

Will TV Bring Back 'Name Band' Era?

By BERNIE HARRISON

Any of you aging high school "rocks" (circa 1938) remember Bill Downer and his old Nightingale (Route 1) combo? Bill, now a prosperous recording executive, whipped through town recently passing out samples of "Toy Tiger" and we got to reminiscing about the "name band" era.

Bill, whose entire crew was picked up by trumpeter Charlie Spivak, which gives you some idea of its class, has been active in the music and recording field ever since and keeps his finger on the pop music pulse. (He has to.)

So I asked him if he thought the "name band" was coming back.

Bill shook his head. "I thought," he said, "that the Glenn Miller movie might provide the push and impetus. It hasn't. The youngsters of today go for the small vocal and instrumental groups, for off-beat sounds."

He could be wrong, of course. Bill added that "The Benny Goodman Story" (Steve Allen) has an outstanding sound track—maybe the "best" Hollywood has ever turned out in this category.

And you'd have to say TV is finally getting around the orchestral pop music on a major scale.

Tonight, for example, WTOP premieres the "Guy Lombardo Show" (with Washington's Betty Madigan) at 8:30.

There never has been anyone quite like Guy in the field. He

On the Run: Cabinet officials lead the list of well-wishers whose birthday greetings to President Eisenhower will be carried all day today (via tape) on radio station WGMS. . . . The general public was also invited to tape messages on recorders installed at the southwest corner of 11th and F streets (up to 3 p.m. today) and some of them will also be aired. . . . A duplicate tape of the official messages has been down to Fitzsimons Army Hospital in Denver and WGMS is also feeding them to Voice of America. (WGMS is still a bit flustered over the enthusiastic response to its intention of saying "Happy Birthday" to its most distinguished listener.)

"One Man's Family" (the NBC radio serial) loses another veteran performer in Minetta Ellen, who has played Mother Barber for 23 years. . . . Miss Ellen announced yesterday that she would leave the series and this remarkable 80-year-old actress added that she intends to enroll in a school and "take up writing, increase my vocabulary" and learn shorthand.

NBC is backing two color pilot films—"The Further Adventures of Tow Sawyer" and a Western with a "new" approach called "Johnny Macassini."

A full-hour conversation with Herbert Hoover will be telecast by NBC Sunday, November 6, from 2 to 3 p.m. . . . Davidson Taylor of NBC says that "we started to make a half-hour 'wisdom' film with Mr. Hoover, but the former President devoted so much attention and time to the project that it was decided that the document should be shown as an hour and as a special event" . . . Ray Henle, a long-time friend of the former President, speaks with him in the film.

Alcoa has picked up the sponsorship of Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors" for Christmas Day (NBC-4) . . . Amahl will be played again by Bill McIVER if his voice has not changed by rehearsal time. . . . Chet Allen, who originated the role, played it twice before his voice boomed.

Today's "Girl in the Gary Flannel Suit" turned out to be Miss America of 1955, Lee Ann Meriwether, who becomes a program regular.

Tomorrow's TV football game: Notre Dame vs. Michigan State—and in color. (WRC-4).

Variety Award To Steve Allen

The Variety Club will give its "Showman of the Year" award to Steve Allen at its annual banquet Saturday, November 19, it was revealed yesterday. The NBC-TV star, according to present plans, will come to Washington the day before and stage his late night show from the Sheraton-Park Ballroom. Don't write for tickets, though. The sponsors are hoping to be able to fill the room with hospitalized servicemen from Washington area installations. B. H.

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not only survived most of his detractors, but he has earned praise for his music from some of the unluckiest sources—one being Louis (Satchmo) Armstrong, who regards him as the "most."

Guy had plenty of imitators in his day, too. Remember Jan Garber?

Other bands that are doing fine on TV include Lawrence Welk (Saturday, WMAL-7) and The Dorsey Brothers (Saturday, WTOP-9). Stan Kenton's CBS show was well received last summer though not carried locally by WTOP-9.

Country music bands are also finding plenty of work in the medium, though they are not generally show headliners. A local exception would seem to be Jimmy Dean's group.

One result of TV work is reported by the Dorsey Brothers, who happily reveal that they're really packing them in whenever they go on tour. Jimmy and Tommy are especially grateful to their boss, Jackie Gleason, whose interest in pop music is sincere. Jackie's recordings have sold well and he composes at the drop of a baton.

Some TV fans, by the way, are still wondering why a network hasn't picked up that "Cavalcade of Bands" idea that DuMont dropped several seasons ago.

Gleason used a variation of the idea for "America's Greatest Bands" during the summer and it went over and well. It would make a fine show—say about 11



ALICE DANCES WITH THE BOSS

Maestro Lawrence Welk seems to be having the most fun on his Saturday night ABC-TV show, dancing the polka and waltz with vocalist Alice Lon. The series is seen here on WMAL-7 from 8 to 9 o'clock.

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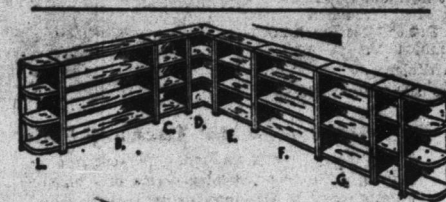


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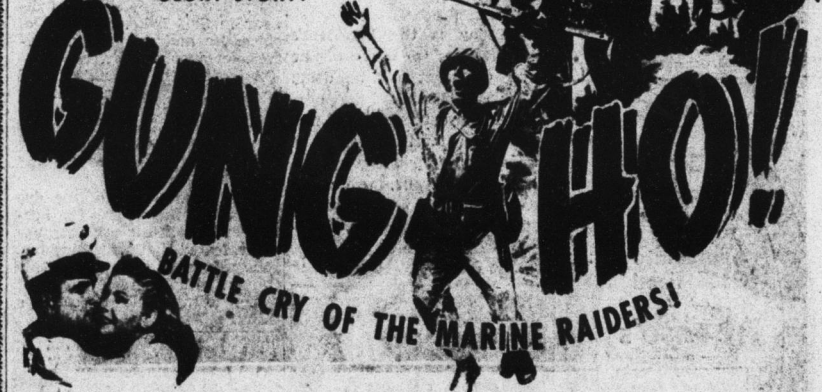
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