of course, can go back to the earliest days of Marconi, of whom I saw a great deal when he was conducting his early experiments. "William," I said to him once, "I was writing about you today—an article called 'Immortals I Know'—and you were one of them."

"Oh, no," he replied, "when I was in the Sahara the other week carrying out experiments, I read that Madame Tussaud's had been burnt down and that my waxen bust had perished in the flames. Fame is like that."

Today, British broadcasting has done nearly everything. Its mechanics are perfect, its staff is receptive, it is enterprising, it is most competent. But, under its Charter, it lacks a soul. Freedom of opinion is barred to it. Religion can never be discussed unless it is "within the main tradition of Christianity." In that sense, it is a coward's castle. Although there are more Mohammedans in the British Empire than Christians, and more Moslems than Christians, Mohammedanism is barred unless it is nicely introduced, for instance, by Sir Frederick Whyte. Judaism is only mentioned when the Jews go down to the Cenotaph once a year. Hindooism is outside the pale. So are Christian Science, Spiritualism and Unitarianism—even though the Home Secretary is a Unitarian. He introduces a new Bishop to the King, signs the document that appoints him—and yet he cannot talk about his own religion on the air. Nor could even Neville Chamberlain have done this when he was Prime Minister, although he, too, was a Unitarian.

During Election time, by arrangement with the Parties, the B.B.C. solves all these problems. It gives an agreed space of time to each Party, who appoint their own speakers and who contradict each other on successive nights. Although in the case of religion it would, of course, be awkward to include small sects like the Plymouth Brethren and the Four-Square Gossellers, it would be possible to have debates on the air. The Reverend Donald Soper, the Methodist, allows himself to be heckled on Tower Hill and in Hyde Park. He would not flinch from heckling in a broadcasting studio.

In America, you can buy time to discuss anything, from someone's pills to Communism. Here, if you are not most respectable from the point of view of contemporary opinion, the air is closed to you. I do not think that in regard to music (in regard to which the B.B.C. has been so enterprising that it has almost made us a musical nation) there is much room for improvement. I must say I would like the B.B.C. to organise a sort of Eisteddfod over all of Britain, starting with local competitions in school rooms, just the same as they have Eisteddfodau all over Wales—and then follow it with an annual competition for the whole of the country in August.

I believe this might bring to light a great deal of unknown talent. Anyway, it would be a national inspiration. I do not think broadcast drama could be improved, or that the Drama Department could do much better than it does. In my opinion, Val Gielgud's work has been most admirable. If the B.B.C. would like a suggestion, I make this one—that in its Third Programme it should deal with the history of the stage from the very beginning. To start with, it should produce the first known play of which there is any record, and then go right through the whole story of dramatic art so far as this country is concerned. I suppose the earliest drama would be the Coventry Nativity Play. Now, if each performance was preceded or followed by an analysis of the play by somebody like Desmond McCarthy, I believe this would have great educational value.

Few people, for instance, understand that the modern theatre was really the invention of Ibsen, who wrote plays with a purpose, dramas with a motive. Although critics like Clement Scott denounced these as "cesspools," Pinero anglicised the idea with "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." We had Shaw because of Ibsen, and Galsworthy because of Ibsen, the French had Brioux because of Ibsen, America had Eugene O'Neill because of Ibsen. Indeed, most of our modern dramatists were very greatly influenced by a Norwegian genius of whom people say when they see "A Doll's House" that they cannot see why so much fuss about the play was made during the author's life-time.

In my opinion, the B.B.C. talks are in many ways admirable. They have had, I am sure, a profound influence on the citizens of tomorrow: but even these should have a broader scope and be more often in the nature of discussions.

They ask me sometimes: "Will broadcasting kill the theatre?" Well, as I used to prophesy that talkies would kill the theatre, I hesitate to answer that. I have been so often wrong about things that would be killed by something else. I thought that the B.B.C. would kill concerts. On the contrary, the B.B.C. has made them more popular than ever. No, not even when universal television comes will the theatre be killed. On the other hand, we know from experience now that the more you know about something the more interested you become in it.

I used to fear that the B.B.C. news would kill newspapers. Yet newspapers have a larger circulation today than they have ever had.

*But any way, I do not think it matters so much what is killed so long as something living is born.*

In a sense the Negro minstrels were killed by the concert parties, and then the concert parties were killed by better touring revues. Art goes on. Culture has changed in form, but the main truth is that we have to educate the world: and there are few better or easier ways of educating the world than by broadcasting—broadcast talks, broadcast music, broadcast plays, broadcast sermons, and, indeed, anything that is possible. Whatever the faults of radio may be, I always remember nearly forty years ago the early struggles of a man, Guglielmo Marconi. And then one day we heard that a ship's crew had been saved by a wireless S.O.S.

Not many years after, because of his patient genius, the B.B.C. was born. It has taken joy into millions of homes, and is, indeed, one of the greatest factors in the entire country.



# It's too easy to say NO!

A. G. THORNTON

**S**TARTING as an experiment, "Radio Forfeits" within a couple of months became one of the high spots of the Light Programme. Soon, according to a listening census by B.B.C. experts it ranked as No. 1 attraction for all programmes, topping "Itma's" ten and a half million by several hundred thousands.

Yet the show was nearly lost to British broadcasting. Its inventor and projector, Michael Miles, has told the story of how after escaping from Singapore in 1942, he settled down as announcer and producer in South Africa. He had a good deal to do with hospital shows and he thought it might be a good idea to evolve an entertainment in which patients and staffs could take part. That was how "Army Forfeits" was born. Later it became popular with the troops in Europe.

Then from America, whither he had gone after finishing his ENSA contract, Miles sent a recording to Broadcasting House. He heard nothing. A B.B.C. man in Canada told him this was odd, because he should at least have had an acknowledgment. He assumed his discs had been lost by enemy action. When he came here on a visit he brought another set with him. Norman Collins, Controller of the Light Programme was away ill, and Tom Chalmers, his deputy, arranged to see him. When Miles called, Chalmers was summoned away immediately before the appointment.

"I was due to go back to New York in a couple of days," Miles told me, "and I decided I'd had it. However, just as a gesture, I rang. Chalmers came through and said Norman Collins had heard the record and was interested."

Without hearing an entertainment like this, experts might well have said that it would never get over. The radio party idea might be good enough when played by stars who could be relied to feed each other if the script broke loose. Relying upon untried and unprepared amateurs for half an hour was quite another matter. The risk of mike fright ruining the show seemed all too obvious. And then making a programme out of the oldest Christmas party game seemed a hopeless gamble!

It was not a gamble, and from the second performance "Radio Forfeits" was a winner. So much so that many listeners think the team is hand picked. It is not. Audiences are chosen in the usual way by rotation and although there is now a large pool of aspirants, anxious to try their luck the first half dozen collections were completely chance material. Miles gratefully acknowledges the help he gets from producer Jacques Brown, who acts as "barker" and gets the party warmed up; but the audience are his collaborators. They go with him from the "off" and they carry with them



*Michael Miles—Radio Forfeits.*

# Puzzle Corner

## RONALD WALDMAN

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**M**R. PHINEAS T. BARNUM knew practically everything there was to know about entertaining the public; the famous story that he once organised a Zoo in which the largest sign of all read "This Way to the Egress" with the result that all his cash customers dutifully trailed off in the direction indicated and paid to come in again proves that he knew just exactly how far he could go (and how much he could get away with) in the matter of entertainment. But if anyone had told Mr. Phineas T. Barnum that scores of millions of the public all over the world could be entertained each week by employing somebody to ask them questions about geography, history, music, science and the mass of different subjects that come under the heading of "General Knowledge," the great showman would have smiled indulgently and pityingly and gone out to organise another Circus.

The "Quiz," in its present form, is entirely a product of the twentieth century. True, men and women have always enjoyed showing off their knowledge, but the general standard of education and information has never, until now, been high enough to include the majority of a country's population in this type of competition. The radio Quiz has now proved its worth in entertainment and, especially in Great Britain, America, Canada, Australia and South Africa, it has become one of the most popular forms of listening. It has its enemies, of course—the too-serious-minded pedants who accuse it of delivering undigested gobbets of disconnected information in a way which, they say, is worse than useless. But they miss the point; a Quiz is, paradoxically, a stimulating form of mental relaxation, a light-hearted piece of brain-exercise which, at its worst, can always serve as a memory exercise and, at its best, can be sparkling, witty, informative and, above all, entertaining—which is, after all, its main purpose.

There are, generally speaking, three different methods of presenting a Quiz on the air. All three are well represented in this country's broadcasting and all three have their own particular appeal. In my own mind, I always think of them as the "Audience Type," the "Team Type" and the "Direct Type."

The leading examples of the "Audience Type" are the "Double-or-Quit Quiz" in "Merry-go-round," Michael Miles's "Radio Forfeits" and the Wilfred Pickles' success "Have A Go!" In all these the "victims" of the Quiz are volunteers drawn from a studio audience. The listener at home can, if he so wishes, remain completely passive in the matter of answering the questions—his entertainment is derived from the struggles of the poor, sweating victim at the microphone. As a matter of fact, it is worth while mentioning, in passing, that the victims, these days, are often a good deal quicker, and wittier, than many experienced broadcasters!

But the home listener has always one great advantage. From the comfort of his armchair he can almost invariably think more easily and more quickly than a competitor in a studio who is faced by the unfamiliar microphone, the studio red light, an audience and all the technical paraphernalia of broadcasting. At home, our regular listener can feel all the superiority of someone who can answer a problem quicker than someone else. I wonder what would happen if the positions were suddenly reversed! The studio atmosphere provided by the "Audience Type" of Quiz is always, of course, cheerful, exuberant and happy—especially if somebody wins a pound or somebody has to pay a particularly fascinating type of forfeit. Its chief value is in this atmosphere.

The best-known examples of the "Team Type" of Quiz are the various Spelling-Bees, the "Quiz Team" series and, above all, "Transatlantic Quiz"—to many people the most satisfying broadcast of the entire week. This type is, in many ways, similar to the "Audience Type." The home listener can, again, remain completely passive. The entertainment and

*Ronald Waldman,  
B.B.C. Producer.*



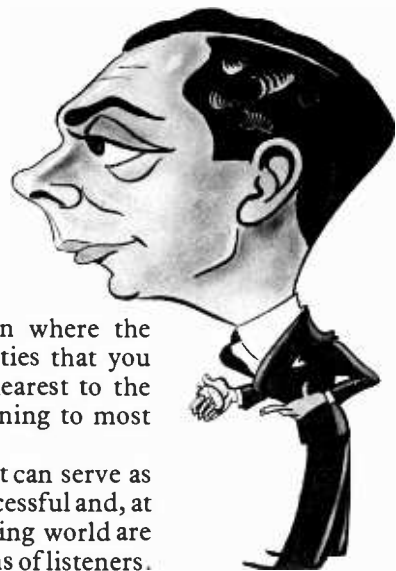
the answering of the questions are provided by the members of the teams and there is the additional interest of the direct competition between two sets of brains in opposition to each other. In the "Transatlantic Quiz," this competition, in a cumulative form week after week, is a very important part of the success of the programme. On the other hand the home listener feels that satisfying sense of superiority when he knows the answer to a question and can hear one of the members of the teams struggling for it—the satisfaction is even greater if he can show the other members of his family circle that he has a wider knowledge and a quicker perception than Professor Brogan!

The third type, of which two examples are Lionel Hale's television series "Quiz with Hale" and my own "Puzzle Corner" in "Monday Night at Eight," is different from the other two types in one vital respect. The home listener no longer remains merely an eavesdropper; the questions are aimed directly at him; he becomes part of the broadcast—there is no longer a "protective screen" of studio competitors and teams which enable him to remain a passive listener. The emphasis is thus shifted from the replies given by the studio contestants and is placed on the questions themselves—the success of the programme now depends not on the entertainment values of the competitors but on the entertainment value of the question.

I can, of course, speak with more knowledge of "Puzzle Corner" than I can of any of the other programmes. Harry S. Pepper first started it in 1937 and it is undoubtedly the oldest regular Quiz feature in this country. In its early days, of course, nobody was quite sure whether this new idea was a success. The answer came suddenly and unexpectedly. A mistake was made in the broadcast one night; before the programme was off the air the telephone wires to Broadcasting House were red hot with calls from listeners who wished to correct the mis-statement: The whole thing had "taken fire"—and the "Deliberate Mistake" was born! This now seems to be the most popular individual feature of "Puzzle Corner" and, in my opinion, the reason for this is to be found in the delightfully witty and sometimes brilliantly clever letters and postcards received from listeners who have "spotted" the mistake. All the rhymes and comments read out each week are genuinely written by listeners to "Monday Night at Eight," but they are not, by any means, the only things received. Many listeners illustrate the Deliberate Mistake by brilliant drawings or paintings, cartoons, models and even the people who *don't* spot the mistake often write very funny little rhymes to say so.

In "Puzzle Corner" the questions can range from the straightforward type, to which we feel we jolly well ought to know the answer but we're blown if we can remember it, to the various types of "catch" questions. For instance, when I ask "Why did Moses take mustard into the Ark?" it takes some people just a little bit longer than it should to remember that Moses never went into the Ark at all! Or there is the "one-track mind" type of question. You ask somebody to pronounce T-W-O. They get it right, of course, and then you ask them to pronounce T-O, then T-O-O, then the French T-U. But when you ask them how they pronounce the second day of the week, the answer is almost invariably "Tuesday" whereas, of course, the second day of the week is Monday! Again, there is the "double bluff" type of question where the answer looks so obviously to be the least likely of three possibilities that you avoid it and get it wrong. For instance, if you ask "Which is nearest to the Equator—Venice, Vienna or Vladivostok?" it's usually maddening to most people to find that the correct answer is Vladivostok.

It's the job of a Quiz to be entertaining. If, at the same time, it can serve as a brain-stimulator and a memory-exerciser then it is even more successful and, at this very moment, radio programmes throughout the English-speaking world are proving that the Quiz has more than earned its place in the affections of listeners.



# It's a Serious Business Being Funny

GORDON CRIER

**CRAZY** :—rickety, falling to pieces, full of cracks or weak joints, insane, outrageously foolish, madly eager for . . . ”

(Pocket Oxford Dictionary)

AS a practitioner in the art of craziness, I have some alterations and emendations to make to our friend's definition. Let's take it to pieces.

“Rickety”—that is one thing a crazy show must never be. “Taut, streamlined, well-knit”—definitely all of these. “Falling to pieces”—well, that all depends on the sort of craziness we are going in for, as anyone who has ever seen the famous American jerry-builders, Willie West and McGinty will firmly agree. “Full of cracks”—I think we will allow him that—though we might agree to differ on the definition of the word “cracks.” “Weak joints” are certainly no part of our edifice. “Insane” . . .

I think this is the time to put in one or two definitions of our own such as—“carefully scripted”—“calculated,” “rehearsed to a split second,” “slick” and, above all, “performed in deadly earnest.” Then we again join hands with our lexicographer in the knowledge that the results of our collaboration with him will be “insane,” “outrageously foolish,” and in the hopes that the public will be “madly eager for . . . !”

It's an axiom in the theatre, of which radio variety is, after all, only a branch, that the more spontaneous the performance is to appear, the more carefully it must be rehearsed and prepared, and the more earnestly it must be performed. That great comedian, Sir Seymour Hicks, whose every gesture and inflexion appear to be a miracle of spontaneity is, in rehearsal, a martinet both to his cast and to himself. Every wink and shrug, every raising of his magnificent eyebrows, is the result of exhaustive rehearsal.

The Marx Brothers, at the other end of the crazy scale, go to the lengths of taking out a stage version of their forthcoming picture on a long tour and trying out the gags, situations and comedy routines on audiences all over America. In the light of the audience's reaction, the show is pruned, revised, rewritten, and put through an intensive process of elimination and reconstruction before the brothers set foot on the studio floor.



*The resident team of hand-picked half-wits with their question master.*



*The team which sent the "Ignorance is Bliss" listening figures soaring*



*Harold Berens, Stewart MacPherson, Gladys Hay and Michael Moore.*



*Gordon Crier*

Nothing is left to chance—though chance sometimes takes a hand in the form of an impromptu line or movement which gets a laugh and is incorporated into the main framework of the show. Could anything be more earnest than Groucho's purposeful prowl or more logical than his jet-propelled dialogue? The Marx Brothers take themselves extremely seriously knowing that if they didn't, you wouldn't.

An "Itma" rehearsal is a very serious business. No question of "That Man" wandering in a few minutes before the broadcast, picking up a piece of paper and being screamingly funny. It takes a long time and hard work to construct that careful pattern of voice, music and sound effects which comes to you on Thursday night. Charlie Chester and his Gang enjoy their work and transmit their enjoyment to the listener, but the planning and execution of "Whippit Kwick" and the weekly assassination of a song are very precise affairs. In the case of "Ignorance is Bliss" we spent some hours rehearsing and polishing the apparently spontaneous answers. If Harold Berens's perennial moan of "What a geyser!" didn't really sound like the cry of a mentally deficient soul

in torment, no listener would believe in the character which he has worked so hard to create. The earnestness of it is all.

A crazy edifice is erected but it is built on very solid foundations. Who started all this crazy business? So far as radio is concerned Max Kester's "Danger, Men at Work" was the first systematic attempt to apply the principles of Marx (Groucho not Karl.) His characters have the authentic Marxian touch—even their names, Duckweed, Eggblow, Nikolas Ridikilous, bring echoes of Groucho's always fantastic titles; while Mrs. Ponsonby is surely a not very distant cousin of the fabulous Mrs. Rittenhouse whom Groucho has courted with leering devotion in so many pictures. This resemblance in type does not detract in any way from Kester's ingenuity and success in developing and presenting his characters but the two formulæ cannot escape comparison.

The original protagonists (with two exceptions) still appear in these broadcasts, and this is a big factor in the effectiveness of the series. The characters have become more than characters in a broadcast—they are people living in a mad world of their own but, within the conventions of that mad world, living, breathing human beings. And that illusion of reality is more than half the battle with a "crazy" show.

How many listeners believed with all their hearts that Arthur Askey and Richard Murdoch actually lived in the flat in Broadcasting House? They could be numbered in tens of thousands. Whatever Arthur Askey did—from going up through the ceiling at the console of the Theatre Organ to blacking-out the skylight of his flat with Pontefract cakes thrown at it from below—the action was always logically schemed and worked out on a practical basis and the listener believed in it.

The incomparable doings of "That Man" are dealt with elsewhere in this volume but he obviously takes his place in the crazy procession. In "Ignorance is Bliss," the eternal background is the studio, the eternal situation three dim minds, alternately unconscious. Faced weekly with problems a child of five could answer, they fail conspicuously to do so. Their craziness is different from that of other shows of this type, but they must approach it with identical seriousness of purpose, for being crazy in entertainment is a serious business.



# Mr. Everyman is No. 1 Star

## KENNETH HORNE

**E**NTERTAINING people—being funny especially—becomes more difficult every year. In the old days a good “spot” lasted a comedian for half a lifetime. In the West End, it might take years for a million people to see his act.

Today most top-liners are featured in radio. Their jokes may be heard at a sitting by twenty million people or more—an audience which was unthinkable in the days before radio. And so the performer must always think of something new next time he broadcasts or faces the footlights. For, as I need hardly remind you, nothing is so unfunny as last week’s joke. One of the essentials of real humour is that it takes you by surprise, and that can only happen once.

Being funny—believe it or not!—is extremely hard work. A top-line comedian is like a gun; he cannot function without ammunition. No matter how talented he may be, he cannot be comic without good material. Hence a new figure has become increasingly important in the world of entertaining—the man who produces the ideas and writes the scripts.

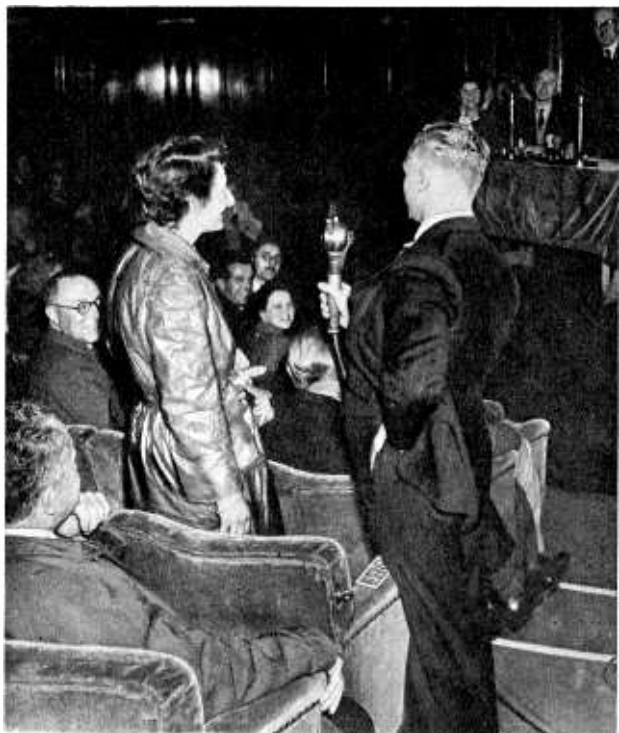
It is perhaps not surprising that seeking for novelty they sometimes tend to overlook the obvious, for we have discovered recently, although it has been under our noses for years, that one of the favourite stars with any audience is the audience itself.

“Audience participation” is how the pundits describe this type of entertainment. Perhaps it started with circus clowns fooling among the crowds. (No doubt some learned fellow will write and tell me it started in ancient Greece, but not being a classical scholar I wouldn’t know!)

When I first started doing Quiz programmes for the B.B.C. I was afraid of “drying up.” I used to go into the studio with a number of preconceived gags in mind. I soon found I was barking up the wrong tree. No matter how good the gags, they always sounded forced. I found that the only way to put the thing over was to be completely natural.

My own connection with Quiz programmes came about entirely by chance. Until the war I had never broadcast at all or even thought of doing so. On leaving Cambridge in 1928 I joined the

*“Public Enquiry.” A member of the audience gives her views.*





*"Have a Go!" Wilfred Pickles conducts a Quiz programme.*

Triplex Safety Glass Co., Ltd., and have been with them ever since, except for the war period when I served in the R.A.F.

As you may remember, early in the war the B.B.C. ran a series called "Ack-ack, Beer-beer." R.A.F. groups were instructed to get the defence units to co-operate in this feature. When the instruction came to our group, the A.C.C. sent for me. (I can only imagine he regarded me as the most long-suffering member of his staff.) Rather bewildered, but with insufficient time to be frightened at the prospect, I found myself under orders to prepare a programme. It was a success and I appeared in about fifty more, being among other things the Quiz Master.

My connection with "Merry-go-Round" and "Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh" came about as a result of another chance. I was posted to Air Ministry as a staff-officer. Walking down Whitehall one day I ran into an old acquaintance, Richard Murdoch. Although I had heard him broadcast in "Band Waggon" with Arthur Askey, we had not met since we had been together at Cambridge. As a result of our talk, Dickie joined my section in the Air Ministry.

In off moments we talked quite a lot about R.A.F. slang. Out of our talks grew the idea of "Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh." Dickie put it up to the B.B.C., who accepted the programme for "Merry-go-Round." Having previously conducted the Quiz in "Ack-ack, Beer-beer," I became R.A.F. Quiz Master as well.

When the war came to an end, Dickie was booked to go on tour and invited me to join him. The salary offered was staggering, but I resisted the temptation. I have seen too many stars come and go to be attracted by the lure of the footlights. In any case I had been extremely happy with my firm, and really I didn't want to leave them. When I returned to Triplex, Sir Graham Cunningham, the chairman and managing director, kindly gave me the necessary permission to continue to broadcast, providing it did not interfere with my work.

Then Arthur Askey was invited to do a new programme for the B.B.C. as a successor to "Band Waggon." Dickie suggested me as a partner and so came "Forever Arthur."

The B.B.C. also invited me to introduce the Birthday Party in "Monday Night at Eight" another example of "Audience participation."

I have never regretted my decision to decline the stage as a career, because I don't really think it suits my particular temperament.

If you ask me what I dislike most about broadcasting, I can tell you without the slightest hesitation—rehearsing. For some people thorough rehearsal is the secret of a successful show. For myself I find that too much rehearsing makes me lose confidence and spontaneity. That no doubt is why I enjoy so much doing programmes like Quiz and Birthday Party.

Of one thing I have no doubt—that both on the radio and the stage the idea of "audience participation" shows still has not been exploited to anything like their full possibilities. I believe it has a tremendous future.



*"R.S.V.P." Alan Dixon interviewing guests.*

# The Great God "Series"

JOHN WATT

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CERES is the Goddess of Plenty and Series is the god of lack of plenty—of ideas.

This is a generalisation and, like most generalisations, not entirely true. But it is true to say that in a broadcast "series" the producer has to think only of one basic idea which will last him through the six weeks or the thirty-nine, as the case may be, whereas had he been asked to put on a "single" show that one basic plot idea would only last him for one week; for the next week the poor wretch would have to think up something new. To this extent the series and serialisation of radio programmes—and these are two quite separate things—are economical. But there is a great deal more to the series idea than that.

'Way back, as we old frontiersmen say, in 1935 there were no series of radio programmes; each and every one of them stood alone for its brief hour—or in some cases in those more leisurely days, seventy-five minutes—upon the stage of the air and then disappeared into the limbo reserved for last night's radio and yesterday's newspaper. The whole idea of running programmes in series was regarded as being too American and vaguely ungentlemanly; in those days British radio fought shy of American programmes (instead of fighting for them). And then there burst upon an astonished world a show called "Band Waggon." And here I must indulge in a little personal reminiscence.

"Band Waggon" was the first radio series to be broadcast in this country and it was considered to be a very daring move. The show was booked in the schedule for twelve weeks. Suppose it should be a failure? There was no retreat! With the ordinary single-night shows of those days, if one failed there was no need to take it off; it had taken itself off. But with this—three months of it! It was revolutionary. Fortunately, the show was a success, and what the revolution has led to can be seen in the unending series that now fill the columns of the *Radio Times*.

That first series was a very carefully planned affair. All the ingredients of the pudding were meticulously selected; the sketch feature, the various musical features, the talent spotting feature called "New Voices," all these were arranged at their various lengths. The space for the comedian was also allowed for—without knowing who the comedian was going to be. And the space allowed for the plum in the first pudding (which ran for sixty minutes) was seven and a half!

But who was he to be? He must be unknown or nearly unknown to the radio public, he must be willing to co-operate in the new scheme, he must be able to stay the course, the unprecedented course, of twelve weeks; and, of course (we thought of everything), he must be funny.

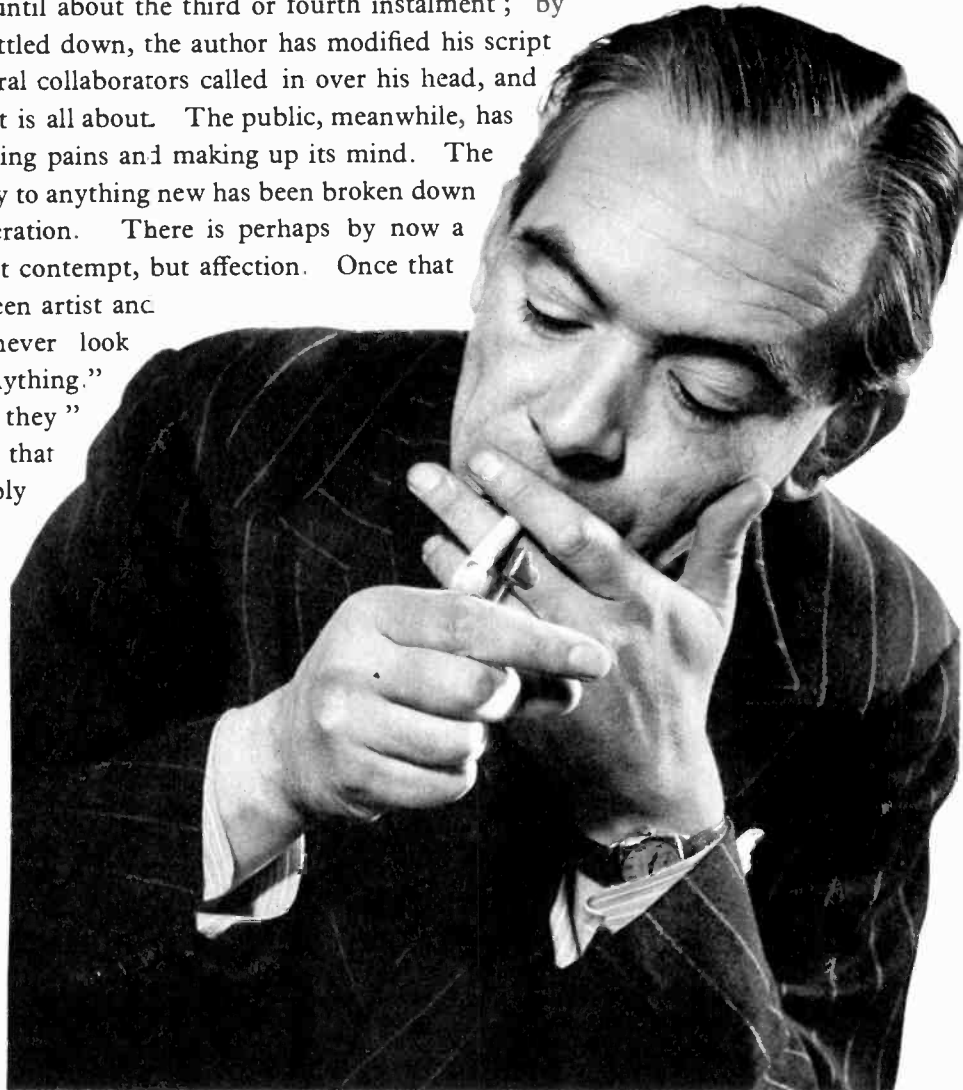
Eventually the field was fined down to two candidates. It was arranged that I should meet them both at the same time but in different pubs. I went first to the pub where Arthur Askey was waiting; and I did not go on to the second pub. For all I know the other comedian is still there.

There are many points that favour "series" and the most important depends on the fundamental laziness of the British, or indeed any other, public. This generalised insult is based largely on the question of timing. If the timing of a programme alters from week to week the chances are that many of the people who wish to hear it will not do so because they have not taken the trouble to find out when it is on—they will complain bitterly of this. If the programme comes on with the regularity of a pendulum at, say, 8.30 p.m. on Thursday (need I tell you what occurs at this time?) they will listen if they like and want to hear the programme, and sometimes if they do not—in which case they will complain bitterly, at having to listen to something which they dislike intensely. There is a small switch at the side of most radio sets which can be operated to avoid this but it is rarely used.

Every series builds up its goodwill on what might be called acceptance value. A new comedian may appear on the air and be mildly successful; if he makes only that one appearance he may well be forgotten. If, on the other hand, he makes six or twelve consecutive appearances, even if he is the most howling flop he will not be forgotten—he may have to change his name in order to obtain future work, but he will not be forgotten. The average series does not get into its stride until about the third or fourth instalment; by that time the artists have settled down, the author has modified his script and possibly have had several collaborators called in over his head, and the star has gathered what it is all about. The public, meanwhile, has been listening to these growing pains and making up its mind. The first natural human antipathy to anything new has been broken down by the very fact of reiteration. There is perhaps by now a familiarity which breeds, not contempt, but affection. Once that affection is established between artist and audience the star need never look back—"they'll take anything." There is no need that "they" should take "anything"; by that time the show has probably developed into what it was meant to be on its first trial run. It might even be good.

It is an unalterable fact that in the case of broadcasting, repetition does make the heart grow fonder. This applies not only to entertainment

*John Watt.*



programmes and comedians (as has been discovered by many a publisher) but also to popular songs. Song-plugging is only another example of any advertisers way to the public's heart ; continued repetition.

Opponents of Series Broadcasting also make the claim that this method keeps new talent away from the microphone. This is, I think, just plain not true. The additional characters in an entertainments series built round the star are just as liable to be newcomers as old hands. Series Broadcasting also does far more to make new stars than any other method, in fact I do not know that there is any other method. These opponents also claim that it makes for monotony if the same item in a programme comes on at precisely the same time each week ; there used to be complaints that "you could set your watch" on Sunday nights on the "Hi Gang" by the time Vic Oliver made his appearance. I am sure you could, and a very good thing too.

One of the great strengths of the entertainments series is the catch-phrase.

In a show called "Happidrome" the phrase "Let me tell you" became nation-wide currency, and a considerable nuisance in ordinary conversation. There was the sad case of a distinguished politician making a serious speech on a serious subject, in the course of which, working up his peroration, he smote his fist in the palm of his hand and (not being a radio fan) uttered those words. He got a very big laugh which surprised him very much. In the case of "Itma" the success of this show has been built up largely on catch-phrases, such sentences as "Can I do you now, Sir?" ; "After you, Claude ; No, after you, Cecil" ; "I go—I come back," have all virtually passed into the language. At one time I believe there were seventy-eight catch-phrases in "Itma" and none of them were spoken by Tommy Handley. This year's "They don't tell nobody nothing these days, do they?" bids fair to become another menace to normal speech.

The question of serialisation compared with series is a slightly different kettle of fish. To take a play and cut it up into six instalments with a "curtain" at the end of each instalment (with sufficient suspense to keep the audience agog as to what is going to happen next week) has a far more doubtful value than an ordinary series. Serialisation involves a much greater effort on the part of the audience to make a date with its radio and if one instalment is not heard it makes nonsense of the rest. It is surprising the number of people who do find the time and the inclination to make that date. But a serialisation has not and cannot have the appeal of a series in which each instalment is self contained.

This is not to decry all serialisation. There have been many highly successful serials, such as the "Count of Monte Cristo," "Jane Eyre" and in the musical field such shows as "Crooks Tour." The fact remains, whether we like it or not, that the series idea has come to stay ; so don't forget Ladies and Gentlemen to listen next week, same time, same place.

# Just William

## REX DIAMOND

*The guiding hand behind the "Just William" broadcasts belongs to Alick Hayes. He leads the "Just William" team, as part-author of the scripts, and producer. It was he who "discovered" John Clark and in due course, his successor.*

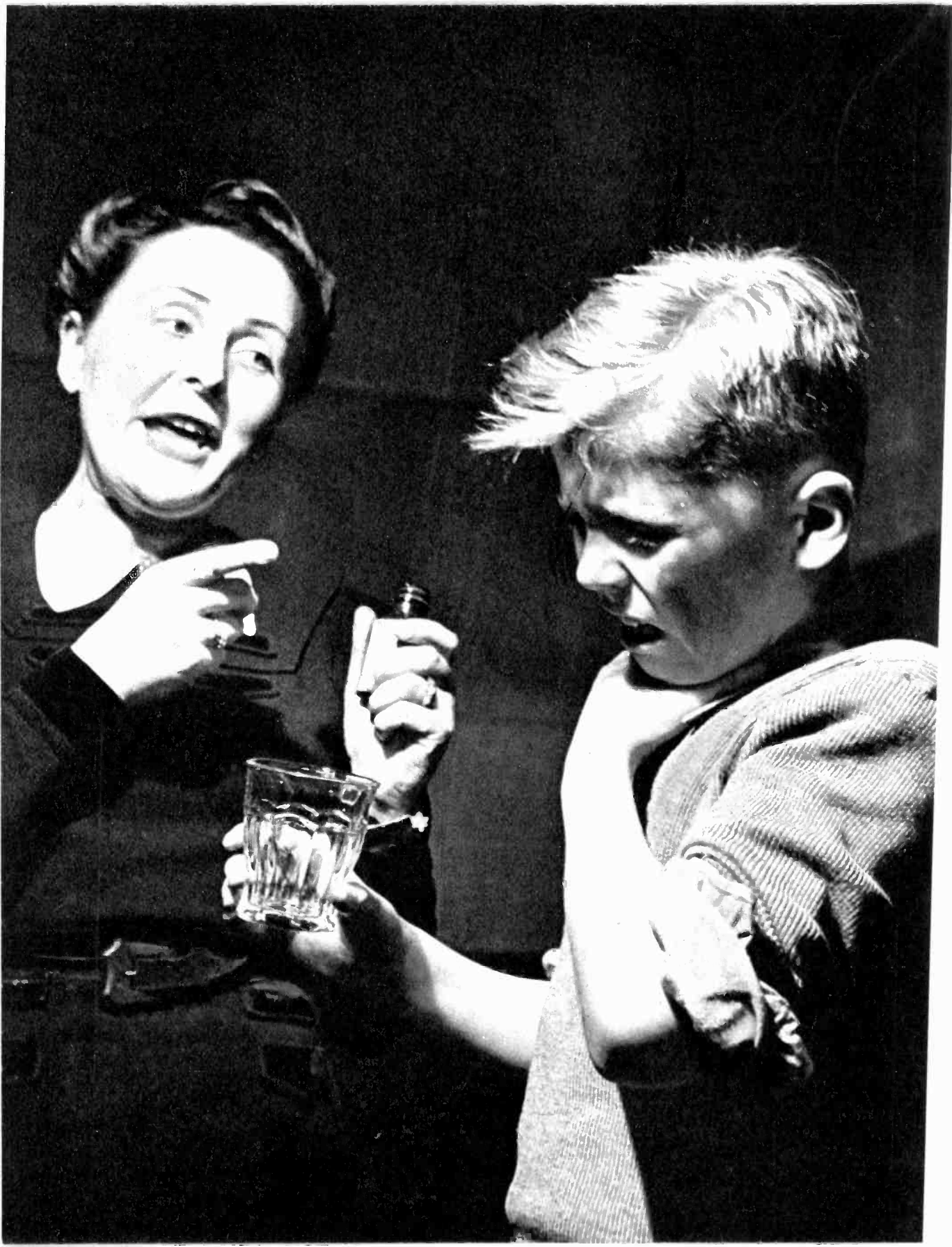


**J**UST WILLIAM !—Just two little words that have taken their place in the front rank of radio entertainment.

When writer-producer Alick Hayes in 1945 first told me his idea of adapting the "Just William" books for radio I realised the big possibilities and at the same time the great difficulties to be overcome.

The initial meetings, discussions and conferences with the author, Richmal Crompton, convinced me that Alick Hayes had put his finger on the one weak spot of radio entertainment, that is, the gap between young listeners and older ones. "Just William" was the ideal link which brought little Johnny Green, Mr. Green, and Grandfather Green to the loud speaker simultaneously, Johnny to compare William's adventures with his own, Mr. Green to reminisce on his youthful escapades, and Grandfather to remind Mr. Green about them.

Of course, Mrs. Green is a listener too, sympathising with William's mother, Mrs. Brown, and Johnny Green's elder brother and sister to commiserate with William's big brother and sister, Robert and Ethel.





So, in October 1945, was born the nearest approach to perfect family listening that twenty-three years of radio had offered. The first three or four programmes consisted of adaptations of stories from her books by Richmal Crompton in collaboration with the producer and myself, but it soon became evident that for the set cast, and the different technique of radio, we should have to invent our own original stories each week. Alick Hayes, therefore, very wisely brought in Ian Smith as an additional collaborator.

Apart from this, another successful factor was the almost perfect casting. John Clark as "William" was his own personal discovery and has proved a tremendous success; and we would have had to go a long way to better little Jacqueline Boyer as Violet Elizabeth.

The reaction to "Just William" by listeners was a pleasant revelation and proved that



*Rehearsing "Puck of Pooks Hill" for the Children's Hour.*

here, maybe, was a turning point in light entertainment. The crazy, gagging type of programme that played so much to a live audience, had, in my opinion, reached its peak; and although there will always be an "Itma," supported by such prototypes as "Stand Easy," "Ignorance is Bliss," and the "Jewell and Warriss" show, I am convinced that a good humorous story, deriving chuckles and laughs from plot and situations has a big future.

For myself, after writing for years for Tommy Handley, Arthur Askey, Jack Warner, Claude Dampier and others, it was a grand change to work on a programme where it wasn't necessary to have to think up new gags to make a studio audience laugh. All the same, "William" is as big a headache to us as to the Brown family, because each week a new plot, situations and an effective "pay-off" (or climax) has to be found. Ian Smith and I found all our



*Father has something to say about it (Gordon McLeod and John Clark). John Clark (William) with Rosamund Barnes.*

time taken up cudgelling our brains and bringing to the conference-table ideas for a smooth continuity of plot and situations. From this Alick Hayes would write a rough script and bring us back for further discussion. As we were anything but a mutual admiration society, the final script never emerged until all were satisfied.

The fan mail of all the cast grew every week. William's headed the list but listeners had their own special favourites—Ginger, Violet Elizabeth or Mr. Brown. Thousands of children wrote. There was the little child of five who, during the break in the series wrote and pleaded "Please bring William back and I will be a good boy," to the senior girls' school asking for a script so that they could put on a "William" play at their school.

Charles Hawtrey (Hubert Lane, the bad boy) once had a fan-letter from Parkhurst Prison! All around me I have come across incidents that shows how "Just William" has crept into the homes and lives of listeners. The little boy in a tantrum lying on the pavement kicking and screaming, deaf to the entreaties of a distracted mother until in desperation she threatened that unless he behaved himself he wouldn't be allowed to listen to "William" that evening. Result—a tear-stained little boy clutching his mother's arm and promising not to do it again. The noisy bar in the local pub where some of the real old 'uns gather for a game of darts and dominoes, and who, deaf to the melodies of Albert Sandler or wisecracks by Tommy Handley blaring from the communal radio, instantly call for silence and a suspension in getting "double-top," while they religiously follow the life of the Brown family every Tuesday evening.

I think the greatest problem was that of the younger listeners who insisted on staying up to listen to "William" on Tuesday evenings at eight o'clock when they should have been in bed. The decision to repeat the programme every Sunday afternoon at two-thirty brought a storm of protest from children who couldn't stop to listen because they had to attend Sunday school at three o'clock. The B.B.C. obligingly made amends, and the show was re-broadcast after Sunday school.

To sum up, a steady listening figure officially estimated as nine million listeners above the age of sixteen, to say nothing of nine million younger ones, means that "William" is an asset we cannot afford to lose. William is the Peter Pan of radio and will never grow up, and our task is to see that the lovable boy with the good intentions that always go wrong will always be Richmal Crompton's "Just William."

# “Produced by—” DOUGLAS MOODIE

*Back in circulation after more than four years in the Army, Douglas Moodie is one of the oldest hands at radio production in Britain. Few outside the “business” know very much of the work that goes into a large radio production, and in this fascinating story “Douggie” takes us behind the control panel.*

*An Effects Expert with block and tackle used for ship sequences.*

I THOUGHT you might like to come with me on a typical production job from the moment it starts to the time when the programme is over and the announcer says: “Production by . . .”

We are going to present an hour’s radio adaptation of a new film-musical. A script writer has been chosen, and I rely upon him to get a rough adaptation of the scenario. We gauge the dialogue with the music that is to be fitted in, and the writer completes his script accordingly. From the word “go” we are concerned with the time element, for the finished production has to run fifty-nine minutes and thirty seconds, and there’s no two ways about it.

We’ve got three orchestras at our disposal: there’s the Revue Orchestra, the Variety Orchestra, and the Dance Orchestra. There is a lot of music in the programme, but we decide that the Revue Orchestra, augmented if necessary, will handle the job admirably. The music is carefully scored to suit the orchestra, and follows the action and dialogue.

## *The Cast.*

Choosing the cast is a delicate and often very difficult job. We must have a leading lady with a fine soprano voice and dramatic ability. The field here is small, and it turns out to be impossible to engage the star we had in mind for the date of the broadcast. Never mind, we can engage two ladies to play the one part. Miss “A” has exactly the voice for the singing part, Miss “B” has just the right speaking voice for dialogue. (I did this in the radio production of “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” when Alice Mann sang and Joan Miller spoke. This was the first time that a film was presented over the air before it was seen in the theatres, and Irving Berlin did us the honour of appearing himself in our version.)



*No trouble is too great to obtain a dramatic “effect.”*





*Producer Peter Eton (right) with Martha Scott and John Mills.*

Now the cast begins to grow. Mr. "W" would like to play very much, but he would probably be filming; could he give us a definite answer next week? We arrange with his company that they will release him for rehearsals and the broadcast. Miss "R" would like to play too, but she is sailing for Hollywood on the day of the broadcast. We cable the U.S.A. and her sponsors are quite willing that she should remain here for the broadcast. Finally,

the cast is complete, and we get down to the business of fixing rehearsal studios and dates.

#### *Rehearsals.*

Before starting, we arrange to get hold of a copy of the film, and see that the entire cast and the musical director sit through anything from six to eight showings.

Then come two rehearsals of three hours each: and at the end of the second one, we find that the show is going to overrun by about ten minutes. We look over the script with the writer, and cut an entire scene that we had our doubts about anyway; that saves five minutes. We look to the musical director and agree to cut two of the orchestrations, which gives us the other five minutes.

This time everything works smoothly, and we get through the programme in something under the hour, and feel justified in repeating the rehearsal over the mike. You and I direct the proceedings from behind the glass panel in the control room, and we tell our actors how we want the words "put over." We do not read every line for them, but we concentrate on the light and shade and the little emphasis that may not be apparent to them in the script.

As soon as the orchestrations are complete and copied, we fix a Band-call. A section of the B.B.C. Chorus is wanted as well, so we call them at the same time. This rehearsal is largely the job of the musical director, and we tactfully act in an advisory capacity. We see that the microphones are arranged so as to provide the best "balance" and we explain any difficult points in the script. The actors will not be working in the same studio with the orchestra, but the conductor will hear them

through a single ear-phone. That means he will only hear his orchestra with the other ear. To make sure he brings the music in at the right moments, we have arranged a cue-light behind his rostrum.

Now we arrange a full rehearsal. Actors, orchestra, singers, choir, effects—they're all brought together for the first time, and you and I sit down behind our control panel and hear what happens.

#### *The Control Panel.*

It's rather like a cross between the console of the organ at the Odeon, and the instrumental panel of a Meteor. We have, on this occasion, several knobs with which to balance the band. Each of these controls the "pick-up" of a microphone. There is a mike for the strings, another for the rhythm section, one for the saxes and woodwind, one for the trumpets and the trombones, and one for atmosphere! Another knob controls the choir mike, another for the announcer, another for the vocalists, two more for the actors who are in another studio, another for the effects studio, and yet another for the gramophone effects on the turntables in the control room itself. If you add that up, you will see that we have no fewer than twelve control knobs to play with.

There are three other essential points of interest at the control panel. The conductor's cue-light I control from one switch. Other switches work cue-lights in front of the choir and the actors. When we wish to speak to any of them during rehearsal, we push a button which silences the loudspeaker beside us and brings *our* mike into operation. It's a useful contraption, for we can say what we like without having

*C.B.S. engineers watch an orchestra at work from the control panel.*



to see their reactions. The red light flickers—the announcer gives the station identification—the conductor's baton comes down—and off we go !

There are two more rehearsals of three hours each to follow this one, so my interruptions are frequent. It was my own idea to conduct the early rehearsals with a piano and skeleton score which enabled us to work out the timing pretty accurately, so now we can give all our attention to the production.

The orchestra is playing, I cue in the announcer, and the chorus come in with the theme tune. We fade the music under, and cue in our story teller, who



*A rehearsal as seen by the men at the turntables.*

sets the scene for the opening. As he finishes his lines, I cue the effects studio, and up comes the lap of water and the beat of a ship's engines. Mary and Tom are talking (cue to actors)—on the deck of a liner ploughing its way through the moonlit waters of the South Pacific. The ship's orchestra (cue to conductor)—is heard in the background. It's the good old stuff. Tom is romantically inclined, and the orchestra is conveniently playing a sentimental song hit. Mary decides to sing; the conductor brings her in at the right time, and we fade up her vocal microphone. The orchestra swells and the choir joins in at the end of the chorus. Tom (I cue the actor's studio) says how wonderful the moon is, and Mary (Miss "B" now) says, it certainly is, but she's getting cold. They open the nearest door (up

effects mike, the effects man is all ready with the door) and I fade up the music.

There, briefly, you have it. In three hours, this rehearsal is through. We have sorted out our cueing defects, tightened up on the effects, struck a balance with the orchestra and the vocalists, smartened up our dialogue, and generally become familiar with the production. At the next rehearsal we shall see an improvement and after that we shall run straight through the show and adjust the final timing.

We don't really relax until the show is over, and the announcer reads out the cast and gets to . . . ". . . production by Douglas Moodie," and the stopwatch points to fifty-nine minutes thirty seconds precisely.

# A Studio on The Stage

## HENRY HALL



**I**T was the day of the 1934 Boat Race, I remember. We had been making some gramophone records at Maida Vale, and in the recording studios at the same time were Elsie and Doris Waters.

Casually—it was no more than an impulse of the moment—I asked them: “Care to do a turn with my band on Saturday night?” They said a ready and friendly “yes.” Between then and Saturday the idea grew from a turn into a show: Lupino Lane and Flanagan and Allen came along, too, and the result was the spicing of our late-night broadcast with some expert tomfoolery. When it was over—“Well,” I thought, “*I’ve* enjoyed it, anyway.”

Half-a-dozen bags of letters on Monday morning brought a listener’s warrant to go ahead with the idea.

From that March evening in 1934 some hundreds of artists have allowed me to call them my guests (and as such, incidentally, many of them broadcast for the first time). The list is at my elbow. I see names that have shaped the lights on the theatre, cinema, music-hall, and concert-hall facades of Britain, Europe, the U.S.A., and the Commonwealth—names like Fred Astaire, Jack Buchanan, Eric Coates, Harriet Cohen, the late George Black, Charles Cochran, Noel Coward, George Formby, Richard Tauber and Moiseiwitsch.

Each name identifies a memory; all remind me of my debt to their owners. For these people were truly my guests. They came to my programme as friends, and their coming was a compliment that my band and I valued highly.

So to the music-halls, and the creation of a studio on the stage. That was in 1939, and for nearly four years we regularly presented “Guest Night” for the audiences in the theatre and the world beyond—a run that must be among the longest of any war-time series of broadcast shows. Then, for a while, I ran a variation of the feature under the title “Henry Hall’s Rhythm Entertainment,” but in 1945 went back to the traditional pattern and we’ve kept to it ever since.

What, I’m often asked, does the theatre audience see? The answer is: “Almost what they would see were the show coming from a broadcasting studio.”

The drill is this: the day of performance is fixed by the B.B.C.’s Variety Department. They know well in advance where I am booked to appear, and so have ample time in which to make their arrangements for the installation of equipment

*Binnie Hale and Bobby Howes at  
one of Henry Hall's famous  
"Guest Nights."*

and the booking of the necessary Post Office lines between the theatre and the nearest B.B.C. centre.

On my side, the chief job of course, is to arrange for my guests. This means knowing the activities, whereabouts, and availability of almost every well-known music-hall artist. Top-liners like the Western Brothers, Richard Murdoch, Harry Korris, Oliver Wakefield, Stainless Stephen, Old Mother Riley and Kitty, Jeanne de Casalis, Max Miller, and Stephane Grappelly are busy people, and it's almost certain that the acts in mind for a particular week won't be those eventually heard.

And to answer another frequent question: yes, the artists *do* travel to wherever I am playing. Only rarely do I invite someone who is appearing in the same bill, for after all, the essence of "Guest Night" is surprise. (You will have noticed, I expect, that the guests are never publicised in advance, either at the theatre or in the published radio programmes).

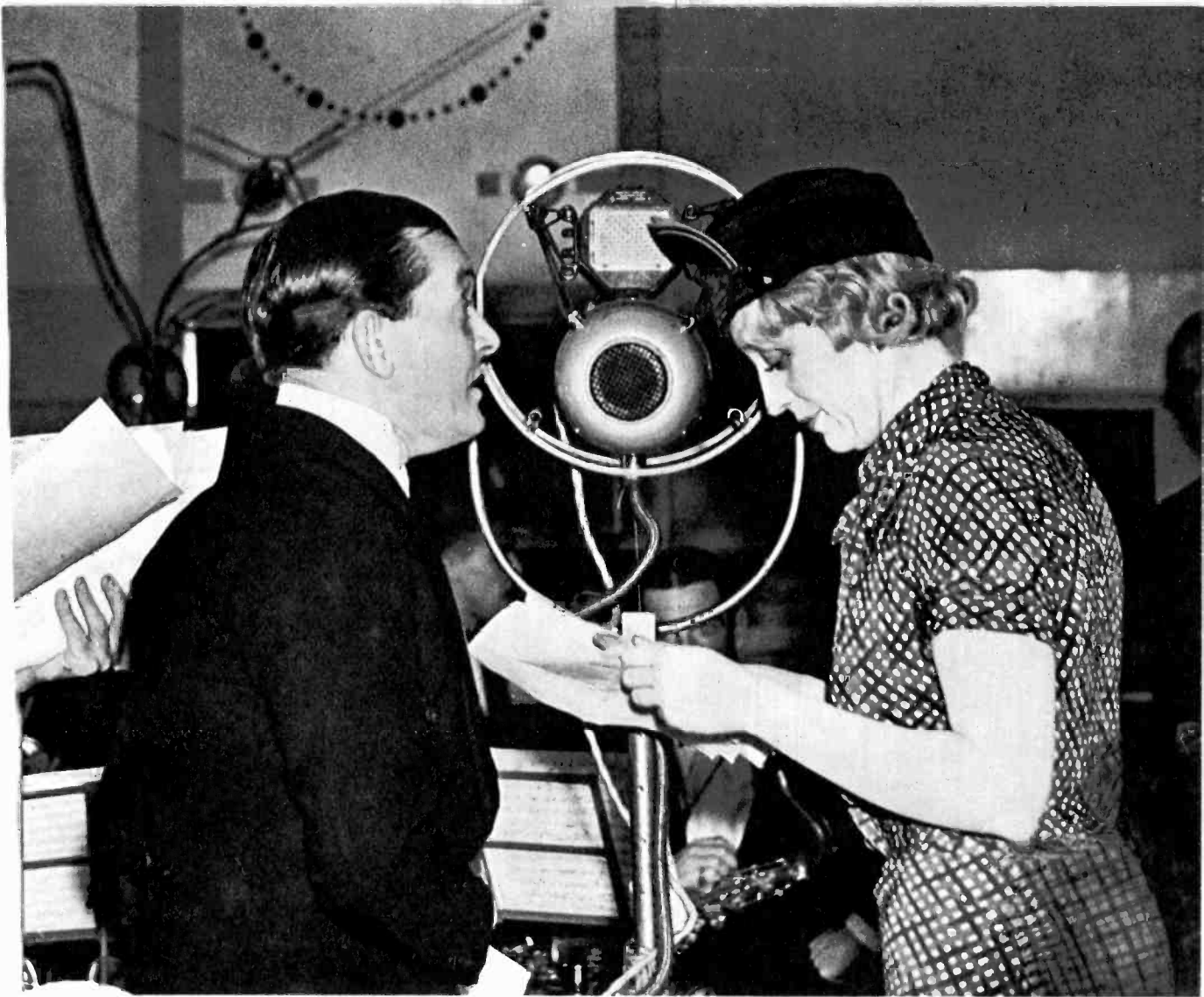
For "Guest Night" performances the stage becomes a three-walled studio. In fact, the set-up on it and behind it represents a complete, if temporary, broadcasting centre, and the audience is given a genuine glimpse of what goes on in a real studio.

Back-stage is a control-room (a dressing-room on other nights). Here the B.B.C. has installed its outside broadcasting amplifiers and control apparatus, and the Post Office engineers have terminated their lines; and there, as H.H.-hour approaches, you find the B.B.C. producer and engineers checking scripts and timing, testing equipment and lines.

On the stage the curtain rises to reveal a seemingly haphazard array of chairs, instruments, and microphones. The addition of the B.B.C. microphones to those of the







theatre, by the way, always poses a problem for the technicians, because on each occasion they must ensure that the output of the house loudspeakers doesn't distort the radio intake.

The boys come on in a casual manner, talking among themselves and to the audience, tune to "A" in the familiar fashion, check their music-parts, try over some sticky passages, and generally behave precisely as they would do were they back in Broadcasting House. When they have settled in their places, you see that the symmetrical grouping that we normally present has been abandoned and that the rhythm section, in particular, is well to the fore. In short, the band adopts the layout the microphone likes.

"This is Henry Hall speaking, and tonight is my 'Guest Night.' It gives me much pleasure to welcome . . ." The guest comes on; like myself, he works from a prepared (and pre-censored!) script. The show swings along, subject not so much to the baton in my right hand as to the watch in my left. A crowded house spontaneously supplies the atmosphere; we on the stage are apparently playing only to the microphone. But despite that, and despite

the absence of stage "business"—for that would be unfair to the millions outside the theatre—it is remarkable how the artists succeed in putting their personalities over the footlights. The short answer to the question, then, is that you see the behaviour and the technique that the years of studio life have taught us.

Finally, "Here's to the Next Time." And this, if we have under-run a little, is where the visible audience makes a useful contribution, for while I "gag" out the time by looking impatiently at my watch and by trying to blow out the red light, the sense of climax is sustained by the applause from in front.

Just now I wrote of memories, and I can't resist their plea for a place in a record such as this. Of those of the war years, pride of place goes to the fact that the blitz never kept us from fulfilling our engagements with the public. We had some narrow squeaks; as we went from town to town, it often seemed that the Luftwaffe was trying to catch up with us. But they never forced us to cancel an engagement; "Guest Night" artists travelled from all parts of the country, and not one of them was ever late.

Runner-up to that recollection is the time when the then Lord Provost of Glasgow, Sir "Pat" Dollan, brought a new flavour into "Guest Night" by giving a stimulating talk, and thereby established himself as one of the most successful and memorable of my guests.

I look back on the appearance of Cyril Fletcher and Betty Astell in a "Guest Night" at Exeter: it was followed, to my delight, by an engagement of another kind. I went to their wedding.

I remember Moiseiwitsch introducing me to his small son with the words "You know who this is, don't you?" and hearing the reply (memory of a recent visit to Queen's Hall conflicting with a taste for swing): "Yes—Sir Henry Hall."

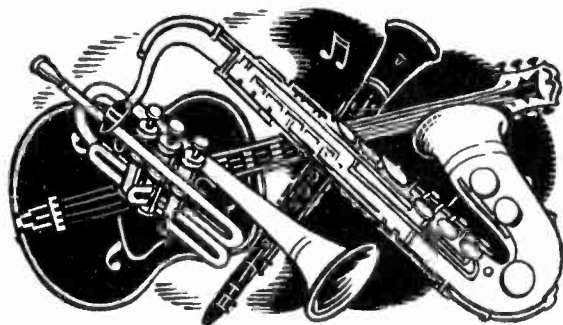
There was the time when a rehearsal for "Guest Night" with the late George Grossmith was unexpectedly interrupted by a visit from the King and Queen of Siam, who were touring Broadcasting House, and George, in compliance with a royal request, sang "I was so young; you were so beautiful."

The name of Noel Coward spotlights a broadcast that attracted what, in those days, was a phenomenal audience: in addition to the transmissions to listeners at home and overseas, that edition of "Guest Night" was rebroadcast in the U.S.A. on the coast-to-coast networks of both National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System.

The appearance of that Grand Old Man of British Variety, Sir Harry Lauder; Richard Tauber singing and conducting; Flanagan and Allen and Nervo and Knox from the Palladium, careering through the West End in a bus labelled "Crazy Gang—bound for Henry Hall's Guest Night . . ." This could go on for pages more.

Savouring these memories refreshes my gratitude for the enthusiastic, friendly co-operation I have enjoyed, and gratitude not only to my friends of the stage, not only to the theatrical managements—the late George Black, his successor, Val Parnell, Prince Littler, and the many others who have encouraged me to bring a studio to their stages—but to the boys and girls of my orchestra, the backbone of it all.

"Guest Night" is a happy show for us, too, and the curtain here is rightly theirs.



# THE BANDS

*The dance band has its own indisputable place in the radio programmes of all countries. From earliest days, music for dancing has been a staple and important item in British broadcasting. From the carefree days of the Savoy Orpheans, band leaders have set a high standard, notwithstanding the difficulties of keeping the same team together. In these pages (which may be regarded as a tribute to all the light orchestras who give us pleasure on the air) we learn of something of four band leaders each of whom excels in his own style.*



Any Old Town  
Bakerloo Non-stop



Two-o'clock Jump

# TED SWING HIGH—



It started on V.E. Day, not so very long ago. Ted and his wife, Moira, had written a song which they called "Lovely Week-End." It was a great success in Britain and America and the shillings and dollars came rolling in. Moira wanted a car but Ted wanted a band. They sunk their proceeds and all their capital in the band, crossed their fingers and hoped.

In a matter of months, the band went to the "Top of the List" with a vast following on both sides of the Atlantic. Was it a fluke? Luck? Or was it the result of years of hard work and planning? Ted Heath here gives you the story.

IT was a Brass Band Festival. Liszt's Second Hungarian Rhapsody was drawing to a triumphant conclusion. The Edwardian Hall was cold but the sweat was running down the conductor's face. Suddenly a man appeared at the side of the platform and raised a handkerchief in his right hand. The conductor's face broke into a frightened smile, his baton wagged outrageously, the unfortunate players scrambled out the last notes, the audience looked puzzled and the conductor bolted. "Perhaps it was as well that I did get out quickly," he said afterwards, "but that was how the conductor, my father, was told he had a son—and I was the son."

By the time I was  
seventeen I had  
been in and  
out



Ba't ut  
On Gbela Moor  
Dem Bells  
Ring



Twilight Time

First Jump

Lovely Weekend

Wotcher



Jim going

to love that guy



# HEATH —SWING LOW

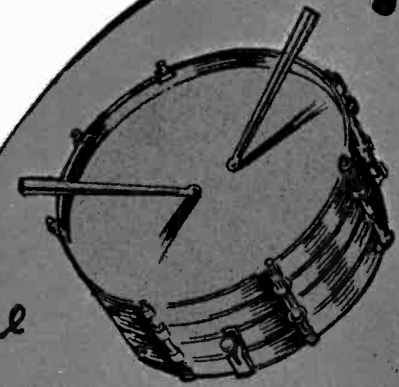
of a dozen jobs but music was my only interest and at last I got work in a pit orchestra. The depression arrived. Orchestras went out: the Wurlitzer came in. Hoping our families would never find out, some old pals and I played for pennies in the streets of London. Then came a break—a job with Jack Hylton, followed, over the years, by work with a coloured band, the Southern Syncopated Orchestra; with Al Starita; with Ambrose; Sidney Lipton; and, finally, Geraldo.

My wife, Moira, and I (we had married in the Ambrose days) wrote "Lovely Week-End." It proved to be a hit and as the money came in we put it carefully on one side. At first Moira thought we might buy a car but as the takings grew we decided to save up for something bigger. On May 7th, 1945, V.J. Day, I launched out with my own band. It was a big jump and I felt that the only way to win through with it was to give the public something new in this country.

Glenn Miller had made a great impression on me with his music in the film "Orchestra Wives." The dignified production, the faultless playing and the impressive arrangements took me to see the film five times. I decided that my band should have an eight piece brass section, five reeds, and piano, bass, guitar and drums. Special orchestrations only would be the rule and every musician would be a top liner. For effect and variety the band would have three sections, each one capable of operating by itself.

We played regularly at the Hammersmith Palais and I feel that I owe a debt of gratitude to the enthusiasts who, from the first show, packed round the stand and gave the band their wholehearted support. The reception of our Sunday "Swing Sessions" at the London Palladium was no less responsive.

We went into films in the first British musical "London Town"; made several tours of the Continent, and my belief was strengthened that a British band can compete on level terms with all comers.



Opus One

Winter Sunshine

First Rhapsody

# GEORGE

# MUSIC BY



*The compelling rhythm of a counterpoint melody. The sweep of strings that leaves you breathless. The fascination of a superb musical arrangement played as it was dreamed of in the mind of the conductor. That is MUSIC BY MELACHRINO. This story tells, for the first time, something of the man behind the music.*

THE story of George Melachrino's success is not a fairy story. It is a story of hard work and perseverance and a scientific knowledge of his art. George belonged to music from his childhood days when he learned to play a miniature violin and write musical notes on manuscript paper. He wrote his first composition when he was five and by the time he was old enough to go to the Trinity College of Music he was already an accomplished musician. At sixteen he wrote a string sextette which was performed in London and he made up his mind that to understand an orchestra he must learn and master its instruments. He carried out his resolve with the result that he can play every type of instrument except harp and 'cello.

In 1927 he began his broadcasting career at the old Savoy Hill studios of the B.B.C. In the dance band world his mastery of instruments made him invaluable to West End band leaders. His voice, too, became an important asset, and as his work took him further and further away from the classics he loved, his hopes of establishing himself in straight music grew dim.

At London's Cafe de Paris, George Melachrino ran his own band until the Battle of Britain when he joined up and became a military policeman. Later he toured with the "Stars In Battledress," and then, as musical director of the

Dusk

Schellita

Autumn

Begin the Beguine  
Indian Summer  
Summer



# MELACHRINO

## MELACHRINO

Army Radio Unit, was able to call together the fifty-piece *Orchestra in Khaki* recruited from professional musicians serving in the ranks. The Army gave George his head and during the years that followed he handled every type of music, from the ambitious *Orchestra in Khaki*, to pit bands, and from religious music to the famous British Band of the Allied Expeditionary Forces. Perhaps you will remember Ronnie Waldman's war time presentations of the "British Band of the A.E.F. conducted by Regimental-Sergeant-Major George Melachrino." Lieutenant Douglas Marshall, the Canadian Army commentator usually styled him breezily as "the Sentimental Sergeant-Major," to the delight of the forty-seven sergeants, corporals, lance-corporals and privates in the band. The combination more than held its own against the Canadian and American Bands. Bing Crosby applauded it.

Subsequently Richard Tauber fell in love with the band and broadcast with it in a long series, as did Ann Ziegler and Webster Booth. When the Army days were over it was this same band that provided the backbone of the Melachrino Orchestra as it is to-day. Now the accent is on strings and it is in string orchestration that George excels.

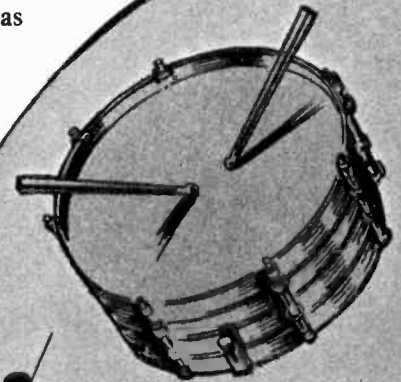
George, himself, on the conductor's stand, has a quiet but supremely confident style. He knows what he wants from each and every instrument. One false tone from a back bench will be corrected with charm and understanding. Every musician in the orchestra has the greatest respect and affection for George. For readers interested in the composition of the full orchestra, it consists of thirty strings, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, four trumpets, three trombones, two percussion, a harp and piano, making a total of fifty-one in all.

Although Eric Robinson has his own straight orchestra as well as a television orchestra, his name is inseparable from that of the Melachrino Orchestra and its origin in the British Band of the A.E.F.

Before the war, Eric Robinson, brother of Stanford, was playing in the B.B.C. Television Orchestra under the late Hyam Greenbaum. In the Army he formed the famous "Blue Rockets" at Donnington, and subsequently joined the Army Radio Unit where, with George, he represented the other half of the music team.



*Memories of the Ballet II  
Liebestraume*



Open the Door Richard the Old Lamplighter

Jazz

Blues in the Night



Symphonic

# GERALDO

## MELODY



*In a plain statement of fact Geraldo reminds us that Britain has musical talent second to none. It remains now to give our musicians the incentive to produce their very best by broadening the scope and raising the prestige of their work.*

**P**ROGRESS—that, in a word is, the objective of Geraldo, indisputable authority on British popular music. His observations on the sound of things to come are illuminating.

During an on-the-spot survey of American music he confirmed his belief in the developing appreciation of tone colour. He underlines the growing popularity of the orchestration for strings and the new interest in such instruments as the oboe, horn, flute and bassoon, as applied to modern dance music. The development is, perhaps, more apparent on the other side of the Atlantic, but American entertainment continued to advance during the war years when progress at home was almost at a standstill.

“Nevertheless,” says Geraldo, “although we can profit by America’s experience, we shall not further our own professional interests or attain higher musical standards by sheer imitation. The American product is admirable, of course, but there is always the danger of it being accepted here as a criterion—an American article for British consumption.

“I agree that this is not altogether objectionable, but is it necessary?”

“I say ‘no,’ for in the sphere of ‘popular’ music





Whispering Grass We'll gather Lilacs



# LDO

## IN RHYTHM

Moonlight

Cocktail

Paper

Doll

our true progress lies in furthering our own British traditions. We can and do attain the same heights of musical technique as in America, but we can put on an even better orchestral production *in our own style* and for our *own tastes*."

Geraldo—Gerald Bright to give him his full name, was playing the piano in his London home when he was too small to reach the pedals. A natural talent paved the way for a brilliant record at the Royal Academy of Music: then, as was so often the way in the grim 20's, came frustration. Young Gerry's first job was dictated by necessity. He became a cinema pianist. The next step was to the organ console and then, in 1924, he formed his own orchestra at St. Anne's-on-Sea where he stayed five years. It was during the latter part of this period that he made his debut in broadcasting, and was soon on the air for three sessions a week.

At the height of his success he decided to visit South America. Here he studied the native music and crystallised his plan to bring the authentic South American rhythms home to Britain.

Back in London he gathered together his original Gaucho Tango Orchestra and was installed in London's Savoy Hotel; and here it was that he became known as "Geraldo."

In 1933 the Tango Orchestra was called upon to play in a Royal Command Performance. Gerry remained at the Savoy for ten years and the Tango Orchestra was slowly supplanted by the new Dance Orchestra. In its present 17-piece form, with twin brother Sidney Bright at the piano, it is familiar to listeners throughout the world. Equally famous are the Concert Orchestras which are augmented up to seventy players. It is these orchestras, performing heavily scored modern works in what may be called the "rhythmic idiom" that represent a most progressive feature in modern popular music.

"Much depends upon you listeners," says Geraldo, "for your interest, criticism and encouragement; it is you who call the tune. So please remember next time you hear us through your loudspeaker—we are playing for you."



You're Dancing on my Heart *Gazz-me blues*

# VICTOR IT'S DANC

*The most readily identified music on the air. That is Victor Silvester and his Ballroom Orchestra. Not only his music but his voice is familiar to listeners in all parts of the world. This article tells something of the voice behind the music.*



**W**EEK BY WEEK, in the course of more than two hundred evening broadcasts Victor Silvester's "B.B.C. Dancing Club" has delighted dancers and "wall flowers" alike. The orchestra, specialising in non-vocal, strict tempo dance music has been well at the top of the B.B.C.'s Listener Research lists and in the radio

polls conducted by three newspapers, the *Daily Express*, the *News Chronicle* and the *Sunday Pictorial*, it has been voted the most popular dance band in the country.

The band has become an "institution" in British radio. But it is not radio alone that keeps Silvester in the public eye. He is chairman of the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, the largest dancing association in the world. Dancing schools find that his music meets their requirements exactly but, most important of all, his melodic interpretations with their clearly defined rhythm have made their mark with the fireside listener.

Victor Silvester's success was not heralded by fanfares or expensive publicity. It has grown steadily since 1934, when the orchestra was formed.

Son of a clergyman, the late vicar of Wembley, young Victor ran away from school when he was just over fourteen. That was during the First World

*My Heart is still in Vienna* *Babbett*

*People will say we're in love*



*Un peu d'amour*

*Say it isn't so*

# SILVESTER ING TIME!



*Night of Rhapsody*

*Spurs of Gaucher*

War. He joined the London Scottish Regiment and before his seventeenth birthday he had been wounded in action and awarded the Italian Bronze Medal for Valour. After the Armistice he studied at the Trinity and London Colleges of Music.

At twenty-two he won the World's Dancing Championship and his books on ballroom dancing have been best-sellers.

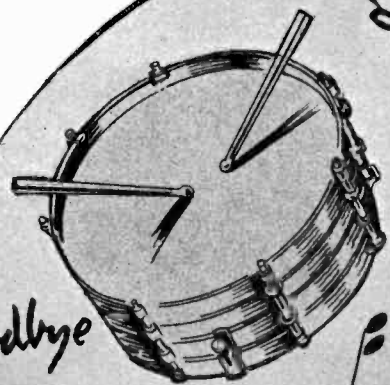
In the early 1930's Victor was surprised by the difficulty in obtaining gramophone records for dancing. Strict tempo dance music without the distraction of crooners was unheard of as a speciality.

"I took the idea of a ballroom orchestra along to one of the big gramophone companies, only to be politely shown the door," he relates. "But I was so sure in my mind that the idea would sell that I kept on trying. A year passed. I went to another company and was told that at that time, it took six months to sell 2,000 'name' records which only just about covered the cost of production. I was far from being a 'name!' I saw my hopes disappearing but I promised them that if they gave me a chance they would see their money back on my recordings within a week.

"They gave me that chance and I was engaged to make two double-sided records. Within a few days they had sold 7,000 and 9,000 copies respectively and before long the sales had gone up to 18,000."

Victor Silvester was already a top-liner when he made his first broadcast, and this was not until 1937. Like the gramophone companies, the B.B.C. was a little chary about the innovation, but listener reaction settled any doubts they may have had. A number of series followed in rapid succession—"The Dansant," the "B.B.C. Ballroom," and "Music For Dancing."

It was the Silvester style that moulded the "Music While You Work" series and the band became a top contributor to these programmes. The B.B.C. acknowledged in official terms that "the light rhythmical dance music with a clear melodic line, such as that played by Victor Silvester, had the most beneficial effect on the output of the workers"



*Rehids in September Don't Say Goodbye*

Stormy Weather Red Sails in the Sunset Blue moon



# MUSIC IN



The Skyrockets Dance Orchestra

My Heart Sood Still



Frank Sinatra



Charmian Innes



Sweet and Lovely at the Balalaika

Night and Day The Last time I saw Paris



# MANY STYLES

In an Eighteenth Century Drawing Room  
The man I love



Sid Millward and his Nit-Wits



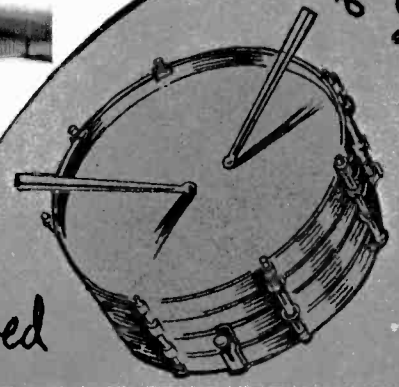
Jack Parnell



Gene Autry



Kay Cavendish



my ago and far away Dear My Beloved

# A Concerto? Certainly, Sir, Straight away

## PETER PHILLIPS

*Writing music at high speed and to order is something most people find hard to understand. But it is no use waiting for inspiration if you have to deliver a song or set a lyric to music a few hours before rehearsal. PETER PHILLIPS (composer of "Which Way Does the Wind Blow," etc.) here tells us about the broadcasting composers who can fulfil any commission at a few hours notice.*

**O**NE—TWO—THREE numbers in a day! It sounds incredible, but believe me, it is a commonplace behind the scenes of broadcasting. The demands of radio are such, that composers, orchestrators and copyists have to be ready to work on something new at a moment's notice.

I have known composers who, given a lyric to set or an orchestral arrangement to make for the following morning, find that, by the time they get home the whole idea is complete in their mind's eye. All they have to do is to put it down in manuscript, which is, of course, the tedious side of the job.

How do they get their ideas and how do they put them into practice?

So far as the first part of the question goes the professional composer and arranger obviously chose their profession because they have a creative faculty. To succeed, they must also have a flair for the original association of ideas. By this I mean that almost certainly a good lyric will at once suggest a fresh and interesting musical interpretation. If that same composition is to be orchestrated, then the overall idea should create a picture in instrumental colour which the expert arranger can produce in a miraculously short space of time.



Alan Paul, one of the B.B.C.'s most able composers, recalls one week, when he composed and orchestrated no less than six songs, a violin solo and incidental music for "Farewell to the Pegasus," a play by Gale Pedrick; arranged six numbers for his weekly programme, "Three's Company," in which Helen Claire and George Melachrino took part, and finally, arranged and orchestrated five "Old Timers" for the Sunday programme "Scrapbook." All this in addition to his normal routine work and a recital to Latin America of his own compositions! It took him five whole days and two complete nights.

For the first B.B.C. wartime revue in Bristol he and Max Kester wrote the opening song, "For Amusement Only" in a few hours.

*Alan Paul—  
six songs a week.*

The quiet, unassuming genius behind the Orchestrations Department of

"The Fingers of Private Spiegel."

Music by Alan Paul



the B.B.C., Wally Wallond, remembers best the early days of the Cartoon Film broadcasts, when he would go along to the cinema, accompanied by the producer and his secretary, and mentally photograph the scores of such cartoon films as "Three Little Pigs," "The Grasshopper and the Ant" and "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" so that the broadcast score could be as authentic as possible.

Perhaps the biggest feat of Wallond's department happened when fourteen members worked from Monday to Friday without break on the score of "Pinocchio" from an abridged piano score obtained from Hollywood.

But "musical velocity" is not just something that has arisen from the needs of broadcasting. The "old boys" could do it, AND DID. Mozart, as a young man, went to the Sistine Chapel in Rome to hear the jealously guarded Allegri's "Miserere," copies of which were not allowed outside the chapel library. After one hearing, he wrote down the entire work from memory, correcting one or two passages when it was repeated on the Good Friday. What wouldn't Wally Wallond do to have him on his staff today?

Again, on the evening before the first performance of his opera "Don Giovanni," which was a rushed job anyhow, he found he hadn't written an overture, so he sat down and did the job that night.

Schubert, of course, composed with the ease that most people write letters. When he wrote his dramatic ballad "Zwerg," he used no notes of any kind, but jotted it down whilst talking to a friend who was waiting to go for a walk with him.

A great deal of light broadcast entertainment depends on topicality. So when next you listen to "Itma," "Merry-go-Round" and the rest, remember that the number you may or may not have enjoyed, was probably written, composed and orchestrated in forty-eight hours at the most.

# How Radio Helps the Police

PERCY HOSKINS

*PERCY HOSKINS is chief crime reporter of the Daily Express and creator of the Scotland Yard radio series "It's Your Money They're After." He is also the author of several books on crime.*



*Percy Hoskins.*

**H**OW do you know your programmes will not educate a new generation of criminals? Can you be sure you are not passing on the ingenious tricks of one criminal to a hundred others less proficient?

These were the questions fired at me when the Scotland Yard radio series "It's Your Money They're After" was first announced by the B.B.C.

I answered my critics with this simple argument. The criminal record statistics prove that for every criminal in this country there are a thousand honest persons. Is it not logical to protect the thousand even at the risk of the one obtaining a few imitators? What is the value of criminal ingenuity if the prospective victims are on their guard?

The criminal's great advantage, up to now, has been the almost total ignorance of the public about his activities. The same state of affairs used to exist in regard to practical crime detection. The public knew something of the analytical powers of Sherlock Holmes, the subtly inspired methods of Ellery Queen, but no one seemed to appreciate the working of the 999 alarm system or the detective service it immediately placed at their disposal, until we took the microphone into the Information Room at Scotland Yard. The following night telephone calls from the public increased by sixty per cent.

Nine out of ten persons once thought that the blue telephone boxes in the streets were for official use only, until these radio programmes taught them otherwise.

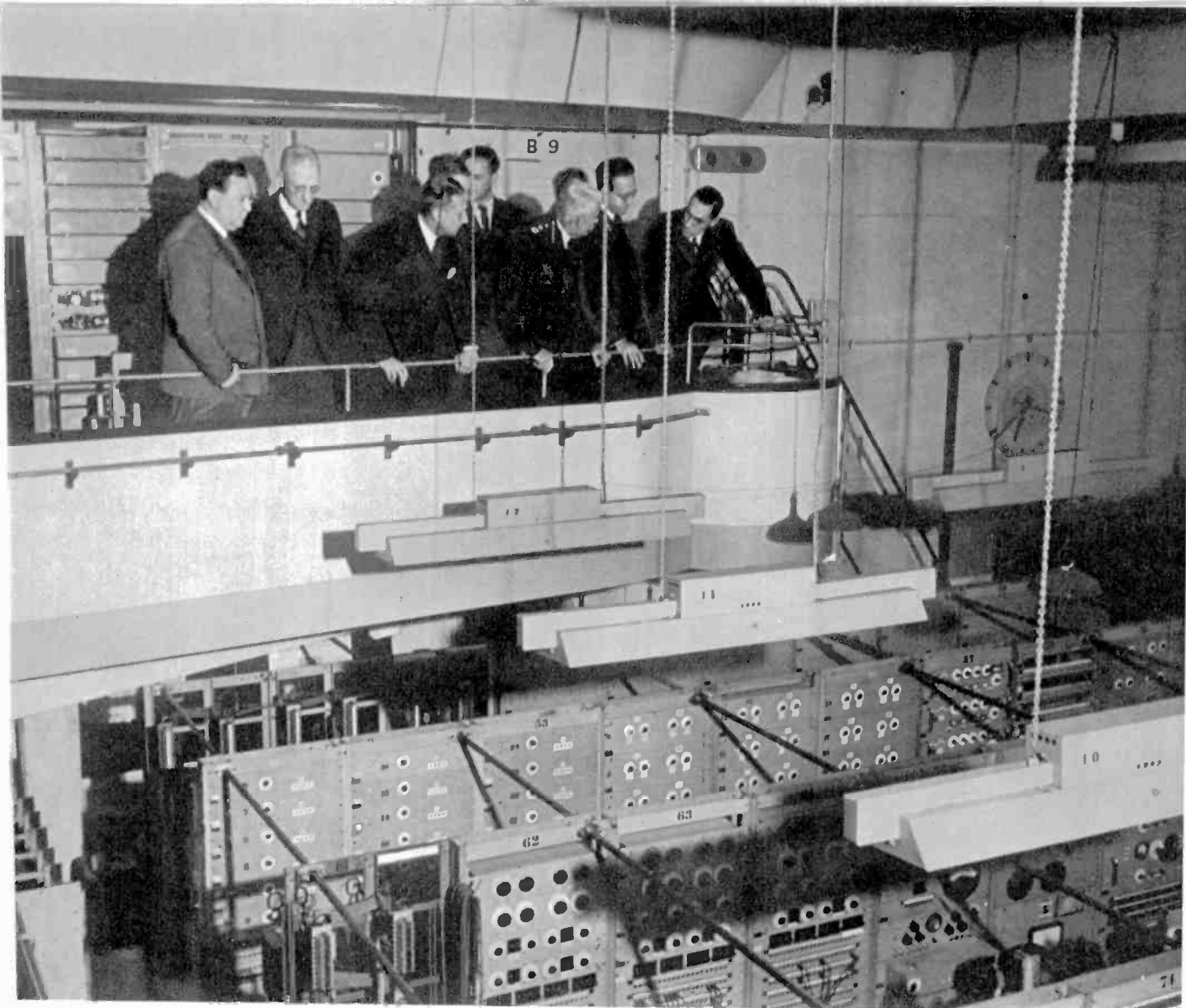
Yes, "It's Your Money They're After" achieved its primary object within a couple of weeks. It sent a huge new force—the public—into action against crime.

Before the first series of broadcasts were over, I had received hundreds of letters from listeners. Some from those already victimised by the tricks we exposed, but many others, I am glad to say, from the unwary who had been about to fall.

*High officials from Scotland Yard, including Sir Harold Scott, Commissioner (third from left), watch from the control room a production of "It's Your Money They're After."*







Scotland Yard were the first to appreciate the new weapon which had come to their aid and it is at the personal request of the Commissioner, Sir Harold Scott, that the programmes are occasionally revised and repeated as the criminal finds new tricks to play on an unsuspecting public.

“It’s Your Money They’re After” has now gone out on B.B.C. services to all parts of the Empire—letters still reach me from India and New Zealand—and co-author Robert Barr has adapted the scripts for television.

The question now arises—how much further insight should we give the listening public into the problems of crime and crime detection? Or should the subject be played down as one not quite suitable for the family circle?

“Why not just leave it to Scotland Yard and the police? They’ll conquer it all in time” is the plea of those who shrink from discussing all forms of moral laxity.

What they do not realise is that detection alone cannot win the battle. The roots of crime are in the depths of the social system itself. To attack it fundamentally, the police would have to perform an operation upon the body politic, and that, they rightly argue, is a little beyond their scope.

I remember once having to address a leading women’s organisation which had called for the suppression of crime news. My main theme was that we were an adult community entitled to know what was going on about us, and that there was no hope for salvation unless, knowing, we then rose up on our hind legs and did something about it.

And I would like to repeat these few additional points I made because they apply to-day equally as much to broadcasting services as to newspapers.

Crime and criminals cannot flourish long in the full light of publicity.

Crime news is an important deterrent to crime because, either directly or inferentially, it carries the warning that crime does not pay. If there is any foundation in psychology for our assumption that repetition is effective, surely the news of arrests, convictions, and sentences, must make some impression on the minds of the criminally inclined.

Crime news aids in the apprehension of those who have committed offences. It permits the wide dissemination of personal descriptions. It exposes the fugitive criminal to an army of volunteer intelligence sources.

Crime news provides a penalty for many offenders, more feared than the penalties of the law. Those who would laugh off fines or even short imprisonment, if they could pay the one or serve the other in obscurity, fear the penalties of public reproach. A short experience in dealing with those who try to keep their names out of crime news, would persuade any critic of the powerful influence of this deterrent upon many people.

The confirmed criminal, the hardened law breaker, may be indifferent to this penalty, but thousands of persons, who might otherwise proceed from minor to major crime, are influenced by it and avoid the repetition of offences that had led to painful publicity.

It may not be necessary for broadcasting services to allocate so much space as the newspapers to the recording of actual crime. *But of this fact I am certain :*

If every time a criminal tried a new trick we made it the subject of an “It’s Your Money They’re After” programme and took it straight away to the microphone, the crime figures would come tumbling down.

And quite a few of you would be much richer.

# Here is the News

BRUCE BELFRAGE

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**D**URING my four years in the Navy, after leaving the B.B.C., my job took me into two or three hundred of H.M. ships and shore establishments.

They varied from battleships to midget submarines and from naval barracks to requisitioned ladies' colleges; but the questions I was asked by the people I met there scarcely varied at all. "Did you see the news before you read it?"—"How did you pronounce the Russian names?"—and about a dozen others, all of which underlined the curiosity of listeners to the B.B.C.'s war time News Bulletins.

These Bulletins had, of course, a listening public which never has and probably never will be equalled in the history of British radio. Loud speakers in hotels, restaurants, ships, camps, and private houses at home were switched on five or six times every day, regardless of bombs or rockets. British troops and civilians overseas never missed the news from home if they could possibly help it.

Anxious people in occupied Europe listened regularly, at the risk of their lives, to what they came to know was the plain, unvarnished truth broadcast from the B.B.C. studios in London. Such was the responsibility of the News-readers and our colleagues in the News Room of Broadcasting House—a responsibility which, had one allowed one's mind to dwell on it when the red light went on in the studio as the signal to start, would have rendered me, at any rate, entirely speechless.

I found the best way of avoiding panic was to picture some well-known room and the people sitting in their familiar places, then simply to imagine myself inside their radio set telling them the latest news. Any other way madness lay. The consciousness of a vast expectant audience would have made it impossible to deal, for instance, with a sheet of news thrust unseen in front of me and announcing the fall of Malojaroslavetz!

The pronunciation of these place names was, of course, one of our major problems. We did not attempt accuracy. To have done so would have made many of them incomprehensible to British listeners. We did attempt uniformity—though particularly in the case of Russia this was not always achieved. Joseph McLeod was studying the Russian language and felt strongly on the subject of anglicising it. Alvar Lidell was rather proud of his French—and on one occasion early in 1940, when an important conference had taken place between General Weygand and the then Viceroy of India, he announced that full agreement had been reached between Generals Weygand and "Vavelle"!

I was the amateur of the party, being the only one who had never been an announcer before the war—and consequently I made many bloomers. I remember once at 7 a.m. coming across a place in Roumania spelt Cernauti, which, after profound thought, I pronounced "Soinorty"—only to be informed by Alan Howland, who relieved me later, that this town should be described as "Chernaootz." In spite of such lapses, however, we did, I think, achieve our purpose of making the place names intelligible to the listener who read the communique in the papers and followed the position on their maps.

It is, of course, quite impossible to be logical or satisfy everybody on this question. After all, if you are not going to call Calais "Callaze" why should you call "Paree" Paris?

Talking of official communique brings me to the actual composition of News Bulletins and the News-reader's part in it. The war-time bulletins were not, needless to say, written by the News-readers—though, judging by the letters we sometimes received, many people appeared to be under the impression they were. They were put together, in the same way



Bruce Belfrage.

as a newspaper is, by an editor and staff of "subs," from material collected from a number of sources and checked and double checked before inclusion.

The News-reader on duty usually went up to the News Room about an hour beforehand, to read over whatever was ready, and perhaps to make a few alterations in the wording, in consultation with the editor, so that it would be simpler to read. The official communiques were sacred—and might not be even slightly altered without permission from the highest authorities. Unfortunately, many of the originators of these documents seemed to be incapable of writing English—or at any rate English which could be intelligibly read aloud. I shall never forget, one morning before the 7 a.m. news, coming across the following sentence in a War Office communique: "The Italian battalions were scaling a precipitous escarpment." This, I felt, was a bit steep for so early in the morning, so we got on to the War Office and asked permission of the very senior officer responsible for this masterpiece to change the wording slightly. His reply was "Oh! Do you read these things? We always stick them up on a green baize board—we find it answers better!"

Alvar Lidell.



Another question I was frequently asked about the News-reader's job was—"What did you do when you weren't reading the News?" Not an unnatural query, since it might easily seem from the listening end of radio that the announcer's job consists of a few brief bulletins and many hours of leisure in between.

This brings me to the whole set-up of what was and still is called the Presentation Department of the B.B.C. There are in fact three such departments for the Home, Overseas and European Services. Each of these services have their own announcers and administrative staff. The names of Robert Harris and Derek Prentice for instance, are as well known in Australia and South Africa as the names of Alvar Lidell and Frank Phillips are here. The Director of the Home Service Presentation Department is the well-known commentator John Snagge—and under him work all announcers on the Home and Light programmes. During the war, or at any rate the first three years of it while I was there, the announcers were divided into News-readers and Programme Announcers.

The former were strictly limited in number so that the whole country might become thoroughly familiar with their voices and names. When the Germans entered Holland, Belgium and France they created widespread confusion among the armed forces and civilian popu-



*Top left : Frederick Allen. Top right : Joseph McLeod. Centre : Stuart Hibberd. Bottom : Frank Phillips.*

lation by issuing orders over the air purporting to come from home announcers acting on the instructions of the home government. We were determined that this should not happen in the event of invasion of these islands.

The original five News-readers were Phillips, Lidell, McLeod, Howland and myself—with Frederick Allen as reserve, occasional bulletins being read by John Snagge. Later, Stuart Hibberd, who had been with the Music Department in Bristol, rejoined us; and when it was felt that the danger of invasion was over, Wilfred Pickles, James Urquhart and others swelled the ranks.

The News-readers worked on shifts of 48 hours, and apart from the News, we were responsible for all programmes going out on the two Home wave-lengths. With programmes both in London and the Regions

constantly subject to cancellation and interruption through enemy action, this kept us pretty busy. One of us had also to stand-by in the reserve studio in Maida Vale in case Broadcasting House were hit. This in fact occurred three times; the first occasion involving a delayed action bomb which exploded on the sixth floor while I was reading the 9 o'clock news. The explosion was, of course, broadcast all over the country, but luckily it did not put the control room out of action. I have never been more thankful to finish a bulletin; and I was thankful, too, to find I could still get out of the building and hasten across to the Langham Hotel for a much-needed drink.

Those days of continuous air raid casualties, the retreat in Africa, Russian defeats and then Japanese victories, made the reading of the news a grim business. If we succeeded in dealing with "triumph and disaster, and treating these two impostors just the same" we accomplished our main objective.

We did have our lighter moments. For instance, the occasion when I was using somewhat unparliamentary language about a gramophone record which was apparently making no sound—only to find that I had turned the gramophone off and the microphone on, and that my diatribe was being broadcast all over the country. The letters we received, too, were both cheering and amusing. I would hear from some enthusiast who raved about my voice and delivery, while deploring the fact that "that terrible man, Frank Phillips" should be allowed to read at all; while by the same post, one of Frank's many fans would write to him imploring him to do something to stop "that abominable fellow Belfrage from insulting the listeners with his beastly bellowing"!

There was no tonic however like a piece of really good news to put over, and I shall always be grateful that it fell to my lot to announce the real turning point of the war. I was on duty the night we received that historic communique from Cairo. I stopped both programmes at 11 o'clock and instead of the usual "retirement to previously prepared positions" and "damage and casualties have been reported," I was able to give the great news that "Rommel is in full retreat." That announcement was recorded and heard in the epic film "Desert Victory." A few days later I was in uniform—but the News still haunted me.

I was sent down by the Admiralty to take part in a Brains' Trust at Central Hall, Westminster, in aid of the Royal Naval Benevolent Fund. On arrival I found to my horror that I was representing the Service in place of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser who had thought better of it at the last moment. The Mayor of Westminster introduced the other distinguished Brains' Trusters to the audience, apologised for the absence of the admiral and turning to me said, "However we have here in the admiral's place another very distinguished naval officer."

Somewhat shattered by this, I was completely at a loss when Freddie Grisewood, the Question Master, put the first question, "Is the day of 'Super dreadnought' over?" adding "Sub-Lieut. Belfrage, no doubt you can tell us." Never having seen one at that time, I was not able to be very constructive on the subject! Freddie Grisewood, however, gallantly came to my rescue. "I think," he said, "in all fairness I should make a correction to the Mayor's introduction of this 'distinguished naval officer.' What the Mayor should have said was, 'Here is a naval officer's uniform, and this is Bruce Belfrage sitting in it.'"

# Children and Radio

RUTH ADAM

**C**HILDREN are exacting about radio programmes because they haven't got the secret conviction that it's rather remarkable that there should be any radio at all.

As one of the children who was wished Many Happy Returns by a radio uncle, in the days of Kiddy-winkery, I have. But my son and daughter don't agree with me. They're interested in radio, but they don't think it's remarkable. To them, the human voice either emanates from a person standing near by, or from invisible persons hundreds of miles away. One isn't stranger than the other.

All the same, whether they think it's a miracle of science or not, the radio is probably the strongest single influence on children of today. Magistrates used to grieve constantly over the influence of the films. I've heard teachers blame the inaccuracy and lazy thinking of an entire city school on the cinema habit. Yet films are only available to the average child an hour or two in the week, and require an expedition and the sum of ninepence. The radio—to most—is accessible from before the time the household is stirring until bedtime. In over a third of the schools, it's available too.

Parents can forbid cinema visits, try to keep undesirable books out of their children's hands and desirable books in them. They may even censor the daily papers with a pair of scissors. But, unless they're prepared to hold their children by the hand from morning till night, they can't prevent them having the freedom of the whole world of radio.

*These British youngsters are telling their American cousins about life in the Old Country.*



*One of Uncle Mac's favourite pictures—and no wonder !*

There is a certain cost for these widening horizons. Just as the cinema habit does make for careless visual work, so the radio habit makes for careless listening. In homes where the radio is a continual background noise, children cultivate protective deafness. It's an exasperating habit from both teachers' and parents' point of view. Apart from that, I should say that in this country the minimum harm is combined with the maximum gain. Radio gives the ordinary and the under-privileged child a share in a world previously the property of those with wealthy and intelligent parents.

The red-letter days of an old-fashioned education were the semi-holiday occasions when lessons were turned into entertainment. Most of us look back on a visit to a historic ruin or a museum ; or to a nature ramble, a lantern lecture, or a dramatic production of a set-book, as worth a whole syllabus of lessons put together. The other universal landmark was the visit of some famous figure, or some distinguished expert, probably on prize-giving day. These landmarks are weekly, or bi-weekly, to the radio-conscious school of today. The "Back-Street Junior" and "Little Mudcombe Church School" can hear the voice of people who would once have been heard only at Eton's Speech Day. They can hear musicians once only available to those whose parents and teachers would combine—and pay—to take them to a London concert. The teacher of genius is shared among hundreds, instead of being the property of one school.

The greatest impact of radio on education, in my view, is that it lifts lessons like Literature, History and Geography onto a plane which most of us—if we were fortunate—may have experienced just once in our school career. Most school children experience a sudden vision when a subject "comes alive" for the first time. It may be when it suddenly dawns on you that there was once a race of real people who talked Latin—who lived and died, bought and sold and (apparently) endlessly discussed military tactics in the very words you learn by painful stages. Before that, you vaguely thought of them as a figment of text-book imagination, like the A., B. and C. who filled cisterns which leaked badly or not so badly. Such moments of illumination transform a whole subject. To the school-children who have learned to accept radio, this moment of illumination can be a common experience. They learn to take in a

complete sound-picture of—say the Spanish Armada—or the life of a foreign city. Here again they have an advantage over a generation which was not born to radio. They learn the language of sound-effects, dialogue and narrative, so that

*British children—war-time exiles—speak to their parents from U.S.A.*







they don't have to translate mentally, as they go along, as so many of us still do. It's like horse-riding. You never acquire quite the same ease as those who started as soon as they could walk.

Children's experience of broadcasting isn't, of course, confined to the school broadcasts. Most children hear the news bulletins, since parents listen at mealtimes. I think many children, with their parents, have built up an unconscious habit of checking up the daily paper with the wireless news. On the other hand, my impression is that news-bulletins are one of the main occasions when a child switches off mentally—at least until it comes to the weather forecast.

Because many children have a favourite programme which rightly belongs to the adult part of the radio day—the “Robinson Family” or “Itma”—it's possible to make the mistake of underrating the influence of the “Children's Hour.” I know that some children don't listen to it and that many adults do. That doesn't alter the fact that the “Children's Hour” does succeed in introducing the licence holders of tomorrow to radio entertainment.

Every type of radio programme—music, talks, drama, feature and Quiz—is included there, shortened and simplified. It is a primary course in listening. By the time a child has “grown out” of the “Children's Hour,” he should know exactly what kind of radio suits him best and means most to him.

The slogan “Nation shall speak peace to Nation” has been rather uncomfortably avoided lately. But I have found that the internationalism of radio is very much in the minds of intelligent adolescents of today. You can verify the quality of any sixteen-year-old's education, by throwing out some reference to international friendship. The well-educated child always rises to it. “If only we could get to know them——” and the end of the



*B.B.C. School Broadcast for infants.*



*Music and movement.*

sentence is usually to the effect that the young people of the nations could settle things between them.

We smile—but it's remarkable that we can spare a smile after our own efforts in this field. Radio may yet help towards a solution. Personally, I have always taken the lightest two-way programme between children of different nations with the seriousness it deserves. And incidentally, there is no comparison between producing an international programme for children and a similar one among adults. The difference always impresses me. The children have seized upon each other's halting ideas and responded to them, while the adults are still bewildered over the strangeness of foreigners. Sometimes I hope that the greater ease of the second generation, in this new element of sound, may yet be our salvation.

We haven't really learned to listen yet. We have learned a lot about putting out programmes and not so much about receiving them. Children are being trained as listeners in schools, where silence, study before and after, discrimination and proper attention are the rule. I am afraid quite a lot of that training is daily forgotten when they get back home. I know some school children even do their prep in the teeth of the evening programmes. Both prep and listening ability suffer.

Radio stretches from the precious whispered truth, listened to in cellars, by men who risked their heads in doing so—to the meaningless blare which transforms family conversation into a shouting match. Somewhere between the two, tomorrow's licence holders must draw the food to build their minds.



*Miss Rhoda Power, script writer attached to the School Broadcasting Department.*

# Picture Parade

## A Radio Magazine about Films

PETER ETON

**W**ONDERING how to begin this article, I ponder on the unhappy lot of a one time film-technician-turned-humorous-artist-turned-radio-producer asked to write about such a responsible subject as "Picture Parade" a radio magazine about films.

I say "responsible" because as well as being a form of art, a means of communicating education, propaganda and entertainment, film production is a business, the seventh most important in Britain.

I say "responsible" because audience reactions go deeper than fashions and mannerisms—films have become a part of our lives. A radio programme reflecting these trends must carry a terrifying responsibility. Every week nearly five thousand cinemas show films to 25 million people.

A wave of self-pity sweeps over me as I realise how difficult it is for a cartoonist with as distorted a sense of perspective as mine to see "Picture Parade" in its correct proportion—I am too close to it. Its problems are right on top of me.

Desperately I glance through some cuttings, hoping for inspiration. Here's one—"Poor Old B.B.C." ". . . of all the thankless tasks in modern entertainment that I could have imagined, there must surely on occasion be none like broadcasting a film programme. Peter Eton and his unit, whose umpteenth edition of their film magazine I went along to see broadcast last Wednesday, might surely be forgiven if at times finding themselves experiencing a certain sense of frustration at their work.

"After a considerable amount of hard work in preparation and rehearsals the fortnightly hour to go on the air comes round and they go through their paces knowing that there can be no 'retakes.' They speak, sing, or perform their lines before a microphone and it's all over. There is no audience reaction, no tangible result by which they can satisfy themselves



*Peter Eton (left) rehearsing his cast.*



*Martha Scott and John Mills with producer Adrian Scott and director Edward Dmytryk.*

as to just how good or bad the performance sounded because there is not even a recorded 'repeat' later in the week.

"However, with an eye on the clock, the other on the control room, and remaining faculties employed to ensure successful team work as the seconds are counted off, they do succeed in entertaining a large section of the public with matters filmic."

I don't like the word "filmic" but here is a beginning. I know the listener is only concerned with the noise that comes

out of the hole in his radio, and not with all the headaches on the other side of the microphone, but a little knowledge of the producer's problems may help.

In the first place, everyone agrees that films are primarily made to be seen—then how can radio, using only sound, deal with them adequately? Admittedly pictures are a hundred per cent all talking nowadays, but supposing the screen was out of use at your cinema, would you be prepared to sit and listen to the sound track on its own—I doubt it. Yet that is what "Picture Parade" has to provide—a cinema show without a screen.

Filmgoers can make their choice of pictures and stars they want to see when they decide on an evening away from home. Even the regular film fans are at least in a receptive mood when they go to the pictures, but a radio audience contains thousands of people who, though actively disliking films—and radio too for that matter—are either too lazy or too stubborn to switch off.

How to broadcast about the highly commercial activities of a number of competitive private enterprises without infringing the B.B.C. ban on advertising is a difficult problem.

Every aspect of the film business—the making of a picture, the picture itself and its exhibition to the public, is commercial. The film business people do not regard radio as an individual art form but as a transmitter of other arts—one of them being motion pictures. A radio programme about films is therefore nothing more than a means of "exploitation" in the eyes of the film industry.

I don't blame the industry for wanting as much publicity on the air as it can get—I realise that that seven to ten million audience that listen regularly to "Picture Parade" are potential filmgoers and can make an appreciable difference at the box office, but I do blame it for failing to realise the limitations made by the "no advertising" ban.

"Picture Parade," by the very nature of the subject, does, of course, advertise to a certain extent—but a fair balance is maintained between "art" and "industry", and films and various aspects of film production are given the amount of time that we judge they deserve, when seen in proportion to their importance to the industry as a whole.

In America, of course, it's quite a different story. Commercial radio there is a recognised outlet for film advertising. Film stars have clauses in their contracts binding them to take

part in radio shows for the promotion of their pictures, and interviews plugging their forthcoming pictures are "churned" out for them to broadcast whether they like it or not.

We must not advertise directly but we can give a film the publicity it merits by broadcasting "fair comment" about it, presenting the opinions of critics acknowledged by the industry or by broadcasting excerpts from the film itself.

Here again we encounter another snag. Listeners are being deprived of far too much intelligent entertainment because the stars will not realise that the personal publicity they get from a broadcast appearance makes up for the comparatively small salaries that we can offer. They are among the highest-paid wage earners in Britain, whereas the pound a year licence fee has to be split up among thousands of programme and administration costs, and obviously doesn't go very far towards encouraging highly salaried film people to broadcast. But these difficulties can be overcome and indeed even act as a spur to the production of a fortnightly "Picture Parade."

We are told that 25 million people go to the cinema every week. Can they be whittled down into the "average" representative beloved of statisticians—the average picture-goer? No, there is no such person.

But film-goers can be divided into two main groups—film fans, and picture-goers.

Film fans are those who go to the pictures regularly and follow their favourite stars. As long as they can see pictures with their stars in them, they are happy—they are not worried by any other qualities the picture may contain.

Picture-goers are a smaller group than film fans. They are the serious-minded people who realise that the cinema bears a great responsibility and has a tremendous influence on our lives. They criticise the industry and its products in that light, and approach their entertainment perhaps more thoughtfully than film fans.

It is for these two distinct groups that "Picture Parade" is compiled. Now, how do they want their items served up to them? As a picture-goer myself, I would give the following advice, "Don't play down to us. Treat us as adults. Remember we have a sense of humour, and appreciate the common touch. Have showmanship by all means in the presentation of the programme, make it as lavish as possible, and keep away from items which are obviously educational. The first duty of the cinema is to entertain."

And having taken my own advice, I plan a number of short items designed so that the regular listener will eventually get a complete picture of the film industry and its products. In an hour's programme there

*Roy Rich with microphone, wants to know all about a new picture.*





*Roy Rich persuades Googie Withers to give a "Picture Parade" interview.*



*A Rich interlude with Tom Walls.*



should not be less than four or more than seven items. None of them should last less than three, or more than fifteen minutes.

Let's take a programme and analyse it.

### PICTURE PARADE

A fortnightly film programme on all aspects of picture production and film going.

1. Title Music : The opening music of "London Town."
2. General Release : An illustrated review of a film on show this week in the provinces, "13 Rue Madeleine."
3. Break for Drearitone. Roy Plomley reviews Drearitone's best film of the year.
4. Background music to the fore. Introducing composers and their film music with outstanding scenes from films in which their music has played a part. William Alwyn's music for "Odd Man Out."
5. The Star System. A short discussion between documentary director Harry Watt and feature director Maurice Strey.
6. Round the Studios. Roy Rich visits the G.B. animation studios to talk to the director, some of his operators and apprentices.
7. Scene from "Way to the Stars" with John Mills, Douglass Montgomery, Rosamund John, etc., etc.

The first item, "Title Music" is glamorous yet leisurely and gives listeners a chance to settle down and try to picture something of the atmosphere of the cinema. Then comes a brisk quick-moving item for both film fans and picture-goers—something for the whole audience all over Britain—balanced criticism and information surrounding a dramatic scene from a popular picture.

In direct contrast to this follows an item for a minority audience, Satire. Wardour Street,

*The producer explains that film and radio technique are not quite the same.*

the business side of film making, gets very upset because "Picture Parade" regularly pokes fun at it. Wardour Street is happy to be given more publicity than money can buy, but it resents the B.B.C.'s right to allow Roy Plomley, one of our wittiest radio writers and a devoted movie fan, to have a go at the expense of the humorous community who make pictures.

A musical item is next—this gives those who have been concentrating a chance to relax. Then a short vigorous argument on some aspect of the industry—in this case, The Star System) which, in order to keep it lively, is presented as a boxing contest.

An item for the fans follows. Roy Rich takes them on a tour round the studios with a roving microphone, giving them news and gossip about studio life.

The programme ends with another contrast—scenes from a film with the stars themselves taking part, with all the drama, sentiment, humour and sophistication of the finished product.

In this way the two sides of the audience can be catered for—separately and together. They hear about the technicians who make the pictures, the pictures themselves and what the critics think of them. They hear stars and technicians in carefully balanced discussions and they hear them again behind the scenes, unrehearsed. They hear the industry as viewed by those outside and they hear the drama, sentiment and humour in the films themselves—the whole framed and presented with music.

Unfortunately, we cannot broadcast as much as we would like about films of the past, because apart from personal appearances of pioneers in the industry, it is not easy to broadcast sound-tracks, the quality of recorded sound deteriorates very rapidly with age and the timing of the dialogue on many early films is visual rather than aural.

Up-to-date sound-tracks can be used, of course, so that within an hour it is possible to hear anyone in the industry from Bob Hope in Hollywood to a cinema operator in Bootle. From film directors to cinema doormen. From the music of Danny Kaye's latest success to a discussion on the architecture of the latest Odeon.

It is not easy getting all the various film people together on the day of the broadcast, neither is it easy to explain to them when they do come, that although they can talk for hours on their subject at home and not begin to exhaust themselves—two and a quarter minutes is all the listener is likely to want to stand. But it can be done—once a fortnight in "Picture Parade."

I glance at that film magazine lying in front of me—the reporter who said ". . . they do succeed in entertaining a large section of the public with matters filmic" may be right—I am not sure—but we are doing our best.



*In the control room Peter Eton shows his visitors from the film studios how it is done.*

# Men of Many Voices

## HILARY PRYDE

**I**F the coming of broadcasting saw the sudden birth and extraordinary growth of a new science, the first broadcast play brought into being, with equally dramatic suddenness, a new art.

Radio-drama, unlike other broadcast material, is unique in that it can exist only in terms of the microphone. It differs markedly from other forms of broadcasting because a man talking or a band playing in a studio sound to the listener like a man talking or a band playing—their message is uncomplicated and direct, they demand from the listener no response except the mechanically aural.

But a play, whether specially written for, or merely adapted to, the microphone, can present a whole world of new stimuli to the heart, the intellect and the imagination. The limitations are obvious—no make-up or costume, no gesture, no scenery, none of the useful aids of showmanship and stage-management, none of the exciting atmosphere of a theatre. In their place, merely a loudspeaker and a more or less comfortable chair in familiar and therefore unexciting surroundings.

Perhaps less obvious are the advantages, though these certainly exist. Unlike a stage production, a broadcast play is independent of time and space, and can rove the continents and the centuries unfettered except by the necessity to make the changes apparent



*Norman Shelley*

*Richard Goolden*



*George Crow*



and understandable. And unlike a cinema performance, the use of several microphones simultaneously can build up a composite sound picture, of different things happening in different places at the same moment, which can be used to summon up an endless variety of emotions.

What has the producer of a radio play chiefly to rely upon in order to transform a typewritten script into a finished performance? Firstly, what are broadly called "effects," and which range from the imaginative use of music to the noise made by the opening and shutting of a door, and secondly, what is of far greater importance—the correct choice, the careful training and rehearsal of the actors and actresses taking part.

There are no stalls or gallery in radio-drama; the actors are no further from their audience than the distance of their youths from the microphone (about fifteen inches, on the average) *plus* the distance of the listener's loudspeaker from his ear, a matter of a mere few feet.

The result of this is immediate and at first startling. A completely new technique of acting is required: to be a theatrical star of dazzling magnitude by no means ensures a convincing or even intelligible performance at the microphone. So with the years a new constellation of actors and actresses has grown up, never seen by their unseen audience, but none the less well-known and well-loved for that.

The outstanding quality demanded from these interpreters of a new art is versatility, and here again they differ from their prototypes of the stage and screen.

*Sam Costa*



*Jon Pertwee*

*Joan Young*



An actress or a film star (partly because they can be seen as well as heard), are often called upon to play an endless succession of roles, all merely slight variations of one particular type. But broadcasting does away with all that once and for all, and experienced radio actors must be prepared to interpret a bewildering variety of parts.

The successful broadcaster must be ready to take part in anything from a Greek tragedy in the Third Programme to a fairy story in a broadcast for school-children under nine. Of radio actors more than of anybody else in the world can it be said that "each man in his time plays many parts."

Radio-dramatists, too, taking advantage of the almost unlimited freedom of the medium, tax the ingenuity of the most experienced cast. How should a cricket-ball speak; what does a star sound like; what sort of noise does a leprechaun make?

Gladys Young has been justly described as radio's leading lady. This fine actress has appeared since the middle twenties in literally thousands of different roles. She may be rehearsing for, say, Hamlet's mother in the morning; make a recording as an Edwardian grande dame after lunch; play Queen Elizabeth in Children's Hour later in the afternoon; and finish her day by giving an evening performance as the termagant wife of a hen-pecked inhabitant of modern suburbia.

A radio-actor may have to cut the most unlikely Thespian capers in order to achieve a particular effect. Norman Shelley, an actor of immense experience at the microphone, once took part in a play the scene of which was set hundreds of fathoms down on the bed of the ocean. The problem here was to get just the right impression of mysterious sonority, and in the result a "live" audience, had there been any, would have witnessed the strange spectacle of an apparently eccentric actor prancing about the studio claspng a script tightly to his chest, a small microphone strapped round his stomach, and a tin waste-paper basket borrowed from a nearby office clamped firmly over his head. It may have looked ridiculous, but it sounded most impressive.

Such seasoned top-liners as Carleton Hobbs, Mary O'Farrell, Laidman Browne, Barbara Couper and all the other familiar, though ever-changing, voices known and loved by millions have all at one time or another found themselves in equally fantastic situations. These studio tricks perform in radio-drama precisely the same function as stage lighting or *montage* in films, and are, of course, equally legitimate. But in the long run, as has already been suggested, it is not the "effects" that count, but the carefully studied and patiently polished technique of these men and women of many voices that make or mar the play.



*Top right : John Sharp.*

*Middle : Neal Arden.*

*Bottom right : Kim Peacock.*

# Building a Radio Character

HUGH MORTON



*Few men are better fitted to discuss the task of creating a character on the air than the man who introduced "Itma's" Sam Fairfechan and portrays that popular clergyman-detective, Simon Cherry—"the Rev."*

**L**OYALTY is one of the outstanding qualities of the British audience. Once the music hall fan has taken a character to his heart, that character will take a tremendous lot of shifting. And I am glad to say that goes for the listener, too.

The old favourites of the halls understood the recipe so well. It didn't matter how often the customer heard Harry Tate in "Motoring"—the famous act never got stale. Will Fyffe may, if he likes, assume new characters from time to time, but it's his Railway Guard or his Engineer that gets the warmest welcome. The man-in-the-street and his wife come to feel an affection for the characters they know, and generally speaking they can't get enough of them.

Surprisingly enough, the rule has been confirmed by radio rather than the reverse. I say surprisingly, because whereas in the days before broadcasting we heard our favourite characters only on the halls (at long intervals, perhaps) and on the gramophone record, radio presents them week after week, sometimes almost day by day, and the danger of a character outstaying his welcome becomes very real.

Some radio characters have succeeded by design—the majority, by accident. Some time before the war, Richard Goolden was asked at short notice to play in a radio sketch one of those prim, clerkly, but very likeable roles, the kind of thing that he can portray better than anyone else I know. No special significance was attached to this sketch: it was quite a short one. Goolden's name was not even billed in the "*Radio Times*."

Yet the public reaction was firm and immediate. Reporters were telephoning Dickie Goolden all next day asking "Are you Mr. Penny?", for that was the name of the character concerned. The B.B.C. commissioned more sketches of the same kind, with the result that "The Adventures of Mr. Penny" became a broadcasting best-seller almost overnight, and in due course, a book, a play and a film followed.

The listening public waited eagerly for news of "Mr. Penny" and his "Annie." Here is an example of a completely fictional character. Other artists have contrived to identify

their famous characters with themselves—such artists as the late John Henry, our old friend and philosopher, Sid Walker (“What would you do chums?”) and the inimitable Robb Wilton.

That delightful couple, Claude Hulbert and Enid Trevor also prefer to be themselves. It is quite unnecessary for them to build two special characters: Claude and Enid they are in their amusing domestic sketches, and Claude and Enid they devastatingly remain.

Richard Goolden, of course, brought to life several successors to “Mr. Penny.” He was the Mr. Meek of “Meek’s Antiques”; and his Ebenezer (“sitting round my old fire bucket”) made him countless friends during the war. Miss Jeanne de Casalis, a serious dramatic actress in her own right, has given the world those priceless comic interludes of “Mrs. Feather.”

That apparently inexhaustible programme, “Monday Night at Eight” has cradled any amount of famous radio characters—the acid and (almost) infallible Dr. Morell, for instance, and more recently “The Young Sullivans” and the ex-pugilist, Gus Millett in “The Old ‘One-Two’.”

“Itma” with which I have been very happily associated for so long, has brought into being a non-stop succession of characters—including Colonel Chinstrap, Miss Hotchkiss and Chief Bigga-Banga, and those characters which I introduced myself, among them, Sam Fairfechan and that inveterate Spoonerist, the gentleman of “Would you care for a sninch of puff?” and “Bood-gye” fame. “Merry-Go-Round” contributes its own quaint gallery with Commander High-Price, Flying-Officer Kyte and Lord Waterlog.

It was a long time before radio began to develop its own detectives. For years we had to be content with “adaptations” of stories and novels in which the great sleuths of fiction figured. But in the last few years we have come to know intimately several detective characters whose adventures have been related specially in terms of radio. The name of Paul Temple has become as familiar as those of Holmes, Lupin or Thorndike. I have heard listeners of four and eighty-four talking about “Dick Barton, special agent.”

In this field, the character for which I feel most affection (and with which I have been most closely concerned) is that popular figure of the Thames dockside, “the Rev”—otherwise the Reverend Simon Cherry, D.S.O.

With his gift for nosing out trouble and helping lame dogs over every kind of stile, “the Rev” (who started with thirty episodes in “Here’s Wishing You Well Again” and was later promoted to a “spot” of his own on Tuesday evenings) soon had an immense following.

Here was a specially interesting example of radio character building. To begin with, our hero was a clergyman—possibly the first clerical sleuth since Father Brown—and to build a sympathetic yet convincing character was quite a tricky business. Cherry is the best and most up-to-date type of sporting parson, an ex-Eighth Army padre who can hold his own in a bare-fisted scrap when necessary. Yet his character has to be drawn in such a way as to appeal to thrill-loving listeners, at the same time avoiding offence.

This result, I am happy to think, was achieved with considerable success. “The Rev”

is very much a man's man—yet whatever scrapes he and Charlie Banks, his former batman, get into, we never forget the background of his mission work in one of the toughest quarters of the City.

After talking it over with the producer (Audrey Cameron) and the author, it was decided that I should play Cherry "straight"—that is without any hint of caricature. True, he is a confirmed snuff taker—but then, so am I. He has one or two other tricks (endearing or irritating, whichever way you feel about them) such as his habit of crying "By Hector!" or whistling a snatch of "Funiculi-Funicula" when hot on the trail.

Eut otherwise, I like to think our "Rev" is a sane, normal kind of chap who through the medium of radio has become a very real person indeed to a huge audience.



*Roy Plomley as Charlie Banks. Hugh Morton as "The Rev." Audrey Cameron producer. Gale Pedrick author.*

# The Third Programme

LIONEL GAMLIN

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WHEN I was asked to attempt a review of the Third Programme from the point of view of the man-in-the-street, I was reminded of Sydney Smith's reply to a similar invitation : " I never read a book before reviewing it. It prejudices a man so."

Perhaps, I thought, I ought to close my ears to the Third Programme and write my review to the subdued accompaniment of the Home Service and Light Programme alternately? The man-in-the-street, I gather from my conversations with him on the bus, in the barber's chair or propping up the bar, does most of his radio listening by accident. Programme succeeds to programme on his ever-throbbing loudspeaker, but only now and again do his social activities permit him to listen attentively to the broadcast in progress.

To write without prejudice, therefore, about the Third Programme from the man-in-the-street's point of view, it might be as well, I said to myself, first to switch on that interminable background, and secondly to resist all temptation to wallow in the romantic reverie of Science Survey at the expense of the strenuous business of appreciating a " Stand-Easy."

There was, of course—and it still remains—another snag to be overcome before I could begin the review which the editor had asked me to undertake. It is a snag which will have occurred to the reader at once. How can a professional broadcaster possibly comment on a radio programme from the angle of the man-in-the-street? Was it possible for someone who had a fair knowledge of " how the wheels go round " in broadcasting to put himself in the average listener's fireside chair? At first, I admit, it seemed a bit tricky. Suddenly I remembered Shylock's *cri-de-cœur* : " If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? . . . "

That settled it. Hath not a broadcaster ears? I decided to forget Sydney Smith's epigram and go to work.

At random, and without even the assistance of the " *Radio Times* " I began to sample the offerings from the B.B.C. connoisseur's corner, not sipping daintily, but indulging in solid—sometimes extremely solid—gulps. With the telephone disconnected, and the doors barred to loquacious friends; with the lights out and only the crackling of a log fire to compete with the sporadic spitfire of the transmission, I listened to the Third Programme from scratch. I listened, moreover, not once, but on many different occasions.

Before I go into details, let me tabulate my impressions briefly. The chief impressions which the programme registered were these :

a. high quality. b. intelligent presentation. c. curiosity-value.

Do I claim that these impressions are shared by the average listener, by that man-in-the-street in whose behalf I have undertaken this review? Provided that he has not been scared away from this experiment by the old cry of " highbrow "—yes, I do. One would have

thought that by now this twentieth-century business of labels—so easy to stick on and so damnably difficult to scrape off—would have ceased to hypnotise otherwise sensible folk! “Fascist”—“red”—“proprietary brand”—“highbrow”—“lowbrow.” Surely we know their worth by now? In world politics and the black market this generation has had bitter personal experience of the value of a label. In art, however, the labels still seem to bemuse the great majority. At times indeed they bemuse the minority. How otherwise can one account for the inclusion in the B.B.C. Light Programme of such a sombre, if brilliant, piece of reporting as the account of the atom bomb’s effect on Hiroshima?

Provided then that the average listener is not scared away from the Third Programme by the meaningless label “highbrow,” I am prepared to swear that his impressions of it will coincide roughly with the headings listed above. Now let’s consider those impressions in detail.

Granted that the Third is a different type of programme from the Light or the Home Service, and therefore can’t be compared with them, there yet exists a point of comparison which strikes the ordinary listener at once. This is the fact that for the first time in his experience he is being offered quality by the B.B.C. rather than quantity. Literally drenched each day with torrents of talking, singing and music (even though he makes the act of conscious attention only now and again) the ordinary listener now finds a programme to hand which is on the air for a limited time, and which is presented with moderation and taste. Here is a draught, not a downpour, and it will be surprising if the ordinary radio-sodden listener doesn’t find it refreshing.

In the old days, before the storms of world-war beat about this country, the man-in-the-village-street used to talk about “The Quality” up at the big house. These village ancestors of ours were not educated men and women in the twentieth-century sense of the term, but they knew good quality when they saw it, whether it was in the craftsmanship which was the Englishman’s heritage or in a man’s good breeding. Quality, of course, has nothing to do with snobbery, either personal or intellectual. To any sensible man quality is immediately recognisable, and the consistent quality of the Third Programme is, I am certain, the first thing that strikes the newcomer.

At this point it may be objected that the man-in-the-street has neither the time nor the opportunity in the prefabricated-home days to listen to any radio programme which lasts longer than half-an-hour. The length and elasticity of some of the Third’s

*Mr. George Barnes, head of the Third Programme.*



contributions have already become a hoary music-hall gag, although compared to the length and inelasticity of so many radio comedians' gags, the Third's most monumental programme is surely the merest "Itma" bang-of-the-door?

The answer to this superficial objection is to be found, I believe, in present-day habits of radio listening, or to be precise, habits of *not* listening. By this I mean that in the twenty-fourth year of British broadcasting regular listeners are more impressed by quality than quantity. No doubt every single one of the B.B.C.'s programmes in the Home Service or the Light Programme has its devoted knot of "fans"—numbered in millions, perhaps, but a small knot compared to the grand total of listeners throughout these islands. On the other hand, it is surely fair to say that to-day the man-in-the-street is moithered by the sheer quantity of broadcasting which pours out of the loudspeaker into the living room at No. 19 Jubilee Buildings. With such a daily welter of radio flooding the room—the set has probably been switched on since early morning—it is extremely doubtful, to say the least, if the ordinary listener listens attentively to more than one or two broadcasts, apart from the ritual of the news bulletin.

With quantity at a discount then, quality becomes an attraction in itself. It would be interesting to know, as one day the B.B.C. Research Department may be able to tell us, just how many recruits the Third Programme has won from the ranks of the man-in-the-street since the preliminary trumpet ceased to attract the merely curious.

Quality, it may be argued on the other hand, is surely to be expected from a radio programme which is professedly "different," a programme designed for connoisseurs and specialists? That is perfectly true, but as I pursued my listening at random, I was struck by something else—by the consistency with which the high quality of the Third Programme broadcasts is maintained throughout the week. One first-rate programme sandwiched amongst a host of mediocre tit-bits is an experience to which most listeners have become accustomed with the passing of the years; the excitement of being reasonably certain *before* one switches on that nine programmes out of ten will be first-class of their kind—that's something quite new, something which should keep us going at all events until television is installed in every home.

The fact that as a non-specialist I personally am not particularly interested in every subject included in the Third's schedule is neither here nor there. What matters more is the fact that up to the time of writing I have heard no broadcast or part of a broadcast in the Third Programme that didn't bear the imprint of quality. Either I have listened with attention and interest or I have switched off. There have been no half-measures, no leaving the programme burbling on as I began to potter about the house doing odd jobs. Unlike quantity, quality in broadcasting demands, and deserves, the respect which was accorded to "The Quality" of a bygone age.

As I indicated earlier, the second thing that strikes me favourably about the new venture is the straightforward presentation of the programmes. Quite apart from the evident care taken to adapt each subject to the limitations of the microphone, there is a freedom from the worst traditions of B.B.C. announcing that is altogether refreshing. At long last the ordinary listener is being treated as an intelligent adult!

*This is indeed a welcome change from the old order of couching announcements in the tone and language usually reserved for mentally deficient children.*



It is a change, too, to hear eminent broadcasters introduced without the unnecessary assumption of that depressing grave-side manner. This retreat from pomposity is a timely draught of humanity for which the man-in-the-street, I am certain, is duly grateful.

Finally there remains what I have called the "curiosity-value" of the Third. In the Home Service and the Light Programme the listener is on familiar ground. On the whole there are very few broadcasts in these two programmes which are outside the ken of the man-in-the-street. The urge to explore, however, is with us from the cradle to the grave; it may be dimmed as time goes by, but it never dies out completely. "Breathes there a man with soul so dead," to misquote Sir Walter Scott, "who never to himself hath said: 'This is a new and wond'rous land'?"

It is in this matter of curiosity that the Third Programme seems to me to score a bull's eye. Confucius once said: "I will not be grieved that other men do not know me, I will be grieved that I do not know other men." This saying of the great Chinese philosopher seems to me to sum up admirably the opportunities now offered to the ordinary listener by the B.B.C.'s specialist programme. Without any suggestion that the Third Programme is a kind of broadcast night school, here at last, surely, is a chance for those of us in the twentieth-century who in the poet's words "have no time to stand and stare," to indulge in private exploration into unknown and exciting lands, under the command of first-class guides.

Archæology, the arts, science, politics—in all these fields beyond the narrow bounds of our industrialised life the man-in-the-street is now free to browse at the turn of a switch, if he feels the urge to do so. "Ah!" exclaims the cynic, "but how often *does* he feel that urge?" More often, I think, than is generally admitted. There is an old saying that religion is caught, not taught. So it is with ideas, and so it is, in my view with broadcasting, which after all is a scientific means of communicating those ideas. Even if the man-in-the-street only switches on the Third Programme out of mere curiosity, the odds are that he will hear some broadcast which will transmute his curiosity into a genuine interest in a hitherto unknown subject. The onus of maintaining that interest is upon the B.B.C., and so far at all events the sponsors of the Third Programme have shown themselves happily equal to the task.

What effect the Third will have on the two elder programmes remains to be seen. Maybe we shall begin to see a change for the better in the matter of straightforward presentation and greater elasticity of programme planning. Apart from that however, it is unlikely that either of the two senior services will be affected to any marked degree. Specialisation is clearly not their cup of tea—the sparkling wine or the genial flagon, yes, but the exotic dish of tea—no. Let that be reserved for those who prefer tasting to swallowing. Our Third Programme palates are not yet jaded.

It's tempting, I know, to imagine Ted Kavanagh deserting the island of Tomtopia in order to re-write Homer's *Odyssey* with Tommy Handley in the part of Odysseus, or to anticipate twelve lectures on archæology from Mr. Gillie Potter, each lasting an hour and a quarter. It is engaging to think of the Light Programme embarking upon its own series of *The Critic of the Air* in which well-heard radio comedians have to explain their jokes to a hard-boiled critic once a week. Or is that just a bit too obstetrical?

All this, I fear, is fantasy. What exists is the fact of the Third Programme. On behalf of the ordinary listener I take leave to say: for this relief, much thanks.



# Appointment with Fear

VALENTINE DYALL

*Mr. "X," an average listener, has an interview with Valentine Dyall, familiar to millions as "The Man In Black," most famous of all characters in radio thrillers.*

IT was at the request of my wife, Mrs. (Average Listener) "X," that I screwed up my courage to go to the telephone and ring up her favourite radio character, Valentine Dyall, who has brought so many "Appointments With Fear" to our fireside.

He answered the phone himself and I asked, nervously, whether I could go along and see him. As I made my explanation I could hear the sound of tiny, high-pitched voices babbling behind him. They reminded me of one of his "Appointments" and I shuddered; but he agreed charmingly to my visit and suggested that I should go along right away. I kissed my wife goodbye and set out before my courage failed me.

His house is in Chelsea. It appeared to me most attractive from the outside but, as I mounted the steps to the front door, I heard again the strange voices that had carried so clearly over the telephone. I hesitated, but thinking of my wife's scorn were I to turn back, I rang the bell and waited. The voices mounted, there came the sound of heavy footsteps and the door opened.

A tall, broad-shouldered young man stood framed in the bright hallway. He had one little fair-haired boy on his arm and another was peeping out from behind his trousers.

"Is—is Mr. Dyall at home, please?" I asked.

"That's me," he replied cheerfully, "do come in."

I closed the door behind me and he led the way into a pleasant sitting room hung with original paintings. "I'm afraid we're in a bit of a state," he said, "we usually are just before the boys go to bed. This, by the way," indicating the one on his arm, "is Christian, and the other one is Hugo." "I'm four-and-a-half," observed Hugo, "he's only two-and-a-half," poking his brother with a brush.

"Run along now, rats," said Mr. Dyall, "it's time for bed."

"I want a story, Dad," said Hugo.

"Later on, when you are in bed."

"Can we have the Three Bears?"

The "Man In Black" agreed and his two little boys wishing me a hearty good-night, vanished in search of mother.

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Dyall, "they were making so much noise when you were on the telephone I couldn't hear very much of what you were saying. What can I do for you?"

I settled myself in a comfortable armchair and explained that all I really wanted was a chat. I told him that Mrs. "X" and myself were two very ordinary people, that we wouldn't hurt a fly and that practically nothing would induce us to an act of violence, and yet we revelled in "Appointment With Fear," even though it did send us rather shakily to bed. I asked him if he could explain this and, at the same time tell me something about himself. He sat down, pushed over a box of cigarettes and we began to talk:

*Mr. D:* I think that the radio thriller has some sort of psychological reason behind its appeal. We've all of us got a certain amount of aggression in our make-ups.

*Me:* Mrs. "X" certainly has.

*Mr. D:* Quite. And the nicer you are, the more you are subconsciously compensating for your natural aggression. The thriller, I think, provides a harmless outlet for that aggression.

*Me* : I must say I didn't expect you to dispose of that question so quickly. What is your prescription for a good thriller?

*Mr. D* : The answer to that would probably be given much better by John Dickson Carr who has written so many of them himself, or by Martyn C. Webster who has produced all the "Appointments With Fear" for you. But I'll try and give you my ideas. To begin with I'll tell you what I think it should *not* be. A good thriller should *not* be a lot of talk ending in some ghastly conclusion. Plain "horror" is not exciting at all, it's just revolting.

*Me* : Hear, hear, I agree.

*Mr. D* : A good thriller should start on a note of tension from the word "go," and the conclusion, if it is an unpleasant one, should be indicated rather than played. To illustrate what I mean, I don't know whether you remember an "Appointment With Fear" which was about a young couple who got lost in a fog.

*Me* : Yes, didn't they find shelter in a house belonging to a mad scientist?

*Mr. D* : That's the one. The scientist chap locked them in and told them that he was going to perform an intricate operation on the young man's brain at midnight, which would result in certain death. The girl managed to escape and went to the police. But she didn't know the address of the house and she couldn't find it in the fog. The whole thing finished as the clock struck twelve and the listener was left on a note of tension that would have been destroyed if the scene had been played out.

*Me* : I remember the broadcast very well. Very effective it was.

*Mr. D* : Of course, the integrity of a plot is of the first importance and a good plot can prove the exception to what I have just said. As an example you have "A Watcher By The Dead." It's an extremely ingenious plot, with plenty of tension, increasing towards the climax, which is, to say the least of it, macabre. For good measure it has a twist in the pay-off.

*Me* : Before I go, I wonder if you'd tell me a little more about yourself, and perhaps you would say something about the family, too. I've been looking at your paintings, and very nice they are.

*Mr. D* : My wife, Babette, did them. I'm very proud of her. Several have been exhibited.

*Me* : Is she an "Appointment With Fear" fan?

*Mr. D* : Definitely not, I don't think she likes it very much. She hears enough of me without listening to my voice on the radio.

*Me* : You look as if you might be interested in sport.

*Mr. D* : Oh, I enjoy cricket and fishing and most of all, sailing.

*Me* : I like sailing, too, but I usually scare myself stiff before I've got very far.

*Mr. D* : That brings us back to the thriller, doesn't it? It frightens you but you like it.

*Me* : Very true. Have you ever been badly frightened, Mr. Dyall?

*Mr. D* : My goodness, yes. I hated snakes and things like that, and one day my wife held an enormous blind worm up against my head, "Prepare to meet thy doom," she said in an awful voice and I turned around quickly and met the thing head on. Oh, I was frightened. But it cured me of my altogether unreasonable dread of snakes.

At this moment the sitting-room door opened and Mrs. Dyall came in, dark-haired, young and charming. I took my chance. "I wonder if I could ask you, Mrs. Dyall, has your husband any particular failing or weakness, anything . . ." I hesitated but she needed no encouragement to speak on this point. "He has a very serious weakness and I don't suppose for a moment that he's mentioned it to you. Has he told you that he plays the guitar?" Mr. Dyall looked embarrassed but his wife went on relentlessly, "not only does he play it, but he sings with it, too."

"I am only developing my arpeggio, darling," he murmured.

I coughed and picked up my hat and with a word of thanks left Mr. Dyall to his most attractive wife and Christian and Hugo and the story of the Three Bears.

# Outside Broadcasting is a Man's Size Job

DICK RICHARDS

**A** SOLDIER in Italy was sitting listening to the B.B.C. It was VE-Day. And, on the air, the B.B.C. was placidly going about its business, describing the scenes of jubilation round Britain.

Just another B.B.C. Outside Broadcast? Perhaps. But it was also a link with home.

The roving microphone reached St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and the commentator said: "And now, standing next to me on these famous steps, are Mr. S—— and Mr. W——. They are seeing the sights of London and I'd like them to say a few words into the microphone . . ."

Ordinary words, but the listening soldier gulped his vino and shouted—his voice shot with incredulity—"Hey, Mr. S——. That's my Dad. My old man, I tell you!" Casually, almost out of the blue, the O.B. boys had brought one soldier at least, the thrill of his lifetime—the sound of his father's voice, which he had not heard for over three years.

The miracle that is broadcasting offers many such high lights, and the busy hard-working Outside Broadcasting Department provide a lot of them.

Every outside broadcast is carefully planned weeks ahead. Too many unexpected things can happen, too many things can actually go wrong during the broadcast for the department to risk any mishaps which could be attributed to lack of foresight in planning or to any carelessness in covering detail.

S. J. de Lotbiniere, the tall, knowledgeable radio man who is Director of O.B.s, usually presides over the conference at which various events are allotted to specific broadcasters.

It is decided that such-and-such a broadcast shall take place, and De Lotbiniere decides that Mr. So-and-so shall be responsible for it. That fixture is then his job. He must contact the responsible authorities for necessary permission, must arrange who is to do the commentaries and how, must fix with the Lines section of the B.B.C. engineers that mike-lines will be available on the date of the broadcast and for previous rehearsal, and must fix a script if one is needed. No light task.

One of the most consistently successful outside broadcasters is Stewart MacPherson. He's versatile, confident and *never at a loss*. Those last four words are highly important. Presence of mind is a very necessary arrow in the quiver of an outside broadcaster. This was proved, particularly, during the broadcasts that MacPherson and Wynford Vaughan-Thomas did on the maiden trip of the *Queen Elizabeth*. Recordings had been made but at one stage the sea was so rough that it was



Top to bottom: Denis Johnston. Howard Marshall. Wynford Vaughan-Thomas. Richard Dimpleby, on right.



quite impossible for the record to be played. Quandary. There was the time allotted, but it looked as if all arrangements had broken down and that there would be a gaping hole in the programme, which would have to be filled with gramophone records from Broadcasting House.

"But why?" thought Stewart. They decided to take listeners into their confidence and tell them frankly why the scheduled broadcast could not take place. Instead, most promptly they whipped up an excellent, graphic "live" broadcast describing the weather, how it had upset routine on the *Q.E.* and actually introduced over the air a passenger who admitted that his stomach was not feeling at all in tune with such an ordeal!

"Never try to bluff the listener" Stewart told me. "If you tell him frankly about the snags you've encountered he'll be on your side. But if you try to make out that everything in the garden's lovely when it isn't then he'll be resentful and critical."

Stewart MacPherson's "Down Your Way" broadcasts have also provided their problems.

Only once was he nearly at a loss. That was when he called, uninvited, at a house in the hope of getting an interview. Not unnaturally he found the householder somewhat unresponsive at first. Gradually Stewart won the woman's confidence, but he confesses that to do so he had to talk overtime and for once could not keep his anxiety out of his voice!

When it comes to sports broadcasts MacPherson is completely in his element. Hailing from Canada he knows ice-hockey to the nth degree and this knowledge enables him to do high-pressure and dramatic ice-hockey broadcasts.

Boxing is another sport at which MacPherson is aces high. Whenever he is doing a boxing commentary he insists in attending the weigh-in. As Stewart points out, matches are often won and lost on the weighing machine. Suppose a fighter has had difficulty in getting down to the required weight. He may have done so only by intensive dieting and "slimming" exercises. This may provide a clue for a man like MacPherson as to which way the fight may go.

Similarly, the facile ease with which Raymond Glendenning and others of his class can "read" a horse-race is the result of intense practice. Before a horse-race Glendenning takes a pack of cards, each of which is coloured to match the colours of one of the jockeys . . . and numbered correspondingly. For hours Glendenning broods over these cards till he has memorised the coloured cards in relation to the names of the horses. Then Glendenning arranges for a colleague to fling cards swiftly—and at random—across the room. Gradually, unerringly, he can pin a horse's name to its colour and on the day is thus able, without apparent thought, to give the correct names of the horses.

Football offers its headaches. Poor visibility can make a nightmare for the commentator (remember the Moscow *Dynamos* versus Arsenal match played in such a fog that the bewildered radio commentator had to admit several times that he hadn't the slightest idea of what was happening?) and spare a thought for the poor commentator who may have to describe a match with foreign players. There was a Yugoslav team which had players with such names as Szcly and an outside-left with seventeen letters in his name! Try saying those names at high pressure!

During the war the O.B. lads did great work—broadcasts from over enemy territory, the famous "running commentary" on a dog-fight

Stewart MacPherson.  
Frank Gillard.  
John Snagge.  
Raymond Glendenning.

*Harold Warrender, actor and  
radio quiz-master, interviewing  
passers-by in Regent Street,  
London.*



over the white cliffs of Dover, visits to factories, coal-mines, gun-sites, aerodromes—often under hostile attention from raiders—all these kept the O.B. department on its toes.

There are perils in peace time, too. Edward Ward will not readily forget his visit to Bishop's Rock Lighthouse which caused him and his companion to be marooned by gales for weeks. Yet cheerfully they work long hours and set about the most outlandish tasks. A village cricket match? Certainly! Mr. Snagge, will you go down and broadcast in a diver's suit under water? Certainly! The Grand National? Victory Parade? Anything goes.

David Gretton remembers vividly a job he light-heartedly took on with the Army Broadcasting Service in Italy. Joe Louis was touring the C.M.F., giving exhibition matches. It was thought that an O.B. of one of these fights would offer good listener appeal, so all arrangements were made, the lines duly tested, and sports-columnist Peter Wilson led off, giving a first-class commentary.

Just as Wilson signed off, hotfoot from the station some miles away came a messenger. Not a word had gone out to the eager listeners! Obviously the line had been cut. Portly David Gretton scrambled under the ring, through the mud, till, thirty minutes later, nearly a mile away, he found the cut in the line. A bulldozer had nosed its way carefully through the line, a few minutes after the successful test had been okayed!

# COMMERCIAL

## THE CASE **FOR** PRESENTED BY

*Howard Thomas*

**I**N many departments the B.B.C. excels. It is in the one department where the B.B.C. happens to be weakest that commercial radio is strongest—in the field of light entertainment.

No other country in the world has better broadcasting for schools. The standard of B.B.C. drama is splendid. America can turn out an occasional feature programme which will outshine the British best, but for consistent excellence and for regular listening interest B.B.C. features are on top. Musically, the B.B.C. has done a fine job. Apart from its satisfying musical programmes the Corporation can claim to have helped to educate a whole generation to take a deeper interest in good music.

In these respects the B.B.C. has pleased millions, but they are the minority millions. For the majority radio means entertainment. Through the sober war period and now through the drab peace years 15,000,000 have turned to radio night after night in hope of good cheer. Too often they have been disappointed.

The whole war produced only one first-class show on the radio, the magnificent "Itma." Towards the end of the war an Army show, with Cheerful Charlie Chester and his troops, forced its way on to the wavelengths and won an audience, but, these programmes apart, B.B.C. entertainment offers no inducement to stay in at night, nor escape from the gloomy news in the papers.

Over and over again it has been proved the one thing that commercial radio does provide is the brightest kind of entertainment. Look at and listen to America's array of talent—programmes like those of Jack Benny, Red Skelton, Bob Hope, Charlie McCarthy, Bing Crosby, Fred Allen, going on by the hour. The B.B.C. paid significant tribute to American radio last year by relying for many new shows on close imitations of U.S. successes. "Ignorance is Bliss;" "Radio Forfeits" (a direct descendant of "Truth and Consequences," of which I watched the sixth birthday broadcast in Hollywood some time ago); "Merry-Go-Round" Double or Quits quiz (called in America "Take it or Leave it"); and "Breakfast Club" (modelled on an American programme of the same name).

The B.B.C.'s main trouble is an inability to spark out new ideas. The big comedian shows laboriously follow the American formula, even to the dance music interludes with weird and wailing vocal ensembles. By contrast, broadcasting in the United States is forever refreshed with original ideas. New programme notions are always cropping up, on trial. If the public likes them there is a roaring success and a long run. If the ideas are not good they are yanked off. We all have memories of bad programmes series on the B.B.C. which have continued grimly and mercilessly month after month.

Why is American radio so much more virile and entertaining than ours?

The answer, of course, is money. More are being paid higher money to produce bigger and better shows. The competition for listener attention is so great that the big American advertising agencies and programme groups pay out millions of dollars to men with creative ability.

When there is a variety time available on the B.B.C. the programme planners either revive something of a songs-from-the-shows type or bring back a comic who has already given of his best. When an American cigarette manufacturer has a hunk of time he will probably audition half a dozen possible



*Howard Thomas,  
former producer of the Brains Trust.*



# RADIO—YES or NO

## THE CASE AGAINST MOVED BY

*Leslie Ayre*

IT'S a good meaty topic, this question of the for-and-against of commercial broadcasting. And, as with all meaty topics, there are worthwhile arguments to be put forward on both sides.

Though I can see much that is strong in the argument of the other side, my task here is to assume the role of barrister and to present a case for the prosecution against commercial radio. So you will forgive me if I am, for the moment, rather cold and impersonal. You, the jury, may disagree with—or want to qualify—some of the points I make. But let us at any rate have a dispassionate look at the case.

One of the main dangers in this kind of discussion seems to be that of over-simplification. Too often you have the kind of argument that weighs the worst that the B.B.C. has done against the best that commercial radio *might* do, and says: "There you are; it's all so obvious."

The most familiar form of this argument is to take B.B.C. light entertainment, as the most criticised field, and point out how much better and more varied *could* be the commercial equivalent.

The B.B.C. is held up as a dear old unenterprising stick-in-the-mud. It is stressed, with truth, that when a series programme makes a hit, other writers and producers seize upon the pattern with the result that, instead of variety, you often get a boring sameness.

How true all that is. But might not the basic reason lie in the fact that first-class ideas in light entertainment really are hard to find? Commercialisation does not provide the complete answer; there is as much copying of good ideas there as anywhere else. Consider films. You know from experience how a winning idea in one picture is followed by a stream of other films on precisely the same lines. The companies making the pictures are competing as hard as you could wish. They don't have to be sheeplike—but how often they are.

Commercial radio would not necessarily be any different in that respect.

As to the too-sweeping accusation of lack of enterprise on the part of the B.B.C., we are all ready enough to jog them into greater efforts—and we shall go on doing so. Perhaps there never will be enough enterprise to suit us listeners.

But there are certain facts that must be faced. The launching of the Third Programme, brought about as a duty to the listener and not because of fear of competition, was undoubtedly one of the most outstanding developments in world broadcasting. No other country has anything comparable with it.

From Alexandra Palace there goes out the most regular television service in the world, operated by people whose heart and soul are in the job.

The B.B.C. cannot however, be allowed to rest on its Third Programme and other laurels. It must face criticism in all the fields, including that of light entertainment, in which it is active. Can it show any record of enterprise in the provision of that light entertainment?

Take the development of the B.B.C.'s ideas about Sunday programmes as an example.

Though it seems a century ago, it is really not so very many years since the war began. Before that, the only variety programme on a Sunday was the "Scrapbook" series—and a very good series, too. But the B.B.C. was rightly criticised for the almost complete absence of the lighter stuff on a Sunday.



*Leslie Ayre,*  
Radio Correspondent, Evening News.

# FOR

programmes, complete shows built around stars like Eddie Cantor, Humphrey Bogart, Harry James and Betty Grable. Hollywood's best script writers are hired, musicians dig for new ideas in music, and often the programme is tried out on selected audiences before being given a national airing.

In New York, Chicago and Hollywood, hundreds of highly paid young men and women make it their life's work to concoct new ideas for radio, and then to make every show in a series as lively and fresh as a Palladium first night.

In the B.B.C. a £12-a-week producer will have to throw together a show in addition to his two other weekly productions, coax a star to dash away from the theatre and scamper through the hastily written script with the minimum of rehearsal. How significant it is that the veteran "Itma" is the work of three people who give almost their entire time to the broadcast alone, the comedian Tommy Handley, the writer Ted Kavanagh and the producer Francis Worsley. By sheer public demand the B.B.C. has had to make it financially worth while for "Itma" to be the major interest in the lives of Tommy and Ted. Only the producer has not seen his salary soar, because he is on the B.B.C. staff.

In my view, the B.B.C. simply cannot afford to buy the best talent, or to pay for the writers and producers who can create original programmes. Established people in entertainment laugh at B.B.C. salaries. Young men who join the B.B.C. and make their name by good work are snatched up by newspapers, theatrical producers and film companies at double and treble their B.B.C. pay. B.B.C. producers, average about £10 to £15 a week. The minimum a producer of even short films can be paid is £20 a week. The top price in radio is the starting price in other fields: A B.B.C. writer who earns £15 a week looks enviously at current newspaper rates of £10 to £30 for a 800-word article.

The hardest, toughest job at the B.B.C., Director of Variety, with the responsibility of a nightmare quantity of shows per week, earns less than £2,000 a year. At the very least, by present day British commercial entertainment standards the job is worth £5,000. What it means is that successful showmen cannot afford to work for the B.B.C. and promising newcomers quickly find higher-paid activities.

The same thing applies to artistes. How can it pay stars like Bud Flanagan, Sid Field and Tommy Trinder to work for the B.B.C. at £50 a broadcast, when they can earn £600 to £800 a week in the theatre? If they do broadcast, it can only be in time snatched away from their full-time work. They might be willing enough to spend a whole week preparing for and working on a broadcast for about £250 a week, but the B.B.C. cannot spend so much, nor can the Corporation afford the £100 a week needed for adequate writers.

The advertiser can afford to pay. And it pays the advertiser because he attracts a sufficiently large audience to make the total cost unimportant when reckoned on a per-head basis.

*Red Skelton.*



*Fred Allen.*



*Jack Benny.*



# AGAINST

Things have indeed changed since those days. Sunday broadcasting nowadays provides a good range of variety, revue, light music, quizzes, in fact quite a generous dip into the lucky-bag of light entertainment.

You can find many examples of the gradual putting aside of the too-stuffy approach to things. There has been a very real development in sane broadmindedness, in the more adult selection of material, coupled all the time with the exercise of great care in the choosing of what might be called adult listening times.

These changes have not been brought about in sudden sweeps. Sometimes—quite often—we get a bit impatient at the time taken to achieve what appears to be a fairly obvious development. The story of British broadcasting has in fact been one of steady progress. Its forward march has been uninterrupted, even by the war.

True, there may not have been many moments of great excitement, of sudden revolutionary change, but we have missed, too, the chaotic conditions that are sometimes precipitated by those revolutionary changes.

You have only to look back—a year, five years, ten years—to realise how great and how steadily maintained has been the progress. Yes, even in the much criticised field of variety.

“Big names” are, I suppose, the biggest guns in the armoury of the supporters of commercial radio. So forceful is the bombardment that it sometimes seems to be suggested that at the magic word “sponsor” all the theatres and all the film studios would be immediately emptied of their best talent in the wild rush for the microphone.

But, for a start, some of the “big names” are not suited to radio; some others would not choose broadcasting anyhow.

On the other hand, large numbers of those whose styles *are* suited to radio do in fact broadcast to-day. If you spend a few minutes “listening back,” you will hear the voices not only of those who have made broadcasting their main medium but of other big artistes like Jack Buchanan, Leslie Henson, the Hales, Arthur Askey (radio’s gift to the theatre, returned at pleasant intervals) and lots of others.

Ah, it might be said, under a commercial system you would have more ringing of the changes among the stars in the long-running popular series. But does it really happen like that? Just how many years have the Jack Benny and Fred Allen programmes been going out over the commercial waves?

I will admit to you that I got just a bit tired of “Itma.” I no doubt *shall* tire of “Merry-Go-Round.” But I am quite certain that, as a regular listener, I should tire just as soon of the Jack Benny or Fred Allen programmes.

Bob Hope.

Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

Eddie Cantor.



# FOR

It is understating the case for commercial radio to claim that its one and only merit is bright entertainment. The American networks carry a high proportion of cultural programmes. Their symphony concerts, their open forums, their talks are equal to anything we have in Britain. And of course the competitive element does give a crispness, a sparkle and a pace to the whole proceedings which make our radio seem so tame and dull when one returns home.

But the B.B.C. does not have a monopoly of all the faults. There is much wrong with American radio—too much irritating advertising, like the jingles sung by rhythmic trios; too many quiz shows; too many daily serialised novelettes; too many lurid programmes for children. There is plenty of good and bad in both systems, American and British.

The remedy is an obvious one—the best of both worlds. Let us have our B.B.C., exactly as it is, for those who like it—and millions do. But alongside, and in healthy competition let us have one or two commercial networks. Up to now what has been broadcast on your radio has been the choice of a handful of rather serious gentlemen at Broadcasting House. With an alternative source of supply you could have the cream of Britain's show talent working at full pressure to win your approval, and at least you could decide for yourself what you had on your radio.

Entertainment thrives on competition. Imagine a single government cinema, one nationalised theatre, one official newspaper! But you still have to endure civil service broadcasting.

*What do*

## LISTENER'S ACROSTIC

by H. C. G. STEVENS

LIGHTS

UPRIGHTS

Its G.H.Q. (on Tudor)  
phone  
Has got a quite palatial  
tone.  
Hawaiian these (or say  
they are);  
With them are George  
and his guitar.

1. They're in the box, that they may try  
And say what should be taught, and why.
2. A witness uses this to seek  
Around the world for news each week.
3. With music that's contemp'ry, he  
Gets "Tippetised" in "No. 3."
4. Till Sunday you must wait for it,  
And stay up rather late for it.
5. Its voice you hear in lighter mood;  
Its "off'rings" popular and good.
6. A word (it used to be initials, four)  
That tells us Thomas has returned once more.
7. It is this easy—with (to name them) Ken,  
Louise and Arthur, Ramon, Charles and Len.
8. They love to show it, and, "when shouting dies",  
The nitwits give us music in disguise.
9. The introducer, here  
(Producer, Eric Spear).
10. Seven, eight, one, six and nine—  
When for such your minds incline. (Solution on page 192.)

# AGAINST

So you see, it is not all quite so simple and clear-cut as at first appears. Although this kind of discussion so often develops into a wrangle over light entertainment, it is wrong to narrow down the issue in that way and leave it there. Whether you want to or not, you must also consider broadcasting as a whole, with light entertainment as one of its popular components. And a part of the case against commercial broadcasting, an important part, is concerned with the immense power, the almost frightening power, of the spoken word.

Whether or not you think the present system of a Board of Governors of the B.B.C. is the ideal one, it does at any rate provide some kind of protection against the misuse of radio. The governors are appointed for various qualities, not the least of which must be their impartiality. Theirs is a grave responsibility—and they must be kept up to scratch all the time.

And as to the Government case. It was summarised in these words in the White Paper issued in July 1946: "Where only a limited number of suitable wavelengths is available to cover a comparatively small and densely-populated area, an integrated broadcasting system operated by a public corporation is, in their opinion, the only satisfactory means of ensuring that the wavelengths available are used in the best interests of the community, and that, as far as possible, every listener has a properly balanced choice of programmes. Co-ordination and the planned application of resources, rather than their dissipation is, moreover, in the opinion of the Government, likely to lead to the greatest advances in technique and programmes."

*you think?*



... then I shall play a gramophone record which I shall fade out in the middle as I'm too tired to time it ... then there will be an agonising pause before Big Ben strikes eleven ... then another agonising pause while I turn this little knob and clear my throat, then I shall assume a pompous pseudo cheerful voice and say this is the B.B.C. Light programme—Goodnight Everybody!



"GOOD MORNING EVERYBODY. THIS IS THE SEVEN O'CLOCK NEWS READ BY ONE OF THE JUNIOR ANNOUNCERS BECAUSE NOBODY KNOWS WHERE THE HELL FRANK PHILLIPS IS!"

# Milestones of Radio

*Wireless was fifty years old last year.*

THAT is to say, it then celebrated its jubilee as a practical science, for much of the theory on which practice has been founded is many years older.

The fifty years begin with the month in 1896 in which Guglielmo Marconi first demonstrated that a message may bridge distance with only the air to support it, and it's a fitting beginning. But it does not make Marconi the inventor of wireless. As he himself tried to make clear, he was an inventor of wireless apparatus that worked (though, as time has proved, such an achievement alone is sufficient warrant for lasting fame).

Like other great products of human effort, wireless and its uses are the offspring of a number of brilliant minds, active both before and after Marconi's day. The minds of our time are still at it—radar is only one of their children.

The story of the wireless wave actually began ten years before Marconi was born. In 1864, the existence of the waves—electromagnetic disturbances in the air—was proved by a Professor of Experimental Physics at Cambridge University, Clerk Maxwell. His proof was entirely within the field of mathematics: by means of equations only, he showed that the waves exist, that they are governed by the same natural laws as light-rays, and that they travel at the speed of light, 186,000 miles per second.

Marconi was still a boy when another great brain set up the next milestone. Its owner was a German physicist, Heinrich Hertz, and he put Clerk Maxwell's theory to proof by producing a wave in accordance with the paper formula. The wave travelled from its generator to receiver only over the length of a laboratory, but after that the problem was reduced to a matter of degree. The waves existed, could be produced. Now, how could they be used?

Hertz's success inspired the scientists. Something to detect the waves was needed: in 1892, Professor Edouard Branly of France invented a device called a "coherer" that would do it. It could be used as a carrier of a signal: in 1894, Sir Oliver Lodge, the famous British scientist, showed how (an event of immense significance, this, though—as Lodge later admitted—he did not fully recognise it at the time).

At about the same time as Lodge was experimenting, Marconi began his investigations in Italy. His apparatus for transmitting and receiving signals worked; he brought it to England—according to one story, the Customs officers broke the instruments because they thought them dangerous!—and within four months he had captured the interest and support of Sir William Preece, technical chief of the British Post Office and himself a radio experimenter. Marconi applied for his first British patent on June 2, 1896, and wireless was under way.

In the following year, Sir Oliver Lodge set up another milestone by inventing the tuned circuit—the answer to the obvious problem of how to separate one wireless wave from another. They were all very short waves then, by the way. Later, they became much longer, because, said the scientists, "the longer the wave, the longer the range". Later again—much later—they found out that the short waves can carry signals around the world.

Developments, rather than discoveries, marked the next few years. The first Marconi station was set up in the Isle of Wight, and in 1898 it sent the first paid-for message. July of the same year saw wireless brought to the aid of the press, apparatus being installed on the vessel *Flying Huntress* to give the Dublin "*Daily Express*" reports on the Kingstown Regatta. A month later, Queen Victoria, at Osborne, was relying on the new medium to keep her in touch with the progress of the Prince of Wales, who was laid up with an injured knee aboard the Royal yacht in Cowes Bay.

In 1899 the East Goodwin Lightship suffered a mishap at sea and used wireless to report the facts to Trinity House—thus beginning the long, dramatic career of wireless as the life-saving servant of mariners. In March of that year a message from Wimereux, near Boulogne, was received at the South Foreland Lighthouse, and the English Channel was bridged; towards the end of the year, the British War Office sent Marconi apparatus to the South African War.

By February of 1901, the range of communication had been extended to 196 miles; eleven months later, the waves took a signal over the Atlantic. Then the world sat up and took notice of this new, mysterious gadget of the scientists. Only five years old, yet, on Thursday, December 12, it was good enough to bring to Marconi in a room at Signal Hill, St. John's, Newfoundland, a letter 's' tapped out in morse in Poldhu, Cornwall—1,800 miles away!

The same year brought further significant, if less spectacular, evidence of utility when wireless apparatus was installed for the first time aboard a British seagoing vessel, the *Lake Champlain*.

Progress quickened still more between 1902 and 1904, and discovery reinforced development. Wireless at work took the first press message from America to Britain (1902), won official recognition and adoption by the Royal Navy (1903), and became of such importance that the British Parliament passed legislation to control its use (1904).

And in the laboratory occurred two events that swept away known limits and gave great opportunity to imaginative enterprise.

The first event came in 1902, when Oliver Heaviside of Britain and A.E. Kennelly of the U.S.A. showed how wireless waves travelling long distances jump the bulge in the earth's surface—between Britain and America, for example, the earth curves to a maximum height of 200 miles. But Clerk Maxwell and Hertz had shown that the waves must travel in a straight line. Why, then, weren't they absorbed by the bulge?

Independently, but almost simultaneously, Heaviside and Kennelly suggested that in the upper atmosphere were layers that deflected upward-travelling waves back to earth, so that distance was covered in the manner of a bouncing ball. The experts of 1902 found it difficult to accept the theory, but twenty-three years afterwards Sir Edward Appleton not only proved it, but measured the height of the layers and announced the existence of others.

The second event is dated November 16, 1904. On that day British Patent No. 24850 was issued. The patentee was Sir Ambrose Fleming; the patent, an application of his discovery that a heated filament in a vacuum emitted electrons. The two-electrode thermionic valve had been invented.

It was to be the solution of a problem over which the radio scientists had long puzzled. The early transmitters worked on what is known as the "spark" system. Each dot of the morse code set up several separate ripples of waves, but the ripples were not sustained. What the scientists sought was a way of preventing the ripples from dying away by filling the gaps between each set of them. They knew that achievement of such continuous-wave transmissions would open a vista of possibilities, with telephony—radio-speech—as the predominant attraction.

Many attempts were made to find a way of doing it; several of them were successfully applied to the transmission of telegraphy. Telephony, however, continued to be just around the corner, for even if a continuous wave were to be produced, a way had to be found of superimposing upon it the complex waveforms of sound—in engineers' words, a way of "modulating" the carrier wave.

That the valve presented the answer in a glass case was not recognised, at first. The scientists saw it chiefly as another, if refined, means of detecting radio waves. Even when, in 1907, Dr. Lee de Forest of the U.S.A. took the evolution of the valve a vital stage further by adding a third electrode, thus vastly increasing its potential value, years passed before its usefulness as a continuous-wave generator, as an amplifier of signals, and as a means of modulation was accurately interpreted and fully exploited.

Looking back from the radio-furnished living-room of today, one may see a variety of aerial highways behind the telephone, the loudspeaker, the viewing screen. They lead back to the early years of the century—some of them beyond it—and the invention of the valve may be seen not as a milestone, but as the signpost at the point where the highway laid by Marconi diverges into the different paths.

The main road of radio communication led on, of course, marked by measures of progress such as the opening of a public service between Britain and Canada (1908), the establishment of the first radio stations in New Zealand and South Africa (1909), the installation of sets aboard airships for British Army manoeuvres (1912), the appointment of the first committee to evolve a scheme for linking the Empire by wireless (1913), and the passing of the first message from Britain to Australia (1918).

Telephony without wires was one of the pre-Marconi dreams: as long ago as the 1880's distances of up to two or three miles had been covered in the experiments of A. G. Bell, Sir William Preece, T. A. Edison and others. But the electromagnetic waves were uncharted then, and the twentieth century had come before they carried the human voice.

They first carried it over a distance of a mile, and the American, Fessenden, sent it. In 1906 he transmitted music as well as speech, and over twenty-five miles. Does that make him the first broadcaster? It's a strong claim. Fessenden showed, too, how a radio telephony service could be

linked to the land phone system, and in 1907 he brought the range of communication up to a hundred miles. Three years later, the human voice was air-borne for five times the distance.

By that time, the valve was coming into its own, although five years were to pass before there was any spectacular demonstration of its capabilities. That came—it added another milestone—when the American Telephone and Telegraph Company put some hundreds of valves into a transmitter, and, using a wave of 6,000 metres, sent speech and music from Arlington to Paris, so conquering a distance of 3,500 miles.

Music and speech: broadcasting was on the horizon. It was brought nearer when, in 1919, Captain H. G. Round sent good-quality speech on 3,800 metres from Ireland over 2,000 miles to Nova Scotia.

The first broadcasting station in the world was opened at East Pittsburgh, U.S.A., on December 21, 1920, and soon all the civilised world had heard of, if not heard, the Western Electric station KDKA.

In Britain there were experimental transmissions as early as 1920 (Dame Nellie Melba took part in one of them), but the first authorised programmes, filling fifteen minutes a week, came from Writtle in the spring of 1922. The B.B.C. was constituted as a limited company in the October of the same year, and the first B.B.C. programme went out on November 14, 1922.

Before then, however, the experimenters were trying out the short waves again. And they used them for a demonstration of two-way telephony between London and Amsterdam in 1921. In 1927, the B.B.C. began experimental broadcasts on the short waves from a station at Chelmsford; in December, 1932, it opened at Daventry the first regular programme service in the world.

And behind the viewing-screen? The road goes a long way back, and though the thermionic valve made it traffic-worthy, there is a track leading into the middle of the last century: scientists were seeking to send still pictures by wire as long ago as 1860.

One of the earliest milestones in the development of the wireless transmission of a vision signal, however, is positioned in 1908, when a well known British experimenter, A. A. Campbell Swinton, suggested that the cathode-ray tube could be used, a component that today plays a vital part in both transmission and reception.

There were long delays, of course, as a result of the first world war, and 1923 was the next year of public significance, with J. L. Baird in Britain and C. F. Jenkins in America engrossed in the development of disc-scanning systems. Baird demonstrated his in 1925; in the same year, vision signals passed between New York and Washington and between Glasgow and London. On September 30, 1929, the B.B.C. collaborated with Baird in the transmission of low-definition pictures, and on August 22, 1932, took over complete control of the transmissions. In Britain, then, as in France, the U.S.S.R., Germany, and other countries the miles of progress were covered swiftly: May, 1934, brought the appointment of a committee to advise the Postmaster General on the merits of the available systems and to recommend the bases of a public service; on November 2, 1936, after a preliminary canter at the Radio Exhibition of that year, the tapes officially went up at Alexandra Palace to start the first regular vision service in the world.

And behind the domestic telephone, beyond the Post Office and the cable office, are the material of independent histories. A stride in wireless was measured when, in 1917, a report from New York said that the wireless system of the City's police was "a pronounced success." Another was taken when, in 1920, radio connected a 'plane in flight to Paris with a 'phone subscriber in London. A further and internationally important step forward came in August, 1921, with the official opening of the first Imperial-beam station at Leafeld, Oxford—and others in November of the same year, when valve-operated communication between England and Australia was begun, and a still-photograph went by radio across the Atlantic.

There are many, many more; an exchange of signals between a British and a New Zealand amateur in 1924 (the contribution of the radio amateur to radio development cannot yet be fairly estimated); the first international plan for the allocation of wavelengths, agreed at Geneva in 1926 . . .

As I write—as you read—milestones are being shaped, set up. Many of recent years have yet to be uncovered; and though thousands are engraved so that he who runs may read, here one must run too fast for fair comprehension. Most listeners, probably, would support a motion that the outstanding milestone in wireless progress—the monument to fifty years of achievement—was identified by the man who first said: "This is Radio-X calling the world."



# The BBC and Music

STEPHEN WILLIAMS

“ I WONDER, by my troth, what thou and I did till we loved,” wrote John Donne ; and similarly may we wonder, in this age of calmly accepted miracles, what we did before the miracles happened.

“ Mechanical ” music for example. The past quarter of a century has seen such a monumental revolution in England’s musical life that it is almost impossible now to imagine ourselves back in the early nineteen hundreds when there was no broadcasting and even the gramophone was regarded more or less as a frivolous toy for the musically illiterate. Even to those who are old enough to remember them those years are as vague as dreams ; and to the young people of today, who can turn on their music as easily as they turn on the bath taps, they must seem as remote and legendary as the dark ages.

A very simple illustration will serve. Most people have agreed that there is a kind of queer enchantment in music heard accidentally in the night. George Gissing in “ *Henry Ryecroft* ” has a charming chapter describing how in an evening walk he heard a piano through an open window and stopped to listen in the darkness. When the music ended he went on his way, blessing the unknown hands that had given him this unexpected pleasure. Now if we had been walking along a suburban road thirty or forty years ago and the windows had been open we might have heard a great variety of music : here a piano thumping out Grieg’s “ *Wedding Day*,” here a contralto advising the red sun to sink, here a baritone singing of shipmates o’ his or friend o’ his or of the exploits of the baritone’s invaluable friend, Sir Francis Drake.

If we walk down the same road tomorrow evening we shall also hear music. *But it will be the same music* : millions of people all over the country listening to the same thing at the same moment. Indeed it is not outside the bounds of possibility to overhear a whole symphony in a walk of two or three miles. Gone are the days when, if invited out for the evening, you “ took your music ” and were expected to make honest and personal attempts to entertain the company. Nowadays nobody ever asks you if you have brought your music. No one has any music to bring, and only in one suburban house in twenty will you find a piano. No : your music is provided for you by the B.B.C.

Now this, like every other tremendous revolution, carries both its blessings and curses. There are those who condemn the mass-absorption of music altogether. They contend that the pleasure of making music for ourselves is lost for ever ; and that music obtainable as easily as gas or water becomes as cheap as gas or water.

They argue that, instead of a nation of performers, we are becoming a nation of knob-switchers, tap-turners and button-pressers. Where are the artistes of tomorrow, they ask, if today we are all merely listeners ? What incentive has a young fellow to study the piano or singing when he can get all the music he wants without taking any trouble ? And what of our public concerts ? Who would trek out to the Albert Hall through a winter blizzard when he could hear the same programme comfortably by his own fireside ?

Let us examine these objections. Of the first there can be no question : no music is ever as valuable as the music one discovers for oneself, and it is better for the soul to spend an evening in hammering out Chopin, however imperfectly, than in hearing someone else play it, however brilliantly.



*Sidonie Goossens.*



*B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra.*



*Sir Adrian Boult.*

In the matter of cheapness, they are stating only half a truth : music that is not cheap in itself can never become so, in whatever circumstances we hear it. Only inferior music is cheapened by familiarity and it is as well to have such a test so as to establish a standard of values. If we say we have heard a thing till we are sick of it, then we are automatically assessing it at its proper rate.

Nature is still producing artistes ; they may not be on a level with the giants of the past, but this is an age less of giants than of efficient mediocrities. In any case, no amount of easy access to music will discourage the youngster who is determined to make music for himself. If it discourages the half-way type, then, here again it is all to the good : for in the past the market was cluttered up with half-way types and it was the despair of impresarios to find them employment. In a world in which the public has grown accustomed to the best, only the best will survive, and the second and the third best can forsake music and earn an honest living.

The objection that broadcasting would empty the concert halls is an old one and is by now, I hope, thoroughly exploded. It is tantamount to assuming that if you can talk to your friends on the telephone you will never wish to meet them. Certain forms of music lend themselves ideally and almost exclusively to broadcasting ; but an orchestral concert—as proved by packed houses at the “ Proms ” every year—is a thing to be seen as well as heard. There is the irreplaceable zest of being “ on the spot,” of watching the conductor’s thought translate itself into action and the orchestra translate it into music, of sharing with performers and audiences a great emotional and intellectual adventure.

When all the objections have been carefully weighed and examined, however, there remains the undoubted fact that broadcasting has brought about a renaissance of musical culture in England such as has never been known before. The wireless set is now an indispensable item of furniture in ten million homes ; and these ten million people are listening every day—either deliberately or accidentally—to the best music of the best composers interpreted by the best artistes.

Today we hear errand boys whistling Wagner, business men in the trains humming Beethoven. They may not go to concerts, you may not meet them at Covent Garden ; but they are bound to have radio sets in their houses and—especially the business men—if they have paid the piper they will make him play. Even if they only tune in to the nine o’clock news they may carelessly leave the thing on and inadvertently stumble on a masterpiece. And, once again, the B.B.C. not only establishes the best but gives them the perception to recognise the second best. After hearing the greatest artistes in the world by their firesides citizens will demand a higher standard from their local concert halls and opera houses.

# How to Write for Radio

GALE PEDRICK



Gale Pedrick.

AS each of radio's twenty-five years have passed, more and more writers have come to look to it as a source of income and as a field for experiment.

Broadcasting from Britain goes on in some form or other, every hour out of the twenty-four. During that time a non-stop torrent of talks, discussions, variety programmes, sketches, plays and musical programmes continue. It would be almost impossible to calculate the number of words tossed into space in the course of a week. Words that are written, spoken—and paid for.

It is the most natural thing in the world for the enterprising listener with a bent for writing to turn expectantly to this promising field.

The question is—how *does* one write for radio? Is there truly a demand on the part of the B.B.C. for new authors? Or does this vast organisation rely on the output of its own experts? Briefly, the answer to this is that while in certain departments much material is provided by staff or writers under contract, there is—there must be—constant opportunities for men and women with imagination and ideas.

The novice will obviously want to know how it is possible to learn the technique of writing for radio when staff appointments are limited and there exists no "school" for the broadcasting writer. That is a fair question, and the password is to be found in the word "ideas." It stands to reason that with a demand which never relaxes, ideas are the true currency.

Week by week, new shows are originated, new situations exploited. In one department alone, at least 120 shows are sponsored every single week of the year.

Many "best-selling" radio shows originated in suggestions made outside the Corporation. Sometimes, the creators of these ideas have shown a talent for authorship, and have in due course found their way into the ranks of the established script-writers.

There exists in one department—the Variety Department—a script section which is responsible, among other duties, for sifting new ideas. Encouragement is given to writers who show promise; they are shown how the wheels go round, and frequently given an opportunity to "break into" this specialised profession.

After operating for a mere quarter of a century, radio entertainment is still one of the newest of trades, and even though the opportunities afforded by commercial broadcasting do not at present exist, its possibilities are considerable. In the past few years, well-known writers previously discouraged by the belief that the fees were meagre, have taken a closer interest in radio journalism and fiction.

The days when a play was paid for at the rate of a guinea an act have long since vanished. Fees paid to contributors are now on a more just and more attractive scale. One reason for this improvement is that the successful broadcast is not usually confined to a single performance, but may be repeated in the home programmes and in overseas transmissions. Each repetition means a percentage of his original fee for the writer, and it may, therefore, come to pass that the final return is as high, or higher, than can be found in the popular markets for fiction.

Variety, which is the bread-and-butter of radio, flourishes on comedy—comedy which is broad, comedy which is sophisticated, and comedy which is neither. Unfortunately for the inexperienced, humour, of all forms of writing, is the most difficult.

The most popular programmes in this field have been those based on the domestic scene. First-class ideas for domestic humour are rare: and it is useful to remember that "situation" comedy is the

most pressing need. In other words, while a handful of experienced comics can rely for their effects upon broad and well-trying "gags" the public has grown to like programmes which (though they contain the same characters week by week) present a more or less self-contained story. The "Just William" programmes and the type of series in which Naunton Wayne and Basil Radford have appeared are apt illustrations.

You may take it that the man or woman who sees a future in radio need not know *immediately* the actual technique of script-writing. A brief outline of a novel idea or situation may well be sufficient introduction to a fascinating script. A page or two of suggested dialogue may help, but it is not essential. A word of warning—there is no copyright in an idea, and topical ideas have a habit of occurring to a number of people at the same time: so it pays to be first in the field. The use of effects, fading, cutting, the ingenious use of sound, and so on, can be learnt by experience.

It is, generally speaking, a waste of time to make suggestions about a series which is already running successfully. These programmes are prepared well in advance, the authors being engaged for the length of the run.

It is not always possible for an immediate answer to be given as to the suitability of a script. True, the editor of a magazine can make up his mind fairly quickly, but he has a limited number of stories and articles to find and can tell at a glance whether submitted material fills the bill. Broadcasting, on the other hand, has many channels, and those who scrutinise submitted scripts or ideas may try three or four of these channels before it is finally evident that no use can be made of them.

The points made so far apply mainly to the realm of light entertainment, in which music plays a considerable part. Straight plays, thrillers and so forth may best be submitted in full. They are invariably read and considered with care by the Director of Drama and his staff, and may be sent to him at Broadcasting House, W.1, or to any of the Regional headquarters.

There is little or no demand for lyrics without music, and all *serious* music contributions are handled by the Music Department. A reading committee of experts meets from time to time to report on symphonies, concertos, choral work and so on, which has been submitted. Talks and short stories are the concern of the Director of Talks, Broadcasting House, W.1.

Broadcasting for children goes on day by day and there is always a welcome for original ideas in this field. Choice of material is entirely the responsibility of the "Children's Hour" Director and his assistants. Careful consideration is always given to talks, plays and stories. For the younger children these should be about 1,000 words long, and for older children, between 1,500 and 2,000. The best length for plays and dialogue stories is between 30 and 40 minutes, and the wise author will time his work as accurately as possible.

## "FOUR WERE BIDDEN"

by GALE PEDRICK

*Characters :*

Lord Bastople

Maj. Ross

Col. Vaney

Col. Hubbard

Maj. Trehearne

*(The scene is a sitting room in Lord Bastople's town house, overlooking a main Mayfair thoroughfare)*

VANEY : *(Is humming gently "Lilli Marlene.") He is alone until door opens and to him enters Hubbard)*

Hubbard ! Well, I'm damned. I *am* glad to see you.

HUBBARD : Hullo ! Who is it ? I say—it couldn't be Vaney, or could it ?

VANEY : It could and it is.

HUBBARD : It's the gent's natty suiting that took me in. Never seen you in civvies before. And the moustache makes a difference, too. Here, come over in the light. Only got one peeper now, you know.

VANEY : Yes, I remember. We were afraid you might lose it—at the time.

HUBBARD : The other's not too hot. Oh, well, quite the Nelson touch, eh ?

VANEY : Yes. *(Pause)* Looks as if we're going to get a pretty exclusive view of the . . . jolly old Victory Parade.

HUBBARD : Yes—front seats. *(He laughs rather nervously)* I suppose you know whose house this is ?

VANEY : Well—I didn't until I got here. It's old Bastople's.

HUBBARD : I say, Vaney, old boy, this *is* a rum do. Meeting you like this . . . .

VANEY : I take it you were invited here in the same way that I was . . . .

HUBBARD : Expect so. What the deuce do you make of it ?

VANEY : About Hawker, you mean ? I don't know. It's darned queer. I'd half a mind not to come, but the old boy who rang up was so persuasive that somehow I couldn't say no. Must have been Lord Bastople himself . . . .

HUBBARD : Same with me. Did he tell you the same story ?

VANEY : That he was a great friend of Hawker ?

HUBBARD : M'm.

VANEY : And that in Hawker's effects they found a note saying that he wanted you to watch the Victory show from the window of his home in Town, and drink his health . . . .

HUBBARD : That's it exactly. But it's going to be a . . . bit awkward. Hawker's dead. Died during that business you and I and Matt Ross and old Trehearne were mixed up in in Morocco . . . before the landings.

VANEY : He's dead all right. At least, I've a pretty good reason for thinking so. And there's no good being sorry about it, either. (*Pause*) Look here, Micky, you've got to know this sooner or later—and it's what makes it so damned difficult to accept hospitality from any of his pals. I killed Hawker. Shot him one night about eight miles out of Fez. I had to. Remember, we were being trailed just then by those four wogs—only they weren't wogs . . . .

HUBBARD : So *you* found out about him, too ? Yes, it looked as if he were going to let the side down pretty badly. But your story's wrong in one rather important particular, old boy. *You* didn't kill him. *I* did.

VANEY : But that's imposs . . . .

HUBBARD : I tracked him to a stream, cracked his head on a particularly solid bit of rock, and held his head under water . . . for quite a long time. It was an order. I couldn't even tell you—much less Ross and Trehearne . . . .

(*Door opens.*)

ROSS : Come right in, Roy. Lovely view of the procession . . .

TREHEARNE : Unless I'm much mistaken, I don't think we're alone.

ROSS : I should say not—look who's here !

TREHEARNE : We might have guessed.

ROSS : Those two eminent members of the Intelligence Service—Messrs. Vaney and Hubbard.

VANEY : So they couldn't keep you two out of it, either. Well—friend Hawker wanted it to be quite a party.

ROSS : I ran into old Trehearne here on the doorstep. I suppose you characters had the same invitation that we had ?

HUBBARD : Looks like it.

TREHEARNE : I got cold feet after I'd rung the bell. Nearly went back to the Club. As a matter of fact—I'm not in quite such a festive mood as Matt. You all know Hawker's dead, don't you.

THE REST : (*Murmurs of assent*)

TREHEARNE : Well, it was under orders—and after all, we were in the same boat together, so I can tell you now. I had to—eliminate Hawker.

ROSS : You *what* ?

VANEY : Oh, look here, this is overdoing it altogether.

TREHEARNE : You remember that night we all stowed away in a hospital train, full of typhus cases, with some small-pox for good measure ? I gave you all an injection—had a devil of a job picking you out among all those hundreds of Arab types. It was more for the psychological effect than for any good it might do. Well, the stuff I gave Hawker wasn't anti-anything except anti-breathing. I gave him enough to kill a herd of cattle . . . .

ROSS : An interesting story, told with great dramatic effect, old son. But quite incorrect.

VANEY : For Heaven's sake, Ross—don't tell us *you* bumped him off, too.

ROSS : I most certainly did. And a very neat job it was.

HUBBARD : I suppose *you* put something in his hot milk last thing ?

ROSS : No. I used—a knife, as a matter of fact. And just to make sure I dropped him on the railway track. —

VANEY : This is ridiculous. You can't kill the same man four times over . . . .

BASTOPLE : (*Enters*) Gentlemen. Good evening to you. Colonel Vancy, I believe. Colonel Hubbard. Major Ross. Major Trehearne.

THE REST : (*Murmurs of " Good evening, Sir "*)

BASTOPLE : I hope you will forgive me for leaving you alone, but I thought you would like a few moments in which to renew your acquaintance. I am very honoured to welcome you to the home of one who was for some time your comrade . . . and, I believe, your leader. (*He breaks off tantalisingly.*) This is one of the very few private houses now remaining in this part of London. I can assure you an excellent view of to-day's great events. It was er . . . Major . . . ah . . . Hawker's wish, you know.

VANEY : Yes. I know, sir. But . . . I feel . . . we feel . . . that there is something we should explain . . . .

BASTOPLE : In a moment, if you will allow me. Gentlemen, a great number of famous victories have been celebrated in this house. The victor of Waterloo was cheered from the very balcony outside this room. You may say that this has been a grandstand from which the Bastoples have seen history made. It was because he knew that one day yet another victory would be honoured here, and yet another great pageant of victory would pass beneath these windows that . . . the man with whom you fought in strange places, and with strange weapons, asked me to arrange this meeting.

VANEY : Sir . . . you must not go on . . . my friends and I have . . . an explanation we must . . . .

BASTOPLE : On the contrary, it is I who have an explanation to offer. Your comrade—Hawker—was my son.  
(*They sigh*)  
I know, gentlemen, that the four of you and my son were on a mission of great peril before the Allied landings in North Africa. He was selected for an even more hazardous duty, a duty which involved constant meetings with the enemy. There were four enemy agents who knew the country and whose business it was to destroy your work—and you. One day Colonel Vancy, it was found necessary for your leader to . . . disappear.

VANEY : I . . . see . . . .

BASTOPLE : To vanish so completely that not even you, his closest associates, would know. So that even under torture you could not reveal—the truth. Do you follow me, gentlemen?

ROSS : Good Lord !

BASTOPLE : My son devised a scheme. Each of you received instructions you could not ignore : you were told that he was about to betray you, and would have to be . . . liquidated. Am I right?

TREHEARNE : Great Scott ! Of course . . . .

BASTOPLE : You were, of course, all disguised . . . .

HUBBARD : Yes, we never even saw each other in European clothes.

BASTOPLE : Your orders were that at the time you were to perform your . . . disagreeable, but necessary task, the man in question would be wearing something of a distinctive nature . . . a red head-dress, a blue cloak, perhaps . . . .

VANEY : Why, yes. In my case, anyhow.

TREHEARNE : And in mine.

BASTOPLE : What happened was that my son had also sent each of your four enemies to an appointed place. So, gentlemen, you need have no fear that your . . . victims . . . were innocent men. They themselves were pledged to kill *you*. I fear that my son found himself under the disagreeable necessity of deceiving you. Before meeting you again, it was his wish that I should acquaint you with the circumstances, and offer you his apologies . . . .

VANEY : Before meeting him ! Then——

ROSS : But where is he ? You mean *here* ?

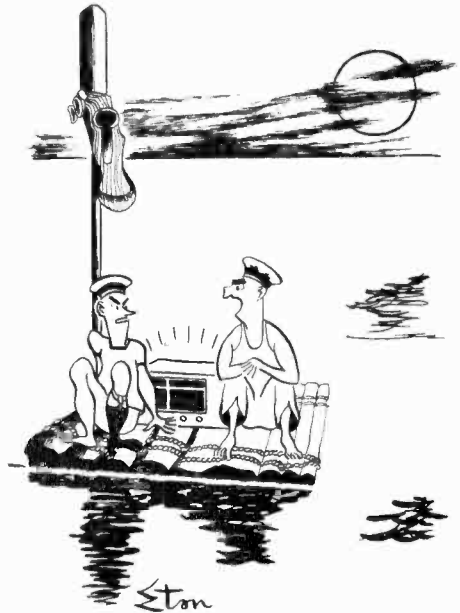
BASTOPLE : On the balcony, with a glass of this rather rare sherry, which I have preserved for such an occasion. Before we join your friend, gentlemen, I give you a toast which has been honoured many times in this room. Victory ! And this time . . . may it last !  
(*Fade up victory crowd noises*)

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# Peter Eton off Duty



"CARE TO LISTEN TO 'THE KITCHEN FRONT'?"



"THIS IS A FINE TIME TO PLAY 'MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK'!"



"...NOW STAND BY FOR TONIGHT'S WAR REPORT!"



"I WILL RE READ THAT LAST PARAGRAPH - TWENTY-FOUR, NOT TWENTY-THREE, ENEMY PLANES WERE SHOT DOWN TO-DAY"

# Power in the Air

F. J. LYONS

Writes on Radio as an Instrument of Propaganda.



F. J. Lyons.

*Mr. Lyons, who is 36, is a Public Relations expert and author. During the war became a Squadron Leader in R.A.F. Intelligence, serving in 15 countries—in Africa, Asia and Europe. His latest book, For Want of a Borgia, is a satirical novel with a Middle East background.*

**B**Y the time you read these words the number of wireless licences in the United Kingdom will have reached at least 10,750,000. In more significant terms 35 out of our 45 million people listen regularly to B.B.C. programmes.

When, in the last century, education became compulsory, Alfred Harmsworth recognised that in its wake would come a demand for popular reading matter. By founding the "Daily Mail" he became the pioneer of the modern newspaper. He was the first man in this country to visualise the possibility of newspapers and magazines being read by the masses.

As Lord Northcliffe, he built an empire of popular newspapers and magazines, and people began to speculate as to the future of mass-circulation journals. For good or for evil—by what they said or omitted to say—the men who controlled them would exercise tremendous influence over the opinions and demands of the people.

Northcliffe's first objective in the circulation race was a million. How far things have progressed since then. To-day circulations of two and three million are an accepted feature of Fleet Street, and one daily newspaper is said to be aiming at five million. Assuming three or four readers per copy, circulations of to-day are astronomical.

But tremendous though Press circulations are, they cannot compare with that of wireless. It is estimated that in this country as many as 25,000,000 people have listened to the King's broadcast on Christmas Day; and 150,000,000 people throughout the world. When radio was in its infancy, many people believed that it would put newspapers and magazines out of business. News of an event can be broadcast within a few seconds of its happening—in some cases, like the Derby, while it is taking place. Clearly newspapers cannot compete with broadcasting in this respect.

For this reason many newspaper pundits of the 'twenties concluded that their industry was doomed. This heartrending spectacle of stony-faced editors and reporters grinding barrel-organs so that their wives and children might eat did not, however, come to pass. For although newspapers cannot compete with the B.B.C. in speed when it comes to announcing the result of the Boat Race or the Grand National, in general broadcasting has helped newspapers. It has whetted the appetites of readers. For a broadcast bulletin of fifteen minutes' duration can but give us the salient points of the news. For amplification and background we turn to our newspaper.

Clearly this is a state of affairs unlikely to change fundamentally. A full-size newspaper contains 80,000 words or so (the length of an average novel). Few of us read it from cover to cover; we select what especially interests us. To broadcast the same number of words would take eight hours—and I have yet to meet anyone willing to sit through a news-bulletin of that length!

There is, though, a fundamental difference between listening and reading.

Let us take a look into the news-room of the B.B.C. First of all, the announcers do not—as many people think—compose the news bulletins they read. (Reading the news is a tricky enough job without having to write it as well.) In the news-room of the B.B.C. there is an important cardinal rule. No bulletin for broadcasting may be handwritten or typed by its author. It must be dictated. The



reason is this. Spoken English and printed English are quite different. Listen to a good political speech and then read it. Try the same thing (if you can get hold of it) with one of your favourite comedian's scripts. The politician's speech probably seems intensely boring and the comedian's patter decidedly unfunny. I find that younger people can more easily remember things they hear than things they read.

For this change broadcasting is obviously largely responsible. In my childhood there were no such phenomena as B.B.C. news bulletins, and "swotting" was done from the printed page. To the youth of to-day broadcasting is a routine part of education. (Talkies too of course have played an important part in this change, but we are not concerned with them here.)

Clearly then (if my theory be correct) the influence of the spoken word is increasing, although it is difficult to foresee how far this trend will ultimately go. For reasons I have given above, radio is unlikely to supplant newspapers and magazines. But it is clearly a direct enemy of books. We have as yet learned only a comparatively small part of the possibilities of broadcasting as an instrument of propaganda. (Many people regard the term propaganda as entirely sinister, so please let me explain that by it I mean influence *for good or bad* on the thoughts of the people). Even so broadcasting as an instrument of propaganda has developed much further as a result of the war than it would otherwise have done. Have you ever thought what a tremendous part it played in helping us to victory?

About one thing most of us agree, whatever our political views—that Winston Churchill was the one man who could lead us to victory. In my view it was the power of broadcasting that put him in the saddle. The proper man to speak to the nation of the major issues of the war was the Prime Minister. Neville Chamberlain lacked the personality of a great orator or broadcaster. At the outset of the war Mr. Churchill performed the task in his stead. When the time came for Chamberlain to retire, the effect of Mr. Churchill's broadcasts unquestionably played an important part in making him unrivalled choice as leader of the nation.

After the first surprise of the 1945 General Election many wiseacres said the result was a foregone conclusion. By this they meant that the electorate had made up its mind how to vote before the election started. With this view I disagree. If the result of the election had been a foregone conclusion, it would have been predicted by at least a few people. As it was, no one prophesied an overwhelming majority for Labour.

Here again, I believe wireless to have been the greatest single deciding factor. During the four weeks preceding the election between 44 and 47 per cent. of the adult population listened to the election broadcasts. B.B.C. listener-research information shows, furthermore, that broadcasts of all three parties were followed with equal interest. I conclude, therefore, that the Conservatives could have won the election, but that they lost it because their argument did not appeal to the electorate.

Although, therefore, radio is so powerful a weapon of propaganda, it is also an extremely delicate one. To the Conservatives in the 1945 General Election it proved a boomerang. They had as their spokesman the most prominent man in England, but even that could not compensate for faulty psychology. Another classic example of faulty wireless psychology—if one be needed—was the misjudgement of Lord Haw-Haw, who came to terrify, but remained only as a music-hall joke.

What a man writes is read for what he has to say, but what a man broadcasts may be followed because of the way he says it. The catch-phrases of Arthur Askey, Tommy Handley, Tommy Trinder, Sandy Powell and Robb Wilton are characterless enough in themselves. It is the personality of the performer that makes them comic or memorable.

It is the same when it comes to serious broadcasts. No doubt the Radio Doctor offers very excellent medical advice, but it is not the quality of that advice that makes four and a half million people listen to him. It is the way he gives it to us.

Generally speaking, in this country radio as an instrument of propaganda (as we have already seen, an influence *for good or evil*) has been confined to such unambiguous subjects as gardening. There are a few notable exceptions, such as the General Election, but here I think most people will agree that all sides receive fair hearing. Although such speakers as J. B. Priestley (whose broadcasts have commanded as large an audience as eleven million) have been called propagandist, they are not so in any sinister sense. Propaganda is sinister when its real motive is concealed.

Many harsh things have been said about the B.B.C. Most of the criticisms boil down to the allegation that it is a "stuffed shirt." Certainly it has not always been so enterprising as it might in adopting new ideas. But when I consider the terrifying possibilities of broadcasting as an instrument of propaganda, I think the B.B.C.'s conservatism has been perhaps just as well. For radio, like atomic energy, has greater possibilities for evil than for good.

# Regional Broadcasting

VICTOR KAY-DAVIES

*"Each man . . . is justified in his individuality, as his nature is found to be immense."*

*(Emerson)*

**E**IGHTY-TWO days after VE-Day, Regional broadcasting came back on the air. During the six years of war, wavelengths were suppressed and programmes nationalised, but at the end of July 1945, Northern Ireland, the Midlands, the West, the North, London, Wales and Scotland began again to have their own services. In announcing the return of regional broadcasting, the Director-General of the B.B.C. said: ". . . It gives a chance of great diversity of programme; it gives a chance for local talent to get heard, and it gives broadcasting a chance to do for the broad communities of the United Kingdom what cannot possibly be done with one national service." His words were echoed by the B.B.C. Regional Directors in Manchester, Cardiff, Birmingham, Belfast, Edinburgh and Bristol, and throughout the country the resumption of regional broadcasting was welcomed.



*Victor Smythe.*

It was made clear that the regions were to be given very considerable autonomous authority. They were free to develop whatever resources and talent they could find in their own areas; to draw upon each other; to exchange programmes or, whenever desirable, all to join together. They were given their own budgets and their own staffs, and within the limits of their financial resources were free to design and put on their own programmes. *Any region could cut out of the Home Service programmes radiated from London and could put in its own programme instead.*

The plan went further. Regional staffs were given the responsibility of ensuring that, within the limits of technical resources and geographical difficulties, the villager got as good listening as the artisan; the family in the provinces every bit as good entertainment as the people of the metropolis. But it was obvious that in order to succeed, regionalisation had to stand on the strength of its programme value; third-rate stuff could not be tolerated merely because it came from around the corner. Every regional

programme had to be as good as a national one.

All this was of great significance to millions of listeners. It went far to meet the demands of the masses in the well marked regions of the North, Scotland and Wales. The people of the provinces rightly desired that broadcasting should foster their own talent, reflect their own culture and cater for their particular and widely varied tastes and interests. The terms of the brief were clear enough, but the regions could hardly start off at full speed. Staffs had to be built up to strength, and personnel were returning from the Forces slowly. But by the autumn of 1946 the regions were well into their stride, so it is not unfair at this time to ask how regional broadcasting is getting on.

Consider the North Region, which, covering as it does the vast industrial and agricultural areas from the Scottish border down to the Midlands, and stretching across from the Mersey to the Wash, is the largest of the regions. Its population numbers half that of England, practically a third of the United Kingdom.



*Wilfred Pickles, as "Th'owd Thatcher" in a North of England series.*

The North has a historic character as a laboratory of political, social and economic ideas and activities, combined with rich and unrivalled cultural resources.

The people of the North live as much by entertainment, sport and recreation as by philosophy and music, and to them a good variety programme is as important as a serious talk. "Northern Music Hall," an old favourite, has always had a national audience, and was therefore taken on to the Light Programme within three months of the return of regional broadcasting. A few months later, "Have a Go!," a typically Northern feature which had rapidly become one of the most successful entertainment programmes ever put on the air, joined it.

The region is in the vanguard with other light entertainment, notably in "Sing-Song," a production which went on the air for the first time two years ago and employed a completely new technique in the presentation of community singing. A community-singing feature from London appeared in the programmes three or four weeks after "Sing-Song." Doubtless the Northerners consider this another case of "What Manchester thinks today . . . !"

The North has always been famous for its choirs and brass bands. What has been done by regional broadcasting to reflect this characteristic? The series "Brass Bandstand" and "Sounding Brass and Voices" provide the answer, and the latter series has been described as showing at its best the remarkable talent of the North in these two kinds of music making.

In the world of symphonic music, the B.B.C. Northern Orchestra, under its conductor Charles Groves, has not been content merely to broadcast its concerts from the Manchester studios, but has taken music to the people of the region by giving a large number of its concerts to public audiences in places rarely visited by other symphony orchestras.

The region has its own Northern News and runs a weekly "Northern Newsreel," together with many topical features of interest to listeners in the Northern counties. The sporting instincts and interests of the people in this region are specially catered for, as also are the farming communities; and the "Children's Hour" of the North not only maintains a regional spirit, but is widely listened to by children—and grown-ups—in other parts of the country as well. The output of Drama also shows the extent and rapidity of the region's progress.

But where the region seems to have scored most heavily is in the way in which it has taken the microphone to the people, particularly in the case of "Have a Go!," "Sing Song" and "Public Enquiry." Each of these productions goes "on tour," and is to be found in the village hall rather than in the studio.

The spotlight has been turned to one region only in this short glimpse of regional activity. Other regions of the B.B.C. have made similar progress: and judging from what has been achieved in so short a time, the future of regional broadcasting is bright indeed.

*Nan MacDonald, Muriel Levy, Violet Carson and Wilfred Pickles.*



# Seven Links make the Chain

WILFRID BESSENT

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**E**VEN in these radio-conscious days, some listeners picture the broadcasting studio—the first of the main links in the chain that joins them with the artiste—as a kind of padded cell, a fabric-sealed place of heavy silence and claustrophobic effect.

That type of sound-source is as obsolete as the cat's-whisker. Broadcasting House, London, has been in use for fifteen years, and the only curtain-drapes in its studios are there solely for decorative effect.

To the technician, a studio denotes a room matched to the sound to be produced in it: broadcasting calls for, and gets, studios for talks and news-reading and dramatic productions, studios for sound effects and symphony orchestras, studios for variety, chamber music, military bands, and gramophone recitals. Each must be a well-groomed servant of sound.

Let's say you are the one who is going to make the sound. You have undertaken, we'll assume, to deliver a talk. At once, it must be decided whether you are to speak "live," which means that your voice is radiated at the time of speaking, or are to be pre-recorded, the disc-recording so made being put on the air at a later hour or date.

Live transmission is agreed. You go to the studio for rehearsal. To reach it you pass through an ante-room. In it are either a vertical rack full of amplifiers and jacks and knob-studded panels, or a long, box-like arrangement in which meter dials are mounted and from which black knobs project. A pair of gramophone turntables, a loudspeaker, and a microphone are there; occupying most of one wall is a large window.

You pass through the door alongside the window, and the studio shows you a couple of chairs, a table, a loudspeaker, a pair of microphones; up on the walls are a clock, and red and green lamps.

You rehearse. All the apparatus is in use, but only to bring your voice to the loudspeaker in the cubicle. Later, you return for the transmission. Routine preliminaries over, you watch the clock. The red light flickers, stays alight. You are announced. You speak.

The sound you make impinges on the microphone, is converted into a tiny electrical impulse, and, as such, goes into the control cubicle for balance and the first stages of amplification.

Were you in the cast of a show, your voice, at that stage, could then be "mixed" with whatever other sound was to accompany it. Each of the knobs on the control-panel would be controlling a different intake of sound: speech on one, music on a second, effects on a third, artificial "echo" on a fourth, and so on. The producer would be in the cubicle, guiding his programme engineer in the stirring of the mixture, which would be coming back to them through the loudspeaker.

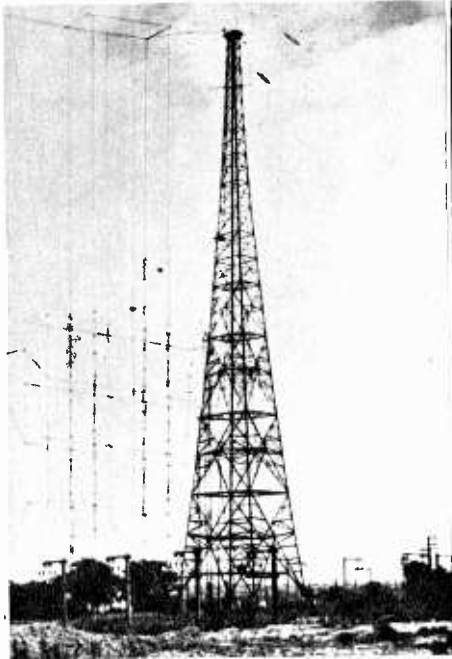
But as yours is a straightforward, solo business, the sound-impulse, after its technical treatment at source, goes through the central control-room of the building to a "continuity suite," which is link two.

The continuity-suite is the marshalling yard of the service to which you are contributing—the place where the connecting announcements are made (a studio forms part of the suite), where fill-ups and the interval signal originate, and through which all the programmes of the transmission, wherever they may come from, must pass. It's a marshalling yard, yes—and it's a blending-room, too.

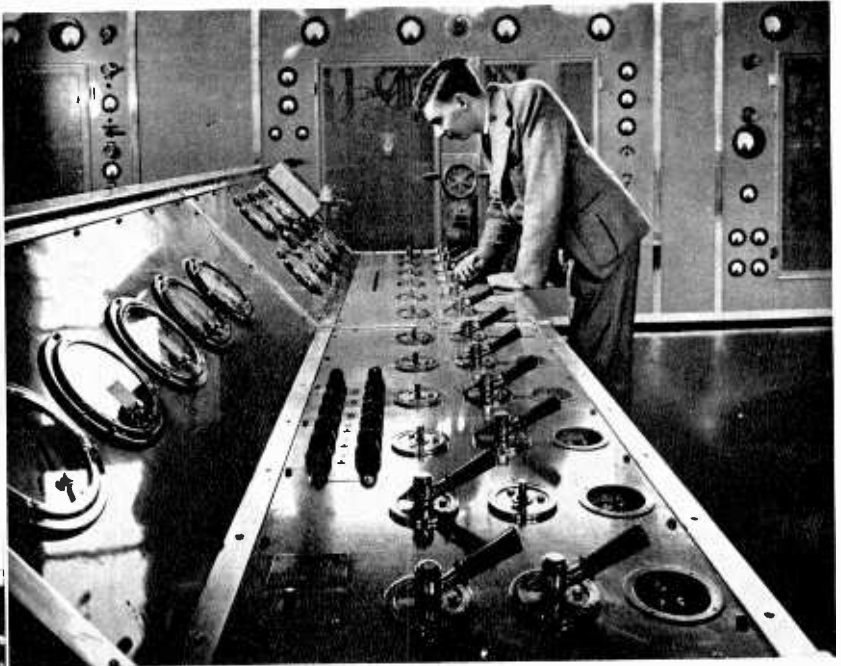
Back, then, to the control-room, which is the third link in the chain. "The nerve centre of broadcasting"—a thousand journalists have made that a cliché, but to better it is difficult. The nerve centre it is. It handles everything that makes the programme: the items from distant studios as well as from those in its own building: the time signals; the commentaries and actuality stuff from street, sports ground, and wherever things are happening. It serves the loudspeakers in its building; is the point of contact with other studio centres; it handles rehearsals on the "closed circuits"; it feeds the transmitters. . . .

In a number of countries overseas the state department responsible for telecommunications runs the whole of the technical side of broadcasting, but in Britain, the engineers are members of the B.B.C. staff. That doesn't mean the Post Office makes no contribution to the system. It does, and an indispensable one: it provides the fourth link in the chain.

Placed end to end, the high-quality telephone lines that weave the link would stretch for 20,000 miles. All of them are permanently allocated to broadcasting, and the Post Office engineers and lines-



A B.B.C. transmitting station.



Control desk of one of the high-power transmitters.

men are responsible for their maintenance. Co-operating with the P.O. men is a department of B.B.C. experts whose job is to regulate the use made of the lines, watch over their fitness for broadcasting, and plan, in collaboration with the P.O., the inland communication routes between outside-broadcasting points and studio centres, and between studio centres and transmitters.

This last responsibility brought grey hairs to technical heads in the war years. Lines were peculiarly vulnerable to bombs, and the accustomed paths were frequently blitzed. But a way round was always found—*always*, even though it meant sending a programme from a studio in London to a transmitter in Devonshire by way of the Midlands.

Over these cable-bridges, then, goes your voice, to arrive at transmitters many miles from the studio in which you are speaking. On the way, it may pass through a switching-centre—a junction under the control of the broadcasting engineers—and through one or more repeater-stations, where it comes off the road, as it were, for technical refreshment. Its arrival at the transmitter brings it to link five.

Up to this point, the electrical impulses that your voice is creating have depended on wire for their very existence. Now the physical, uni-directional route is to be left behind, and the whole process becomes wire-less.

Only the trained technician can really appreciate the marvels of a radio transmitting station. To the lay eye (we will forget the enthusiastic descriptions with which the expert guide baffles the lay ear) it looks a place of unexpectedly *quiet* efficiency. It is clearly one of the palaces of Power—irresistibly, one is reminded of the iron hand in a velvet glove.

The absence of noise—oh, a low-pitched hum, perhaps—probably inspires the thought. The discovery that a single engineer, working from a central control desk, can govern the behaviour of a hall full of bewildering apparatus emphasises it.

The eye sees, and the mind dimly comprehends, clever gadgets that give technical hitches only a few seconds' life; massive valves that need a constant supply of cold water to control their temperature; "prams," running on a miniature railway, on which new valves are wheeled into position. And outside, the cloud-prodding masts and their aerials that are the slip-way for your voice.

And, when your voice has been launched into the air, the sixth and most significant link—the wire-less wave—has been reached. The seventh is the receiving set. With those, the chain coupling you to your listeners is complete.

# The Proof of the Pudding

**I**N a remote part of South Wales an old farmer was being interviewed. "BBC?" he queried. "What's that?" Told what the initials signified, he shook his head again. "Broadcasting? Never heard of it!"

Later, while the old man was hay-making, his ignorance of radio and anything to do with it was confirmed by his wife. He had never seen or heard a wireless set, she told the interviewer, and was genuinely unaware of the existence or purpose of the B.B.C.

The story is worth telling not only for its own sake, but because it is an arrow to a backroom of British broadcasting that has a great deal to do with the goods in the shop window.

The label on the backroom door is "Listener Research."

In this country, scientifically-organised effort to find out what the listener likes and dislikes about his programmes, why he thinks the way he does, and how many of him there are in the audience for every broadcast began just over ten years ago.

"Scientifically organised" is a phrase that summarises a nation-wide activity. There are between ten and eleven million listening families in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and a great many of them have probably never met a B.B.C. interviewer. But it is reasonably certain that the Listener Research Department of the B.B.C. has as accurate an idea of the views and tastes of the un-interviewed as they have of those whose opinions and outlook have been noted, analysed, indexed, and filed.

It's all done by the use of modern methods of sampling—that is, by taking a manageable cross-section of the population, representative of all professions, age-groups, regions, income levels, and of both sexes—and, on the results of enquiries among the part, deducing the opinions of the whole. Within known mathematical limits, it can be done, and the conclusions accepted as reliable.

To assess the number of people that listen to each programme, a permanent survey-of-listening drill has been worked out. Every day 3,000 people (500 in each of the six regional areas) are sought out by about 200 interviewers in the streets, railway stations, markets, shops, queues, in their homes, and asked "What programmes did you listen to yesterday?" The answers give a small-scale picture of the large-scale behaviour; they are found by mechanically tabulating the findings of the interviewers, and expressing the result in terms of a percentage figure for each programme of the day. A statement—the "Listening Barometer"—is prepared and a copy sent to all B.B.C. departments and officials concerned.

A listening panel consisting of 3,600 volunteers—600 in each region—has also been set up to supply reactions to selected programmes of all kinds. While the members of this panel undertake to answer questions about named broadcasts, they are asked *not* to answer any questions about broadcasts they would not voluntarily have listened to. And the results here? About 3,000 reports a year based on what ordinary members



*A B.B.C. interviewer recording the previous day's listening by a member of the public.*



of the public think about programmes they themselves have chosen to hear.

Are dialect broadcasts popular? What is the current view about religious broadcasting? Is controversy at the microphone wanted? How are the news bulletins regarded? What is the attitude to the alternative programme series? General questions such as these are put by the interviewers to a cross-section of the audience—6,000 people comprise the sample—four times a year. And that gives the B.B.C. not only your views about various aspects of broadcasting policy, but a valuable check on the conclusions drawn from the testimony of the Listening Panel.

The facts, figures, and feelings that the results of this elaborate effort reflect form a touchstone for the programme-planners. It is true that broadcasting has duties of minority interest—experiments in the form and presentation of sound-drama, for example; it is no less true that public acclaim or disparagement as reported by listener-research (and the “appreciation index” may be as significant as the listening figure) can decide the future of a programme. The response to “Why on earth do they keep it on?” is often

“Because five million listeners have shown they want it.”

Research among listeners overseas is conducted by another department on the same scientific basis. In this activity, of course, postal rather than personal contact is the main link between listener and broadcaster, but the sampling method is as valid in this field as in any other, and the results are not only invaluable guides, but encouraging evidence that distance does not necessarily disenchant.

Some broad conclusions about changes in our listening trends and habits are worth quoting. Forces audiences during the war showed an increased liking for light classical music. The public listener overseas has sustained his interest in news from home, but, not unexpectedly, has lost some of his interest in world news. The average Briton's interest in politics, public affairs, and the nature and activities of his Government has greatly increased, and the most popular composer is Beethoven.

So far, research among listeners has been fully developed only in this country and, of course, in the U.S.A., but an increasing number of broadcasters in other lands are showing interest in the B.B.C.'s methods—even to the extent of on-the-spot study—and before long a backroom for the assessment of audience reaction may well be judged an essential in the plan of every broadcasting set-up.



*Completed questionnaires returned by members of the listening panel being sorted.*

# Listening Laid On

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SOME 650,000 of the United Kingdom's ten million licensed listeners have no radio set. Or if they have, they still prefer to have their radio on tap at an all-in cost of eighteenpence or two shillings a week and the pound a year for the licence.

For that sum, a pair of wires is run to their respective houses and they are supplied with a choice of two or three programmes for sixteen hours or so a day, a switch that enables them to make the choice, and a loudspeaker to hear it by. Which done, they will tell you that they have "the wired wireless," are "on the relay system," have "subscribed to the local rediffusion service," or "have tied up with the wireless exchange."

It all means the same thing. And the degree of development expressed by the figures for today shows how much the rediffusion of radio programmes by wire from a central receiving point has come to mean. The many subscribers are served by central receiving points—or "exchanges." They have attained that degree of organised development in under twenty years.

The distinction of being the first to institute a wireless exchange in this country is claimed by Wallace Maton, of Hythe, near Southampton.

"My exchange at Hythe," he has recorded, "commenced working in January 1925 . . . at present (May, 1927) I have over thirty subscribers in various parts of this village, some being situated over half a mile from my exchange."

According to a contemporary report, Mr. Maton was followed by Mr. J. Tubb of Southsea, who, from June, 1926, fed subscribers from a four-valve set. The advantages so practically expressed by these examples of individual enterprise were emphasised in the report: "It is surprising that systems such as these," it commented, "are not more common, especially in London and other great cities, where large blocks of flats could be supplied with broadcasting from one receiver. Such schemes are working with great success all over New York."

These prototypes soon evoked the obvious question: What is the legal position? There were assertions that such exchanges contravened the wireless regulations of the Post Office, and the situation was officially examined. However, in September, 1926, the Post Office decided to grant permission for such relaying of programmes on condition that each subscriber took out a receiving licence. (Later, operation of the exchanges themselves became subject to official licensing.)

That cleared the wires for the time being, and the idea spread—spread inside communal buildings, spread across towns and their suburbs, and spread across the country. It had obvious advantages. It was cheap—for the small wage-earner, a regular few pence a week was an easier undertaking than the relatively heavy initial outlay on a receiver and its accessories. It was convenient, condoning the natural revulsion of the average lay mind from things that look technical. After all, everyone can operate an electric-light switch, and a rediffusion service asks no more than that. Above all, it offered a means of interference-free reception.

There are "cons," too, of course. One is that the typical Briton dislikes imposed limitations (technical limitations always excepted!) and may not be prepared to leave it to others to choose his programme-service for him. Another, that a prime virtue of radio is that it overcomes isolation, and the existence of a radio exchange in his local market-town may mean nothing to the farmer in a remote valley or the crofter in the hills. But those who operate the wireless exchanges are the first to insist that their relative value is for the listener to assess.



In Britain the wireless exchange is an agent—rarely an originator. When the local microphone (and most exchanges are so equipped) is used, it is for announcement purposes only—to do more might infringe the monopoly officially granted to the B.B.C., and the terms of the licence under which the exchanges operate.

Nevertheless, the locally-originated announcement is a valuable and valued service, and never more so than during the war, when it was extensively used for official messages to the public. In blitzed towns, especially, the relay system was often a friend in need: in one shattered city it was the only means for nearly two days of communicating air-raid warnings to vital centres. An off-shoot of the exchanges, extensively cultivated during wartime, was the rediffusion of programmes in workshops and factories—and it looks as though “ Music While You Work ” has come to stay.

The merits and demerits of the system were officially recognised long before the war, of course. Some measure of state control was inevitable, and it is exercised, as has been said, by subjecting the exchanges to the licence of the Postmaster General. He issued the first one in 1927; by 1930 he had issued sixty, and by 1935, 340, by which time there were 200,000 subscribers.

In 1936 the Ullswater Committee, appointed to examine the whole system of British broadcasting, recommended that ownership and control of the exchanges should pass to the Post Office, but the Government decided to continue the existing system until the end of 1939, thus giving the Post Office a period for research and practical experiment.

Then the war came; the whole matter had to be looked at again, and as a result the licences of the exchanges were extended for another ten years. The experiments of the Post Office were suspended; so, for the duration, was the licensing of new exchanges (though that didn't prevent a great increase in the number of subscribers—to-day's 650,000 was 260,000 when war broke out).

And the position now? In July 1946, the Government issued a White Paper on Broadcasting Policy. The final paragraph in it says this:

“ The Government have considered the future of wire broadcasting in this country, and have deferred a decision on the question of public ownership and operation of wire broadcasting services pending a further review nearer the date on which the licences held by the relay exchange proprietors are terminable.”

Meanwhile, the technicians are busy. They are seeking ways of increasing the number of programmes available to the subscriber while preserving his ease of selection; they are considering how the electric-light mains and the telephone network may be used as carriers of the rediffused signals; they are developing the application of exchange systems in blocks of flats and hotels; they are planning to lay on television in the homes of subscribers in television areas.

This story of enterprise in Britain finds many strong echoes overseas. In the U.S.A., in several European countries, and in British Colonies “ wired wireless ” has long been an ordinary thing in everyday life. Many of the Colonies—Malta, Gibraltar, Trinidad, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and the Falkland Islands give convincing examples—have adopted the system as their form of broadcasting, offering their own programmes and newscasts as well as relays of bulletins and programmes from London.

Malta, during the darkest of its war days, ran its rediffusion service from a cave, sending two programmes—one Maltese, the other a relay of the B.B.C.—to the islanders in their homes, to soldiers in their billets and canteens, and, through public-address loudspeakers, to the people in the streets—and thereby graphically emphasised the ideal of the exchanges: service to the people wherever they live, work, or play.

# The Radio Record

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“THE war has altered the broadcasters’ outlook upon recorded programmes,” said the recording expert. “Before it, they were mostly looked upon as a useful adjunct to ‘live’ broadcasts; now—well, they’ve become an essential. You hear programmes today that only recording could make possible.”

A natural question followed: “How has the war done so much?”

The answer it evoked brought new evidence of the way in which the necessities of war mother technical invention: “By greatly stimulating the development of magnetic systems of recording.” The expert went on to cite the two outstanding examples.

Both sides in the conflict provided them. From the U.S.A. came a means of recording on wire. From Germany, a high-quality magnetic system using a plastic tape impregnated with magnetised metal particles.

The U.S.A. contribution came into being as a result of the demand for a compact, reliable means of recording good, intelligible speech under the physically disruptive conditions of the field. High quality and the capacity to handle a wide range of frequencies were not wanted, and the method is thus of limited value in broadcasting. A value, however, it has—as the use of a model by the B.B.C. has already proved. It was used, for example, when making on-the-car recordings during the “Old Crocks” race from London to Brighton last year, and effectively demonstrated its ability to do its job despite vibration and other adverse physical conditions. The B.B.C. also uses the wire method for such behind-the-scenes tasks as the training of announcers.

Germany’s development and application of the magnetised plastic tape has greatly influenced the technical outlook. Known as the “Magnetophon,” the device has been produced in a dozen different types, and the quality of reproduction attracted the attention of the experts quite early in the war. Germany made extensive use of pre-recorded programmes—as indeed (and for the same obvious reasons) did Britain—and in the closing stages of the war every programme from every station in the Reich, and from others in occupied territories, was pre-recorded.

One of the “Magnetophon” models was captured soon after the Normandy landings and sent back to Britain for examination, but what was most eagerly sought was the high-quality model used by the B.B.C.’s opposite number, the Reich Rundfunk Gesellschaft. The B.B.C. found one, and used it for the reproduction of programmes originated on the Continent. It has already been the means of bringing to British listeners programmes that, owing to the uncertainties and deficiencies of some of the land-line communications, they would otherwise have been unable to hear.

Britain, too, made a wartime contribution to recording development, though by other means. It was designed and produced by the B.B.C.’s own engineers, and took the form of a midget disc-recorder. Like their American colleagues, the engineers were asked for a machine small enough for a man to take into a foxhole, light enough to be carried by hand, reliable enough to ensure that the words it trapped were intelligible when they were reproduced. For witnesses to the success of the engineers, seek out the correspondents who carried the recorder on D-day and afterwards, and the listeners who heard their reports.

There are fifty years and more of retrospect in the story of sound recording as radio uses it. One of the systems used by the B.B.C. today is another variant of the use of electromagnetic applications: known as the Marconi-Stille process, the apparatus consists of a steel tape that unwinds from one 24-inch

spool on to another, passing on the way through recording, reproducing, and demagnetising "heads." The system, like the wire and tape recorders of the war, are the descendants of the wire system invented by the Danish scientist Poulsen towards the end of the nineteenth century.

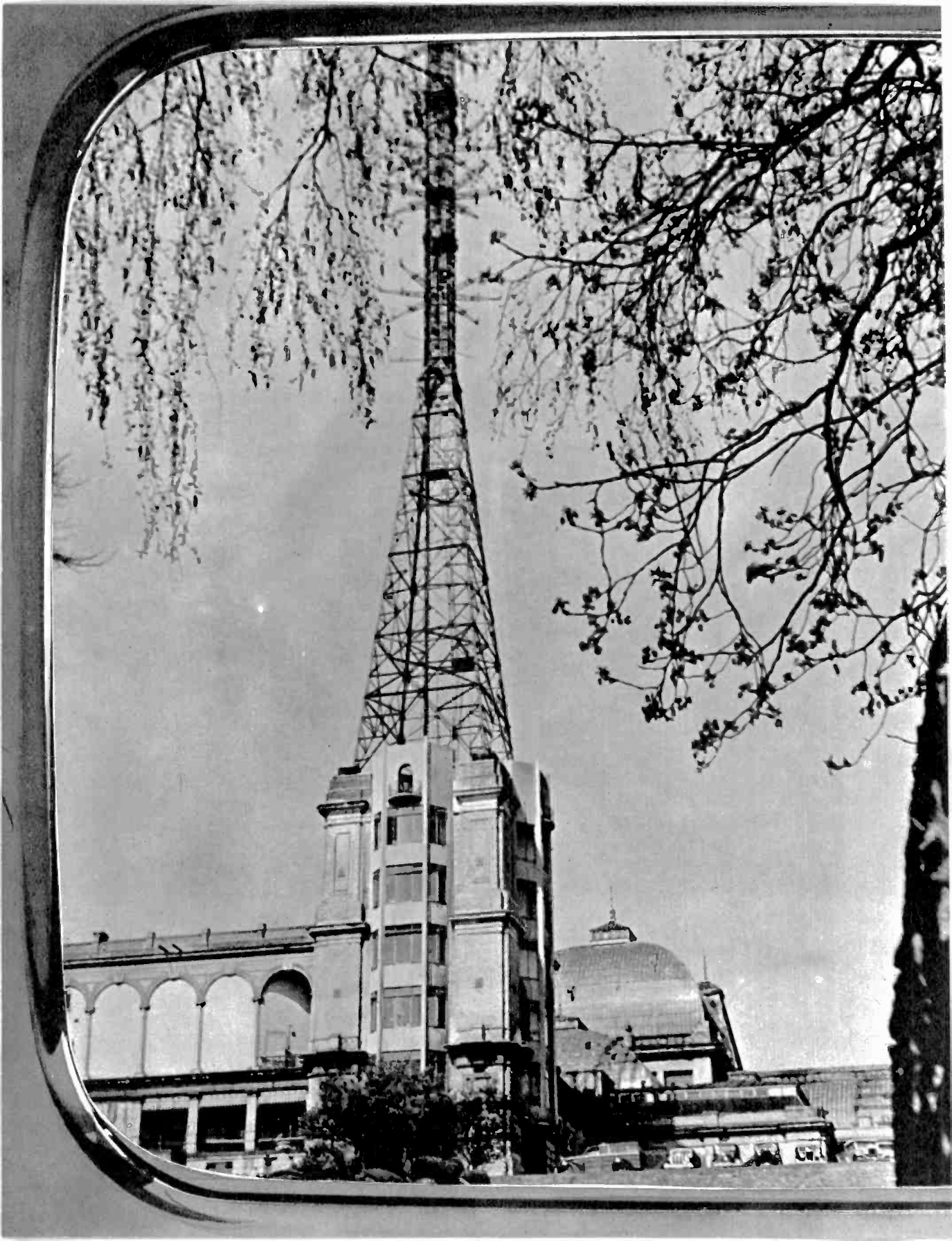
The Marconi-Stille method has been utilised by the B.B.C. for many years past, but it is only one of the three in standard use. The other two are the disc-recorders—records closely akin to those you play on your gramophone—and the Phillips-Miller film system.

Each has its advantages—and disadvantages. Steel tape and wire recording has the prime virtue of being economical: when a recording is no longer needed, the tape can be demagnetised—"washed," is the jargon—and used over and over again. But it is difficult to edit programmes so recorded; cuts must be made literally with scissors, and the tape rejoined. The disc method is the joy of editors and archivists, but is more expensive; film, offering first-class quality and so used chiefly for broadcasts of outstanding importance, is the most expensive of all, and again editing involves a cutting and rejoining process.

These are the systems inside the studio, but recording, as every listener knows, ranges far outside it. Apart from the midget recorders, mobile units (they use the disc method, of course) have ranged all over the British Isles and far beyond it in the chase after "actuality" news, the collecting of programme material, the trapping of "the real sound." The results are in this evening's programmes. The results are in the B.B.C. Recorded Programmes Library, too. It houses some 10,000 separate items on discs alone, and there are half-a-dozen copies of each disc as well as the "master" copy. Speeches, plays, music, documentaries, outside events—the sounds of Britain and the voices of its people—all are in and on the record. When future generations seek to know what we were like and how we lived today, our voices will be there to tell them—just as, in this same library, precious discs preserve for us the voices of other days. For in the Recorded Programmes Library at Broadcasting House you may hear Gladstone speak again.



*The programme you have just heard was recorded . . .*



# The Story of TELEVISION

GUY CHEVIOT

## I. *The Radio that is seen as well as heard*

“IT’S like looking out of a window !” exclaimed the small boy from next door when he got his first glimpse of television—the Victory Parade—on my home receiver.

He was right. As the cars swished through the puddles in the Mall, reflecting the few glints of sunshine on that rainy day, we might have been sitting at a window in Carlton House Terrace. But we could hear everything, too, with Freddie Grisewood and Richard Dimbleby alongside us, as it were, to point out the highspots.

It was radio, but radio that you could see.

Have you ever considered that radio history is rather like film history in reverse ? Film began with picture minus sound. Radio began with sound minus picture.

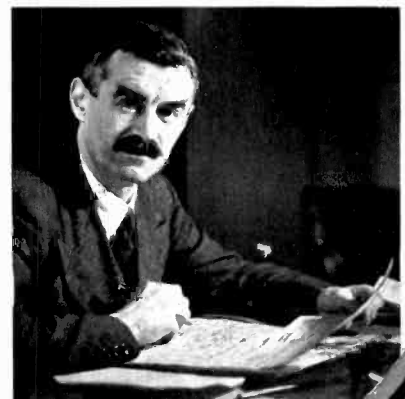
Film was a few jumps ahead of radio in catering for both eye and ear, but radio is rapidly catching up, and those of you seeing a television screen wake into life for the first time will find it as stirring to the imagination as the first talking film. The whole field of radio entertainment broadens out, and no-one knows what lies beyond the horizon.

The B.B.C. television mast at Alexandra Palace, pictured on our screens at the opening of each programme, is really a signpost to tremendous expansion in the next few years. In time we can expect the spread of television all over the British Isles, with bigger and clearer pictures, then the addition of colour and perhaps even stereoscopy, which would make the images stand out in three dimensions like characters on the living stage.

British television leads the world. But first let us glance backwards for a moment and trace the shadowy path which has brought us to modern television and to-day’s B.B.C. service, with its daily output of three hours of vivid entertainment in vision and sound.

How many people know that the first important television discovery was made by accident over seventy years ago ? This was at the Valentia cable station, County Kerry, on the west coast of Ireland, where engineers found that some resistance rods composed of an element called selenium changed their value under the influence of strong sunlight. That at once opened up the possibility of using light waves to control

*Mr. M. A. C. Gorham.*

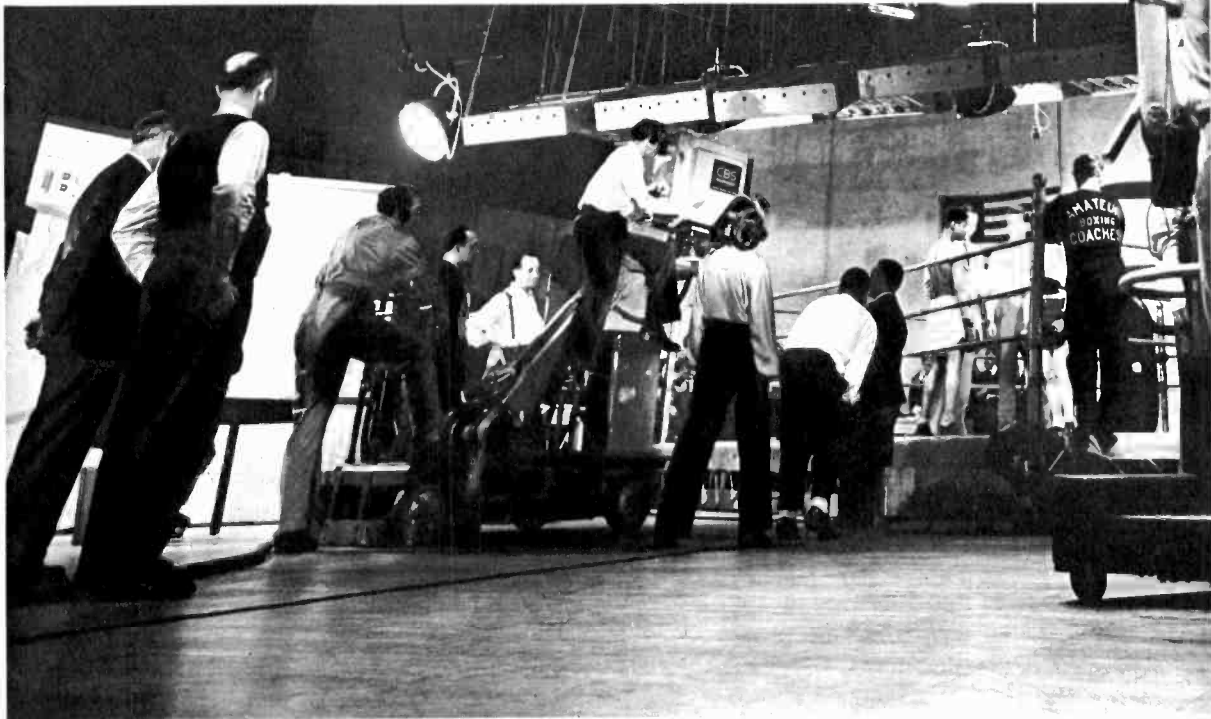


electric impulses. What was needed was a means of splitting up a picture into separate elements so that it could be sent in the form of a varying electric current. The first practical invention came ten years later when a scientist named Nipkow used a disc punched with holes in the form of a spiral. As the disc rotated, light shining through each hole in turn played on the image in a series of lines from top to bottom. Nipkow had invented "scanning," which is still the underlying principle in television to-day, though the process is now carried out at incredibly high speed by means of cathode-ray beams.

If the scientists of sixty years ago had possessed a cathode-ray tube, television might have been possible in the reign of Queen Victoria. It was their tragedy that no means existed for amplifying the tiny currents, so Nipkow's clever idea was shelved.

Twenty-five years later, in 1908, the British physicist, Campbell Swinton, described a device which was the forerunner of the famous Emitron camera used in television to-day. Campbell Swinton had hit upon the idea of using electron beams which could be made to move in step simultaneously at transmitter and receiver, "scanning" the image in the studio and building it up again, line by line, on the receiver screen at home. This British idea, now nearly forty years old, gave a remarkable pre-view of modern methods.

By 1923, the Scotsman, John Logie Baird, was experimenting with disc scanning, and before 1930 had made such progress that the B.B.C. gave him facilities for test transmissions, first from the London station in Oxford street and later from the new London Regional transmitter at Brookman's Park. Considering their "low-definition"—30 lines compared with the 405 lines put out from Alexandra Palace to-day—Baird's pictures were surprisingly clear,



in spite of flicker, and in 1932 the B.B.C. equipped a studio in Broadcasting House with Baird apparatus for regular experimental transmissions between 11 p.m. and midnight.

Television was now being talked about. It was still more like a toy than the real thing, but the technicians were already getting restless for something better and were discussing "high definition." The Government grew interested—so interested that by 1934 the Postmaster-General set up a Committee to report on the relative merits of different systems. The report was out early in 1935 and its recommendations were for the establishment of a high-definition television station to be operated by the B.B.C., using two selected systems—Baird and Marconi-E.M.I.—which would be used alternately for an experimental period.

Britain led the world. In the autumn of 1936 the world's first high-definition television service was opened on London's northern heights at Alexandra Palace, on an ideal site which enabled the ultra-short-waves to cover the whole of London and a large portion of the Home Counties.

After two months' trial, the Marconi-E.M.I. system was permanently adopted, and this is the system in use to-day. The transmitter divides the image into 405 lines, with fifty frames a second, to produce a brilliant flickerless picture on the receiver screens.

Television corner is one of the most fascinating spots you can imagine. It covers a modernised wing of the old amusement palace set up by North Londoners in the 1880's as a rival to the Crystal Palace in the south. Until 1937 the two palaces used to wink at each other in the sunlight across about ten miles of smoky London haze; then Crystal Palace got burnt down, and Alexandra Palace was left to enjoy its faded majesty alone. Nothing is faded, though, in the television station, nestling around the base of the re-built tower at the south-east corner. The ground here is 300 ft. above sea level, on the summit of the grassy slopes of Alexandra Park. The tower, with its five floors of offices, is 80 ft. high, and above it straddles the tapering steel lattice mast for another 220 ft. The tiny receiving aerial at the top, which is used for picking up vision signals from the mobile units as they roam around London's theatres and sports grounds, is thus 600 ft. above sea level.

Clustered round the thin apex of the mast are two sprawling aerial "arrays," not unlike a chimney-sweep's brush. The upper one



sends out the electric impulses which the home receiver miraculously translates into a living picture of things happening in the studios below. The lower array radiates the sound signal.

Visitors to the station always want to see the studios first. This is where the romance and glamour are to be found ; other parts of the establishment, like the control rooms and transmitter halls, have a sleek, shiny fascination of their own, but it is the fascination of an ocean liner's engine room rather than that of the sun-deck or ball-room.

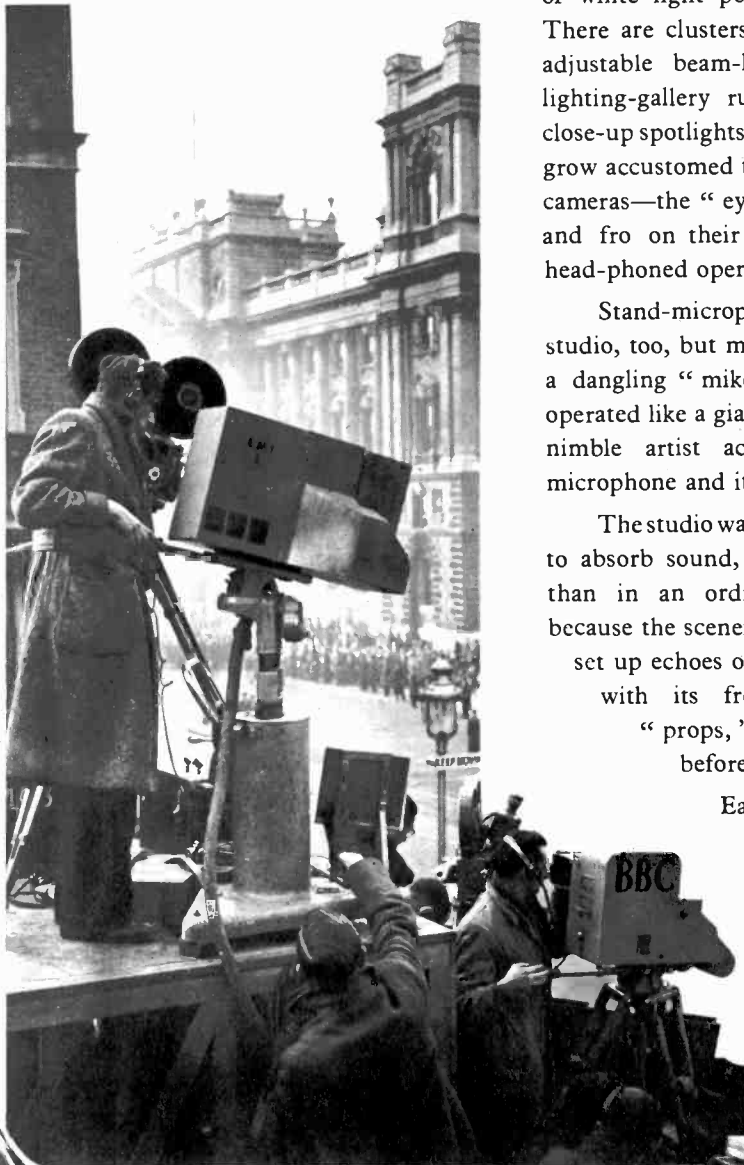
The two studios are at second-floor level and each measures 70 ft. by 30 ft. and 25 ft. high—about the size of a small news cinema.

The first thing that strikes you about a television studio, if you enter it while a show is on, is the torrent of white light pouring on the floor from all angles. There are clusters of lamps suspended from the roof, adjustable beam-lights along the edge of the dim lighting-gallery running round the upper walls, and close-up spotlights dotted about the studio. As your eyes grow accustomed to the glare, you pick out the Emitron cameras—the “ eyes ” of television—gliding silently to and fro on their rubber-tyred “ dollies ” while their head-phoned operators focus them on the artistes.

Stand-microphones are distributed around the studio, too, but most of the sound pick-up is done with a dangling “ mike ” on the end of a boom which is operated like a giant fishing-rod and can follow the most nimble artist across the floor while keeping the microphone and its shadow out of vision.

The studio walls are covered with asbestos compound to absorb sound, giving an even more “ dead ” effect than in an ordinary broadcasting studio. This is because the scenery and apparatus needed for television set up echoes of their own ; every new programme, with its fresh arrangement of scenery and “ props,” requires special microphone tests before it goes on the air.

Each studio has its own control room where the producer chooses his pictures on monitor screens while the show goes on, and midway between them is the station's nerve centre, the central control room. It is here that all the channels of sound and vision meet—from the two studios,



*Television cameras in  
Whitehall.*



from the telecine plant (used for televising film), from the gramophone and effects desks, and from the mobile units wherever they may be in London or the surrounding country. In fact, it is television's Clapham Junction, though the traffic consists of nothing more than tiny electrical impulses which are passed on to the control panels of the vision and sound transmitters on the ground floor and thence to those aerial "arrays" at the top of the mast.

Running alongside the studios and central control room is the narrow but lofty studio corridor, arched like the side-aisle of a Norman cathedral and stretching in a long vista to the scene dock. This must be one of the most extraordinary corridors in Britain, if not in the world. In it you may meet Cabinet Ministers, troupes of dancing girls, leading West-End actors and actresses, crooners, distinguished writers and painters, or perhaps a flower-girl from Piccadilly Circus awaiting a televised interview in "Picture Page."

Above all you would note the atmosphere of tension and bustle. Television is an urgent affair. It goes on every day, Sundays included, and nearly every day the programme is a completely new one. Small wonder, then, that "first-night" nerves abound. Many people who come pacing along the corridor in colourful costumes and special camera make-up are unaccustomed to television, and the ordeal of being seen by an unseen audience, as well as heard, is sometimes a formidable one, more perhaps to professional actors and actresses, whose reputation is at stake, than to the casual visitor making an isolated appearance.

Lining the opposite side of the corridor are the artistes' dressing-rooms and, at the far end, the make-up and wardrobe departments.

Scenery is brought in by pulley and tackle through a large trap door opening in the scene dock at the far end of the corridor. The workshops and carpenters' quarters are in another section of Alexandra Palace next to the old theatre, which is itself stacked with scenery and properties of all kinds, ranging from a sedan chair to the front of a Grecian temple. The stage makes an excellent studio for the scene painters.

The television tower is honey-combed with offices. Midway up it, on the third floor, is one of the most inspiring offices in all London. It belongs to Maurice Gorham, head of the service. The whole of one side is taken up with huge bay windows opening out on a view of nearly all North London, with a peep at the dome of St. Paul's silhouetted in a smoky mist against the distant Surrey hills. A floor below, conveniently near the studios, is the Productions Office, where the working time-tables are evolved and all the mechanics of presentation are worked out, from the wording of an announcement to the allocation of dressing rooms. The producers, now numbering more than a score, have offices scattered all over the television wing and even in a re-furbished wing on the other side of the Palace. Engineers are accommodated in the main tower so as to be near the transmitters and control rooms.

Beneath the studios, at ground level, are the transmitter halls for sound and vision, besides a miniature cinema where films can be shown and edited before inclusion in the programmes. A music library completes the establishment, together with a canteen which is quite the most colourful in the B.B.C. organisation. Any day you may find a procession of customers dressed in anything from boiler-house overalls to Queen Elizabeth's coronation robes.

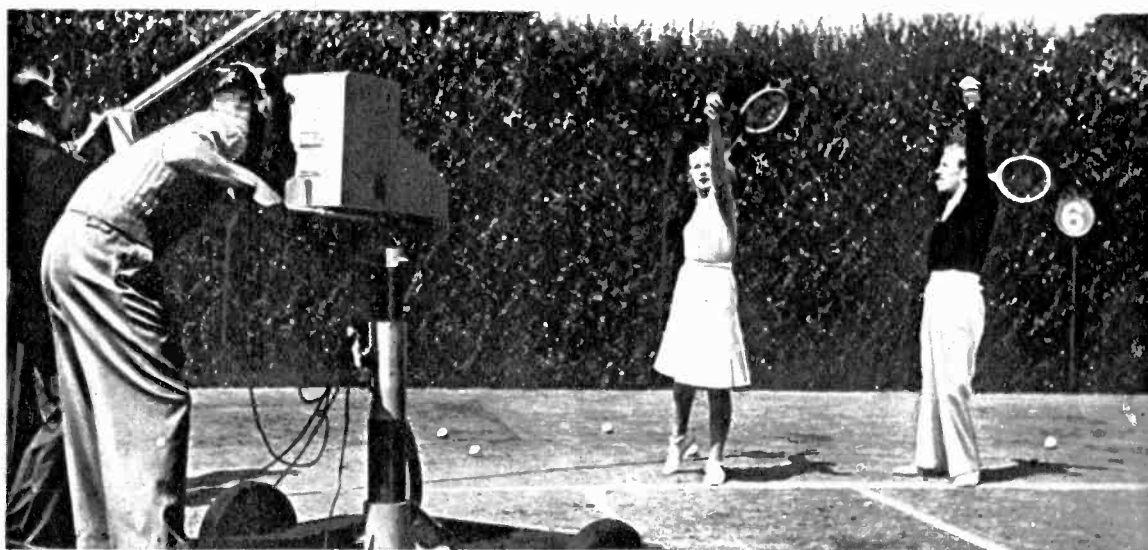
How little of all this seething organisation is it possible to visualise as we watch the slick succession of pictures on our screens at home! All this effort at Alexandra Palace, with its staff of 400 specialists, is funnelled down to two electrical impulses which we pick up on our home aerials. By turning

two or three knobs (contrast, brightness, volume, etc.) we translate them into brilliant screen versions of full-length plays acted by West-End casts, sporting events direct from boxing ring or football field, studio interviews in close-up with celebrities and "people in the news," variety shows straight from the theatre, and hundreds of other items creating a panorama of never-ending interest.

Perhaps those engineers on the coast of Kerry seventy years ago dreamed even then that their selenium rods had the makings of magic wands.



*Life on the canals is televised.*



*Cameras on the court.*

# THE STORY OF TELEVISION

## PART 2

### 2. Behind the scenes at "Ally Pally"

"**B**IT too bright, isn't it, Dad?" says twelve-year-old Harry, with a critical glance at the television screen.

"Be quiet!" warns Mother, her eyes fixed on the silvery, moving picture. "You men are always the same, always tinkering . . ."

"He's right, though," says Dad, glad of a chance to fiddle with the mysterious knobs. "We might as well get it perfect before the play's properly started."

The guests gape. (There are nearly always guests in a television household). They wonder whether to follow the play or watch Dad in the role of magician. Soon he leaves them with no option. He has twiddled the wrong knob. The picture splits up as if a comb had gone through it.

"Marvellous!" murmurs the man from "The Laurels." "You can do anything with it, can't you?"

But another touch on the knob brings back the brilliant and beautiful picture.

"Try reducing the 'Brightness,'" prompts Harry.

"I know what I'm doing," mutters his parent, and this time he does; the picture softens a trifle.

"Now leave it alone," pleads Mother.

Young Harry wriggles. "It's nearly perfect, Dad. All you want is a shade more 'Contrast.'" His father coughs. "Well, only a shade."

A fraction of a turn, and the picture stands out with almost stereoscopic clearness.

The play is a thriller. Two men kneeling over a safe turn guiltily and spring to their feet. The camera holds them for an instant as they peer up the stairs to the right; then, with a lightning "cut" to another camera, the heroine's face appears in close-up, tense and drawn, almost life-size.

"Wonderful!" says the man from "The Laurels."

"Not when you understand the knobs," says Dad. "It's easy!"  
Easy?

*One of the latest full colour television receivers.*

Well, yes; it is easy to manipulate a few plastic knobs; it is easy, sitting there at home, to adjust the picture to your liking, with exactly the light and shade needed to make it stand out like a fish in an aquarium. But the picture itself? If the picture is "easy on the eye," if it grips the attention and holds the home audience spell-bound for an hour or more, then the B.B.C. Television staff at Alexandra Palace have once more achieved the most cunning fusion of the technical and the artistic yet known to man.

To create that swiftly-moving drama on the home screen, with its smooth and flexible scene changes and apparently accidental groupings of characters, sometimes in long-shot but more often in close-up, calls for supreme organisation. Only by seeing the studio in action could you guess how television production is bound up with the art that conceals art.



The main responsibility falls on the producer, who, in television, is the equivalent of a film director. But unlike a film director or stage producer, the man who puts over a television play is producing all the time. He can make or mar the show while it is actually on the air.

Watch him in the control gallery overlooking the studio.

Few people are allowed to climb the steel ladder to this sound-proof sanctuary, but we are privileged guests, sworn not to distract him from a job demanding intense concentration. He controls the entire machine.

Down on the right, as we peep through the double-thick glass, is the studio, looking like a brilliantly lit Aladdin's cave. There are people everywhere—camera-men and

their assistants in long white overalls, "property" men and scene-shifters, a girl prompter crouched at the edge of a "set," make-up girls with trays of cosmetics and grease paint, actors and actresses in costume, and a host of technicians almost literally on their toes as if looking for a technical hitch.

The play has reached the point where, at home, Dad has just got the "Contrast" right. You can see the studio-manager carrying his cue sheets and wearing headphones on a long tether of flex as he steps over the snake-like cables connecting each Emitron camera with the control room. He is whispering to the heroine at the top of a short flight of stairs while she receives another dab of face powder before her next scene.

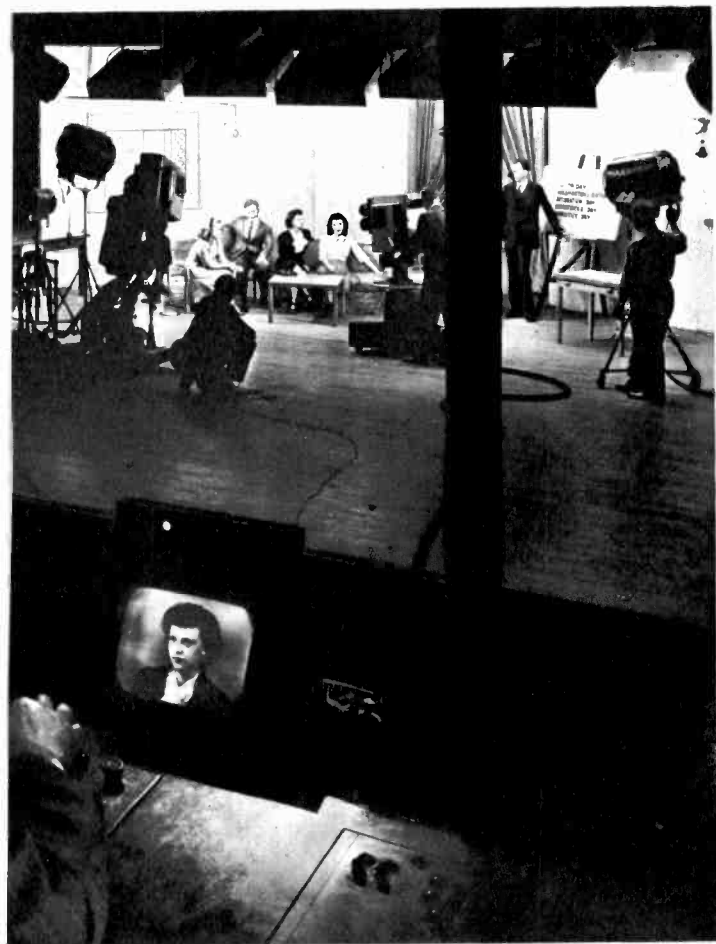
The studio-manager is the producer's lieutenant and right-hand man. It is he who gives the players their camera cues. During rehearsal the producer can talk to them through a loudspeaker in the studio, but during transmission his only means of conveying messages to them is by speaking to the studio-manager on his headphones. Then, by mystical finger signs, the "S.M." can indicate to the leading actress that unless she moves nearer the settee she will be "out of vision."

Now listen to the producer. "Track up a foot or two, Number Three Camera; that's good! Hold it!" He calls over his shoulder to the girl on the desk behind—she is "Miss Vision-Mixer"—"Preview on Four, please."

Fronting him in the semi-darkness are two receiver screens, each with a different picture. The one on the right shows the scene that is actually being transmitted—say from Number One camera—while



*Getting a picture right. A C.B.S. picture of engineers watching a studio broadcast.*



the left-hand one is a "pre-view" screen; it is used for selecting a scene from any one of the other three cameras in the studio. For instance, it may show the two burglars bending over the safe. On the producer's instructions, Number Three camera moves up slowly to the corner of the "set," which represents the duke's library, focuses on the two crouching men and gets them in the centre of the view-finder. While the cameraman is feeling for his distance, the producer is watching it all on the pre-view screen. "You've got it, Number Three!" he shouts triumphantly. "A lovely picture. Hold it!" And now, to "Miss Vision-Mixer": "Mix to Three."

The picture of the heroine in the right-hand screen fades out, to be instantly replaced by the one showing those two bad boys at the safe. Now the pre-view screen is empty again. "Give me One," says the producer, and the left-hand screen springs to life again with a picture they cannot yet see on the home screens; it shows the Inspector at "Scotland Yard" waiting for his cue to pick up the phone.

Pictures are only part of the producer's problem. At the desk in front of his own is the sound and "effects" engineer who, on instructions, selects the output from the various microphones. The burglars may be speaking on a microphone hidden in the safe. The heroine's voice is picked up on the microphone swinging from the boom as it follows her flight down the stairs without casting a shadow on her glamorous face. Yet another "mike" is concealed under the "Scotland Yard" desk to overhear the Inspector. Crowd noises may come from gramophone records on the turntable in a corner of the control gallery.

In addition there may be film sequences to show the speed-boat escape down the Thames. These scenes may have been shot on the river by the B.B.C. Film Unit ten days earlier and are now instantly on tap from the tele-ciné plant, to be blended with the studio scenes when the producer gives the word "Go."

Most people who come to the studios, whether to act or just to look around, wonder how the Emitron cameras work. Having no moving parts, they are completely noiseless. The Emitron camera is almost literally an "electric eye." The lens picks up the image in the same way as an ordinary camera but projects it, not on to a photographic plate, but on to a small oblong mosaic covered with tiny photo-sensitive nodules. When light falls on the mosaic, electricity is released from it in varying currents according to the light and shade on the image. Pointing at the mosaic, just below the lens, is an electron gun which shoots a stream of electrons at the mosaic in a series of lines—405 in all—in the same way that an eye scans a printed page. It does this twenty-five times a second. This is the well-known "scanning" process, and it is by means of this, plus a considerable number of delicate



*At Biggin Hill R.A.F. Station. Headquarters of fighter defence during the Battle of Britain.*

synchronising processes, that an electrical version of the picture eventually reaches the transmitting aerial to the tune of some three million vibrations a second.

The home receivers reverse the process. Synchronised at exactly the same speed of operation, they pick up the continuous radiations from Alexandra Palace, split them into lines again, and shoot them in the form of a stream of electrons on to the screen of the cathode-ray tube. The result is a replica of the image falling on the Emitron mosaic in the studio.

Meanwhile our producer, ringing the changes from one camera to another, is far too busy to consider the technical miracles of the vast instrument at his command. He is like a player at the console of a huge organ creating vision as well as sound. Almost every move has been rehearsed, but there remain those last-minute touches, those inspired decisions, that give television production its amazing spontaneity and enable the experienced viewer to distinguish between good production and bad.

A television play takes at least a fortnight to prepare. Only on the day of transmission do the players actually face the cameras for the dress rehearsal. Up till then all the rehearsals are carried out in studios in town, beginning with a preliminary "run-through" as the players sit round in a circle and read their lines from the script. Then, as they master their parts, the producer introduces the atmosphere of the television studio. Producers differ in their methods. Some use dummy cameras, marking out the actors' positions on the studio floor; others are content with a simple view-finder with a 30° lens, such as is fitted to the Emitron cameras.

And while the play takes shape at rehearsal, the scenery and "properties" take shape in the Alexandra Palace workshops. Our producer will have had long consultations with the scene designer, working out on specially-prepared studio charts how the cameras will move, and how much space can be devoted to the duke's library, the police court "set," and perhaps a "rocking set" representing the cabin of a motor-launch.

Most scenery is constructed from ply-wood, which is strong but light and easily man-handled in a hurry. Papier mâché is used extensively for mouldings. Furniture and pictures are the responsibility of the Property Manager, who may have to scour London to get odd items like a stuffed cormorant in a glass case or an Arabian scimitar. The "prop-room" at Alexandra Palace already contains a weird collection of articles, including every type of hand-telephone used since the 'nineties, champagne bottles (empty) of innumerable vintages, clusters of papier mâché fruit, and, of course, a nice assortment of handcuffs.

Scenery is painted in soft colours, avoiding dead-white and black and strong reds, which have an unsettling effect on the camera.

This colour problem affects the wardrobe department too. When high-definition television began in 1936, it was hoped to spare the cameras as much as possible by using dresses in drab greys and "off-whites," but the effect on the players was so depressing that the idea was abandoned. Now the studios are as colourful as any theatre stage, though red is still treated with respect. Men in evening-dress are persuaded to change into buff-coloured shirts. Pure white is inclined to jolt the television picture in much the same way that a shout blasts the microphone.

Alexandra Palace has a busy wardrobe department, with dressmakers and machinists who can turn out a period costume at short notice. Many costumes are hired, and viewers come to the rescue sometimes with offers of useful items from the family rag-bag.

Actors and actresses who have never before appeared in television wonder what awaits them in the make-up department on the morning of the first camera rehearsal. Ten years ago being made-up was an unpleasant ordeal; artists looked like mandrils, with bright blue lips and lines to emphasise the cheek-bones. Modern television make-up aims at nothing more than a healthy sun-tan which can be worn in the street. Many actresses, and not a few actors, go home after the performance without troubling to remove it. A thin grease-paint foundation is used, slightly darker in the case of men, finished off with a dusting of powder. During rehearsal the make-up assistants watch the players on monitor screens in the corner of the studio, and decide whether any of them need special treatment.

And now we are back in the producer's control gallery. The play is near its end, and Number Four camera-man is lining up on the final caption card. You can see it on the pre-view screen, slightly askew and out of focus. Number One Camera is busy transmitting a double close-up: the heroine and—well, who could *he* be? It's a kiss, anyway, as large as life. You can glimpse the pair, down there in the studio under the lights, and get a closer view on the transmitter screen in the gallery.

"Hold that caption, Number Four!" shouts the producer. "Fade in grams—mix to Camera Four."

As the music wells up in the background from the gramophone turntables, the picture dims, and in comes that caption: "The End."

The producer stands up. "Fade out vision. Out grams. Splendid show. Thanks very much everybody."

And while the producer stretches his numbed legs, Dad, in a sitting-room 20 miles away, is switching on the lights.

"Easy, isn't it . . . when you understand the knobs."





# **THE STORY OF TELEVISION**

## **PART 3**

**N**OBODY believes the story of the old lady (it is always an old lady) who asked the television salesman to "do that bit again, please—the bit where Oxford spurts ahead just before the winning post."

But it *is* true that many intelligent people getting their first glimpse of a television broadcast direct from the scene of action share the feelings of that legendary old lady. It seems fantastic that the vividly clear picture—a horse-race or a boxing match, perhaps, or an act straight from a London theatre—is no film but an instantaneous delineation of something that is going on many miles away while you watch it.

"It's happening now!" would be a good caption to flash at intervals on the pictures as they pour in from the B.B.C. mobile units. These units are the flying squads of television. Their business is "immediacy," "actuality"—call it any name that implies contact with events of the moment, caught by the Emitron camera and projected within a split second on tens of thousands of home receiver screens.

Regular viewers can recall many great moments when, in the excitement of watching a sporting contest or big public event, they quite forgot the television medium. In sheer news value, nothing surpassed a moment at the Cenotaph before the war, when a man tried to interrupt the Two Minutes' Silence. Television cameras were there, and as the police removed the offender, they were seen by people at home, and in Fleet Street newspaper offices too, before even the reporters could give the story to the world. Here was effective demonstration of the unpredictable, unforeseeable element in television broadcasts which holds the audience as in a spell. Anything may happen, and nobody, from the cameraman to the viewer, can prophesy what the cameras may see next.

This is probably why the televising of sporting events comes first in popularity. Newsreel versions of a football match or horse-race are exciting, but the audience already know the result, whereas television viewers share the same thrills of uncertainty as the people on the spot.

The B.B.C. Television Service has two mobile units or "flying squads," each composed of a number of vans the size of a motorcoach and painted dark green, which are daily becoming a more familiar sight in London streets and the surrounding country. It is when they roam far afield to more distant points from Alexandra Palace like Ascot or the Lower Thames that the cavalcade becomes really imposing. In Central London only the scanning van or mobile control room is needed; this is linked with the Alexandra Palace transmitter by special high-frequency cable which Post Office engineers have installed underground in a large circle which encloses most of "theatre-land," Westminster and the Mall, and other focal points of interest. Near Broadcasting House the circle is tapped by a line running direct to Alexandra Palace.

*At the Cenotaph.*

But the task is less easy when the mobile units set off on a new orbit, perhaps to televise the Derby from Epsom or a swimming gala in the suburbs. Then the complete cavalcade takes the road.

First comes the scanning van, housing some of the most complicated apparatus ever carried on four wheels. In fact, it is a miniature version of the producer's gallery and control room at Alexandra Palace. The inside is rather like a submarine, and during the broadcast the centre passage-way is crowded with engineers each performing an allotted task like the members of a submarine crew. At the front end are the two monitor screens, one for transmission, the other for "pre-view," just as at Alexandra Palace, and the producer in the van mixes his pictures in the same way as his colleagues on the control desk at headquarters.

Connected with the vision equipment are the long multi-core cables linked to each of the Emitrons or super-Emitron cameras, which can operate up to about 1,000 ft. from the van itself. These cameras move around like the tentacles of an octopus, always bent on capturing the best "shot." If there is time beforehand, small rostrums may be set up to give views over the heads of the crowd, but more often the "O.B." assistants must use their wit and ingenuity to seize the perfect picture while the show is "on" and button-hole interesting people who may be persuaded to face the cameras for a tele-interview. In the case of long "tracking shots," where the cameras have to advance and recede, a small army of men are needed to pay out the cable like sailors at a capstan.

Besides the vision apparatus, the control van handles all the sound equipment, with cables to microphones used by the commentators.

Next vehicle in the procession is the transmitter van. This is a complete television transmitting station on wheels, and it acts as a link between the mobile control room and Alexandra Palace. It works on a very low wavelength and uses only a fraction of the power employed at the main station. Always next to the transmitter van, like a Siamese twin, is one of the strangest vehicles in the country: a telescopic aerial specially constructed by a firm of fire-escape manufacturers. Like a fire-escape, it can be shot up at a moment's notice to a height of nearly 100 ft. At the top is a horizontal "di-pole," looking from the ground rather like a hospital stretcher. This is aligned on a compass bearing towards an exactly similar aerial fitted at the top of the 300-ft. mast at Alexandra Palace, where the vision signals are picked up, piped down to the central control room, and passed on to the main transmitter in the same way as the vision currents from the studios.





The height of both transmitting and receiving aerials is an important factor. Television works on the "ultra-short" waveband around 6 and 7 metres, and these waves, though not strictly limited to the horizon, as was originally thought, cannot be relied on to give a consistently good signal beyond optical range. So far, the maximum distance over which the mobile units have operated is about 30 miles, but this distance could be at least doubled if use were made of the many high radio towers dotted about Southern England. These could be employed to relay vision signals from still more distant points.

Fourth van in the long green cavalcade is the petrol generator, which supplies power to the mobile transmitter when no mains supply is available. And to complete the procession is the "spares" van, which carries everything from reserve equipment to the engineers' lunch.

Not even newspaper reporters or newsreel cameramen have a more adventurous job than the men with the television units. A reporter's story is sub-edited before it goes into print; so is a newsreel before it reaches the screen. But the television men lead a split-second life. Picture and commentary go out together, and if something goes wrong, there can be no cutting and starting again. All the O.B. men's triumphs are opportunities seized at the psychological moment, transformed into a living picture which often tells the viewer more than if he had been present as one of a milling crowd.

Outstanding among the successes of post-war television was the transmission of the Victory Parade from a rostrum specially erected opposite the Royal dais in the Mall. Results surprised even the men at the cameras; in fact, as has happened many times since, the commentators standing in the rain were apologising for poor pictures when viewers at home were receiving brilliant images. On this occasion the B.B.C. film unit was set up side by side with the Emitrons, so that viewers who missed the televised version at midday saw some of it repeated the same evening.

When tennis is transmitted from Wimbledon, one of the three Emitron cameras is usually placed in a fixed position, unattended, among the high seats at the back, to give long-shots of the entire court between close-up commentaries on individual play.

Considerable use is made of tele-photo lenses, especially when televising cricket. The producer in the scanning van gives directions for changing the lenses, and sometimes, if he is lucky, chooses exactly the right moment to show, say, a batsman in close-up just when he is being bowled out. But such inspired decisions are rare!

The television units must always be ready for rush jobs. Once when the equipment had been installed at Lords for a match the following day, the order came to televise a film artists' reception at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane. Park Lane is within the magic circle of the Post Office cable, so only the scanning van was needed. It was sent post haste to a narrow street behind the hotel, while one Emitron and its cable were taken through the kitchens and into the ballroom.

Scarcely less impromptu was the televising of a huge fashion display from the Royal Albert Hall. The programme included a camera ramble round the dance arena, with celebrity interviews, but as the parade of mannequins was not timed till midnight, after the television station would have closed down, a platoon of beauties and several leading dress designers were televised earlier in the evening from a special studio rigged up at short notice in the dressing rooms.

This is not to suggest that the O.B. crews like being rushed. Like everybody else, they prefer to take their time, and most of their artistic triumphs have been achieved in West End theatres. Monday is their favourite night, as this enables them to spend Sunday setting up the gear and arranging extra lighting without interfering with the running of the theatre.

The ideal camera position in most London theatres is the Dress Circle. From here the viewer gets a general picture of the stage besides a glimpse of the audience. Close-up cameras are occasionally used at one end of the orchestra pit, but as these give an oblique view, it is more usual to employ a variety of telephoto lenses on the more distant cameras.

These are early days. Alexandra Palace is offering a complete television service, not in any sense experimental, but the scope for development is infinite. Increases of range with the installation of relay stations all over the country will mean the expansion of outside broadcast facilities, and before long the mobile units may be showing us rugby at Edinburgh, a ship-launching on the Clyde and a fun-fair at Blackpool—all in one afternoon!

And then for international television, such as Olympic Games from the Continent, film-making in Hollywood, Test Matches in Australia.

We shall be seeing round the earth.

# The Measure of Short Waves



“YES, I could switch to the short waves on my set if I wanted to—but I don’t want to.”

“Why?”

“Well, the stations are hard to pick up, aren’t they? Anyway, I don’t seem able to find the ones I want, and if by chance I do, reception is cluttered up with atmospheric and stuff. So I leave the short waves to the technically-minded. I’m not.”

The bus arrived then, and we separated. Later in the evening the lady of the house (who was born in Toronto) provided a sequel and a contradiction by saying :

“I listened to Canada again this afternoon. It came in beautifully.”

The moral is this: the short waves are *not* the prerogative of the radio engineer, or the schoolboy son, or of the technically-minded. If they were, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, All-India Radio, the U.S.A. broadcasters, the B.B.C., and a number of other broadcasting bodies around the world would be wasting a lot of effort, money and time.

You can listen to the short-wave stations by moving the wave-change switch on an all-wave receiver to the appropriate marking, and turning the dial, *slowly*. Italics for “slowly” because it’s the key word. When the set is switched to the short waves, a half-inch of the tuning dial covers many more stations than when the switch points to medium wave, and so the tuning process is more critical. Twiddle the knob carelessly, and you jump over the stations.

Why are there more to the half-inch? Because “the shorter, the higher”—and that’s not a wise-cracking answer. A wave is—yes, literally a wave, and its length is measured in metres. But there’s more than one wave: there’s a rapid, continuous succession of them, leaving the transmitting aerial in an unremitting flow for as long as the transmitter is pumping out a signal. So, as well as length, the waves have frequency—that, obviously, means the number of them leaving the aerial in a given length of time. The length of time accepted as the standard is the second; the engineers’ name for a wave is “cycle.” So—frequency is cycles per second. If the waves are long, there must be fewer of them in a second than if they are short. A wave of 50 metres in length has a frequency of 6,000,000 cycles per second (which, for convenience, are abbreviated to 6,000 kilocycles or 600 megacycles per second).

Now the experts say that any two neighbours in the wavebands allotted to broadcasting must be at least 9 kilocycles away from each other, or mutual interference of signals will occur. An elementary sum will take you the rest of the way: there must be more multiples of nine in the high-frequency ranges (shorter waves) than in the low-frequency ones (longer waves). Thus, more stations to the half-inch of the tuning dials.

“ . . . I don’t seem able to find the ones I want.”

If the bus hadn't arrived, the response to that would have been: "Are you looking in the right place for them?"

It is true that knob-twiddling over the short-wave range can fill an hour very pleasantly, but if your interest is in Australia or the Belgian Congo or Russia, you may twiddle through the hour and more very disappointingly. You must know—or, at least, be able to make an intelligent guess—when the station you want is on the air, and the waveband it is most likely to be using.

If you can't obtain a list of short-wave stations and the wavelengths they use (and the disturbance of war has upset their supply, too), then you work it out this way: most stations aim to put their programmes into the audience-area at times when most members of the audience are most likely to be free to listen, which is normally the local evening, lunch time, and breakfast time, in that order. The next point is whether the path the signal takes from the wanted station to your fireside is all in daylight, all in darkness, or a bit of each. The answer to that determines whether the wavelength the station is using is towards the bottom end of the waveranges allocated (by international agreement, incidentally) to short-wave broadcasting. These ranges, or bands, are usually the 13, 16, 19, 25, 31, 41, and 49-metre bands, each spreading over a metre or so. A station on the 19-metre band, for example, would be using a wavelength somewhere between 18.99 and 19.99. The limits are sometimes over-stepped—42.16 for instance, would be described as in the 41-m band—and a few stations work on wavelengths in between the bands, but the general rule holds good.

Good general purpose wavebands are the 19, 25, and 31; the 11, 13, and 16-m bands are more valuable when the path, or most of it, is in daylight; the 41 and 49 when it is conditioned by darkness.

All this is because the short-wave signal doesn't travel in a straight line, or follow the curvature of the earth. When it leaves the transmitter it goes up at an angle. Between 30 and 300 miles above the earth's surface it hits a series of the atmospheric layers that envelop the globe. The signal hits a layer, and, if the length of the wave carrying it has been correctly calculated, it is bent over and sent back to earth. There it bounces up again—still at an angle, and so, hop by hop, it goes on round the world, until the strength of its impulse dwindles to inaudibility. This explains, too, of course, why the short waves are particularly suitable for long-distance communication. The ground, or direct wave, on which we rely for medium wave reception, peters out relatively few miles from the transmitter.

An interpolation here: if the signal is not "beamed," which indicates that the transmitting aerials are so arranged that the strength of transmission is deliberately concentrated in one particular direction, it will go out in two opposite directions (radiation at right angles to those can be ignored). So the signal hops over two paths at once; the paths may be of unequal length, and so a double signal may be picked up by the receiving set—the "echo" being heard a fraction of a second (speed of signal—186,000 miles per second) behind the original. The technical-tongued call this "echo effect." It can occur, too, when a very strong signal, having hopped once around the earth, does it again.

Back to the layers. The region where they lie is called the "ionosphere". The name comes from the fact that the gaseous particles of which they are composed are capable of being ionised—that, charged with ions, which makes them conductors of electricity. The agent of ionisation is the sun. Hence the importance of the daylight-darkness condition of the signal's path. Put at its simplest, it means that

as the density of the layers is affected by the action of the sun, so the length of the waves that they will refract is altered.

When, therefore, a broadcaster wants to keep his short-wave service on the air for many hours at a stretch, changes in wave-length must be made in the course of it to ensure continuous reception of the signal. And as in the course of the day, so in the course of the year: as the seasons change, and with them the influence of the sun, the engineers must re-order their wavelength schedules. Before we leave the sun, a word about its "spots." Sometimes there are mighty storms in the solar gases with great eruptions and emissions of energy—seen through a telescope, they look like spots on the face of the sun. When these occur, the ionosphere is violently upset, and down on earth the newspapers carry headlines like "Short-Wave Blackout; Radio Links Broken".

What was the other objection? ". . . Reception is cluttered up with atmospherics and stuff."

Well, in view of the distances that short-wave signals travel, and the fact that a great deal of shipping, aircraft, beacon, and commercial traffic share the waves below 100 metres, more "noise" is to be expected.

But a great deal of it can be avoided when short-wave listening is selective. There's a deal of difference between roaming the ranges to hear what you can find, and tuning in a transmission that is intended for you and has been engineered to make it as easy as possible for you to hear it. The lady of the house had no difficulty in tuning in Canada because the transmission she sought was directed to Britain, on a wavelength suitable for the time of day and season of the year. Further, receiving-set manufacturers have the suppression of noise very much in mind when they design sets for listening on the short waves. A good set married to the right transmission bears as offspring signals that can be not only easy on the ear, but examples of quality on the air.

To know what you want, then, is a large part of the answer. Here, as a guide to getting it, are some of the short-wave services regularly addressed to British listeners, with their approximate hours of operation and the wavebands on which they are normally to be found (*wavelengths* would be useless, as those in use at the time of writing will not necessarily be operative at the time of reading).

*Australia*: 7.0–8.15 a.m. G.M.T., on 13 and 25-metre bands; 3.0–4.0 p.m., 31-m band.

*Belgian Congo (Leopoldville)*: 1.30–2.30 p.m. and 4.30–5.15 p.m., 16-m band.

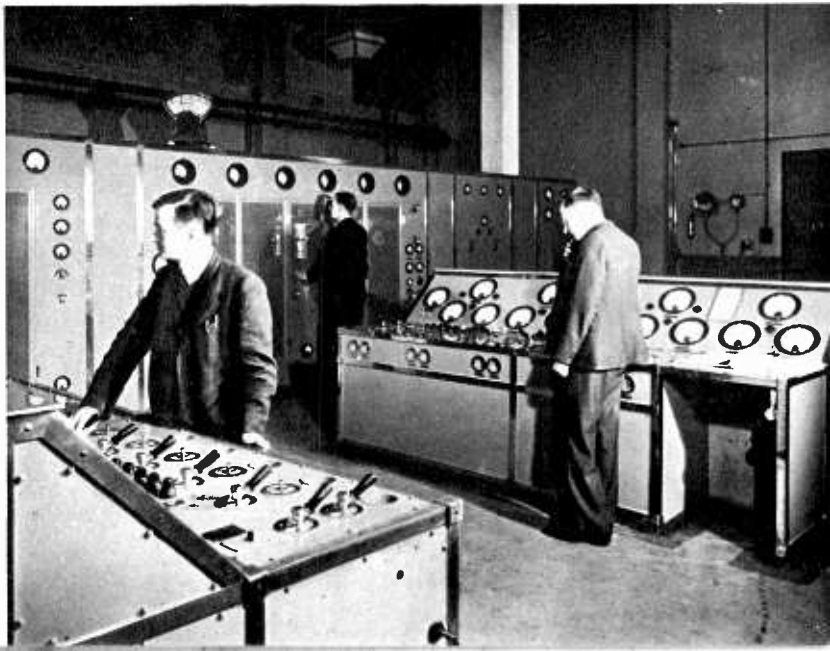
*Canada*: 6.30–7.0 p.m. and 9.30–10.0 p.m. and 4.30–5.15 p.m., 19-m band.

*French Equatorial Africa (Brazzaville)*: 6.45–7.0 p.m. and 8.45–9.0 p.m., 25 and 31-m bands.

*U.S.A.*: At intervals throughout day on 13, 16, 19 and 25-m bands.

*U.S.S.R.*: 4.0–4.30 p.m., 5–5.30 p.m., and 6.0–6.30 p.m., 19, 25, and 31-m bands; 8.0–8.15 p.m., 19, 25, 31, and 41-m bands; 10–10.30 p.m., 25, 31, 41, 49-m bands.

*A B.B.C. transmitter control desk with high power short-wave transmitter in background.*



# What Is F.M.?

“**F.M.**” means frequency modulation—formidable-looking words for the listener who “leaves that kind of thing to the engineers.” Yet, no listener who buys a daily paper can be unaware that they hold meaning for him, too. To find it, he needs to know what the words themselves mean.

The dictionary definition of “frequency” that applies here is “number of repetitions in a given time;” and it applies because it can refer to a sound or a wireless wave. If you have a piano handy, strike the bottom note. You’ll find that you can actually *hear* the vibrations of sound, although, even in a note as low as that, they are too fast to count. If you could count them, you’d find there were  $27\frac{1}{2}$  vibrations every second, and you could say that the frequency of the sound was 27.5 cycles per second.

Wireless waves are neither visible nor audible, but if you could see them, you’d be watching a succession of waves rippling past on their way from a transmitter to as many receivers as were adjusted to respond to them. The number of waves passing you in a second of time would tell you the *frequency* of the wave in use; the distance from the peak or trough of one wave to that of the next would give you the *length* of the wave.

But there is a third factor. The *intensity* or the amplitude of the wave would vary, and this would reveal whether the wave was, so to speak, a roller or a ripple. When it reached a receiver, the *size* or amplitude of the voltages it set up would vary in accordance with its rolling or rippling character.

Let us imagine a particular wave—a B.B.C. Home Service wave if you like—as being under observation at, say, 6.29 a.m. It would be 342.1 metres in length, which means that its frequency would be 877 kilocycles a second. At 6.29, its amplitude would be constant. But at 6.30, the amplitude would begin to vary, sometimes expanding, sometimes contracting. The variation is a reflection of what the announcer is saying as he opens the Service—every time he says “Service,” for example, a certain variation in amplitude would recur. The announcer’s voice, creating sounds of various frequencies, is riding on the carrier wave from the transmitter, and the various sound frequencies are causing the amplitude to fluctuate.

In radio terms, the effect is known as modulation, and so the second word is defined.

But while all this has interpreted “frequency” and “modulation,” it certainly has not interpreted “frequency modulation.” The description is of *amplitude* modulation, which is the system of broadcast transmission now in general use.

In frequency modulation, superimposing speech and music frequencies on the carrier frequency sets up a different kind of fluctuation: while the amplitude remains constant, the fundamental frequency of the carrier wave is caused to vary in sympathy with the frequency and amplitude of the sounds the wave is called upon to carry. In more scientific terms: the modulation of the carrier wave is carried out by varying its frequency at the frequency of the modulating oscillations and by an amount depending, at any time, on the amplitude of the modulating oscillations.

Now, what is the practical difference from the listener’s point of hearing? Why is F.M. advocated as preferable to A.M.?

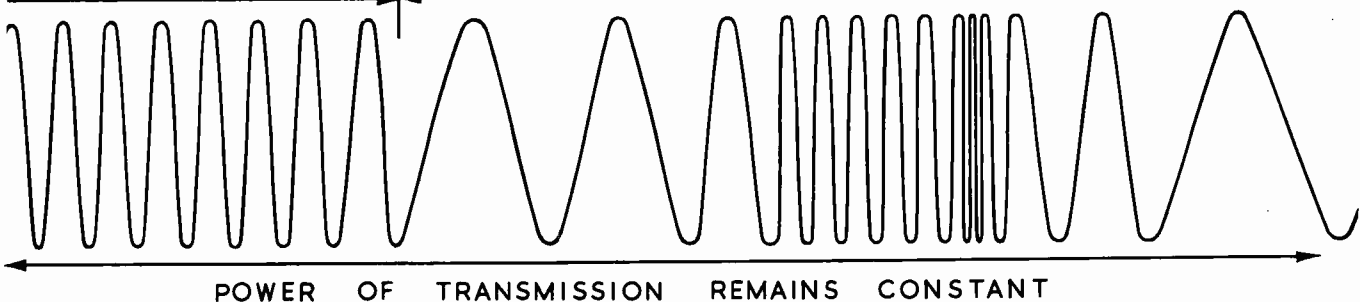
In their answer, the experts put the emphasis on two advantages: it offers a means of, first, more faithful reproduction of sounds, and secondly, of reducing disturbance by background noise. An incidental fact, but of obvious significance, is that F.M. is really effective only on the ultra-short waves, which forces attention to them, rather than to the medium waves, for broadcast transmission. This brings into the picture wavebands on which there is no congestion, and so a promise of some relief from the congestion on the existing broadcasting bands.



## DESIGN OF FREQUENCY MODULATION

STEADY FREQUENCY  
NOT VARIED BY SIGNAL

TRANSMISSION AT SLOWER & FASTER FREQUENCY  
CAUSED BY SPEAKING INTO MIKE OF F.M. TRANSMITTER



To illustrate the value of that promise: Let us say that stations need to be nine kilocycles apart if they are to avoid mutual interference. A range of very high frequencies (very short wavelengths) offers many multiples of nine and so obviously has room for more stations than a range of lower frequencies (longer wavelengths). As an example, the U.S.A. reckons that its present 1,000 or so A.M. stations on the medium waves—and there's not room for many more—could be increased to 3,000 if F.M. on the ultra-short wavebands were generally adopted.

Some hundreds of F.M. stations are either already operating or in prospect in America (the system was first put into practice there in 1940). In Britain, the B.B.C. has been experimenting with F.M. for a considerable time past—experiments that were officially approved and encouraged by the Government when it issued its White Paper on broadcasting last year. Not long ago, the B.B.C. announced the conclusions to be drawn from its experiments. They showed, among other things, that the use of F.M. on the ultra-short waves would “immediately and considerably extend the area of noise-free, high-quality reception;” that the system could be used to provide a service throughout the United Kingdom, and that “the increased cost of a broadcast receiver incorporating an ultra-short wave F.M. band is unlikely to be excessive.”

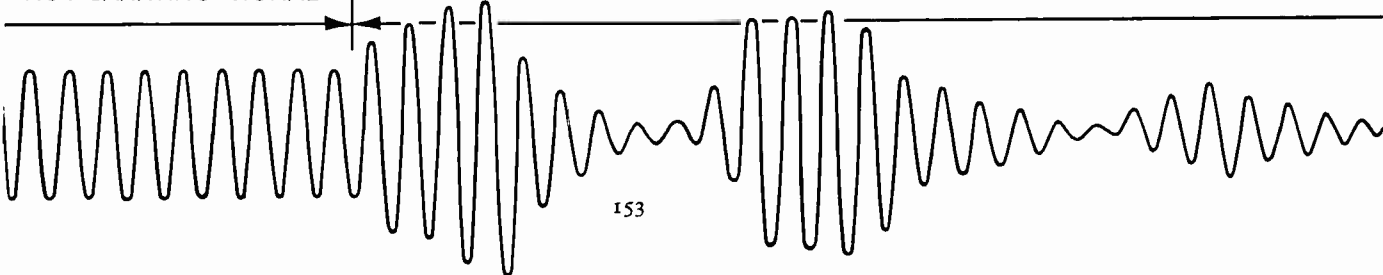
The very fact that receiving-set design must be modified before F.M. can be of value to the ordinary listener is one discouragement of unthinking optimism. Radio manufacturers have been at work in their research and experimental laboratories for a long time, but there's some way to go before there are sets on the market and transmissions on the air to serve them.

F.M. is no new or revolutionary idea. Engineers have known of it for years—a patent was taken out as long ago as 1902—and its practical potentialities for broadcasters have been recognised for ten years past. The situation, now, is that the work of experiment and development has reached an advanced stage, and that transmissions on the system have been and are being made, with results from which the ordinary listener would undoubtedly profit. But much remains to be done before the F.M. set is in Everyman's living-room.

## DESIGN OF AMPLITUDE MODULATION

STEADY 'CARRIER' WAVE  
OF FIXED FREQUENCY  
NOT CARRYING SIGNAL

CARRIER WAVE VARIED IN POWER BY SIGNAL  
THE RISE AND FALL OF AMPLITUDE REPRESENTS THE VERY LOW  
SPEECH FREQUENCIES CAUSED BY SPEAKING INTO THE MICROPHONE



# Services Calling

MAJOR B. D. CHAPMAN

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**I**N the dark days of 1941-42 when the War Office was already planning the offensive that was to eliminate the German Army, the morale of our fighting forces had become a matter of supreme importance.

“ My interest in broadcasting,” said the Adjutant General, “ is in relation to the morale of the troops and the objective is to use the machinery of broadcasting in such a way as to be of the maximum help to such morale.”

And so it became the business of Army Welfare to start the ball rolling. The War Office broadcasting branch was formed under the ministerial symbol A.W.2(b) and, in July 1942, it set up an Army Broadcasting Committee and in collaboration with the B.B.C., a Joint Planning Committee.

One of the first steps to be undertaken was a comprehensive listener research. The findings were lively and constructive. They were welcomed by the B.B.C. and strongly influenced the Forces Programme as well as the planning of the Army's own broadcasting material.

Sanction was obtained from the Army Council to bring soldiers with broadcasting and theatrical experience away from their units for a few hours at a time in order to record Army broadcasting shows in London. Some sort of machinery to handle these artists was called for and to accommodate the necessary script writers, producers and musical arrangers as well as recording and broadcasting technicians, the Army Radio Unit was formed.

The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force contributed their own talent to the organisation, which soon became inter-service. E.N.S.A., too, had its own radio unit.

The programme organisation became known as the Overseas Recorded Broadcasting Service, although the early shows went out under the general trademark, “ Services Calling.”

As early as 1941 a scheme had originated in Egypt, later spreading to Palestine, Syria and Iraq, whereby the Army obtained—limited air time from local civilian broadcasting organisations. Major Jack Frost had also inaugurated a similar system of services broadcasting over All-India Radio.

Although these arrangements came as a blessing to the troops, their disadvantages were obvious. The Forces needed their own radio stations and they made their requirements clear in no uncertain way. Networks were planned for North Africa, the Middle East and Far East, and subsequently for the Central Mediterranean and the British Army of Liberation in Europe. The story of any one of these networks is sufficient material for a book and Gale Pedrick who built the networks in North Africa and Italy and later returned to London to take charge of the complete organisation could tell a fascinating story.

The work had to go ahead quickly. Although the B.B.C. was doing a grand job on the short waves, reception in distant theatres could not be guaranteed, and the Axis, with its stranglehold on Europe, was not slow to cash in. Able to reach our troops with medium-wave transmitters it poured out appeals on the line of “ romantic escape ”—Vienna waltzes and swing, very often recorded from the B.B.C. and commercial stations in pre-war days. Injected into the music was the needle of propaganda, artfully contrived to get under the skin of men far from their homes.

“ Dickie ” Meyer, agile brain of commercial radio, went to the Middle East where a special difficulty existed because of the ban by the Egyptian Government on the relay by the Army of B.B.C. transmissions.

He had air-time facilities for the Army through the Egyptian State Broadcasting, the Palestine Broadcasting System, Radio Levant and Baghdad Radio. In spite of the supply difficulties, four Army stations were added to Cairo, Kabrit (Canal Zone), Gaza and Basra.

In Malta an Army rediffusion service brought radio programmes to the garrison and in Gibraltar the privately owned rediffusion service which served more than 1,000 loudspeakers was finally purchased outright by the Army in 1944.

From the earliest days, the backbone of the programmes in both these garrisons and the networks has been provided by the Overseas Recorded Broadcasting Service, "ORBS," as we call it. Complete radio programmes have been flown out, week by week, from London; further outlets have been provided in East and West Africa, in Iceland during our tenancy, and nearer home in the lonely islands round Britain. The Home Fleet was added to the distribution list at Portsmouth, Plymouth, Rosyth and Londonderry, and ORBS's programmes were sent to ships of our overseas Fleets for rediffusion over the ships' loudspeakers.

It was from the cabin of a ship anchored near Diego Suarez that a British officer on his own initiative directed the first British broadcasts of reassurance to the civilian population in the Madagascar campaign. He laid the beginning of "Services Calling" from Tananarive.





*“ Every artist a soldier—every soldier an artist.”*

rooms were constructed at top speed. Eleven men drove through a defeated German Army to Norden and took possession of the 100kw. transmitter which had been used by the enemy to flood the U.K. with propaganda.

A 20kw. transmitter, complete with its staff of twenty German officers and men, was captured intact at Lubeck, and moved to Velbert, thirty miles north of Cologne. This adequately covered the Ruhr: while to complete the BLA coverage one of the original mobile stations was installed in Berlin.

The British Forces Network in Germany became familiar to listeners at home as well as to the forces in Europe. Towards the end of 1946 it became necessary to hand over the powerful Norden transmitter to the B.B.C. for use in the Empire Service and in consequence it was arranged to cover the British Zone with a network of lower powered transmitters.

Special child of A.W.2(b), now A.W.S.5., has been the powerful 100kw. short wave station situated in Colombo, Ceylon. This Forces Broadcasting station transmits 16½ hours' radio entertainment each day, including relays from the B.B.C.'s General Forces Programme, recorded programmes flown out from London and live programmes compiled in the Radio S.E.A.C.

The station has an immense coverage, including India, East Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Indo-China, Japan, the Pacific Area and even the West Coast of America. Specially directed transmissions to the U.K. were beamed on the 19-metre band between 6.30 and 8.30 p.m. on Sundays, and reception in all parts of the country was excellent, and served to establish a link between the forces in S.E.A.C. and their families at home. In five years, the F.B.S. has grown from an idea into a system of world-wide networks.

Meanwhile the voice of the Forces Broadcasting Service ably directed by Lieut.-Col. Brian Cave-Brown-Cave and Major Roy Speer was being heard from All-India Radio, New Delhi, backed up by subsidiary programmes from Bombay, Calcutta, Dacca, Madras, Lahore, Lucknow and Peshawar as well as from the Ceylon broadcasting station at Colombo.

The B.B.C. launched a new service specially directed to the Invasion Armies—the Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme. The Armed Forces contributed much of the programme material.

A new unit to be known as the No.1 Field Broadcasting Unit was designed. It consisted of four mobile radio transmitters and studios, each a self-contained and independent sub-unit. They adopted the call sign BLA 1, 2, 3 and 4 and swept across Europe to the music of the “Blue Rockets” and other famous service bands. The stations operated on a power of 1kw. and, as the advancing armies moved beyond the range of the A.E.F.P. medium wave transmission, the troops still got their entertainment and news from home.

The advance of the Field Broadcasting Unit stopped at last in Hamburg, where John MacMillan, the C.O., installed his merry men in the Musik Halle. Studios, offices and control

# AMERICA

## OVER THERE

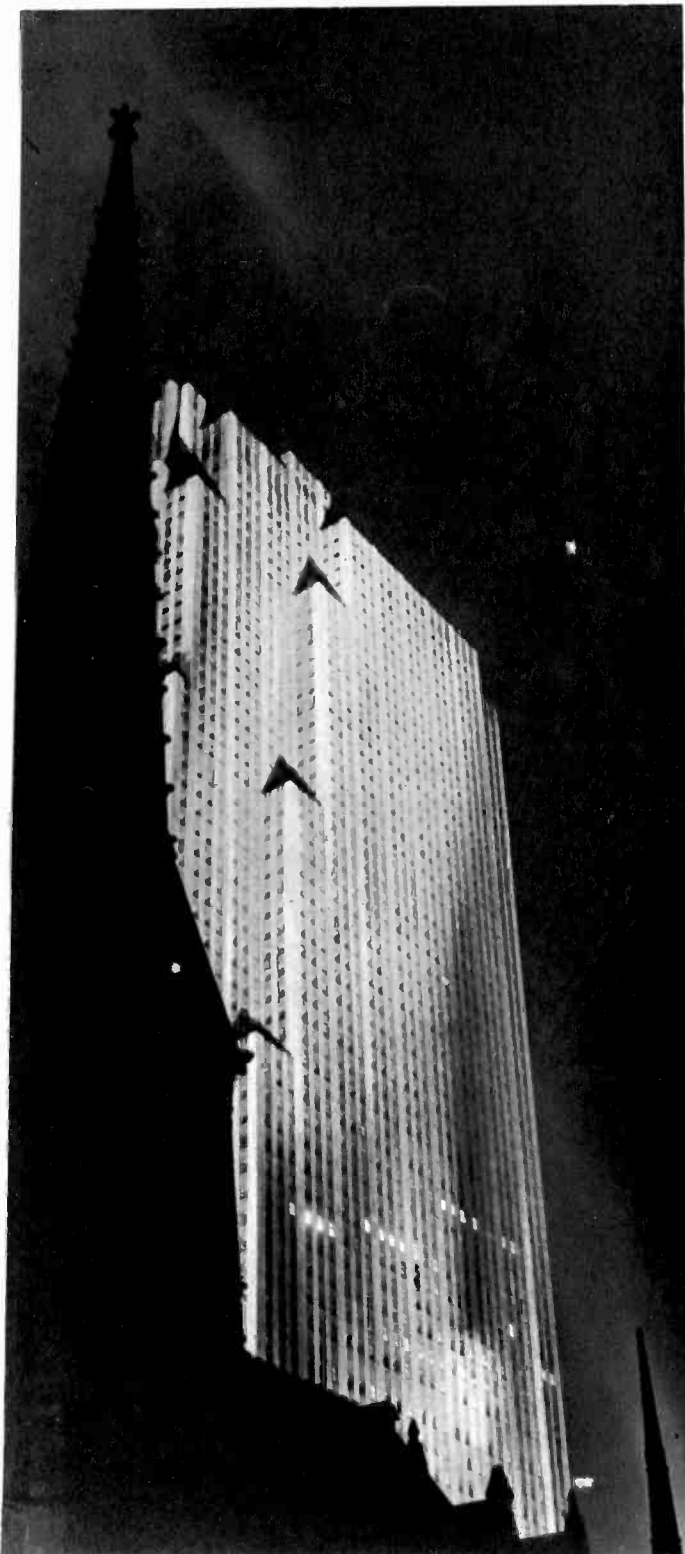
HARRY ALAN TOWERS

*Except for the short-wave enthusiasts few British listeners knew about, or for that matter cared much about American radio before the war. But by 1945 millions had become familiar with the broadcasts of Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Fred Allen and other stars—shows which were, of course, shorn of their commercial “credits.” These vanished from British programmes and the much-debated American “influence” upon the B.B.C. was confined to a few productions of transatlantic origin—“Ignorance is Bliss,” “Twenty Questions,” etc. But we had been given a glimpse of the vast radio industry in America, which presents all its Hollywood and Broadway stars in sponsored broadcasts—dealt with here by a writer who has made it his business to master the subject.*

**T**HIS is no technical survey, but just one man's impression of that noisy, individual, immense and unique instrument of public entertainment and information—American radio.

To begin with, there's so much of it. Nine hundred and fifteen radio stations, four coast-to-coast networks, twenty-five regional networks, are all on the air for an average of seventeen to eighteen hours a day. In New York alone there are twenty radio stations and the vastness of America echoes and re-echoes with the voices, the songs and the music of radio's “big noises”—all paid for by the American advertiser.

American radio, as Norman Collins, Controller of the B.B.C.'s Light Programme, once said, is “a heavy industry.” People take it seriously as a business. This was particularly noticeable during the war when, out of every thousand G.I's, at least one man had a first class working experience of how to run a radio station.



After all, in the States every moderate sized town has its own radio station, just as in Britain it would have its own local newspaper. This doesn't affect the immense networks to which, in most cases, these small stations are affiliated. It does, however, ensure that there is plenty of first class "local radio" where, during the "not-so-valuable" day time hours, the local advertiser buys the air time and fills it with programmes of local interest. Radio is an immense industry and, next to the picture business, employs more people than any other entertainment media in the United States. As in Britain, it has grown in importance in recent years and is today the vital factor in determining public taste and opinion.

But let's leave the general picture for the moment and turn to some of the individual "big noises" on the air "over there." First come the comics. Still pre-eminent in pay and popularity America's radio comics are, in many cases, household names throughout the world. Motion pictures and recordings have seen to that, but don't think you've heard of them all. For instance, a recent top-rating comedy programme in America starred Fibber McGee and Molly, a domestic comedy partnership practically unknown outside the North American continent. Yet Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Charlie McCarthy and Fred Allen have all reached a far wider audience.

Connoisseurs of comedy would probably pick from this quartet, Fred Allen. His unhappy, sing-song drawl (which one critic likened to the sound of a man with false teeth chewing on slate pencils) provides, for most Americans, the high spot of their Sunday evening listening. For his weekly pay cheque of £3,000, Allen provides an entertainment which might easily find a British simile in Tommy Handley's "Itma." For Fred, like Tommy, gains his principal comedy effects through a cast of strange and hilariously amusing characters. The latest addition to the ranks of these freaks is portrayed by his announcer—Kenny Delmar. Senator Claghorn, a senator from the deep South, is the character which has endeared itself to the hearts of Allen's audience as much as Mrs. Mop became an indispensable part of Handley's entourage.

If Allen is master of repartee, Jack Benny in his own field of domestic comedy, is unsurpassed. The radio feud developed between the two of them has paid off a handsome dividend in laughs, but face to face, Benny is at a severe disadvantage. Harassed-looking, cigar-smoking Jack, is no "ad-libber" and probably the saddest and truest lines of his life came out once when Fred Allen literally outwitted him. "If I had my writers here" complained Benny, "you wouldn't talk to me like that and get away with it."

Second only to comedy shows in their listening audience comes the class of programme generally typed as "audience participation." We call them "Quiz" programmes, although in some cases you can find no actual equivalent in British radio, for usually, the greatest appeal of an audience participation programme is its free prize value. "Something for nothing" never loses its appeal, and the enormous awards given to the successful contestants guarantee these shows a large audience.

Apart from such offerings as "Information Please," which bears some resemblance to our own "Brains Trust," probably "Truth or Consequence" is the most entertaining. Its master of ceremonies Ralph Edwards, conceived the idea in 1940 after suffering various indignities at the hands of his friends in the course of a parlour game called "Forfeits." Transferring the idea, quite literally to the air, he has had six years of unequalled success.

Questions, generally tricky, are mailed in by listeners. If the contestant gets the answer correctly, there's a prize; if not, they have to pay the consequence. To date no contestant has refused to perform a consequence, though the forfeits have ranged from the ludicrous to the lunatic. Such cheerful pastimes as "pushing a walnut by the nose" and "washing an elephant" are mere standbys. Two men have been required to crouch in a dog house, alternatively barking and singing "The Curse of an Aching Heart." A woman has had to eat and drink alternatively, with a cream puff in one hand and a glass of milk in the other, singing "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush" and skipping over a rope at the same time. An Eskimo housewife



*Charlie McCarthy and Edgar Bergen.*

has been flown from the far North as material on which a victim had to test his refrigerator selling talent.

Ralph Edwards sent a man from California to New York without any money, but with two dozen pairs of nylons. "Most American people" says Edwards, "are darn good sports." They have to be.

Phil Baker's "Take it or Leave it" programme probably offers the highest money prizes. The idea was copied by the B.B.C. in the "Double or Quits Quiz," but never reached the astronomical values of its American equivalent. A trick on the American show is to carry forward the money prizes on the unanswered questions to a weekly jack-pot. If the jack-pot is not won it goes on to the next week, and so accumulates into a pool of thousands of dollars. In an attempt to collect audiences from the successful "Quiz" shows, rival audience participation programmes are offering bigger and bigger prizes. At one show I visited in New York recently, one woman was awarded a motor car and

*An American audience listens to Red Skelton and his guest, Phil Baker.*



a refrigerator, all for answering a simple question. Cashing in on humanity's natural acquisitiveness, America is taking and liking this kind of programme in ever increasing quantities.

During the war years, America's third ranking radio attraction was the Commentator. Still head and shoulders above the rest stands Walter Winchell. With customary modesty, Winchell has been described as "the greatest town gossip in the greatest town in the world." No Sunday night of listening would be complete without the Winchell contribution. Talking of contributions, Winchell has fathered more perverted additions to the American language than any one else. Such expressions as "the hardened artery"—Broadway, "Infanticipating"—expecting a baby, and "Reno-vated"—contemplating divorce, are now in common usage. Yet Winchell has his serious side and from 1932 onwards his anti-Hitler quips and savageries were among the first to be heard in America.

Among the new recruits to America's radio commentators, most sensational was New York's ex-mayor Fiorello La Guardia. Uncertain in speech, La Guardia splutters and fumes at the microphone, but

*(Continued on page 161.)*

# A Yank in the BBC

JOEL O'BRIEN

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**E**ARLY in 1944 I was on my way to the European Theatre of Operations in a small American cargo boat when I heard the B.B.C. for the first time over the ship's radio. One of the crew turned to me and said, "Will ya jus' lissen to dat : Now why da hell don't dey loin to speak English?"

A few months later I saw his source of annoyance in operation when I made a not-too-exciting report for what was probably the most impressive actuality news programme any radio network has ever produced: "War Report." It comprised recordings from B.B.C. war correspondents in the field and live eye-witness accounts from anyone who had just returned from the front lines. As air time drew near the studio was a frenzy of activity with new reports arriving to be censored and edited, necessitating changes in the entire show's line-up. And through it all walked the imperturbable dimensions of Laurence Gilliam, Director of Features, checking, suggesting, okaying.

Then "War Report" was on the air, bringing the day's battles to most of the homes in Britain with unparalleled vividness. The voices of Frank Gillard from Normandy, Robert Barr from Eisenhower's headquarters, Wynford Vaughan-Thomas from Italy—the correspondents as often as not shouting against the noise of battle swirling around them.

Listening to "War Report" from the point of view of an American radio man, one found it fresh, vivid and exciting—especially in its use of recordings.

It was the B.B.C.'s splendid use of recordings in both news and feature programmes that made top-flight radio men such as Ed Murrow and Davidson Taylor return to America after the war convinced that American networks should break their self-imposed ban on recorded material.

As a writer-producer with the B.B.C. I spent a varied and absorbing twelve months. I started with a half-hour magazine series, ended with a two hour version of John Hersey's magnificent "Hiroshima," and in between was given assignments which covered every aspect of radio production.

At one point I was allowed to adapt and produce Stephen Vincent Benet's "John Brown's Body." It's a compelling work, rich in colour, throwing imaginary characters against the factual panorama of the American Civil War. The adaptation ran for an hour and a half. In America the book is considered a modern classic, but it would never be given that much air time in its native country due mainly to the fact that no network would feel disposed to give up three highly saleable half-hour periods to sustain the cost of one dramatic show, regardless of merit. From this standpoint, the B.B.C.'s elasticity in programming gives it a potential edge over American radio.

Another gratifying fact about British radio for all concerned is that it's not quite so transient an art form as radio in the States. If you miss a programme you particularly want to hear, the chances are it will be given a recorded repeat later in the week. And if it really has merit it will be given a third and fourth repeat in the weeks to come. I feel too, that radio in Britain makes more use of writers in other fields than we do in America.

I don't want to give the impression that the B.B.C. is the ultimate in radio expression. Its potential excellence doesn't always carry with it perfection by any means. I've heard a good many ninety minute shows which should have been done in thirty minutes, if at all. I've heard programmes written by non-radio authors around an excellent idea, but written in a non-radio idiom and therefore useless to the air. And, with the exception of a handful of B.B.C. employees, I miss the precision of idea and perfection of technique which the sharp competition of American radio, both commercial and non-commercial, instills in its workers.

When I first started working in radio, one of its major fascinations for me was the fact that one had to work within a constricted time limit. Not only had one to write and produce within that certain



time, but it had to be correct to the last second. That, to my mind, made for conciseness in the subject matter, and simplification in production: whereas in the B.B.C. I found that one could under-run two, five or ten minutes and nobody seemed to care.

A little honest competition would, I feel, help the B.B.C. enormously. But the fact remains that the B.B.C., with its broad base of subject matter and its non-preoccupation with commercial restrictions, offers its writers and producers far more freedom and far more interesting and diversified material to work with than any American employer would be free to offer, even if he wanted to.

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## OVER THERE *(continued from page 159).*

puts his personality over by sheer will-power. He loses his place, stutters, and yet, above all, is so overwhelmingly sincere that he triumphs.

From commentators to "soap operas." British listeners in pre-war commercial radio had a brief glimpse of the soap opera. These five times a week serial dramas—the radio equivalent of the newspaper strip cartoon—were christened through their natural appeal, as an advertising medium, to the soap manufacturers. Under such titles as "Ma Perkins," "Big Sister," "When a Girl Marries" and "Portia Faces Life," they keep up the spirit of American womanhood as they bend over the washing machine.

But only in America could occur the experience of some years back when one sponsor presented as a day-time radio serial "Light of the World"—a series that took astounding liberties with biblical incidents. Taking its pattern from the normal day-time radio serial, at the end of the instalment the announcer aroused the listeners to contemplate this immemorial problem—"Did Eve do wrong?—Was she too much of a mother in seeking to protect her child? Tune in tomorrow to the next chapter of 'Light of the World' brought to you every Monday to Friday by the makers of . . . etc., etc." In the beginning, according to Genesis, there was nothing; but in the beginning, according to the radio version, there was a two-minute commercial.

Which brings us to the "biggest noise" of all in American radio—the commercial. For the commercial pays for it all and therefore to the broadcaster it must remain the "biggest noise." No one would deny that it is disconcerting to have your radio drama interrupted at the most critical moment by an advertising message. Nobody would deny that in moments of crisis, to have your news commentary held up with advertisements, is annoying. No one would deny all this, and yet in all honesty one must say that once one's ear is attuned to it, the commercial in radio is no more annoying than the "ads." in your daily newspaper.

All the ingenuity of the modern radio copywriter goes into the creating of the commercial. It ranges from singing and dramatisation to plain good old-fashioned plugging. In some cases, such as the Jack Benny programme, the commercial is so artfully worked into the centre of the programme that it is of definite entertainment value in itself. There could be no higher praise for an effective commercial message.

Today in America radio stands in a unique position. As in Britain, during the war it has gained immensely in its power as an instrument of public opinion and public entertainment. Radio has many critics in the United States and some point to the B.B.C. as a model of how an enlightened democracy should deal with such an influential media. These critics are few, but none the less vehement in their expression of opinion. The great majority of Americans are both satisfied and proud of their radio. The ten million Americans who served overseas during World War II demanded comparable entertainment and service to that enjoyed by their families at home. They got it.

All over the world American-operated Forces networks provided recorded radio entertainments which gave the best of America's radio to the Forces—incidentally free of all commercials. This meant that many foreign listeners gained a fleeting, though not entirely true, impression of the U.S.A. style of broadcasting. The influence of that fleeting impression can be felt in many countries. In Britain, the B.B.C. has taken some of the better features of American radio to itself, particularly so far as light entertainment is concerned. True, the B.B.C. borrowed the ideas the long way round, for they are patterning themselves in a very noticeable fashion on pre-war British commercial radio, which was, in itself, a reflection of the American style.

In entertainment, at any rate, it therefore appears that America has led the radio world. Whether in public service and true appreciation of the ultimate power of radio, America can claim that same happy lead, is, perhaps, open to question.

# A Reporter Remembers

## Ed MURROW



*Among the many fine talks broadcast in the last five years, few made a more profound impression on Britain than "A Reporter Remembers." This was the title of a farewell message to British people by Mr. Ed Murrow—Chief of the Columbia Broadcasting System's Foreign Staff during the war years, and the chief American interpreter of Britain to his own country. He gave a vivid and true picture of the Battle of Britain and the people of Britain. Before he left London to take up a key position in American radio, Mr. Murrow went to the microphone and "remembered." We are indebted to Mr. Murrow for permission to print extracts from an outstanding example of broadcasting at its best.—EDITOR.*

**I** FIRST came to England sixteen years ago. I knew something of your history and more of your literature. But to me England was a small, pleasant, historical but relatively unimportant island off the coast of Europe. Your country was a sort of museum piece—pleasant but small. You seemed slow, indifferent and exceedingly complacent—not important. I thought your streets narrow and mean; your tailors over-advertised; your climate unbearable; your class consciousness offensive. You couldn't cook; your young men seemed without vigour or purpose. I admired your history, doubted your future, and suspected that the historians had merely agreed upon a myth. I remember being in Warsaw when the Germans marched into Austria—flying to Vienna, and finding that everyone there was asking the question: "What will the British do?" I remember listening to the B.B.C. that Sunday night, hearing a broadcast about the relief of Mafeking—remember my Austrian friend saying: "There they are, the British, living in the past—their future is all behind them." And still I doubted. I went from Vienna to Prague, and there again my friends were asking: "Do the British know what is happening?" And I could only reply: "Who knows what the British know?"

We all remember the spring of '40, and how the grey German tide spread like a stain over Western Europe. There was Dunkirk—a name which will last so long as the English language. The sea was calm—and the little ships went over and brought the boys back, and how many of them brought their rifles back with them—and defeat was not in their faces.

*And there was Churchill who mobilised the language and made it fight.*

Then came the days when Englishmen dug deep into their history and were worthy of their ancestors. Those were the days when most men save Englishmen despaired of England's life, and when according to reports that came down from the North, they were saying in Scotland: "If England is forced to give in it will be a long war." I remember a week-end spent with General Alexander up on the Wash—seeing seven miles of open beach covered by two antiquated naval guns

—the young gunner explaining that he had exactly twenty-seven rounds ; he proposed to use the H.E. on the barges as they came in, and reserve his seven rounds of shrapnel till the enemy reached the beach. His ancestors were looking down at him, and he knew it.

\* \* \*

I remember Mr. Churchill walking through the East End the morning after a heavy raid. The people cheered him. He said : “ They act as though I had brought them a great victory ”—and there were tears in his eyes. Remember the morning they hit Biggin Hill ? And a company of W.A.A.F. marched through the gates while the buildings were still burning ? They marched like the Guards. The swirling of dog fights over Dover—the black scars on green turf where the planes crashed.

The big raid of December 29th when the City burned, and as I walked home at seven in the morning the windows in the West End were red with reflected fire, and the raindrops were like blood on the panes. That was the Christmas you sang carols in the shelters, and you were living a life, not an apology. And it was then that I learned the meaning of that great word, “ steady ”—in places like Bristol, Coventry, Plymouth, Southampton and Manchester.

When the Americans began to arrive I stood at the rail as the liner came into Greenock. A boy from California looked at that green and pleasant land and remarked : “ Boy, that’s a piece of real estate.” And a young Scot in R.A.F. blue replied : “ Aye, we’ve spent a thousand years improving it. . . ”

I remember how the Americans drank up your beer, monopolised the taxis and made loud noises in the street. And how most of you gave a sustained demonstration of native good manners.

In my youth I was told that you were a seafaring people, and I’ve no reason to believe that I was misinformed. But you carry with you in the air a degree of casual confidence, courage and courtesy which is altogether remarkable. There was a night over Berlin when we were coned in the lights. The Lancaster was cork-screwing ; the pilot said : “ Window like mad.” He meant to throw out those metallic strips you used to confuse the enemy RADAR. And the bomb aimer said to me over the inter. com. : “ Mr. Murrow, would you please pass me another package of windows.” That’s what he said, “ please,” and it seemed so natural that I forgot about it until we returned to base.

Do you remember that while London was being bombed in the daylight, the House devoted two days to discussing conditions under which enemy aliens were detained on the Isle of Man ? Though Britain fell, there were to be no concentration camps here. Do you remember that two days after Italy declared war, an Italian citizen convicted of murder in the Lower Courts appealed successfully to the highest Court in the Land, and the original verdict was set aside ? There was still law in the land, regardless of race, nationality or hatred. Future generations who bother to read the official record of proceedings in the House of Commons will discover that British armies retreated from many places, but that there was no retreat from the principles for which your ancestors fought. The record is massive evidence of the flexibility and toughness of the principles you profess. It will, I think, inspire and lift men’s hearts long after the names of most of the great sea and land engagements have been forgotten. It was your answer to the question that was asked all round the world in the decades before that Sunday in September of 1939 : The question was : “ What has happened to the soul of Britain ? ” Your answer was conclusive and I have been privileged to see an entire people give the reply to tyranny that their history demanded of them.

# Transatlantic Quiz

LIONEL HALE

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*“ To Find Out Who Knows More About The Other’s Country. . . . ”*

NOT all the effects of war are abominable ; and if “ Transatlantic Quiz ” has entertained a good many people it owes its origin to war-time.

I speak only as a hired hand, the London question-master ; but I believe the “ Quiz ” sprang from a B.B.C.-arranged programme called “ Answering You,” in which questions from the U.S. asked for more-or-less impromptu answers from the embattled island. (One answer, I recall, startlingly broke security rules on the presence of General Eisenhower in London, and sprained the wrist of the agonised but belated gentleman on the censor switch).

From this—a programme admittedly flavoured with propaganda—was evolved “ Transatlantic Quiz.” Hired hands like question-masters do not speculate on the deep deliberations of the board-room, but I think it was Alistair Cooke in New York and Mrs. Mary Adams in London who hammered out an idea something like this : “ Let us have competing teams, two a side, in London and New York. Let us find out how much London knows about the American Constitution, the drug-store, the films, the past and present of America. Let us find out how much New York knows about the Tower of London, the ‘ clippie ’ bus-conductress, Scottish slang, the industry, the history, and the curious habits of Great Britain. No propaganda : entertainment and a friendly give-and-take.” It may not have been such bad propaganda after all, both ways.

This “ Quiz ” is not a Brains Trust. It is more on the model of the American “ Information Please.” But, though facts are the primary object, it is the fictions of the contestants, when baffled by some obscurity, that are a large part of its value. Professor Denis Brogan in London was once asked to choose a three-course meal of which each course was named after an American state or place. Having decided (eccentrically) to start with Boston Baked Beans, and having gone on to triumph with Maryland Chicken, the Professor fell into a momentary brood about the third course : he emerged from it to finish (in simple dignity) with California Syrup of Figs. Christopher Morley, asked for the official birthday of every British race-horse, wasted no time in replying “ All Foals Day.” John Mason Brown, partnering Morley, has acquired the same idiom. Asked what a “ fewster ” might be, and fairly justifiably ignorant of the fact that it is a maker of wooden saddles, Brown held firmly to it that it was one of Henry V’s soldiers at Agincourt : “ a happy Fewster.” You observe that no puns or holds are barred.

Christopher Morley, the best of all bearded pards to have about in New York on these occasions, is as walking an encyclopædia on England as our own inimitable Denis Brogan is on America : I am thinking of having them both bound in calf, as soon as Morley can spare time from writing his exquisite novels and Brogan can come momentarily to rest in his breakneck career of Cambridge Professor, journalist, lecturer and conversationalist. How these two mercurial spirits are kept to the point I am never quite sure. But Alistair Cooke in New York is the best of all question-masters,

# OF THE AIR

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*Top left : Basil Radford (left) and Naunton Wayne.*

*Top right : Robb Wilton as Mr. Muddlecombe, J.P.*

*Centre left : Walter Wade, Cabaret and Radio star.*

*Bottom left : Eddie Carroll.*

*Bottom right : Stanley Holloway and Tommy Trinder in " Champagne Charlie."*



# Broadcasting in Latin America

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY

JORGE CAMACHO

(formerly organiser of Latin American programmes)



*In general, how is broadcasting organised in (a) Central American countries, and (b) South American countries?*

**I**N general, in South and Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean republics radio is organised on commercial lines. In most countries, the State claims the right to distribute or withhold channels (wavelengths), and concessions to certain channels are granted at the discretion of the competent governmental authority. Many commercial organisations claim that concessions are granted for periods too short to warrant sufficient capital expenditure on plant installations, etc. In some countries there are State-owned stations. Examples are Argentina and Uruguay (State-owned and financed, and non-commercial); Brazil (State-owned, but commercial and non-official); Peru (State-owned, official and commercial); Colombia (State-owned, official and non-commercial.)

In some countries, the Ministry of Education has a station for cultural purposes—Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico are examples. In Argentina, there is a Buenos Aires municipal station; Brazil has a station operated by the Prefecture of the Federal District of Rio de Janeiro, and Mexico City a station operated by the University.

In spite of these examples, the vast majority are commercial stations, depending on advertising for their revenue.

*How far is control exercised by the respective States?*

Control is exercised in varying degrees. In most countries stations enjoy relative freedom within the framework of reasonable regulations. Political troubles have given rise to exceptions. But to be adequately answered, this question would have to be dealt with at length.

*Do listeners pay licence fees?*

No listeners pay licence fees in any country.

*Is much use made of the short waves? Can we hear their programmes in Great Britain?*

There is a large number of short-wave stations, as only the smaller countries could be entirely covered by a single medium-wave transmitter. Most countries have at least one, and some many more, short-wave transmissions that can be heard in Britain. The best signal is usually obtained from Radio Nacional of Rio de Janeiro in the 25-metre band.

*If one went to (a) Rio de Janeiro, or (b) Buenos Aires, what might one expect to hear?*

(a) *Rio de Janeiro*: Mixed programmes mostly of a popular nature, with a large proportion of serial plays and radio drama in general. Carnival time increases the balance of folk music and popular dances. A small proportion of serious music. Stations operated by the Ministry of Education and the Prefecture of Rio de Janeiro Federal District offer programmes of a comparatively high cultural level.

(b) *Buenos Aires*: High-level commercial programmes comparable with those of the United States. A high proportion of good music from the State radio and the municipal station.

and Denis Brogan is very kind to me in London: if he ever sees me actually shedding tears at the sight of him writing letters in the middle of the programme (while he is abstractedly answering some question about the Christian name of the distant cousin of a remote American president) he indulges me by putting away his writing pad for a few minutes.

To these masters of recondite knowledge and repartee have been added partners of various accomplishments. David Niven, for the films: Jan Struther, for literature (and a great mark-earner

on American kitchen topics): Jack Auburn, for banking: John Foster, M.P., for the law: Joyce Grenfell—all these on the London side have scored marks which pleased a British listening public which has shown a pretty partisan spirit about "Transatlantic Quiz." For New York, Russell Crouse, dramatist: John Mason Brown, dramatic critic and war correspondent: Frank Fay, the actor, made famous by the play "Harvey"—these have partnered Morley since the "Quiz" started in April 1944.

It seems some time since then. In 1944, the programme was heard only over American networks: it was not broadcast in the B.B.C.'s British programmes until July 1945. I saw earlier on that its friendliness might have some value, and that the sound of Englishman and American in amicable rivalry, might do no harm to either country's understanding of the other; and it is a pity that the "Quiz" is not on the big American networks. It is no secret, I think that those networks wanted the programme, but Sponsorship reared its ugly head. The B.B.C. gloomily consulted its Charter, which sternly sticks to its motto of "Sour are the uses of advertisement."

It is not only that some of us participants were thinking, with a kind of incredulous wonder, the whacking great fees accruing from soap or cellular shirts. More impersonally and much more importantly, we felt sure that a programme which created good transatlantic feeling in Middlesbrough would do the same in the Middle West. In this, and many other cases of the same sort, I for one feel that the Charter might get some flexibility into its stiff joints.

However, we continue (in our homely way) on the home air. What does the American "Variety" mean by the head-line "When Schedule Changeth, Business Increaseth"? Why would London recall the name Philip Astley at Christmas-time? Whom does the leading lady at Drury Lane have to thank for a piece of cake, and when? Who was the American printer who "hoped to appear in Heaven in a new and more elegant edition"? If Hoagy was getting in the groove with Cooty and Cosy, what would be happening? In short, how, what, why, and when?



*The two Quiz-Masters—Lionel Hale of London and Alistair Cooke of New York.*



*Kenny Baker.*



*Viera, International Cabaret star.*



*Brian Reece,  
Revue and Cabaret star.*



*Richard Murdoch, Sam Costa,  
Kenneth Horne, Maurice Denham.*



*Elsie (left), and Doris Waters.*



*Has any Central and South American system specialised in any particular field of broadcasting ?*

No. Schools broadcasting has started in Venezuela and Uruguay as a result of B.B.C. initiative. In Chile, a spontaneous start was made. The use of radio for cultural purposes has been widely studied and much experimental work has been done.

*Is there much rebroadcasting of British programmes ?*

Yes. Approximately 315 daily regular rebroadcasts. Together with irregular rebroadcasts, the average is in the neighbourhood of 350 daily. Approximately 35,000 hours per annum of Latin-American radio time is rebroadcast from London. Another 35,000 hours originate in London and are heard through transcriptions.

*Is the " radio distribution " system made use of ?*

No.

*Who, usually, conducts the technical side of the services ?*

In the case of the larger stations, their own competent engineers. Smaller stations are sometimes owned and operated by an ex-amateur who is at once manager, engineer, and advertising agent.

*Is there much interchange of programmes between States ?*

Less than might be thought. There is much local and national pride. But there are signs of further developments in this field.

*How would you assess the order of programme preferences among local listeners ?*

For medium-wave listening I would say :

- (1) Light drama, light music.
- (2) News and sports commentaries.
- (3) Good music, serious drama.
- (4) Chamber music, serious talks, etc.

For short-wave listening :

- (1) News and commentaries.
- (2) Talks—especially those of a topical character.
- (3) Drama.
- (4) Good music.
- (5) Light music.

However, tastes fluctuate and vary too, from country to country. A Gallup poll showing a two per cent advantage to drama as against music may result in a drastic reduction of music in favour of drama. From London, apart from news and commentaries, topical magazine programmes such as " Radio Newsreel " and drama would appear to head the list. The audience for good music is smaller—but select and enthusiastic.

*What are the prospects for television ?*

A high concentration of population and a minimum of 2,000,000 people would appear to be necessary from an economic point of view, and non-commercial television would seem to be improbable. Only the River Plate (Buenos Aires), Rio de Janeiro, and Mexico City meet these conditions. Technically, Rio de Janeiro presents difficulties owing to its peculiar topography. Buenos Aires and Mexico City are more likely. There is much enthusiasm for television in both cities, especially Buenos Aires.

**Freedom**



**of the Air**

### The Outline of Broadcasting in Canada.



*Howard B. Chase, Chairman of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.*

*In little over ten years the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has solved the problems of a radio service in two languages for a population scattered over half a continent. Non-commercial programmes interlaced with commercially-sponsored programmes in the ratio of approximately 80 per cent to 20 and a policy which represents the freely expressed will of the people symbolises to the world the essence of the "Freedom of the Air."*

**T**HE radio system in Canada is based on a publicly operated national and regional network service and a privately owned series of stations having local coverage. In other words, it steers something of a middle course between the methods of the B.B.C. and those of the commercial radio undertakings in America.

Canadians are justly proud of their radio. It got under way in the early twenties and grew like H. G. Wells' wonder child. By 1928 it had taken its place in the lives of the community and a Royal Commission was set up to examine the infant and guide it along the best lines. Bearing in mind the lessons of the violently opposite broadcasting services in Britain and America, the experts settled down to solving the challenges set by conditions in Canada.

#### *The Problem*

A little more than twelve million people speaking two languages, settled in scattered communities, and having their own local interests, had to be served. Even the question of time had to be considered. At six o'clock in Halifax it is only two o'clock in Vancouver and there are five different settings for the clock between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. A system of one hundred per cent commercial broadcasting might well become dependent on the gigantic American networks over the border. Again, it might tend to neglect the sparsely populated areas.

The Royal Commission, having weighed the pros and cons of commercial radio, debated the question of State broadcasting. This, too, was found to have its limitations. Finally, a service was proposed that would be financed partly by radio licences and partly by advertising. A special Parliamentary Committee composed of all political parties examined the report and recommended the setting up of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, the C.R.B.C., which was sanctioned by Parliament and started as a national service in November 1932.

#### *Enter the C.B.C.*

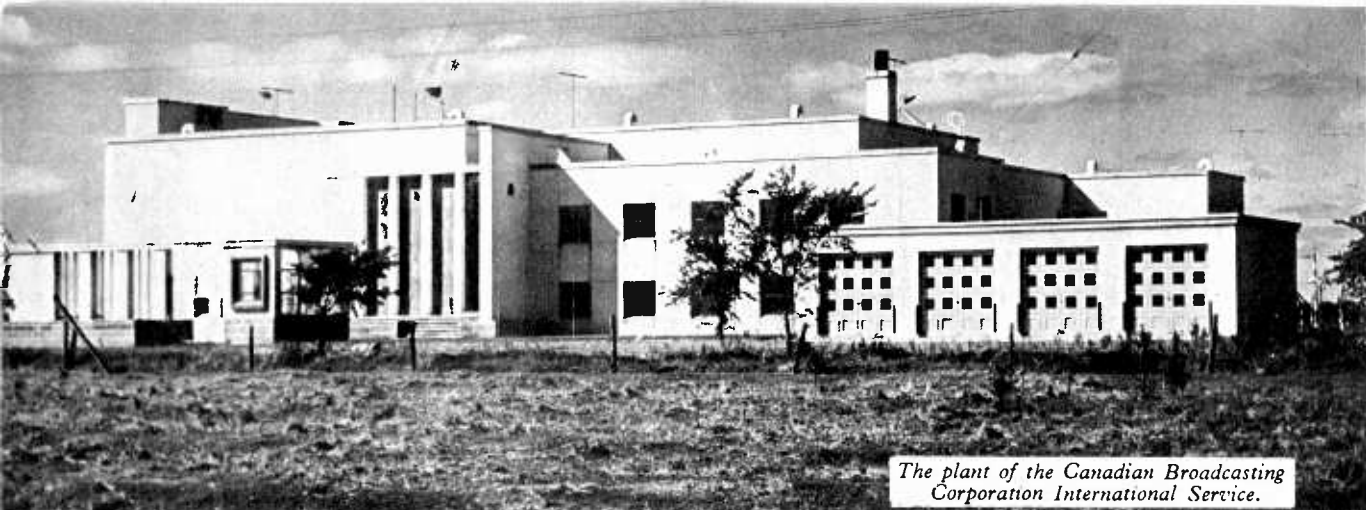
By November 1936, the C.R.B.C. was outgrown and under the present Broadcasting Act the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the C.B.C., was formed. The Corporation was set up with a board of nine governors sworn in for a period of three years without salary. The governors are representative men and women from different parts of the country and their job is to see that the people are served with the best possible radio by the eleven stations belonging directly to the C.B.C., as well as by the local private stations which join the national networks for several hours each day. They meet frequently during the year under their Chairman who works full time and is paid a salary. Listeners pay a licence fee of \$2.50, and it is for them that the C.B.C. is operated. It is not responsible to the government but, as the property of the people, it is responsible to Parliament and every year its finances and operations come up for discussion. Every year or so, too, Parliament appoints a special committee to make recommendations which may guide the C.B.C. in its job of carrying out the will of the people.



The C.B.C. studios are not concentrated in one corner of Canada. They are dispersed in the cause of area representation among five main centres, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax. The administrative headquarters are in Ottawa; the National Programme Office is in Toronto; and the French Programme Offices are in Montreal, which is also the headquarters of the Engineering Division. The great distances between populations involve the use of many thousands of miles of wire lines. The rental of these lines costs the C.B.C. nearly a million dollars a year, and the question of adequate coverage is one of the engineers' worst headaches. Illustrations of this coverage problem are provided in the small, scattered communities of British Columbia and in other parts of Canada too small to support local stations. Mountain barriers shut out the signals of distant transmitters, but the engineers have overcome the reception difficulties by installing small unattended transmitters which are connected to the C.B.C. networks. In this way each isolated settlement can hear the network programmes.

#### *The Private Stations*

Canada's privately owned stations are an integral part of the broadcasting picture, but, since it is clear that to prevent a state of air wave chaos, they require some form of regularisation, it is laid down that no private station shall operate as part of a chain or network of stations except with the permission of the C.B.C. and in accordance with its regulations. The regulations are largely commonsense and for the good of the listener, and since all stations in Canada are required to comply with them, the C.B.C. is in a position to control a high standard of broadcasting from coast to coast. The advertising content of programmes is limited and the advertising of certain products is taboo. The stations have the privilege of joining the network programmes for several hours each day and every year the Corporation makes recommendations with regard to their possible improvement.



Since private stations are dependent for their operation on the revenue received from the sale of time they have formed their own advisory body, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. The Association assists in the exchange of ideas, the establishing of advertising practices and standards and the representation of its members in discussions with the Dominion Government and the C.B.C. Every station, as well as being subject to the rules of the C.B.C., has, of course, to be licensed by the Government. The pattern of operation of the Association is set at each annual meeting when its members elect a board of eleven directors. The directors in turn elect a chairman and vice-chairman for the annual term of office. In this way the Association is entirely representative. It has at its disposal the machinery to advise on all matters relating to commercial broadcasting, it maintains an engineering department and it can and does assist in bringing to listeners programmes of the highest calibre in broadcasting.

#### *The C.B.C. International Service*

Until the war, the world's conception of Canada was largely symbolised by a mental picture of a "Mountie," wide open spaces, Indians shooting the rapids and desperados shooting each other in log built saloons. A voice was needed to dispel these illusions and spread accurate information about the great country. The voice has been provided by the C.B.C.'s International Service. Regularly each day the voice of Canada is heard in ten languages all over the world.

With its studios and headquarters in Montreal the transmitters are located at Sackville, New Brunswick, as far removed as possible from the effect of the troublesome North Magnetic Pole. The transmitters are standard commercial units but their outstanding performance is due in no small part to the antennæ systems upon which all the ingenuity of the C.B.C. engineers has been focused. Concentrated radiations can be beamed in any one of six directions, and the signal strength in Europe is astonishing. When the transmitters went into operation on Christmas Day, 1944, the first cable reporting reception in Europe came from the B.B.C. and said "Strongest signal from your side of the ocean." Small wonder that the official programme schedule, "This Is Canada" is making its appearance in an ever increasing number of homes in the United Kingdom.

A last word on the C.B.C.'s International Service: It is paid for by a direct government grant and no drain falls on the revenue from listeners' licence fees, which is devoted entirely to broadcasting within Canada. The United Nations have been using the service for almost two hours every morning to broadcast official reports to Europe, and the general response from listeners can be gauged from a mail bag which was delivered one day recently. It contained more than 1,600 letters and postcards.

#### *The Great Machine Winds Up*

So Canadian broadcasting has developed and the spring is still being turned. The C.B.C. has no intention of resting on its laurels. National and international radio are a constant challenge and to keep pace with the needs of a young and growing country new ideas and technical developments must be explored vigorously. The years ahead are full of opportunities that will not be missed in Canada. Under the skilful supervision of the C.B.C., Canada has shown in a remarkably short space of time the nearest thing possible in radio to the freedom of the air.

# A Canadian Looks at British Radio



Gerry Wilmot.

“**B**ROADCASTING in Britain? I think it's great!”  
It was Gerry Wilmot, that slick, amiable, fast-talking Canadian broadcaster, speaking.

The tall, austere building known as Broadcasting House endures far more kicks than ha'pence. It has learned, with lofty dignity, to bow to considerable criticism and abuse.

And here was a man going out of his way to root for British radio! Gerry Wilmot is thirty-two. He's tall, thick-set, baldish, and a bachelor. He's a tireless dynamo of energy and an endless fountain of radiogenic ideas. His entire working life has been spent in radio; he lives, eats, drinks, thinks and breathes the radio technique.

From 1930 until 1937, he worked in a small commercial radio station in Vancouver, learning the job the hard way. In 1937 he joined the Columbia Broadcasting System in America and in April 1940 he was seconded to the Canadian Army to broadcast to Canuck troops from Britain. During the war he broadcast at machine-gun speed, a news commentary each evening on the Forces Programme, bringing home-town Maple Leaf news to Canadian soldiers. He was mixed up in such varied shows as “The Canadian Entertains,” shows from The Stage Door Canteen, The Beaver Club broadcasts, “Johnny Canuck's Revues,” the “Canadian Show,” “Soldier Serenade,” “Nocturne in Navy Blue” and many others.

Since the war he has been kept permanently busy. Apart from regular broadcasting on the Home and Light programmes he can be heard almost daily in the Overseas Programmes.

“One of the things I like most about British radio,” he told me, “is the lack of awe with which you approach it. In Canada we were apt to fuss and flap at any show which was a bit out of the common rut. But here you can, and do, tackle the most important broadcasts with as much confidence and nonchalance as the everyday ‘bread-and-butter’ ones. There's something delightfully casual about the whole approach which was always lacking back home.

“Mind you, British broadcasting, by the same argument, seems to me to lack urgency. But is that urgency really required? In Canada everything in radio is high-pressured—or, at least, it was when I was there. Almost a case of running around in circles getting no place very fast. Here there isn't that high-powered tension and I think it's better that way. Your Variety is brisk and varied, especially as producers cannot always get the people they want because of conflicting dates.”

Gerry Wilmot, whose “Gerry-Built” record programmes on Saturday evenings were a week-end highspot, is naturally interested in this type of programme.

“It seems to me that the use made of gramophone records in British programmes is absolutely brilliant. In Canada it's considered a bit *infra dig.* to put on record programmes; they're used, mainly, as ‘filler’ programmes and are put on only as a last resource. That seems to me to be quite absurd.

There's no reason why a singer's voice or a pianist's playing shouldn't be just as entertaining whether the performance is on wax or whether the artiste is actually in the studio.

"I've had the luck to do a lot of outside broadcasting here and I find it different from the Canadian approach. Technically the B.B.C. is excellent, but in Canada we're more mobile. Maybe we leave things a bit more to chance but we're able to get around to an O.B. far more immediately. Of course, here I've found that lines can't always be put in as quickly as one would like. That's an essential difference in broadcasting here and across the Atlantic. Over there most places seem to be wired for sound, and linking up is a pushover.

"I like the B.B.C.'s informality in production and presentation. There's a lot of hard work done at rehearsals but a broadcaster never seems to give the impression of being in an entertainment factory. At least, I never have that feeling.

"As you know, I'm a pretty fast talker on the air and at first I was a bit bewildered by the preciseness of the news readers; by their tendency towards understatement. I think, perhaps, this detachment and understatement is a little too pianissimo—a sort of happy medium may yet have to be worked out—but I prefer it to the Canadian method of practically forcing programmes down the listener's ear.

"I've heard a lot of arguments for and against commercial broadcasting. Obviously, competition is good for everybody and I'm sure that would go for B.B.C. programmes, too. But the present system has one great advantage over commercial broadcasting, as represented in Canada, anyway. The minority of listeners is far better catered for. No matter what a listener's taste may be he can hardly fail to find that taste catered for in the programmes . . . especially since the advent of 'the Third.'

"I don't care over-much for chamber music myself but I think it's essential that lovers of it should be able to hear it. The same with talks, symphony concerts, drama—in fact every phase of listening. In some overseas programmes it's quite possible for minority listening interests to be neglected from one week's end to another, but not so in Britain.

"By the way, that informality and lack of tension that I was talking about earlier is even more pronounced at Alexandra Palace than at Broadcasting House. Television's so informal here that it isn't true! Matter of fact, inexperienced artistes may be a bit alarmed till they're used to the cheery, happy-go-lucky atmosphere at Ally Pally—where the accent's firmly on 'Pally.'

"Well, these are just a few impressions from a broadcaster who is completely sold on your methods in this country. I find much more opportunity than there was in Canada. Most Canadian stars have had to go to the States or come over here to get a big break—Alan Young, the Canadian comedian who's doing so well in America, is a case in point.

"I like the way a broadcaster gets an opportunity to do other work that's closely allied with broadcasting. Take my own case . . . the Sunday Night shows I comper from the stage, the chances of doing film commentaries as well . . . it all helps to give a kick to the week's work.

"I'm a great admirer of the British way of life. I feel happy here and hope to stay for a very long time."

Well, judging by the way Gerry Wilmot is wanted for all types of radio programmes that wish goes for listeners, too. And it is refreshing to know that, in the opinion of one of Canada's top-line radio artistes, the often-maligned British Broadcasting Corporation is very much on top of the job.

# Like a Breath of Fresh Air

*Barry Wells introduces some of the Canadians who have become popular on our air.*

**T**HOSE of us who either worked or fought with the Canadians during the recent war years must have been struck by the natural ebullience of the Canucks. These lads brought a bright, breezy effervescence to work and play which was totally disarming.

It is just that effervescence that makes so many Canadians "naturals" in the broadcasting world. They sweep through programmes like a breath of fresh air. They broadcast as though they enjoy it; and that exhilaration hits listeners like a joyful slap on the back.

Let's meet, briefly, some of the lads and lasses of the Maple Leaf who hit the jackpot in our radio rating.

Several years ago a portly, white-haired young man came into my office. He had a shabby blue suit, a few pounds in his pocket and AN IDEA. He had just arrived from Canada, and was preparing to tilt his lance against Britain's radio windmill, equipped merely with that idea and a tremendous, infectious enthusiasm that swept through my office and left me tingling, if exhausted. Soon I was infected by his sales-talk. And Carroll Levis has been "glad-handing" his way through our radio and variety halls ever since. A matter of eleven years.

Born in Vancouver in 1910 he started broadcasting as an announcer at the Vancouver B.C. Radio Station C.K.W.X. He started an Amateur Hour called the "Saturday Night Club." It was a success . . . and Amateur Discoveries have bought Carroll his collars, cocoa, cars, caviare, cheese and congratulations ever since.

With endless patience he seeks out unknowns . . . grocers who can whistle, milkmen who can croon, undertakers who can crack gags. From the thousands he auditions he finds a few who have "the spark."

Acting on the principle that "the unknowns of today are truly the stars of tomorrow" he does give people a chance. The 86-year-old Glaswegian who mournfully sang "I'm Twenty-one Today" had his little hour. The Derby man who asked if there were many crooners competing was told "dozens." "Any straight singers?" "Scores." "Comedians?" "Plenty." "Well," said the man, "I'll have to play my mouth organ!" And when told there were a dozen other harmonica experts in line for auditions he arrived with a cello!

Now, at a peak hour on Sunday evenings, "The Carroll Levis Show" is tops in entertainment. Decked up with singers, comedians and wisecracks it's core is still "Discovery Time." And while many unknowns bless his name and none revile it, Carroll has grown rich and successful and famous . . . and still that enthusiasm which prompted him to do 57 one-man shows in nine days on the Anzio Beach-head bubbles up in him like a show-business volcano.

There could hardly be a greater physical contrast to the exuberant Carroll Levis than 49-year-old Roderick Hal Macpherson, known to all as "Sandy." Sandy Macpherson was born in Paris, Ontario, and when he was working in a local bank there was little to indicate that this slow-speaking, soft-voiced, gentle individual would one day be a household word.

After the 1914-18 scrap, in which he served in the Canadian Army, Sandy got a job as a part-time organist. M.-G.-M. snapped him up and installed him in various of their cinemas in Canada and U.S.A. In 1928 he was drafted to England to be organist at the new Empire Theatre in Leicester Square. He's been here ever since.

Sandy was one of the first organists to have a crack at the B.B.C. Theatre Organ in 1936 and two years later, when Reggie Foort decided to tour, Sandy was appointed in his stead.

"I'll Play To You," in which he played tunes to Servicemen chosen by their folks at home, and the more recent "Armchair Melodies," have been two of his most popular series. And, on the Forces Programme, he did a good job in a weekly talk to the Services. In a quiet, friendly way he sought to unravel some of the problems of these Servicemen. In quite un-Blimpish manner he put humanity into Army Council Instructions.

Pause now to meet a Canadian girl who, again, is as different from the two Canucks I've mentioned as modern beer is from the pre-war variety. Inga Andersen. Inga, daughter of a Danish lumberman, was raised on a British Columbia lumber camp. From a postal course of fifteen lessons she learned to dance to entertain the lumbermen. She eventually abandoned dancing and took up singing. Her style became that of the sophisticate. Cabaret, concerts and theatres claim much of her time but she

is in constant demand for revues and floor-shows that occasionally—and delightfully—enliven our radio programmes.

One of the first radio crooners to make a name in this country was the Canadian, Les Allen. He has been with us now for so long that we are apt to forget that he is a Canuck. Tall, slim, curly haired and perpetually youthful looking, Les, who made a name with Henry Hall and later, as partner with Kitty Masters, is a star attraction on radio and music-hall. His *metier* is romance. Without "mush" he sings right into the heart of every woman and makes her feel she is beautiful.

Talk of crooners brings us to Charles Gerald Fitzgerald—"Gerry." Both as a solo artist and as a member of a trio Gerry brought a manly approach to crooning which kept him in constant demand with nearly every band-leader in the country. Gerry is slim, slight, tough. He has the profile of a middle-weight boxing champ and a voice which thrills.

War interrupted Gerry's career, as for so many young men. He joined the R.A.F., served for several years, including a spell in the Far East as a radio technical officer.

"Mighty fine" is our next introduction in this Maple Leaf Cavalcade. He is Big Bill Campbell, the large-framed, drawling buckaroo who came to this country round about 1934 and now regards it as his home. In Canada, Big Bill led a varied, adventurous, roaming life as lumberman, farmer, stockman. But he turned to radio and now, over here, his "Rocky Mountain Rhythm" programmes are box-office both on the air and in the music-halls. In the Old Log Cabin wherein Bill throws his weekly parties you get hill-billies, yodelling, folk-songs, modern Wild West songs, simple, homely humour and a streak of good hometown down-to-earth philosophy which makes his programmes a "must" for all ages.

Kids particularly adore Big Bill. They write to him as "Big Bill, Log Cabin, North Pole"; "Uncle Bill, Ranch House, Rocky Mountains"; "Mighty Fine, London, England"; "Big Bill, The Bunkhouse, Canada"; "The Boss, Log Cabin, Tall Pines" and, occasionally, just "Big Bill, London." Away from the mike and the variety stage Bill leads the life of a country squire in an Essex village. He takes an interest in local government and, once, he was even mentioned as a possible candidate for Parliament.

Not all Bill's confrères come from Canada, but one, at least, has hit instant popularity. He is Norman Harper, the Yodellin' Buckaroo. Norman comes from Toronto and, after five and a half years with the Canadian Army in North Africa and Europe, he is now singing traditional songs of the Western Plains to his own guitar accompaniment. Few armies were better catered for in the way of radio than the Canucks. A special radio unit was formed and one of the bright stars in this was Captain Bob Farnon. He ran the first-class Canadian Army Orchestra which accompanied most of the many variety and light musical shows devised for the entertainment of Canadians. He, too, is still with us.

"Gerry." That rings a bell, doesn't it? On another page you will find a Canadian looking at British Radio. That Canadian is Gerry Wilmot, firmly settled in on British radio and eager and alert for fresh broadcasting experiences. Wilmot is a commentator of the Bob Bowman style. He talks with the speed of a Bren gun and he has a penchant for the picturesque phrase and the punchy tag which keeps his broadcasts alive and vital.

On one occasion, in "Monday Night at Eight," he was set the formidable task of racing a recording of his own voice. It is necessary merely to record that the "live" Wilmot won hands down. Nowadays he is heard in open-air broadcasts, as compere of stage shows, as the man who puts over "Gerry-Built," a weekly record programme, and in many other capacities.

Another vivid-voiced Canadian commentator is Stewart MacPherson, who is unrelated to organist Sandy Macpherson. Stewart has that amazing vitality and versatility which seems to be a common factor in the make-up of Canadian broadcasters. He is one of the men who brings sport to your fireside; he is always a certain starter on any important broadcasting job (such as the Victory Parade or the maiden voyage of the "Queen Elizabeth"); and, apart from a short break when he visited his home in Canada, he was the Question-Master in the hilarious "Ignorance is Bliss" series.

A sports journalist in Winnipeg, he saw no prospects as a scribe and looked towards radio. Bribing a railway guard with a bottle of whiskey, he got free transport in a cattle truck to Montreal and from there he shipped to England.

When he landed all he had was a fiver, plenty of initiative, and a knowledge of ice-hockey. Breaking into broadcasting was no pushover, so Stewart took a job as a salesman. Eventually he was given a test as an ice hockey commentator. Months passed before Stewart was asked to do a speedway commentary. He'd just had four teeth out and knew nothing about speedway—but that didn't deter Stewart. He knew what he wanted. And got it.



# Broadcasting in Australia

**B**ECAUSE of its geographical isolation Australia is entirely dependent upon its own resources for broadcasting on the medium waves.

Speaking in terms of radio, this fundamental fact places the country in a class of its own. Competition might well have been eliminated (to the detriment of the listeners) if the radio service had been placed in the hands of a monopoly state-controlled organisation. But this is very far from being the case.

Radio competition in Australia is, in its way, livelier than anywhere else in the world, for two distinct services are available to the public. First, there is the state-controlled Australian Broadcasting Commission, the A.B.C., strictly non-commercial, and second, there is the commercially sponsored system of a hundred private stations. Competition thrives between the two camps and, in the case of the commercials, it is keen between themselves.



*Col. C. J. A. Moses, General Manager of the Australian Broadcasting Commission.*

## *The Australian Broadcasting Commission*

The A.B.C. which is run on lines similar to the B.B.C. is financed by the revenue derived from wireless licence fees. Listeners in Australia pay £1 a year for one radio set and ten shillings for any additional receiver they may care to operate. Whether or not this additional levy has any effect on the sale of receivers is debatable. Whatever may be the answer, it is the contributions of some million-and-a-half licence holders that provide for the operation of twenty-nine A.B.C. stations all over the Commonwealth.

In most large towns the A.B.C. maintains a "national" and "regional" programme on the lines made familiar by the B.B.C. In Sydney, for example, the A.B.C. station 2FC conducts the "national" features such as serious music, drama, talks and so on, and its companion station, 2BL provides the "regional" service to include a predominance of variety, popular music, and sport. Outside the towns, the A.B.C. country stations take the outstanding features from both programmes and supplement them with items of local interest.

Australia's hundred commercially sponsored stations are supported entirely by the proceeds of advertising. The phenomenal growth of commercial radio during the 1930's developed into a race for wider and wider ownership of stations by big business organisations—until the Government stepped in with legislation to restrict further ownership. Nevertheless, the development of networks proceeded, as independent stations formed themselves into groups linked by land lines. It should, perhaps, be made clear that in Australia the term "network" generally applies to a group of stations in a given locality rather than the Canadian or American "coast to coast" translation of the word.

The formation of networks in Australia provided advertisers with wider listening fields and the money began to flow freely. Before the war the networks were spreading and the stations inundated with American

transcriptions. But the war put a brake on land line hook-ups by reason of the demands made upon every available channel of communication and the supply of American transcriptions was halted.

The advertisers overcame the line difficulty by recording their "network" programmes, distributing them to the stations and broadcasting them simultaneously from as many as fifty outlets in all parts of the country. The expense of recording was more than off-set by the savings on line rental and the measure that was made in war time has probably come to stay.

The close-down on imported transcriptions, too, has not been without advantage. It has brought about greatly increased programme output within Australia, and over a recent period of six months the recorded productions of one major network provided engagements for some 8,000 artistes and an average of 100 new scripts were examined carefully each week. Scripts, by the way, are treated as a top priority in Australian broadcasting and the importance attached to them can hardly be exaggerated.

Good radio artistes are in great demand and keen competition has raised the standard of producers and programme engineers to a high degree of speed and efficiency. The quality of radio competition is illustrated by returning to the example of Sydney. In addition to the two A.B.C. stations already mentioned, no fewer than six commercials are in operation.

#### *The Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations*

The co-ordinating body to which all Australian commercial stations are affiliated is the Federation of Commercial Broadcasting Stations. With headquarters in Melbourne and Sydney it watches over the interests of its members and advises on such matters as performing rights, mechanical copyright, patents, frequency allocation and technical developments. It provides the medium for the exchange of ideas and information and in collaboration with the National Advertisers Association it has drawn up a strict code of ethics. Stations will not accept programmes that do not conform to this code, since it is a measure of self protection. No product can be advertised over the air that could cause embarrassment to a listener. For example, an elaborate set of rules governs the advertising of patent medicines and the advertising of laxatives is strictly unacceptable. Not more than 15 per cent of a programme's time may be devoted to advertising and the "plugs" are short and to the point.

#### *Listener Research*

Australia has two independent Listener Research organisations which not only assess the impact of A.B.C. and commercial programmes with a remarkable degree of accuracy but, in addition, draw up comprehensive "rating" tables. These tables show the estimated percentage of broadcast receivers in operation at different times of the day. Allowance is made for counter attractions by opposing stations and so the advertiser knows in advance just about how many sets will be tuned into his programme when it goes on the air.

In this respect it is clear that a commercial broadcast transmitted simultaneously by a group of stations is likely to produce the best results for the sponsor. If this campaign is co-ordinated with publicity through other media such as newspapers, posters and cinema slides the drawing attention to the broadcast, the most effective form of advertising, is found to have been achieved.

The Australian broadcasting system which provides listeners with the advantages of both State and commercial stations caters for every conceivable interest. By a turn of the dial, your particular taste, whatever it may be, can be satisfied. The system would appear to have given the lie to the old adage "you can please all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time."

Australian broadcasting says "you can."

# Introducing the N.Z.B.S.

6.0, 7.0, 8.0 a.m. London News . . . 1.30 p.m. Broadcasts to Schools . . . 3.45 Music While You Work . . . 5.0 Children's Hour . . . 6.30 London News . . . 6.45 B.B.C. Newsreel . . . 8.27 Itma . . . 9.0 Overseas and New Zealand News . . . 10.0 Dance Music . . . 11.0 London News and Home News from Britain . . .

Station 1YA of Auckland provides these extracts from a New Zealand broadcasting programme. They are chosen to point the assertion that, given a radio set, the Constant Listener from Britain who emigrates to that Dominion has only to tune in to feel at home. Every one of New Zealand's twenty-two stations not only rebroadcasts London regularly, but habitually uses the B.B.C. Transcription Service's recordings of many popular programmes.

From the immigrants' standpoint, that is only half the value of the N.Z.B.S.—the New Zealand Broadcasting Service. The other half, of course, is the way in which it will sound-picture for him the outlook and art of his new country.

Knowing—as the Constant Listener must know—that broadcasting is a natural mirror of kinship, he will expect to find similarities with the system he knew at home. But he'll meet some notable dissimilarities as well, foremost among them the fact that in New Zealand broadcasting is a department of the State under the control of a Minister of the Crown, and those who work in it are Government employees. A Director of Broadcasting, appointed by the Governor-General in Council, is the administrative head.

As in so many other countries, the first New Zealand broadcasters were a few enthusiastic amateurs and professional experimenters. They were first officially recognised in 1921, when some four hundred permits to operate transmitting or receiving stations were granted by the Posts and Telegraphs Department. Four years later the New Zealand Broadcasting Company, Limited, was formed, and contracted with the Government to establish and operate stations in the four main centres—Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington, and Dunedin. The effect of this was that receiving licences (then costing 30s. each) increased from 4,000 in 1926 to 70,000 at the end of 1932.

January, 1932, brought the next stage of development. The contract with the limited company expired, and control of the Dominion's system was vested in a Broadcasting Board. A number of private-enterprise stations had been authorised to operate in parallel with the officially-sponsored stations, and a new Board (on which, incidentally, the listener was represented) was charged with the duty of supervising their programmes.

Then, in 1936, the Government passed a Broadcasting Act. It abolished the existing Board as from July 1st of that year; vested control of a National Service in a Minister of the Crown; provided for the transfer of plant, premises, and staff, and laid it down, first, that no advertisement for the pecuniary benefit of any person should be broadcast, except from commercial stations owned by the Crown, and, secondly, that for every area served by a commercial station, an alternative, non-commercial station must be provided.

Today, New Zealand has twenty-three broadcasting stations, two of them privately owned, the remainder nationally owned stations. Of these twenty-one, five carry commercial advertising. Their net income is around £265,000 a year, but out of this the "commercials" must maintain themselves—they are debarred from receiving any part of the licence revenue.

The latest available figure shows that licensed listeners in the Dominion are nearing the 400,000 mark—and, by the way, they now pay 25s. for the licence. Hospitals, charitable institutions, and, of course, the blind are granted free licences.

Our Constant Listener would discover yet one more difference—an unusual and significant difference: in New Zealand Parliamentary debates are broadcast regularly. The Chamber of the House of Representatives is permanently wired for broadcasting, and station 2YA Wellington has the special task of carrying the debates and speeches and—yes, the New Zealand listener likes them!

# Broadcasting in South Africa

**D**URING the recent visit of the King and Queen to the Union of South Africa interest was focused on the country's broadcasting organisation through which listeners in all parts of the world heard reports on the Royal tour.

The basic broadcasting service in the Union is conducted by the government-controlled South African Broadcasting Corporation and provides a bi-lingual service in English and Afrikaans. As an addition to the basic service, commercially sponsored programmes were introduced in 1946. Since the Corporation is a non-profit making public utility service, financial benefits derived from this third programme are to be devoted to the improvement of the broadcasting system.

The Union's twenty broadcasting stations vary in power from 0.2 to 10kw. and operate for the most part on the medium waves. A few years ago, however, five short-wave stations were introduced to improve the coverage of the existing chain of stations.

Radio is regarded as the ideal medium for speaking to the African but as the overwhelming majority are without receivers the Corporation proposes to introduce a rediffusion system for the native population.

Licence fees in the Union vary with the distance a listener lives from one of the eight main broadcasting centres. The scale is 35 shillings for a listener residing within 100 miles, 25 shillings outside this radius but within 250 miles, and 20 shillings if he lives more than 250 miles away from a centre.



# Broadcasting in India

AS the result of plans laid down in 1936 broadcasting in British India has gone rapidly ahead during the past few years. These plans provided for a basic short-wave service on about 60 metres, giving a second grade coverage to the whole of India. A first-grade service is provided by medium-wave stations in certain main centres.

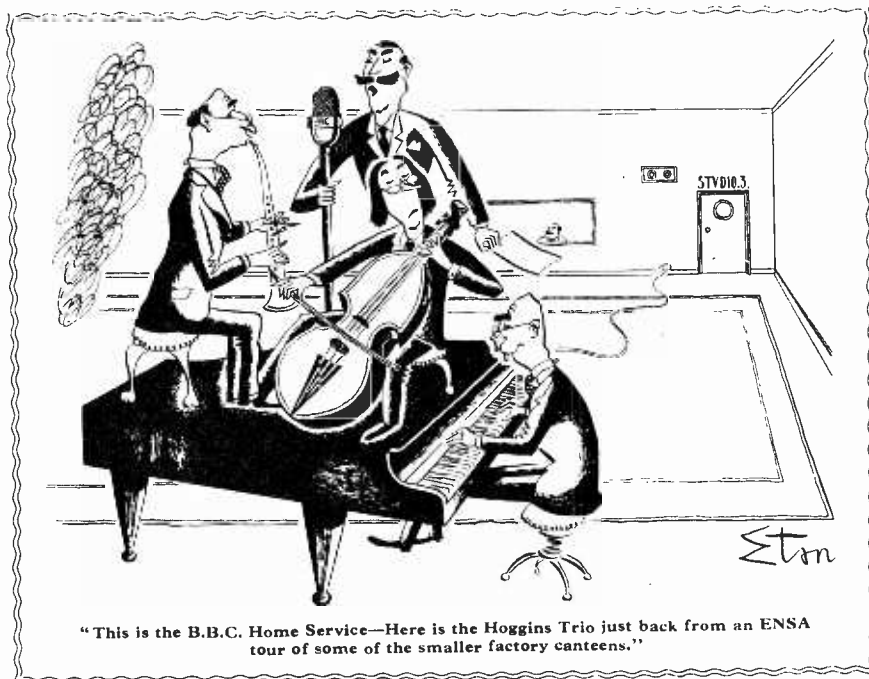
During the war high-powered short-wave stations were installed for the Government's overseas service, while the "home" service comprises four short-wave stations and nine stations operating on the medium wave. A proposal has now been made for a first-grade ultra short-wave service to cover the greater part of the country.

A scheme for rural broadcasting was introduced some ten or twelve years ago as an experiment in the North-West Frontier Province. This has been developed extensively in recent years and is now a fundamental part of the Indian broadcasting service. Communal sets, in most cases specially designed for the job, are installed by the engineering staff of the nearest broadcasting station and maintained by them. So, although the latest figures relating to licensed listeners are only 240,000 out of India's population of 350 millions, they bear no relation to the number of listeners who hear broadcasting by means of the village receivers.

To suit all requirements of speech, programmes are radiated in eight languages for home consumption while seven languages are used in the overseas service.



*Professor A. S. Bokhari,  
Director General of All-India Radio.*



"This is the B.B.C. Home Service—Here is the Hoggins Trio just back from an ENSA tour of some of the smaller factory canteens."

# Broadcasting in Europe

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*The disorganisation of broadcasting in Europe as a result of the war has created many problems, and until a new wavelength allocation plan has been agreed upon the steps taken towards reorganisation must be of a temporary nature. By the time you read this review of the present position an international conference may have been held to formulate plans for the re-allocation of wavelengths. This will not, of course, affect the constitution of the various European broadcasting organisations and here in brief is the outline of their operational systems. No mention is made here of the stations of the Forces Broadcasting Service which are described elsewhere.*

## FRANCE

The broadcasting system in France has passed through many vicissitudes during the past few years. Prior to 1939 the country had two broadcasting systems, one organised by the post, telegraph and telephone authorities and the other by private enterprise. The State stations were financed by the revenue derived from receiver licence fees and the private stations were supported entirely by advertisers.

With the occupation of France in 1940 the country's radio facilities were used by Germany to the fullest extent. Following the liberation, some stations were taken over by the Allied forces, whilst the remainder were administered by the government-controlled Radiodiffusion Française, the R.F. The stations employed by the Allies have gradually been handed back to the R.F. ; the last, at Rueil-Malmaison near Paris, having been returned on January 1st, 1947.

The future of the private stations is still somewhat obscure, especially in view of the recent agreement to set up a French Broadcasting Office on the lines of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

At the end of November last year there were nearly 5,700,000 receiving licences in force in the country. The cost of these has been recently increased and varies according to the type of set and the purpose for which the set is required. Crystal set users pay 100 frs., private users of valve sets pay 500 frs. and the proprietors of halls and public places where free concerts are given pay 1,000 frs. To complete the complicated arrangement of wireless licence fees, the owners of buildings where a charge is made for admission to entertainment have to pay a fee of 2,000 frs.

On the whole, most of the "continental" listening on the part of British audiences is of a casual nature. But many people derive considerable pleasure from the agreeable French cabaret and light music programmes which have become so familiar.

The most cordial relations exist between the B.B.C. and the French radio authorities, and programmes are frequently interchanged between the two countries.

## THE U.S.S.R.

The broadcasting service of the U.S.S.R. radiates programmes in *seventy languages* for the people of the Soviet Union and regular transmissions in thirty foreign languages are broadcast for overseas reception. The controlling centre of the country's broadcasting service is in Moscow : and there are 133 local radio committees operating transmitters with, in addition, scores of regional relay stations.

Great damage was done to the broadcasting stations of European Russia during the war, and a five-year plan for the restoration and development of the system was introduced in 1945. Main provision

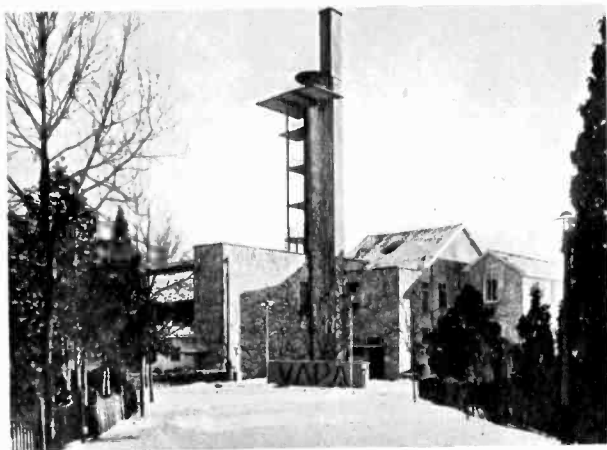
of this plan is for the building of twenty-eight new high-powered stations by the end of 1950. Two of these were opened some months ago at Riga, Latvia and Simferopol, Crimea.

Television, too, comes within the plan for rapid development and centres are to be set up in Moscow, Sverdlovsk, Leningrad and Kiev. A number of frequency modulation (F.M.) transmitters are being operated experimentally and it is expected that these will be used in the larger cities on ultra-short wavelengths for the improvement of reception.

A feature of the broadcasting system in the U.S.S.R. is the extent to which radio relay centres are employed. More than 1,600 distribution centres, serving nearly 1,000,000 subscribers were brought into use in the first year after the war and by the end of 1950 it is planned to extend this service for the benefit of 3,000,000 more subscribers.

## THE NETHERLANDS

The proportion of licensed radio listeners to subscribers to the wired distribution system in Holland is approximately thirteen to nine. The latest figures are 650,000 and 460,000 respectively.



*V.A.R.A. Studios, Hilversum.*



*A.V.R.O. Studios, Hilversum.*



*K.R.O. Studios, Hilversum.*



*N.C.R.U. Studios, Hilversum.*

Several new stations have been planned to supplement the country's two high-power medium wave transmitters and two relay stations.

A feature of the Dutch broadcasting system is that the country's four broadcasting societies, A.V.R.O. K.R.O., V.A.R.A. and V.P.R.O., representing political and religious thought, operate the Government stations for a specified period each week. Each of these societies is represented on the co-ordinating board which has been set up since the end of the war.

## AUSTRIA

In 1945, after six years of German occupation, only one low-powered transmitter of the country's total of seven stations was serviceable.

Medium wave transmitters are now operating in each of the four zones controlled by Great Britain, the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R. and France, and a certain amount of co-ordination is effected by RAVAG, (Oesterreichische Radio Verkehrs A.G.). In addition to the medium wave stations there are also short wave transmitters in the American and Soviet zones.

## HUNGARY

Prior to and during the war, the Hungarian broadcasting system, consisting of seven stations, was operated by Magyar Telefor Hirmondó és Rádió although the station equipment was the property of the Government. Owing to the broadcasting company's attitude during the German occupation the operation of the stations has been taken over by the Magyar Közapnti Hirado Rt. (the Central Hungarian Information Bureau).

Following the defeat of Germany, broadcasting in Hungary was resumed within fourteen weeks, although on a considerably reduced scale. At the time of going to press, three stations are operating and two more are in the process of erection. Plans have also been drawn up for the building of two short wave stations to be used for an overseas service.

## SCANDINAVIA

Of the Scandinavian broadcasting services, Norway's Norsk Rikskringkasting probably suffered the most damage as a result of the war. Of her pre-war total of sixteen transmitters six were destroyed and some 476,000 receivers were confiscated. The loss of so many transmitters, most of which were in the north, clearly means that conditions for the country's 325,000 listeners have been seriously affected. Until new transmitters are built a 20 kw. mobile station has been brought into service at Vigra.

In contrast to the conditions in Norway, the Swedish broadcasting service continued to develop during the war years. Sweden, by the way, claims to be the most radio-minded country in the world, for its total of 1,880,000 licensed listeners gives it a "radio density" of 282 per 1,000 inhabitants.

## ITALY

During the past months the broadcasting system in Italy has been entirely reorganised by the Radio Audizioni Italiano operating a government charter. There are now two main networks comprising in all, some twenty five medium wave stations varying in power from 0.25 to 100 kw. Two small independent stations exist outside the networks, which are linked by nearly 5,000 km. of telephone line, with twenty-eight amplifying stations in each.





*State Broadcasting House, Copenhagen.*

*Headquarters of the Norwegian Broadcasting Company.*



# Amateur Radio

*There's a thrill in the air, says the amateur radio transmitter. In this article, F. H. Martin, a British "ham," tells something of his hobby. The author, when not on the air, is a journalist. During the war he served with the British Army Newspaper Unit in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, and managed to keep up his acquaintanceship with the microphone through the medium of the British Forces' Broadcasting Stations.*

**R**ECENTLY my wife called at a radio dealer's on my behalf and asked for a crystal—not one of those things we used to tickle with a "cat's whisker," but a piezo-quartz ground crystal used to stabilise the frequency of a radio transmitter.

"So you're a wireless widow," he said, shaking his head. And, I'm afraid, she agreed with fervour.

Because a "wireless widow" is nothing more nor less than the unhappy wife of an amateur radio enthusiast, the short-wave fiend who has sacrificed his spare-time and, too frequently, the comforts of normal domestic life, to a hobby which has brought radio to the state of perfection we take for granted today.

The "hams," as they are known, talk to each other over the air, exchange pleasantries, give data of equipment used and experiments carried out, and conclude with the mystic figures "73" which is radioese for "cheerio."

How much radio really owes to the home experimenter will never be assessed. Certain it is that but for him the discovery of the long-range properties of the short-waves would have been much longer delayed.

Forced from the lower frequencies, the amateur transmitter was given the hitherto unexplored territory of the short wavelengths and he showed the commercial concerns what could be done by improvisation and experiment.

The history of amateur radio in this country goes back to before the 1914-1918 war. Though the London Wireless Club was formed in 1913 it was years before much could be heard on the air.

Between 1921 and 1925 it was hard slogging, but the progress made during that period led to the commercial advancement of later years.

As the booklet "How to Become a Radio Amateur" explained—"It is easy to understand why Amateur Radio is often thought of as the youngest and least developed of the scientific pursuits. Actually, however, the very reverse of all this is the case. Not only broadcasting but also the fundamental technique of practically all forms of wireless communication is chiefly due to the pioneer work of men who were amateurs in every sense of that much abused and overworked word."

At the outbreak of war, when all apparatus was impounded by the Post Office, there were nearly 2,500 licensed transmitting "hams" in the British Isles, and more than 2,000 holders of the Artificial Aerial licence, a kind of "provisional" licence which permitted all normal experiments to be carried out with transmitting gear, but prohibited the operator going on the air.

Amateur radio has a jargon all its own. Each country has its own prefix, G for England, F for France, SU for Egypt, etc.

"I'm off to my QRA to keep a sked with a YL in VE," the "ham" says in all seriousness, and adds "My rig has been fine business though I did QSB to R4 on 14 with W last night."

Which merely means "I'm going home to keep a schedule with a young lady operator in Canada. My transmitter has been working well though I did fade to only fair signal strength on 20 metres while in contact with America last night."

Almost every subject is touched upon though politics, advertising and profanity are barred.

The Sunday morning "battle of the ether," willingly called off at the outbreak of war, began again last year.

For years it has been carried on in a spirit of friendship growing in intensity as more and more became technically-minded.

Their low-powered transmitters vied with each other for dominance in the narrow frequency channels allocated for experimental work.

Listeners who tuned their modern receivers to the short-wave band hurriedly passed over the 40 and 20 metre ranges, probably with the remark "Those crazy amateurs again," as they heard a conglomeration of test calls in both morse and telephony.

Even with ten watts of power (remember that an electric-light bulb takes 50 or 100 watts) these calls at certain times of the day reached the Americas or the Antipodes.

Then all was silent! With the outbreak of war the amateur turned to a new and even more important field. He was engaged in the battle of communications.

The first fifty Civilian Wireless Reserves (nearly all of whom, incidentally, were members of the official organisation, the Radio Society of Great Britain) were on their way to France the day war broke out.

They formed the original Wireless Intelligence Screen and became known as "the Early Birds."

From then onwards all the Services benefited from the specialised knowledge of the radio amateur.

And their knowledge is specialised! Talking over the air may seem great fun, but the holder of a new licence with service-trade exemptions now has to pass a three-hour examination



*Mr. F. H. Martin.*

set by the City and Guilds of London Institute. At the first examination 22.2 per cent of the candidates failed.

Then a Post Office test of proficiency in the Morse Code has to be overcome.

But the amateur, once on the air, thinks it worth while. It is not merely the thrill of long-distance contacts but the pleasure at "meeting" so many new friends in all walks of life.

I have a standing invitation to spend a holiday in San Francisco through a contact made before the war. The operator, who at that time lived in Tennessee, was then only 16 years of age, which proves that all ages can participate in this most interesting of hobbies.

In fact, I'm told that among the 50,000-odd licensed amateurs in the United States there are some as young as nine and as old as eighty.

Many permanently bed-ridden persons find the hobby a priceless boon. Even blindness is not a bar.

In times of national stress the amateur in America is often called upon to provide a system of communications when all other has failed. This was shown to effect in the Tennessee floods when his warnings and messages from the danger areas were heard throughout the world.

Exploration trips usually arrange to keep in touch with the outside world through amateur radio.

The first co-operation of this kind took place in 1923 when an American accompanied MacMillan to the Arctic on the schooner "Bowdoin" in charge of an amateur transmitter.

Now no voyage or expedition sets off without first arranging "ham" schedules.

The "Dreamboat" (B29) flight in September, 1946, was in touch with Britain through an amateur in Bromley, Kent.

Of necessity, wireless amateurs become expert in geography. I did not know there was such a place as Longueuil in the Province of Quebec until a Canadian transmitter told me that was where he lived.

Neither did I know Smith's Falls were in Ontario nor that Saskatchewan had a Hudson's Bay Junction.

There is a Bryn Mawr in Pennsylvania, I discovered; a place called Alamogordo in Mexico, Eureka in Illinois, Geneva in New York. Newfoundland has a Curling. In Australia, Victoria has a Sandringham. There's a Granville in New South Wales.

But on a foggy day in England there's nothing like a talk with the gentleman in Barbados who describes his island as "the land of abiding sunshine, sea bathing and flying fish."

All in all, it's a great hobby. Ask anyone of us. Though, when my meal is getting cold and I am still seated in front of a microphone 'way up in the box-room, completely oblivious to all household chores, my wife may perhaps be forgiven for her lack of enthusiasm.

# Some Radio Personalities

**AMYOT, ETIENNE.** Celebrity concert pianist who helps to plan the Third Programme. A South African, he was lent by the Army to be B.B.C.'s South African Programme Adviser. Widely known on the Continent.

**BARNES, GEORGE.** Was trained for a naval career, and still has a look of the sea about him. Joined B.B.C. in 1935 as a Talks Assistant, and became chief of his Department. Was selected to launch Third Programme and is now its Head.

**BARSLEY, MICHAEL.** One of the B.B.C.'s exclusive team of writer-producers. Shrewd and occasionally acid recorder of modern foibles—as proved by his Third Programme revues.

**BLACK, STANLEY.** Conducts the B.B.C. Dance Orchestra; married this year to vocalist Edna Kaye. One of the many classical musicians who elected to specialise in popular modern music. A first-rate pianist.

**BLATT, EDGAR.** Radio writer and producer. As head of B.B.C.'s London Transcription Service saw to it that hundreds of top-line shows were recorded and broadcast from stations in every part of the world. Wrote book and lyrics for Charlot revues: edits and produces popular "To Town on Two Pianos;" is partner in Ted Kavanagh Associated.

**BOOTH, WEBSTER.** A lad from Birmingham, who won success the hard way. Was an accountant, then went into concert party as tenor who didn't mind being assistant-comic when occasion demanded. Was with D'Oyly Carte Company; sang leading roles in Covent Garden Opera; married Anne Ziegler.

**CAMERON, AUDREY.** Variety producer; in great demand for character parts. Made her first appearance on the stage at the age of six months. Was protégé of Dame Ellen Terry. In the producer's chair, knows what she wants—and gets it.



*Sir William Haley,  
Director-General of B.B.C.*



*Lindsay Wellington,  
Controller (Home Service).*



*Major Caprara, Director of  
South African Broadcasting  
Corporation.*



*Professor James Shelley,  
Director of N.Z.B.S.*

**CATLEY, GWEN.** Gifted operatic singer—the radio's own "pocket soprano." Her first concert happened when she was three. Has made films, and has sung in West End successes. Married to well-known 'cellist, Allen Ford.

**CLINTON-BADDELEY, V. C.** Owns one of the most distinctive voices on the air. Actor, writer and reader of verse—and Dickens. Has a flair for the witty lyric, and was author of musical play, "Jolly Roger."

**COLLINS, NORMAN.** Controller of the B.B.C.'s Light Programme. One of the hardest working and most versatile figures in British broadcasting. Was in turn journalist, reviewer, novelist and publisher. His book, "London Belongs to Me," was a best-seller.

**DALBY, W. H. BARRINGTON.** Famous for his "round-by-round" boxing commentaries. Parents were professional musicians. Knows all there is to know about the noble art: himself refereed many big fights including the Lynch v. Kane Championship.

**DE CASALIS, JEANNE.** Creator of the inimitable "Mrs. Feather" interludes. Was born in Basutoland. Is one of the few serious actresses who has turned to good account her exceptional comic gifts. Loves flying and holds a Pilot's Certificate.

**DEVLIN, WILLIAM.** Acted with O.U.D.S. Came to London and made sensational success as youngest "King Lear." Helped to establish Bristol Old Vic at historic Theatre Royal. In one year, played Gladstone, Parnell, Clemenceau and Zola. Was four and a half years with Eighth Army in Africa and Italy.

**EGE, HENRIK.** Manchester-born author whose first radio play was written in 1930. Says he wrote it to "take his mind off the state of the export trade in which he was then engaged." Has a gift for fantasy and satire.

**ELLISON, JOHN.** One of the best-known reporters of the air. Is well known as a broadcasting "first-nighter." Went round the world on a tramp-steamer; became an actor, and joined the B.B.C. as announcer. Is married to Diana Morrison (Itma's Miss Hotchkiss).

**FELTON, FELIX.** A senior drama producer. Was President of the O.U.D.S., and played Bottom in Max Reinhardt's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Is "From the London Theatre" producer, and a composer of light and serious music.

**GIELGUD, VAL.** Director of Drama, B.B.C. Once followed his brother John's career—the stage. Is a brilliant conversationalist and has that rare quality—style. Has written plays, thrillers and an autobiography.

**GILLIAM, LAURENCE.** Director of Features, B.B.C. One of the most impressive and able figures in British radio. Controls his department with shrewdness and imagination. Has the B.B.C.'s biggest headache—the Christmas Day "round-the-world" programme, timed to a second.

**GOOLDEN, RICHARD.** Will always be remembered as creator of radio's "Mr. Penny." Is unequalled in portrayal of prim, fussy and lovable roles. Celebrates his own broadcasting jubilee next year. Was the first radio "Mr. Chips."

**GORHAM, MAURICE.** Tall, brisk Irishman who is Britain's television chief. Journalist for many years, and Editor of the "Radio Times." Was Director of the famous A.E.F.P. (Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme), and first Head of the Light Programme. A bachelor: is never to be seen with a hat or without an umbrella.



*Jimmy Miller, leader of Squadronaires Dance Orchestra.*



*Dr. Peter C. Goldmark, Director of Engineering Research and Development, C.B.S.*



*Marjorie Anderson, Third Programme Announcer.*



*Robert Trent and Quincy Howe at C.B.S. microphone.*

**GRIFFITHS, JOAN.** Outstanding member of select band of women announcers who became fighting troops' link with home. Can write as wittily as she talks. Had big hand in "Woman's Hour" programmes.

**HALE, LIONEL.** One of radio's best exponents of the "spontaneous and unrehearsed" programme. Well known for his skilful handling of "Transatlantic Quiz." Was editor of "Isis" and secretary of the O.U.D.S. His first play, "She Passed Through Lorraine," produced in 1934.

**HAYES, ALICK.** Producer of "Just William." Has been actor-manager, film director and television expert. Tall, friendly, none knows better what the younger listener likes to hear.

**HILL, RONNIE.** Began stage career after leaving Cambridge, 1931. Was one of the tireless radio writers who turned out a mass of agreeable material in the first two years of the war. At one time during this period, wrote five or six shows a week with Peter Dion Titheradge. Served with the Navy.

**HILLYARD, PAT C.** Worked with Lee Ephraim for years and is one radio man who knows the stage from A to Z. Left the theatre to become a pioneer of B.B.C. television: returned to Alexandra Palace after valuable war-time and post-war service as Assistant Director of Variety.

**JEFFERIES, L. STANTON.** One of the best-known names in radio. Was first Musical Director of the B.B.C. and knows all the best stories about Savoy Hill and before. Was Uncle Jeff of the "Children's Hour." Served in the Army in the last two wars, and is now a producer.

**KESTER, MAX.** Lanky, humorous personality who has for years contributed to the gaiety of broadcasting. Is one of the few first-rate comic writers for the air. "Danger, Men at Work!" is his.

**MACDERMOT, ROBERT.** Actor and playwright who had distinguished career in B.B.C. Was popular news reader and later joined the Programme Planning Department. With his wife, Diana Morgan, has written West End plays and revues. Was an Oxford Fencing Blue.

**MACQUEEN-POPE, WALTER.** Author and broadcaster. Has a profound knowledge of the theatre in all its aspects. His programme, "London Carries On" ran for two years during the war. Was for many years a West End theatre manager and is one of the ablest publicity experts in Britain.

**McFADYEAN, BARBARA.** Overseas announcer who became immensely popular with Forces listeners. Her programme "Night at the Opera" was enjoyed by millions. She is married to Patrick (Spike) Hughes, the author, composer and critic, with whom she broadcast "Young Visitors" and "Alice in Wonderland."

**MURRAY, ALAN.** Regular Army officer who has had distinguished career as pianist and composer. Best-known song "I'll Walk Beside You." News commentator: composer of the Iraq National Anthem. Is a magnificent shot.

**PEROWNE, LESLIE.** Became widely known before the war for his gramophone programmes. Has encyclopædic knowledge of everything that has been recorded. Is the son—and the grandson—of a Bishop. Served in Royal Engineers, and in Army Broadcasting Service.

**PLOMLEY, ROY.** Versatile radio man who can write as well as he can act, which is saying a great deal. His brilliantly satirical contributions to "Picture Parade" provoked fierce discussions in Wardour Street. Introduced the popular "Desert Island Discs" series.



*Clifton Fadiman, Kieran and Adams, stars of C.B.S.'s "Information Please."*



*Robert Barr, editor and script writer.*



*Stanley Black, Director of B.B.C. Dance Orchestra.*



*Paul Beard, leader of B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra.*

**ROSE, HOWARD.** Assistant Drama Director. First broadcast was in 1923. Two years later became first London Producer of British Broadcasting Company, putting on 250 broadcasts in his first twelve months.

**SHADWELL, CHARLES.** Brought genuine air of music-hall tradition to broadcast Variety. As Director of the Variety Orchestra, was always ready to join in the fun with comedians. His laugh, his lean figure and meagre locks became famous.

**STANDING, MICHAEL.** Director of Variety, B.B.C. Is son of the late Sir Guy Standing: Kay Hammond is his sister. A fluent, agreeable commentator, Standing was a pioneer of the impromptu "street-corner" interviews. As Variety chief controls a minimum of 120 broadcasts every week. Is a keen cricketer.

**VAUGHAN-THOMAS, WYNFORD.** War correspondent and peace-time commentator. First big job was a vivid three-minute description of the Coronation—in Welsh. Most spectacular assignment was running commentary from an R.A.F. Lancaster during a raid on Berlin in 1943.

**WELLINGTON, R. E. LINDSAY.** Controller of Home Service. Helped to lay foundations of British radio. Has been 23 years with the B.B.C., likes rimless glasses and well-cut suits. Was a valued radio ambassador to America as B.B.C. North American Director in New York.

**TITHERADGE, PETER DION.** Leading writer of revue material for B.B.C. and West End stage. Member of a family famous in theatre. Has a flair for finding and encouraging new authors. Was a Royal Artillery officer during the war.

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Solution to Listener's Acrostic

T e a c h e r s  
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O l i v e r  
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A LAESHEY  
ILLUSTRATED  
RECORD OF  
TWENTY-FIVE  
YEARS OF RADIO  
PROGRESS

This fascinating and entertaining book brings to its readers the views of many of the stars of the air.

It presents a vivid and comprehensive picture not only of radio—including both sound and vision—as it is known in Great Britain, but of broadcasting throughout the world.

