

"Tarzan": A Modern Radio Success Story

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Transcription Has Five Sponsors, Sustaining for Others; Unique Technique in Sound Effects Attained



Mr. Stebbins

THE RAPIDITY with which the radio serial "Tarzan of the Apes" has achieved popularity within only a few months stands out as one of the most sensational instances of sure-fire success in the

history of broadcasting.

"Tarzan's" popularity over the air already rivals his following in book form (though more than ten million copies have been sold), in newspaper strip and in motion pictures. Besides having five sponsors in scattered sections of the country, the transcription feature is carried on three NBC-owned stations in the northwest as a sustaining program.

Sponsorship of this unique program in any territory is given to responsible advertisers who are in a position to utilize efficiently and properly a five-times-a-week broadcast, 15 minutes in length, in somewhat the same way that newspapers are selected or permitted to run the Tarzan strip.

Strategically Placed

IN THE FORM of electrical transcriptions the program can be presented at times most strategic in competition with local or network broadcasts and in scattered territories where certain advertising is most needed.

Among the sponsors of the program to date, together with the stations used, are:

Signal Oil Co., Los Angeles—KFWB, Los Angeles; KPO, San Francisco; KGB, San Diego; KDB, Santa Barbara; KMJ, Fresno; KERN, Bakersfield; KFXM, San Bernardino.

Foulds Milling Co., New York, (macaroni)—WBBM, Chicago; CKOK, Windsor-Detroit; WCAH, Columbus, O.; WSPD, Toledo; WCAE, Pittsburgh; WKRC, Cincinnati; WFBM, Indianapolis.

Crete Mills, Crete, Neb.—KFAB, Lincoln, Neb.

Adlerika Co., St. Paul, Minn.—KSTP, St. Paul.

Hoyland Flour Mills Co., Kansas City—WDAF, Kansas City; KOMA, Oklahoma City; KFH, Wichita.

NBC-owned stations, as sustaining program—KGR, Seattle; KGA, Spokane; KEX, Portland, Ore.

New Technique

"TARZAN" produces in transcriptions effects that will always be utterly impossible in live production before the microphone. Thus it exploits a great new field which

ONE OF the most spectacular of recent radio program successes is "Tarzan of the Apes", which had already achieved fame in book form, in newspaper strips and in motion pictures. While this advance popularity undoubtedly paved the way for the transcription series, it does not entirely explain the instantaneous response which greeted the radio serial. An entire year was spent in technical preparation so that now sound synchronization which would be impossible on a "live" program is employed in the transcription series. Moreover, clever merchandising tieups have been added.

offers almost unlimited opportunity for the imagination and technique of the developers of radio programs.

Sound effects are synchronized to a degree that could never be achieved before the studio microphone. All the birds and beasts of the jungle appear in their own voices. Sound equipment is taken to zoos in all parts of the country where suitable animals are available. There the operator waits hours and days recording the voices of tiny birds, lions or trumpeting elephants in all of their various moods. A tremendous collection of these sounds has been assembled and appropriate portions are synchronized on the transcriptions with fraction of a second exactitude and with emotional quality that fits the story. "Tarzan" on the air is the jungle made audible.

Numerous Rehearsals

IN ONE of the programs cannibals were stealing a man's soul, according to primitive Swahili ritual. Whole libraries of ethnology and exploration were searched until the actual ritual was found recorded in the Swahili language. Drums were made according to the specifications of explorers. Twenty colored people, some of them perhaps actually descended from Swahili ancestors, were taught the ritual and the rhythm of the drums. They were rehearsed for days to make a four-minute program which could be fitted into its proper place in the transcription.

In another program characters are in a deep cavern. A cave was built in the transcription studio so that voices would echo with hollow resonance until they reached the microphone.

Such sound effects demanding

perfect synchronization are impossible except in transcription where every necessary component of the program can be assembled in its proper place, although made miles away, by jackals at night in the zoo, by ringnecked doves, parakeets or elephants.

Year's Preparation

"TARZAN" first went on the air on Sept. 12 following an entire year of technical preparation. The entire cast is employed on full time. There is a full time director. A trained radio writer devotes his entire time to producing the script from the original Tarzan books. Edgar Rice Burroughs, Tarzan's famous author, devotes from one to three hours revising each script. And with "Tarzan" on the air five days each week, this means practically several hours each day. Two sound men are employed on full time. An average of four hours of rehearsal is necessary for each program of fifteen minutes.

When this is compared with the quick production of live drama before the microphone, requiring little rehearsal, no apparatus and no permanent staff, it becomes more clear how different is the "Tarzan" technique.

This means, of course, that "Tarzan" requires great investment. It is undoubtedly the most expensive transcription produced. By the same token it is expensive for the advertiser, not simply because of its popularity, but because of time and capital investment.

Merchandising plans specially adapted to the programs have spread its influence farther, until "Tarzan" on the air is becoming as well known a feature as it has ever been in books and newspapers or motion pictures.

That the program has secured results for each of its sponsors, there can be no doubt. It was our privilege to find with Signal Oil Co. that it was a "direct action"—a get-sales-today—medium as well as a builder of publicity and good-will. Foulds Milling Co. after four weeks reported distribution through 1,520 new retail outlets in the CKOK area alone. Hoyland Flour Mills liked "Tarzan" so well that it added Wichita and Oklahoma City to its audience after a short trial over WDAF. To our minds it is one of the outstandingly successful spot features of all time.

Political Parties Report Sums Still Owing Radio From Election Campaign

ALTHOUGH final figures are not yet available on expenditures by the political parties for radio time purchased during the recent presidential campaign, financial statements of the parties as of Dec. 31 disclose they still have accounts payable for radio amounting to about \$250,000.

The statements were filed with the clerk of the House of Representatives pursuant to the law, which makes mandatory the disclosure of campaign receipts and disbursements. Total figures have not yet been computed, but Senator Dill, (D.) of Washington, recently estimated that, all told, approximately \$2,000,000 was spent during the campaign for time over networks and independent stations.

The Democratic National Committee, according to the Dec. 31 report, was obligated to NBC to the extent of \$107,571.71. It had an unpaid balance of \$47,650.50 with CBS, and owed World Broadcasting System \$959.65. Its total unpaid obligation amounted to \$839,385.

The report of the Republican Committee did not show exact radio obligations, but stated that accounts payable for "radio and other expenses" amounted to \$124,971.84. The bulk of this total is believed to be radio obligations.

Dramatizing Credits

A DRAMATIZED sponsor's message utilizing four dramatic stars was introduced by the Pepsodent Company in its "Amos 'n' Andy" program Jan. 2 on NBC. The dramatized credits presented at the opening of the programs run about three minutes, and are used in three programs weekly. The material is suggested by dentists. The William Wrigley, Jr., Co., similarly, has been using members of the "Myrt and Marge" cast as well as stars of other sponsors' programs on CBS for dramatized credits.