

ON THE AIR

Well, They Said It Wouldn't Last

By BERNIE HARRISON
Star TV Critic

It seemed pretty fantastic back in '52 and '53 that Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, TV's top stars, would ever wind up in the divorce court. We all loved Lucy with a passion.

Any doubts that the public would not accept a situation comedy built about a round-eyed, red-headed comedienne and a bandleader husband with a frantic Latin "accent," were promptly dispelled by their very first show.

It made the top ten—and several astonishing months later, No. 1 on every rating card in the land, including water meter readings in a large northern city where water consumption was noted as dipping to a weeknight low between 9 and 9:30 o'clock on Mondays. Everybody was watching; nobody was washing.

It was in October, of 1952, that the script revealed that Lucy was expecting a baby. (She really was, too, in private life.)

And in January of the following year, the script was one of their all-time best—the one in which Lucy told Ricky that her time had come. In the madcap episode, Ricky arrived at the hospital in a wheelchair while Lucy carried her own suitcase.

It was a boy in the script—and a boy in real life.

A few weeks later, Lucy received the Emmy emblematic of her selection as TV's outstanding personality (over Berle, Godfrey, and an outsider named Adlai Stevenson.) "Gee, Desi, we got it," she said, holding the Emmy happily. Desi planted a kiss as the onlookers roared their approval.

The show went on triumphantly from year to year, holding on to No. 1, but disquieting reports were being heard. The performers were getting a little tired of the

roles. Lucy wanted to quit and direct, one story reported in 1955. Desi meanwhile was busily involved in managing the growing Desilu TV empire. Said Desi, of Lucy's desire to quit, "there'll never be an I Love Lucy without Lucy."

It was said that the TV show saved their marriage. Desi's band tours about the country and Lucy's film work meant a long-distance marriage. When the show went off and Desi became increasingly involved in his TV business deals, a new restlessness began.

To keep busy, Lucy converted a studio on the Desilu lot (the old home of RKO) into a complete theater workshop for promising actors.

There are some prophetic remarks by Lucy in an interview in 1949, before her TV series, with Sheila Graham. "I couldn't be happy with only a home life," she said. "I've got to have both. Fortunately, I'm married to a man who understands that completely."

Observed the Hollywood-wise Miss Graham: "If it came to a choice between home and career, I think Lucille would choose the career. I just can't see her in a rocker knitting, or even cooking . . ."

When I Love Lucy began, the other top situation comedy and comedy-drama shows were Burns and Allen, the Goldbergs, the Aldrich Family and Mama. All are gone. The filing of the divorce suit



AND AWAY WE GO!

Jackie Gleason "two-steps" with Kate Smith during a rehearsal break for tonight's musical half hour (7:30 o'clock, WTOP-9).

'Treasure Island' Gets Happy TV Treatment

Checking the week end's the Month series Saturday night (WTOP-9.)

That was a rousing adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island," that old blood-and-thunder friend of our youth, on the Show of

The players seemed to get a big charge out of playing the familiar roles, a feeling that happily carried over in the flavorful direction.

Dan Petrie is probably the real hero of David Susskind's well-mounted production. Director Petrie looked freshly at an old story and caught the spirit of derring-do with skill and relish. For example: that striking cross-deck scene as

CRITIC'S VIEW

Showcase Psychiatry Only So-So

By CYNTHIA LOWRY
Associated Press Television Critic

NEW YORK, Mar. 7.—It's a little difficult to know exactly what author Alfred Bester was trying to tell us last night in "Turn the Key Deftly."

The message seems to be that all of us have more than one personality, really, but that in show-business people it may be more obvious.

NBC's Sunday Showcase concerned itself with schizophrenia in a traveling circus. The backstage life was colorful with acrobatic acts, fat lady and strong man. So far so good.

Then there was the plot. Gerard the Great, the troupe's magician, dies, and his long-lost son, Peter, returns to the circus. Peter promptly falls in love with the company ballerina and steps into his father's shoes.

Before the first commercial most of us are perfectly aware that the lovable Francesca, with whom Peter is in love, is also the spiteful Simone, innamorata of his late father. The wise circus folk know, too. That leaves only Peter confused. When he finally finds out, he tries to free Francesca by murdering Simone. Then he goes mad.

Elementary psychiatry, my dear Watson, and although Julie Harris played Francesca-Simone and the backgrounds were fascinating, it was sort of a silly hour.

Long John pushed the mate overboard.

Hugh Griffith's Long John Silver may have lacked the meanness of Robert Newton's in the movie, but it was long on cunning and a winning effort. Richard O'Sullivan was fine as Jim Hawkins and Boris Karloff contributed a lusty Billy Bones.

Art Carney's special, poking fun at the awards bit which is so firmly entrenched on every level of our culture, was a joyous show that moved like a shot—a cannonade. I thought the theme lampooning the Miss America Contest was the funniest; especially the contestant who offered that awful dance routine.

There was a lot in the show and some of it didn't come off. The "Room at the Top" scene was amusing but rather pointless. The "Peace Prize" award, for sheer abandon, was the wildest. Roddy McDowell, Betty Garrett and Beatrice Arthur were splendid in support and could possibly be in line for, er, awards. —B. H.

10 More Firms Accused by FTC

Ten more record companies were accused by the Federal Trade Commission yesterday of getting plugs for their records by giving illegal payola to disc jockeys.

The FTC has now brought payola charges against about 70 companies. Those named in the latest complaints were:

United Artists Records, Inc., New York City; State Record Distributors, Inc., and Whirling Disc Record Distributors, Inc., Cincinnati; Indiana State Record Distributors, Inc., Indianapolis, and Ric Records, Inc., New Orleans.

Astor Records, Inc., Pittsburgh; Interstate Supply Co. and Roberts Record Distributing Co., Inc., St. Louis; Mutual Distributors, Inc., Boston, and All-State New Jersey, Inc., Newark, N. J.

Each company was accused of giving payola to radio or television disc jockeys. In addition, Astor, Roberts, State, Whirling Disc, Indiana and Mutual were charged with making payments to other broadcasting personnel.

Mutual also was charged with making an illegal payment to an unidentified radio station.

THE EVENING STAR A-11
Washington, D. C.
Monday, March 7, 1960

TODAY'S RADIO HIGHLIGHTS

8:35, WOL—Broadway Show Time. The cast of "Musio Man," with Robert Preston, will be featured.

10:15, WWDC—United States Army Band. Maj. Hugh Curry conducts a program of semiclassical favorites.

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