

HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY • 'DER BINGLE' RIDES AGAIN • SAM SPADE & 'RED CANYON' • THANKS TO THE YANKS



Volume 47 • Number 1

APRIL 2023

GRAND CENTRAL STATION

... Crossroads of a
Million Private Lives
... a Gigantic Stage
on which are Played a
Thousand Dramas!





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from the president

GREETING SPERDVAC MEMBERS!

WELL, the election results are in, and your new board has been elected. As I begin my fourth term as the president of SPERDVAC, I want to thank all of our members that participated in the election. Your active involvement is a key factor in the success of our organization. Recently a member asked me, "Is SPERDVAC an organization, a club or institution?" Formally, we are a 501C3 California non-profit corporation. A lot of our members refer to us as a club. When conversing with others I use the term organization. Institution? Hmm... Whenever I hear that word, a famous quote comes to mind, "Marriage is a fine institution. But then, who wants to live in an institution?" Groucho Marx.

There is an old saying, "The more that things change, the more they remain the same." This appears to be true for the state of audio recordings today. Most of us remember that audio sources were generally on reel-to-reel or on vinyl discs that were either 33rpm or 78 rpm (that is rotations-per-minute for those of you born after 1980). Then the advent of cassettes came into the picture. They were convenient and easy to get. Oh! The money I spent on blank cassettes! I would hate to go back and add it. We could "transfer" our audio to cassettes and trade with our fellow collectors. Then audio CDs of various types came into the picture. Everyone went scrambling to find original source tapes to transfer to a "digital" format. But wait! Then we moved over to the 100% digital file transfer; we could just "send" files via email. Makes you nostalgic for cassette mailers, doesn't it? Anyway, my point is, with all this change, there has been a resurgence of interest in vinyl discs. What would have been considered prime material for landfill is now fetching top prices on eBay and similar sites. So, we might ask ourselves why? Without getting too technical, digital recordings simply do not have the "full sound" found on records and tapes. Digital literally "slices" the sound wave into samples. The analog recording contains *all* of the

sound without taking anything out. This is very validating for all the efforts we, as an organization are taking, to preserve and restore the audio discs in our collection. Seems like our audio treasures have increased in value.

For those of you who are visiting www.spervac.com regularly, you will see we've added an additional thousand scripts to our library.

Audio files are being added, and we hope to increase the rate and the number of files available to members. Converting the audio files over to the website is a time consuming and exacting process. If you happen to find information in our database that requires review or updating, please let us know. There are so many experts in our organization and it is always appreciated when you share your expertise. Please remember to cite your sources for any changes you recommend.

We still have need for an official secretary for our board of directors. This is an officer position and we need to have someone in this role. I realize this is a repeated request, and I promise I'll stop asking just as soon as we get one. It is in our best interests to find a secretary from within our organization. Please send your interest or request for details to info@spervac.com.

On behalf of the new 2023-2024 I want to express my appreciation for all of you who actively support SPERDVAC. Through emails and several conversations, the interest in providing audio workshops or seminars has been raised. The idea is to impart the skills and techniques of quality audio production to a new generation. This idea is in its early stages. We feel there are other

Until next time, stay safe and stay tuned!📻

Timothy Knofler

A THUMB GOES UP



ACROSS THE POND, radio science fiction comedy got a big boost in March 1978 when *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* aired on BBC. Written by Douglas Adams the 12 30-minute episodes were a zany compilation of convoluted intergalactic adventures which began with the destruction of planet Earth to make way for a hyperspace bypass.

In episode one the soon to be homeless Earthling Arthur Dent is rescued by his friend Ford Prefect, who it turns out is really an alien in disguise. Ford became stranded on Earth while on assignment writing for *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a pan-galactic encyclopedia and travel guide. As Ford counts down the minutes and then seconds until the end Arthur, having a hard time coping with the situation, says he needs "to go and have a little lie down somewhere." And there, from the get go, you have the type of droll humor that runs through this series.

Although with much more humor, *The Hitchhiker's Guide* exhibits some inspiration from Doctor Who, a series on which the author Douglas Adams was a writer and script editor as well. Ford and Arthur often find themselves materializing inside spaceships traveling through time and space while encountering both friend and foe.

Adams cleverly slipped in plenty of satire dealing with modern society, government bureaucracy and destruction of the planet. Yes, humor pops up unexpectedly and frequently including this little gem from the narrator: "And dared to brave unknown terrors, to do mighty deeds, to boldly split infinitives that no man had split before and thus the Empire forged."

During his travels Arthur, the homeless Earthling, learns the answer to the Ultimate Answer of Life which turns out to be 42. Unfortunately now he must learn the Question to the Ultimate Answer of Life, the Universe and Everything. This is a difficult task!

Episodes took about two weeks to make and were recorded on 8 track tape, often out of order with only half the actors on stage for a scene. All the robots and talking computers were added afterward as were the sound effects, often taken from prerecorded disc or tape. Actors sometimes played as many as five roles in an episode.

One of the more interesting characters in the series is Marvin, the Paranoid Android, who is either depressed or sarcastic about the menial tasks assigned to him. Take this grievance, for example: "No one can help me. Not that anyone's ever tried of course. Hardly worth anyone's while really is it? I mean where's the percentage in being kind or helpful to a robot if it doesn't have any gratitude circuits?" In the film version Marvin was expertly voiced by Alan Rickman.

Sam Rockwell played the President of the Galaxy, Zaphod Beeblebrox, who wore a helmet which doubled as a lemon juicer—quite the visual gag! Unfortunately his character had been written as having two heads and this presented a problem when the transition was made to film. Zaphod's heads were stacked one on top of the other so that they awkwardly appeared to emerge from his adam's apple. One had to suspend all notion of logic for this series!

Following broadcast on BBC starting in 1978, *The Hitchhiker's Guide* aired on the BBC World Service, National Public Radio in the US, and CBC Radio in Canada. It enjoyed an afterlife in five novels, stage shows, comic books, a 1981 TV series, a 1984 text-based computer game, audio cassette tapes, an LP and a 2005 feature film.

While researching for this article the author discovered the website <https://archive.org/> and <https://archive.org/details/TheultimateHitchhikers-Guide>. Internet Archive is a non-profit library of millions of free books, movies, software, music, websites, and more. Books can be borrowed for up to two weeks, although renewal is possible.

There are many download formats and languages to choose from and an audio option is available once downloaded.👉

Exploring
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

by Yolanda Day



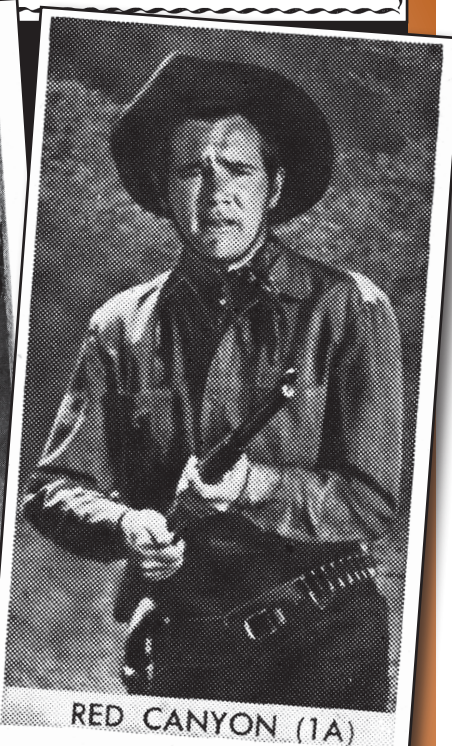
RADIO CAN HELP YOU SELL 'RED CANYON'



U-I AND CBS JOIN IN 'RED CANYON' PROMOTION

An excellent opportunity for local publicity stems from a promotion arranged by U-I and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) because of the fact that Howard Duff, one of the stars of "Red Canyon," plays the title role on the popular "Sam Spade" network radio show (every Sunday, 8 p.m., EST). Cross-plugs can easily be arranged if you credit the station's call letters on a lobby poster in exchange for an air plug, immedi-

ately following the Sam Spade show, in which theatre and playdate are identified. We have arranged for the Sam Spade show to plug the picture on the national hook-up. Take advantage of all the possibilities in this arrangement by contacting your local CBS station with the Howard Duff personal interview record (offered elsewhere on this page), plans for contests and other promotions in connection with this picture.



RED CANYON (1A)

Howard Duff, the "Sam Spade" of the radio series, turns to tracking down wild horses in the Universal-International Technicolor film, "Red Canyon." He also ropes a "wild filly," Ann Blyth, over the objections of her father, played by George Brent.

NEWSPAPER AND RADIO QUIZ

Here is a quiz which should be easy to plant, either in your local newspaper or through one of your radio stations. Ask contestants to identify the following actors and actresses who, like Howard Duff, radio's "Sam Spade," became popular movie stars after they had gained prominence as radio personalities. Answers appear in parenthesis.

- (1) The actor who was first a sports commentator and who played memorable roles in such films as "Knut Rockne," "Kings Row," "Voice of the Turtle" and "Stallion Road." (RONALD REAGAN)
- (2) The latest screen menace was first a highly successful radio actor, and whom you remember in such pictures as "Kiss of Death," "Street With No Name" and "Roadhouse." (RICHARD WIDMARK)
- (3) One of radio's most popular comedians, the man with the large chin and "sliding pond" nose, whom you remember in "Where There's Life," and "Paleface." (BOB HOPE)

- (4) The young lady whom you will see in "Red Canyon" and remember from her roles in "Mildred Pierce," "Another Part of the Forest" and "Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid." She was formerly a highly capable radio actress in New York City. (ANN BLYTH)
- (5) The girl who was introduced to the radio scene as Eddie Cantor's protegee on his famous radio program, and who later became one of Universal's biggest stars in pictures like "Three Smart Girls," "Spring Parade" and "For the Love of Mary." (DEANNA DURBIN)
- (6) Perhaps the greatest entertainer of our day, a man who is known as "the groaner" and who came into prominence with a fifteen-minute nightly singing stint on the air. (BING CROSBY)

SAM SPADE SELLS THE WEST.

Press material for *Red Canyon*, a rollicking 1949 western featuring Ann Blyth, George Brent, Edgar Buchanan, Jane Darwell and radio's Sam Spade, Howard Duff, suggests theatre owners use CBS and Sam Spade to promote the film.

Der Bingle Rides Again



NEWS

FROM 485 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK 22, N.Y.

MR. SAM ABELOW

April 28, 1949

BING CROSBY JOINS CAST OF NOTABLES ON CBS SALUTE
TO DIAMOND JUBILEE OBSERVANCE OF KENTUCKY DERBY

Bing Crosby will join the cast of notables on "The Run for the Roses--The Story of the Kentucky Derby," special 30-minute broadcast saluting the Diamond Jubilee of America's turf classic, Friday, May 6 (CBS, 10:30-11:00 PM, EDT).

Crosby, horse fancier of note, who joins the CBS network next fall, has transcribed a special message which will be aired on the special May 6 program, leading up to CBS' exclusive coverage of the classic on May 7.

John Daly, crack CBS newsman, will narrate "The Run for the Roses," which will tell the story of the Derby from its first running in 1875 to its 75th in 1949.

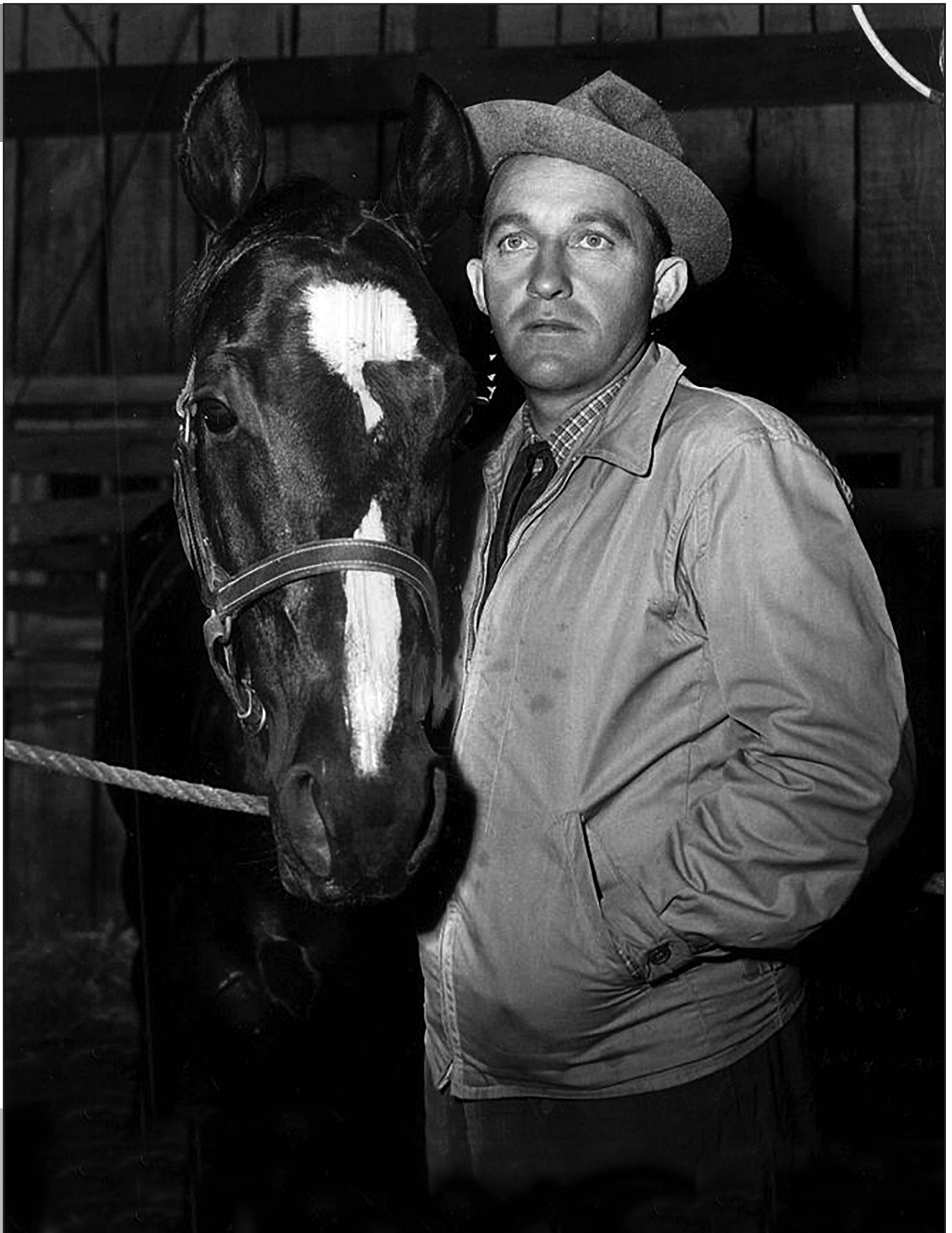
Also participating will be the legendary Col. Matt Winn, Derby boss for many years; Joe Palmer, CBS' racing broadcaster and turf writer for the New York Herald Tribune.

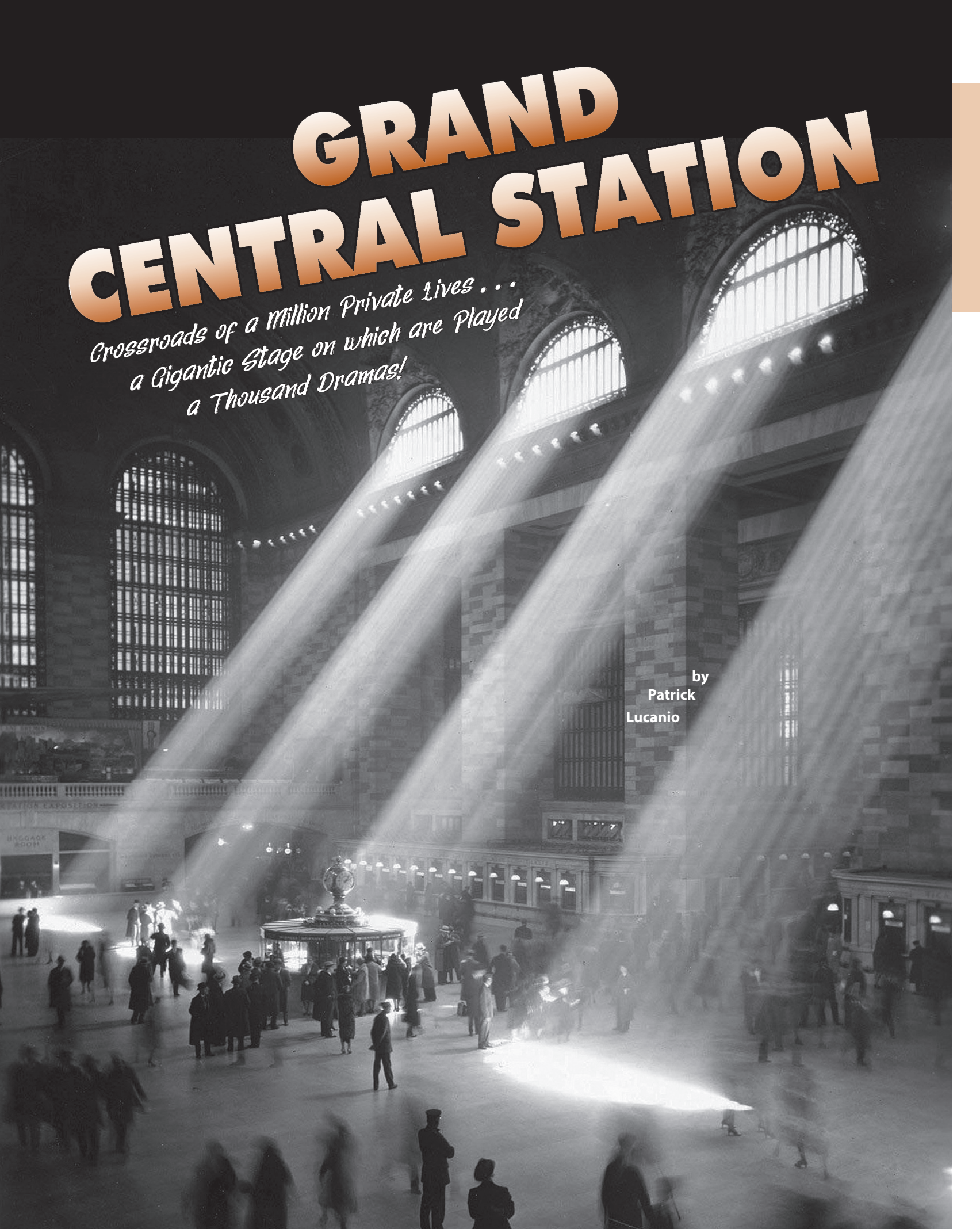
"The Run for the Roses" was written by William J. Slocum and is produced in cooperation with the CBS Sports Department, Red Barber, Director, with Werner Michel supervising production. The program will be directed by Bruno Zirato and produced by Sam Abelow, with original music by Merle Kendrick. John Derr and Brownie Leach were special script consultants.

* * *

THIS IS CBS...THE COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM

Lots of jokes were told about Bing Crosby's racehorse coming in *after* last, and his expression in this photograph from Frank Capra's *Riding High* seems to express his feelings about that horse, but Bing actually liked horses and racing and was the founder of the Del Mar racetrack. As such he was delighted to participate in the CBS special about the Kentucky Derby called *The Run for the Roses*, narrated by John Daly with sports notable Red Barber directing. Originally broadcast May 6, 1949.





GRAND CENTRAL STATION

*Crossroads of a Million Private Lives...
a Gigantic Stage on which are Played
a Thousand Dramas!*

by
Patrick
Lucanio

Radio ad-man turned producer Martin Horrell had noticed the Oscar-winning film *Grand Hotel* (best picture) and being an admirer of the power of short fiction saw how each person within that hotel setting had a story to tell. Moreover, he saw that the setting itself was a sort of character, a sort of organic host that served as an omniscient observer of the human condition. Radio drama itself was a magazine-like collection of many different stories, and an anthology such as *Grand Hotel* seemed perfect for radio adaptation. He set his program inside a railroad station and titled it, *Grand Central Station*.



Martin Horrell

THE WHIMS OF HUMAN LIVES have been a dramatist's inspiration since the earliest days of storytelling, and what better milieu to examine those ups and downs of existence than a sequestered place where people gather *en masse*. Such a modern narrative was first examined in 1929 by Austrian writer Vicki Baum in *Menschen im Hotel/People in the Hotel*, a German novel that was translated into English by Basil Creighton in 1930. Baum's novel has no linear plot but jumps back and forth among stories of diverse people "in the hotel" whose lives are entwined only by their fleeting presence in the hotel.

Baum's novel led to a genre often referenced by scholars as the "hotel novel." Characteristically, these works find diverse people gathered within a confined area, often an inn, a hotel, or large house. Arthur Hailey's *Hotel* (1965) and *Airport* (1968) as well as Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977) are indicative of more modern narratives as is Anthony Asquith's film of playwright Terence Rattigan's *The V.I.P.s* (1963), which is set at London's Heathrow Airport.

Baum's narrative itself was adapted for the stage by William Drake in 1930 as *Grand Hotel* and filmed two years later under that title with an all-star cast that included Greta Garbo, John Barrymore, Joan Crawford, Lionel Barrymore and Lewis Stone. Interestingly if presciently, it is the film that gave us Garbo locking herself inside a darkened hotel room after uttering, "I want to be alone." But relevant to the hotel novel is Lewis Stone's observation, as Dr. Ottersschlag, a disfigured World War I veteran living permanently in the hotel, that the hotel is the place where one finds "people coming, going; [but where] nothing ever happens"—an ironic observation since, of course, much happens.

Presumably, radio producer Martin Horrell had noticed the Oscar-winning film *Grand Hotel* (best picture) and being an admirer of the power of short fiction saw how each person within that hotel setting had a story to tell. Moreover, he saw that the setting itself was a sort of character, a sort of organic host that served as an omniscient observer of the human condition.

Martin Horrell was no stranger to such storytelling having been a short story writer himself and whose works were so adept that he taught writing at the University of Chicago. Indeed, Horrell's career would be as interesting as a story coming out of a grand hotel had it been dramatized. As Horrell told it, his story was the Horatio Alger story as his father's business collapsed during Horrell's first year at college. Horrell offered to quit school and go to work to help out the family, but his father preferred that he remain in school. Horrell did so, paying his tuition by contributing stories to the *Chicago Tribune*, perform-

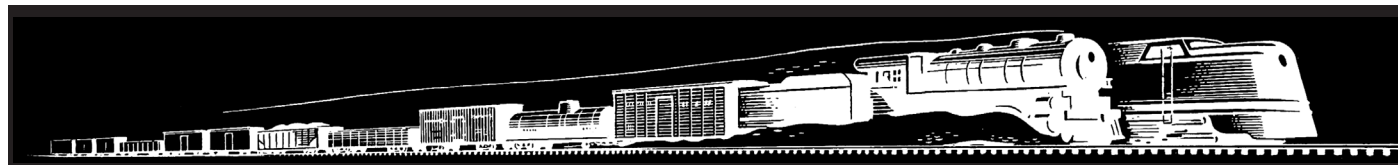
ing in Vaudeville and nightclubs, and acting at Essanay movie studios. After time serving in the U. S. Navy's aviation program in 1917, he moved eastward to New York City, arriving via rail at New York's Grand Central Terminal. In New York he joined an advertising agency and soon took on radio production in addition to his regular duties. Before long, however, radio production demanded his full attention, a task that fit his worldview perfectly since he once observed that he saw radio drama as a magazine-like collection of many different stories, and an anthology such as *Grand Hotel* seemed perfect for radio adaptation.

It was said that Horrell was unable to secure the rights to *Grand Hotel* but the setting remained an inspiration. Believing that the setting itself would be the adhesive to hold diverse stories together, he entertained two dynamic possibilities for a setting: an airport or a railroad station, which would serve as the point of arrival and departure for characters with stories to tell. Recalling his own arrival in New York City he preferred New York City's massive Grand Central Terminal and sealed that location for his radio program after listening to recordings of trains and railroad stations and believing that a railroad station would be more evocative and of greater variety.

He titled his program *Grand Central Station*—yet another "grand"—whose introductory proclamation identified the location as the "crossroads of a million private lives—a gigantic stage on which are played a thousand dramas."

As John Dunning noted in *On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio*, the program is "remembered far more for its opening signature that for its stories," which Dunning described as a "cascade of words and sound effects" worked from an echo chamber:

As a bullet seeks its target, shining rails in every part of our great country are aimed at Grand Central Station, heart of the nation's greatest city. Drawn by the magnetic force of the fantastic metropolis, day and night great trains rush toward the Hudson River, sweep down its eastern bank for 140 miles, flash briefly by the long red row of tenement houses south of 125th Street, dive with a roar into the two-and-one-half-mile tunnel which burrows the glitter and swank of Park Avenue, and then . . . (TRAIN BRAKES, ENTERS STATION ... CROWD NOISE ... IN BG). Grand Central Station! Crossroads of a million private lives! Gigantic stage on which are played a thousand dramas daily!



IT WAS SAID THAT Horrell spent two weeks writing that introduction. He was determined to find the correct words to match the sound effects, or, as he put it: “the spoken words had to match the sound effects to create a feeling of excitement and anticipation; the words must follow a definite rhythmic pattern.” Horrell succeeded since, as Dunning noted, *Grand Central Station* is remembered more for its introduction than its stories.

Purists, however, took exception at such a dynamic introduction. By the time that Horrell’s program had reached the airwaves, trains entering and departing Grand Central Station (terminal) were driven by diesel electric locomotives. The vigorous breathing and roaring of the steam locomotive were relegated to country settings, and letters arrived noting the inaccuracy of the trains as well as the flawed identity of the setting, Grand Central Terminal not *Station*. Horrell responded by returning a form letter explaining that for dramatic effect he used the familiar robust sounds of the steam locomotives. With respect to the title and location, Horrell noted that the actual location was deemed Grand Central Terminal, yes, but Horrell’s own research claimed that four out of five New Yorkers and visitors referred to the terminal as Grand Central Station.

With his program premise set Horrell began production of his series in October 1937. A unique aspect of *Grand Central Station* was that the program had no staff of writers; instead, *Grand Central Station* was written by audience members, some of whom were professional writers but most were amateurs. Newspaper columnists once boasted, or moaned, that scripts for *Grand Central Station* were written by farmers, housewives, college students, vacuum cleaner salesmen and prisoners. Horrell admitted



Newspaper cut from 1947 shows sound effects specialists Jim Rogan and Frank Mellow following the script and awaiting their next cue “to stimulate the auditory nerves to the point that the mind can actually envision what is happening.”

in a newspaper column in 1949 that he had received “perfectly lousy” scripts, but these same disappointments had a gem of an idea. As such, he bought the script, paying his usual \$150 per script fee, and rewrote the script.

“I started as a freelance writer myself,” Horrell recalled, “and I know how cold and impersonal a rejection slip can be. So if I come across anything that might conceivably make a show I go over it again and again. I do all the re-writing and editing myself, and once the submitted script is accepted the only other thing the author has to look forward to is the check.”

Horrell said that he’d never sent a rejection slip. “Every script that’s turned down is sent back with a letter telling why it didn’t make the grade” he said, “and a detailed analysis of the story with positive feedback for improvement and a request for further submissions. I have a feeling for writers.”

Script submission was considered an audition as well. Any new promising talent, Horrell said, would lead to steady employment, and according to Horrell, in an interview with radio columnist Leo Mishkin in 1949, three amateur authors became professional writers although he did not name them. But a

historical note on the Archives West website notes that Horrell gave a start to Arch Oboler, Hal Kantor and Sidney Marshall.

According to script requirements sent to prospective writers, the type of story Horrell sought were “romance, drama, mystery . . . young love, old love, or no love . . . [and] melodrama.” Moreover, requirements preferred “drama, with theme, preferred,” adding that, “We dislike comedy, and hate farce. You may find it helpful to read the short stories in *Good Housekeeping*, *McCall’s*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal*: but remember that to avoid talkiness a radio play needs more incident than the average short story.”

Horrell abhorred horror stories and what he called simple-minded love stories, describing the latter as, “the ones in which boy and girl bump into each other on the street with arms full of packages and then fall in love.” But he added that he was a pushover for a story with a heart tug.

Programs were scheduled four weeks in advance of broadcast. Horrell spent Sundays, he said, perusing submissions, which numbered as few as 12 to as many as 50 each week. He said he seldom received more than 50 scripts, and once boasted that to sell a script to *Grand Central Station* was easier than to any other program, noting that an amateur had a one in 50 chance of selling a story.

Once a story was selected and following Horrell’s careful editing, the script was read by Horrell’s wife, Dorothy, and the series’ director—Ray Kremer, Bill Rousseau and Ira Ashley at various seasons—for further evalu-



A unique aspect of *Grand Central Station* was that the program had no staff of writers; instead, *Grand Central Station* was written by audience members, some of whom were professional writers but most were amateurs.



Director Ira Ashley prepares to cut a cake with actress Mitzi Gould looking on approvingly. The reason for the cake is unknown. Photographs related to *Grand Central Station* are rare and most of those available are not captioned.

ation. Once approved by all, Horrell rewrote the script to maintain series continuity and then production began.

OF GREAT IMPORTANCE to Horrell was what he called the “scenery.” This was the meticulous design of sound effects. As described in various trade publications, Horrell carefully plotted each sound, and then worked with his sound effects specialists—Ed Blaney at NBC, Jim Rogan and Frank Mellow at CBS, and Harold Johnson, Jr., at ABC—for accurate realization. Horrell and his team’s effort was so striking, especially those created by Jim Rogan and Frank Mellow, that the International News Service (INS) in 1947 expressly praised the sequences, describing them as having been “as realistic to radio listeners as though they had seen it happen.” In particular, the news service described the effects as stimulating “the auditory nerves to the point that the mind can actually envision what is happening,” or stated more poetically by today’s dramatic radio enthusiasts, *theatre of the mind*. “Psychologists explain it in scientific terms,” the review continued noting that, “to Martin Horrell . . . radio sound effects are simply stage sets or special lighting used in the theatre to help dramatize a situation.”

More interesting is Horrell and Rogan’s theory that sounds with which listeners are familiar were not to be overlooked or re-

strained. Rogan believed that such sounds were the most effective in radio, and in one episode Rogan and Mellow were required to reproduce the sound of a physician taking a patient’s blood pressure. To achieve this effect Rogan and Mellow used a small hand pump and then released the air giving the “swish” familiar to anyone who has been through the experience.

Rogan’s own contribution to his craft was the “squeak.” This was a wooden peg turning inside a block of wood to achieve the sound of creaking doors, floors, and specifically the unique creak of a ship. Mellow also contributed to the craft by creating a pair of special shoes with hard leather heels that could reproduce any walking sound from a baby toddling in its play pen to a heavy-footed villain climbing a set of stairs.

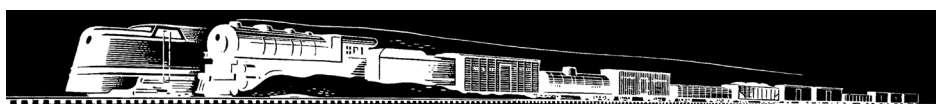
When all was said, Rogan and Mellow’s sound effects studio resembled what INS described as a “Rube Goldberg invention” complete with prop stairs, house doors, automobile doors, jail doors, and so many odds

and ends that INS believed the studio looked very much like the corner of a secondhand store—“unrelated junk all waiting to be used.”

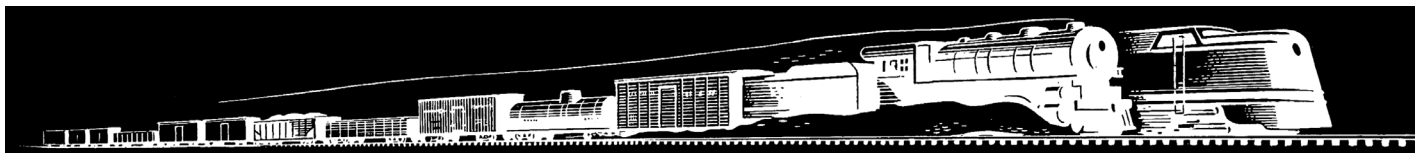
Reproducing sounds was not the only aural requirement of Horrell’s “dressing the stage.” Musical background, supplied in the late 1940s by organist Lew White, was crucial to achieving Horrell’s dramatic effect, and during sound rehearsal Horrell allowed White to improvise chords and passages to augment sequences. Dorothy Horrell, who had been a singer in grand opera in Europe, provided insight into how and why music should be used to enhance mood and to emphasize plot twists. With Dorothy’s agreement, Horrell nodded approval at White who then noted the chord or passage on the copy of his script. It was said in trade publications that the musical interludes enriching *Grand Central Station* were often affected with strong undertones in an operatic style more so than the symphonic sounds found in other programs. Considering Dorothy’s experience, it was no surprise.

Another unique aspect of *Grand Central Station* was Horrell’s reliance on Broadway performers to give life to his characters. He once said that he rejected hosting a stock company of radio performers because he wanted different and fresh voices each week and being centered in New York Horrell turned to legitimate theatre for his performers. A review in the December 14, 1947, Portland (ME) *Press Herald* noted that, “*Grand Central Station* has been a pioneer . . . in the policy of using legitimate stage actors, and has introduced more stage people to the air than any other program.” The review added that a recent show featured players from the then Broadway hits *How I Wonder*, *Command Decision*, and *Our Lan’*. A quick check of the casts for these plays shows such luminaries as Raymond Massey, Paul Kelly, Arthur Franz, Bethel Leslie, Henry Jones and James Whitmore in the rosters. But since extant recordings of *Grand Central Station* and cast lists are scant (there appear to be 11 programs available) there is no way of telling if these actors had appeared in the episode in question.

But of great interest here is the inclusion of *Our Lan’* in the play list. Theodore Ward’s play about slavery performed by a predominantly black cast, led by Muriel Smith and William Veasey, received decent notices but with the strongest praise layered upon Smith and Veasey. Indeed, critic Jack O’Brian, in



According to script requirements sent to prospective writers, the type of story Horrell sought were “romance, drama, mystery . . . young love, old love, or no love . . . [and] melodrama.”



Horrell may have left *Grand Central Station* but not broadcasting. Accompanied by Campbell Soup, Horrell took his storytelling to television with an anthology series called *The Campbell TV Soundstage* (later *Campbell Soundstage*).

The Atlantic City Press, ostensibly wrote for all when he complimented the performances of Smith and Veasy as “expert and . . . consistently above the lesser accomplishment of the writing.” Surely such performances would have caught the attention of Horrell, and apparently did, according to the *Press Herald*, making *Grand Central Station* a rare instance of radio showcasing African-American talent.

Other Broadway performers appearing in *Grand Central Station* included Victor Jory, Peggy Conklin, Mady Christians, Alfred Drake, Richard Kollmar, Constance Collier, Martha Sleeper and Elliott Nugent. Also, appearing in multiple episodes as narrator was Alexander Scourby. A particular high mark for producer Horrell was his ability to employ members of London’s Old Vic repertory company while the company was visiting New York in 1946. Among the Old Vic talent appearing on *Grand Central Station* were Margaret Leighton, Joyce Redman, and Ena Burrill with the latter telling reporters at the time that Laurence Olivier himself arranged for the radio appearances so the actresses “could afford clothes and orange juice” during their stay in New York.

FOR 17 YEARS *Grand Central Station* entertained listeners with human interest stories much in the same vein as soap operas but without recurring characters. The content ran the gamut from tales of lost loves being reunited to a woman’s neurotic fear of taking stairs. With regard to the latter, as reported by newspaper columnists across the country, the series found itself at odds with CBS. This episode told of a woman’s irrational fear of stairs; in the drama, she refused to walk down the front stairs of her home out of a fear that she could not explain. Enter the hero, a psychiatrist, who learns that her mental condition is a “guilt complex” about her marriage. The psychiatrist prescribes treatment, and all ends well for the couple.

Despite psychiatric treatment depicted in hundreds of plays, movies, novels and short stories, notably at the time the popular musical play *Lady in the Dark* with book and direction by Moss Hart; the novel *Wasteland* by Jo Sinclair; and the film *Spellbound* directed by Alfred Hitchcock, CBS censors would have

none of it eliciting the ire of Horrell. Noting the above titles, Horrell argued that, “The over-all ban on psychiatric subjects is somewhat silly especially in view of the marked success in movies and books.”

CBS, however, countered that despite depictions in other media the field of psychiatry was too nebulous and unproved for radio. The censors went further by suggesting that Horrell through the drama’s dialogue was practicing psychiatry. CBS was concerned that many listeners with similar problems and symptoms might “read themselves into the situation” and thus the broadcast would

create a “real danger of positive disservice to lay listeners.”

Gilson Gray, with the dubious title of CBS director of editing, added a loquacious if cryptic defense of CBS’s position that must have had Horrell seeking his own analyst:

This decision is based on our present conviction, reached in consultation with professional authorities, that as in the field of general medicine, so in the even less stabilized area of psychiatry there is real danger of positive disservice to lay listeners in opening our facilities to program material detailing clinical, case history, diagnostic



Eva Gabor from Broadway emotes during a tense scene during a broadcast of Martin Horrell’s *Grand Central Station*.

analysis of specific symptomology and its proper treatment.

The danger, of course, lies in the very real possibility of misinterpretation of symptomology and motivation by many lay listeners and consequent possibility of misapplication of suggested treatment or procedure.

Before we embark on such a course, we feel we must be more fully informed in this field than we are at present, not only in relation to the danger mentioned, but also with respect to the areas of agreement and disagreement among the various schools of professional thought.

Gray's explication must have, ahem, swayed Horrell. None of the extant recordings feature a psychiatrist, and references in newspapers noted that the episode *had been* scheduled for February 5, 1947, and thus indicate a cancelled broadcast. The final word here, however, came from *New York Daily News* columnist Sid Shalit who opined, "If you ask us, there is a vital place in radio for psychiatrists—starting right off with the censors (February 5, 1947)."

Grand Central Station was a successful radio series finding sponsorship by Listerine, Rinso, Toni, Pillsbury, Cream of Wheat and Campbell Soup through its 17-year run with its final broadcast on April 2, 1954. In 1950 Horrell left the program and was replaced by Himan Brown, who guided the series for its final four years.

Horrell may have left *Grand Central Station* but not broadcasting. Accompanied by Campbell Soup, Horrell took his storytelling to television with an anthology series called *The Campbell TV Soundstage* (later *Campbell Soundstage*). Horrell brought his methods with him. Scripts were written by free-lancers—again amateurs were encouraged—and the content relied on human interest in the vein of soap opera. The half-hour program, produced live from New York, was essentially *Grand Central Station* without the setting.

Horrell felt that he was a natural for the new medium, noting that television was broadly radio with pictures. The live aspect was particularly to his liking. Through an NBC press release he remarked that, "We think we do a better TV show live because of the spontaneity and tension of the performances, which actors cannot get any other way."

He added that the major difference between his radio series and his TV series was the change in story content. Horrell told TV critic Leo Mishkin that, "A number of the scripts now coming in deal with religion or faith. Back in the old days [of *Grand Central Station*] they were strictly straight stories. Maybe it's because of the time we're living in, maybe it's because of our strain and tension, but if these stories, these scripts, are in

any way a reflection of how the people in the country are thinking—well it looks to me as if the people in the country were trying to find something to lean on, something to support them in a period of crisis and uncertainty."

Horrell's *Campbell TV Soundstage* ran from 1952 to 1954 on NBC earning tepid reviews and ratings. *TV Guide* (September 25, 1953), for instance, declared an oft-repeated complaint: "Either the program's budget will not permit the hiring of better writers or else the producers think they can gamble with weak scripts." And then adding insult to injury *TV Guide* ironically condemned the series for its "stilted emphasis on *pseudo-psychological themes*, pseudo-sophisticated farce and semi-suspense tales [emphasis added]."

Evidently what had worked on radio did not work on television. Horrell's pool of amateur and free-lance writers was again censured by critics, and audiences seemingly agreed with the criticism. Moreover, judging from the review, Horrell was finally able to explore

psychological themes only to receive fault for doing so. Even though *Campbell TV Soundstage* lasted two seasons there was apparently little to recommend it.

Horrell left broadcasting after the failure of *Campbell TV Soundstage*, and after a long illness he died on May 28, 1957, at age 58.

Those who knew him best claimed that despite all the NBC publicity about the value of *Campbell TV Soundstage* Horrell wasn't that happy with his role in television. Privately, he admitted to friends that he missed the storytelling opportunities afforded by radio—truly the *theatre of the mind*. Seeing a train via film rush into a station wasn't the same as visualizing a roaring locomotive entering the grand opulent destination known as Grand Central Station.

And true to Horrell's own conviction, many critics noted that following the live broadcast on Friday evenings of *Campbell TV Soundstage*, Horrell would catch a train for home at where else but Grand Central Station.🚂



Howard Freeman scans documents as Harrison Dowd and Barbara Winchester look on.

PROGRAM OF THE WEEK *SoundStage*

WITH the antics of the *Aldrich Family* apparently having run their course on TV, sponsors of that show recently replaced it with a new series of live, half-hour dramas. The new program, titled *Campbell TV SoundStage*, is sometimes good and sometimes bad but generally rates a look-in by fans of TV drama (NBC, Friday nights).

Like all TV shows which feature different casts and a different story each week, *SoundStage* is subject to the ability of its writers. And since TV has just about exhausted the supply of available one-act plays and short stories which might be adapted, it must depend almost entirely for story material on originals written especially for the show. There's where the difficulty enters.

Either the program's budget will not permit the hiring of better writers or else the producers think they can gamble with weak scripts. Whatever the reason, several of the stories spotted thus far on *SoundStage* would hardly have done credit to a Hollywood "B" movie. There is the same stilted emphasis on pseudo-psychological themes, pseudo-sophisticated farce and semi-suspense tales.

A recent story, for example, was a murder mystery set in a psychoanalyst's office. The script violated every tenet of good whodunit writing by telegraphing the climax within five minutes after the opening curtain. It was so obvious that it hurt. Another story dealt with a wife's endeavors to remake her husband's character and the ensuing troubles. Where have we heard that one before?

The actors appearing on *SoundStage* are mostly well-known TV performers who have learned the medium the hard way—by working in it week after week. They often are able to inject real quality into the show. Settings, camera work and other technical credits are good.—R. S.

22

Settings, camera work and other technical credits are good but the difficulty with *Campbell TV Soundstage* is the weak writing, according to the September 25, 1953, edition of *TV Guide*.



Quiz Show Offers One Prize: Carton of Cigarettes

ONE OF THE MORE UNUSUAL radio programs to hit the airwaves during World War II was *Thanks to the Yanks*, hosted by Bob Hawk, a comedian and one of radio's most proficient quizmasters. *Thanks to the Yanks*, from its inception, offered only one prize: cartons of Camel Cigarettes. And the contestants who answered a question correctly didn't even keep the prize; instead, the successful participant would designate a serviceman to whom the cigarettes would be shipped.

The concept was dreamed up by Hawk a few months after America entered the war. He had already homed-in on audience participation programs as his natural bailiwick. The Hawk Radio Company specialized in producing such formats. Bob had already amassed a resume of past programs that included *Fun Quiz*, *Name Three*, *Take It or Leave It* and *How'm I Doin'?* The latter, sponsored by the R. J. Reynolds Company, had just recently been cancelled after nine months on the air. Quick-witted in business as well as behind a microphone, Hawk immediately began developing his next radio venture, *Thanks to the Yanks* which would re-involve R. J. Reynolds and Camel Cigarettes.

His new series was designed from the first to acknowledge the efforts of America's service personnel. What would they like? Bob concluded that, "service men would like smokes. Whether they're in a fox hole in Bataan or a barracks in Jersey, a cigarette is always acceptable." Reportedly, *Thanks to the Yanks* was crafted and on the air within four weeks. Camel Cigarettes signed on to the idea and the program debuted on CBS on October 31, 1942.

The format of the program was superficially simple though behind the scenes Hawk and his staff expended considerable time and effort shaping the series to Hawk's exacting standards. Bob would step to the microphone, greet the audience and explain the rules of the game. Contestants could choose to vie for 5, 10, or 15 cartons of Camel Cigarettes. The difficulty of the questions was reflected in the number of cartons selected. If the answer proved correct, the contestant would designate the serviceman or woman who would receive the shipment. If a participant guessed wrong the cartons of cigarettes would be placed in a duffel bag and shipped to a military base or installation off the beaten track.

The questions used on *Thanks to the Yanks* were carefully researched by two young women on Hawk's staff, Claudia Cantey and Alida Pen-

nie, who would turn their questions and answers over to Hawk. Hawk and his secretary would select the questions for use on the show. A hundred or so questions would be placed in a portfolio which Hawk carried with him to the broadcast.

The only discernable outward change in *Thanks to the Yanks* came when the show dropped its male quartet and hired a female vocalist. The alteration apparently made for better listener appeal and better publicity photos. Four announcers, Ed Fleming, Art Gentry, Charlie Stark and Tom Shirley, all carrying portable microphones, would circulate among the audience seeking willing contestants. By the end of four weeks on the air it was being reported that 156,000 cigarettes had already been shipped to service men and women across the world. CBS started publishing a regular news release called "Posers and Pranks" consisting of questions and answers used on *Thanks to the Yanks* and some of Hawk's recent quips.

Variety (November 11, 1942) was lukewarm toward the series describing it as a "slick merchandising stunt." Nonetheless, *Variety* found that Hawk possessed assets that could potentially compensate for the show's lack of contest excitement. The reviewer observed that Bob "kept the thing moving along at a lively pace and sprinkled the question and answer concourse with a fairly diverting assortment of gags."

The Reynolds Tobacco Company seemed pleased. The following June, Hawk was signed to a five year extension of his contract. The questions kept coming for the duration of the war. Questions like: "Do birds have knees?" [yes] and "Estimate within 5.5 million the total weekly attendance at American motion pictures according to the Hays office" [85 million]. Typically, it was the contestant who was flummoxed over the response to a question. Once, however, the tables were turned on Hawk. An old man had been selected from the audience to answer a question. The man answered correctly, and Hawk asked the fellow where he wanted the cigarettes sent. "Nowhere," he said. I don't encourage anyone to smoke."

Thanks to the Yanks signed off the air for the last time on Monday, December 31, 1945. The following Monday, in the same time spot, *The Bob Hawk Show* premiered. Listeners were now introduced to a revamped quiz show. Reynolds Tobacco was still paying the bills only this time successful contestants would be paid in cash and would be permitted to keep their winnings.♣



ORIGINAL CBS CAPTION: "Bob Hawk, quipmaster of CBS' "Thanks to the Yanks" and lovely Lynn Gardner, his vocalist, point up the merits of V-Mail as a morale builder in 194... V." V-Mail was the censored mail exchanged between those overseas and their families and friends. The reference "194... V" was an open date (1942, 1943, 1944, etc.) to indicate "until V (victory) is achieved."



Radio overtakes TV among 18-49 group

A recent article on the Radio Online website reported that last year Nielsen's Total Audience Report revealed AM/FM radio won versus TV in 18-34 average audiences. Now, AM/FM radio ratings have accomplished something few could have foreseen. The March 13, 2023, Cumulus Media/Westwood One Audio Active Group blog outlined how AM/FM radio ratings have overtaken TV among persons 18-49 for the first time in media history.

- Among persons 18-49, AM/FM radio now beats TV in average audience and weekly reach. According to Nielsen's Q3 2022 Total Audience Report, AM/FM radio's persons 18-49 average audience is now +3% greater than television.

- TV reach among persons 18-49 has dropped -28% and time spent viewing eroded -56%. Since 2018, Nielsen's Total Audience Report reveals the 18-49 weekly reach of live and time-shifted TV has dropped -28%. Over the same period, TV's daily time spent is down -56%, an hour and a half loss.

- Cord cutting is a major driver of TV's audience collapse. The MRI Simmons January 2023 "How Americans Watch TV" report reveals 51% have cut the cord.

- Streaming is now TV: Americans say streaming has replaced traditional TV. A Hub Entertainment study finds from 2016 to 2022, those who said streaming was "the first thing you turn on when you watch" doubled from 20% to 39%. The proportion who said the first thing they turned on is "live from pay TV" dropped from 48% to 28%.

- While a huge number of Americans have abandoned traditional TV for streaming, AM/FM radio remains the dominant audio platform. According to Edison Research's Q4 2022 "Share of Ear," AM/FM radio has a massive 73% share of U.S. ad-supported audio.

- AM/FM radio makes TV better: J&J's pharma brand Tremfya realizes a +45% reach increase by adding AM/FM radio to the media plan.

- Shifting 20% of GoodRx's TV budget to AM/FM radio would generate a +31% increase in reach.

— Walden Hughes

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2023-2024

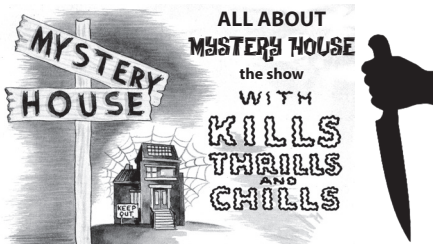
All Candidates Were Elected
Total Ballots Cast: 149

Sean Dougherty	137
Zach Eastman	130
Corey Harker	135
Walden Hughes	140
Tim Knofer*	131
Phil Oldman	130
Robert Tevis*	132

*Re-elected president and vice-president, respectively, at the March meeting.

Sandra Hughes
ELECTION CHAIR

NEXT MONTH IN RADIOGRAM



sperdvac

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