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2

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MID-WEEK SPECIAL

NEWS - COMMENT - POSSIBILITIES

NBC and the Radio & Television Directors Guild in New York are in the middle of "discussions" (there was one in progress last night, Tuesday) over another possible violation by the network of its contract concerning proper credits for directors on television shows. Interestingly enough, the current case again involves a prominent motion picture producer-director. Last Oct 15, when "The Letter" was presented on Producers' Showcase, air credit was given to William Wyler as director, with Kirk Browning additionally credited as having "directed for television." The Guild insisted then that its contract with NBC states that a director's credit must have no qualifying or descriptive tags. Advance releases this week for the Producers' Showcase presentation of "Mayerling" on Monday, Feb 4, note as credits: "Produced, Directed and Staged by Anatole Litvak; Directed for TV by Kirk Browning." Mr. Browning is reported to get fairly hefty fees for supporting the movie men in their TV production and he has solid TV background with good direction credits to warrant the fees. In the case of "The Letter," there was no protest on Mr. Browning's part about his credits, so presumably he has not said anything in the current case. The Directors Guild is vitally concerned because of the possibility that if the NBC cases go unchallenged, the TV director may come to be just another technician hired to assist highly publicized names in embellishing their entertainment world positions..... "Mayerling" will have another distinction when it goes on the air. Property man George Pfeiffer says that show will have costlier furnishings than any TV show he can name because it will be using so many antiques to provide authenticity. Besides that, designer Otis Riggs has created 18 settings that are so numerous and large that they cannot be held in the NBC Brooklyn Studios at one time, so six of them will be stored outside in a trucking bay and trundled into the studio as needed, during commercial breaks.

Lana Turner makes her TV performing debut on the Bob Hope Chevy Show over NBC on Sunday, March 10, 9-10pm EST, but there won't be anything dramatic about her appearance. She'll work in comedy sketches with Hope and with Wally Cox.....Jon Cypher, a 25-year-old lyric baritone with a summer stock background, will play Prince Charming opposite Julie Andrews' Cinderella in the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical over CBS on March 31.....Jackie Gleason is giving full rein to his love for music and musical productions on his Feb 2 program when "The Honeymooners" go to Paris and become involved with an original musical comedy. The original music and lyrics are by Jerry Bressler and Lyn Duddy, with a group of Lyn Duddy singers supplementing 24 dancers (17 girls, 7 boys) in special production numbers in keeping with the Parisian theme for the show.....Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse will do the TV adaptation of their own comedy, "The Great Sebastians," starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in the roles they created, to be presented April 1 over NBC on Producers' Showcase...J. Fred Muggs, only chimpanzee star in TV, retires from his regular position on the Today staff on March 1. He's getting a bit too old (almost 5) for kidding around.

- Page 1 -

(MORE)

When Goodson-Todman's Two For The Money, starring Sam Levinson, returns to CBS on Saturday, March 23, 10:30-11pm EST, Dr. Mason Gross of Rutgers University, will again judge the answers if present plans are realized. The familiar audience participation quiz-comedy program began its career on NBC on Sept 30, 1952, but reached its peak on CBS, with Herb Shriner, and Sam Levinson as Shriner's summer replacement. The returning quiz will replace You're On Your Own, which goes off because the sponsor, Hazel Bishop, Inc., is cancelling after a 13-week trial in the time spot, reportedly because not enough stations were cleared for the show.....When Arthur Godfrey takes a five-week leave of absence, starting Feb 25, his Talent Scouts will be recorded in advance, but Peter Lind Hayes will take over as m.c. of the morning Arthur Godfrey Time shows. Replacement m.c.'s for the Arthur Godfrey Show, Wednesday evenings, will be: Feb 27, Peter Lind Hayes; March 6, Guy Mitchell; March 13, Jo Stafford; March 20, Teresa Brewer, and March 27, Vic Damone.

Talent Associates refuses to give out any information on future scripts planned for either its Armstrong Circle Theatre, or the alternate week Kaiser Aluminum Hour, which the firm will begin producing with the Feb 26 program. Production staff for the latter, which is not completely set, will have David Susskind and Alfred Levy as co-producers (both head Talent Associates), and Murray Susskind as an associate producer. Jacqueline Babbin will be script editor. Last program for the Kaiser show to be produced by the out-going Unit Four Productions will be "So Short a Season" on Feb 12, an original by Gene Rodenberry, to be produced and directed by Franklin Schaffner.

Future productions scheduled for U. S. Steel Hour include: Feb 13, "Inspired Alibi," adapted by S. S. Schweitzer from an original by Gertrude Schweitzer, to be directed by Paul Stanley; Feb 27, "Ruthless!," an original by Curtis Kenyon, to be directed by Robert Stevens. Studio One will present "Tale of the Comet," an original by Robert Alan Aurthur, on Feb 4, to be directed by Robert Mulligan. On Feb 11, Tom Donovan will direct "A Walk in the Forest," an original by Howard Rodman. Alcoa Hour on Feb 17 will present Philip Barry's "The Animal Kingdom," adapted by Philip Barry, Jr., to be produced and directed by Alex Segal. (The play was first presented over ABC on Celanese Theatre, March 5, 1952, when Alex Segal was regular director of that program). Playhouse 90's "The Comedian," scheduled for Feb 14, with an adaptation by Rod Serling of Ernest Lehman's novel, is owned by George Glass, who has had plans for its filming for some time and now regards the TV production as a tryout. If Serling's script, or a large part of it, is used for a movie version, he will get a percentage of the screenplay budget. John Frankenheimer is directing the teleplay.

General Foods will use Richard Diamond, Private Detective as its summer replacement for December Bride. Production of 13 films of the Dick Powell property (it was a longtime radio role for Powell) will begin the last week in February, to be written and produced by Richard Carr, with David Janssen in the title role.....M-G-M's TV division expects to begin production this spring on several TV series to be based on motion picture properties controlled by the studio. The series to be filmed will depend on firm sponsor commitments, although some could move into pilot stage on spec. The M-G-M TV unit will have Adrian Samish as director of programs; Sam Marx, executive producer, and Ruth Kyle, program coordinator. Charles "Bud" Barry heads all TV activities for the movie producer.

PEOPLE GOING PLACES: Edward J. Montagne named to the new position of executive producer in charge of all film operations for CBS Television, New York.....W. Spencer Harrison appointed v.p. and business manager of talent and contract properties for CBS Television.