

Review of Units

Phil Spitalny

(Reviewed at the Strand Theater, New York, Friday Evening, Oct. 17)

Spitalny's all-girl entertainers, whose Hour of Charm show is a radio standard, again put on a fine vaude show. The film is *Sergeant York* in its first local pop-price run, and the bill should be good for three weeks at least.

The vaude ran 53 minutes, being strong on fine melodious singing and instrumental music, but weak on comedy and surprise. But, despite these deficiencies, the program pleased immensely, the audience apparently finding the frequent soft melodies a pleasant change from razzmatazz swing still so prevalent on radio and stage.

Spitalny makes the introductions and is smart in keeping them short and modest. He puts thru the paces his 22 musicians, vocal trio, solo singer and comedienne, spotting the numbers to provide change in pace and contrast. He has six fiddles, plus guitar, harp and string bass, twin pianos, five brass, flute, drums, bass horn, three saxes. After the theme song, the band goes into the oldie, *Tenting on the Old Camp Grounds*, then *Piano Concerto*, with the *Tonight We Love* lyrics by low-voiced Maxine. A switch brings the contrasting novelty rhythm number, *Piggly Wiggly*, with glee club and the Three Little Words singing. *Ave Maria* is another change of pace, with the glee club and Evelyn's violin leading and the backdrop revealing a cross.

The band then goes hot, drummer Mary McClanahan providing skin-beating fireworks that drew plenty of applause, with flutist Lorna providing an effective solo. *Maria Elena* is sold by Evelyn's excellent fiddling plus showmanship, and then the string section and Evelyn win applause with their version of *You and I*, current pop.

Three Little Words, acting tipsy, try to be funny warbling *There's a Tavern in the Town*. Some cute bits; but the comedy idea just didn't come off right. Next comes an arrangement, says Spitalny, by the band girls themselves, with pianist Rosa Linda leading. The show's only comedy punch, June Lorraine, followed. Her amusing impersonations of Lionel Barrymore, Bette Davis, Katharine Hepburn and Jimmie Durante, with emphasis on the eyes, drew laughter and plenty of applause. Had to beg off.

A youngster around 15, Francine Gail, is introed by Spitalny as "the greatest singer I have ever heard" and she offered the ballad *Jim*, and Spitalny's own *Madelaine*. Had to encore. She has an interesting contralto, an expressive face, and, despite her apparent inexperience, held close attention. Lots of possibilities here.

Show closed with Ravel's *Bolero*, with drum and flute dominating, an always-exciting piece. *Paul Denis*.

"Hawaiian Nights"

(Reviewed at the State-Lake Theater, Chicago, Saturday, October 18)

An unpretentious 50-minute show, running smoothly and furnishing pleasant entertainment most of the way. It is a revised edition of Anton Scibilia's *Waikiki Nights*, with more emphasis on modern specialties. Cast is topped by Marty Collins and Harry Peterson, a pair of funsters of the old school who work thruout the show. With them are the Three Ryans, Don and Jane Ford, Evelyn Wilson, Don Seat's Hawaiian band, Charles Dixon and Pal, and a youthful line of 10 girls.

Girls open with a neat tap specialty in front of a pier drop, spotting the Fords in a bright song and dance bit. The Three Ryans come on with their knockabout antics and zany face-slapping gags. Boys have a speedy and funny turn.

The band setting, with an Hawaiian scene in the background, is on view for

the remainder of the show. The girls start off with a swing hula and the Fords return to perform their regular musical comedy song and tap act that is refreshing to watch. The kids work with charm and admirable ease.

Evelyn Wilson, next, sings loudly and sandwiches in a drunk impression which is only fairly funny because it lacks consistency. In her final number, the line dresses the strage with a good rhythm routine.

Charles Dixon and Pal, seal act, still stack up as a good novelty. The seal exhibits human understanding and his balancing feats are consistently good.

Collins and Peterson punch away thruout the bill with familiar but still good cross-fire patter. Collins in a sailor outfit carries the comedy, and in his next-to-closing cornet blowing and legomania specialty works up a good hand.

All back for the Aloha finale.

Sam Honigberg.

Cushman Resumes Sending Out Units

LOS ANGELES, Oct. 18.—Wilbur Cushman Circuit is resuming package shows for Midwest houses. According to Wilbur Cushman, circuit head, the units will be all-girl and will carry a line, standard vaude acts and a stage band.

Opening date is set for November 11, with a route calling for stops from St. Louis west to Salt Lake City and back. In the routing of the shows long jumps have been eliminated, along with risky percentage dates, says Cushman.

Ottawa Club Resumes

OTTAWA, Oct. 18.—The Gaitneau Golf and Country Club will continue with floorshows despite liquor restrictions and blue laws.

Shows were dropped September 15 because of reduced grosses since new regulations went into effect early in summer. "Business was good on first night we returned to shows and I hope we will be able to continue with them," said Manager Ben Rochefort.

SUGAR'S DOMINO

(Continued from page 4)

sons of Jack Benny and Fred Allen and a couple of others not quite as capable but whom we refrain from mentioning because the line between them and the stinkeroos is too finely drawn to permit complete divorce. For the purpose of this piece we cannot be concerned with what causes the smelly shows to be that way. It might be the pace of changing shows weekly, which only organizations of herculean might can stand up under; it might be poor writing staffs as well as basically weak show ideas. Whatever it is, the shows that smell up the air not only hurt those who are directly concerned with them. They cast a blight over all of radio. It is not yet manifest. If it were this screed would be pointless. But it is certain that the trend is away from comedy shows and if radio doesn't do something about it—the networks and the leading advertising agencies particularly—it will lose ground that will not be regained for many years.

Radio disarranged the habit patterns of many millions of people. The erstwhile radio fans deserted accustomed forms of amusement, social activity and hobbies to pay homage to the Great God Radio. Having reached the stage where radio, because of inferior material, is palling on them they are tearing loose and it will be difficult, if the trend continues, to disengage them from the new interests they have acquired.

HERE we are, bringing up vaudeville again. We are as unabashed about this as the man who looks with clear vision at the world of today and is immune against jibes because he continually reminds alleged Christians about the Teacher who lived about 2,000 years ago. We introduce vaudeville into today's discussion because we hope that those who have forgotten or, perhaps, never knew will profit. We remind the men who are killing radio by their stupidity as well as the film biggies who are frightening Hank and Hannah Public away from box offices that one of the major contributing causes of vaudeville's

decline was the copy act, which would never have grown to evil proportions were it not for the encouragement and stupidity of the men who had vaudeville's fate in their hands. Copy acts gave vaudeville the solar plexus punch that sent it flopping to the canvas. Vaudeville's tycoons spent thousands upon thousands of dollars building up attractions that meant box offices bulging with folding money. And they turned around with the deliberation of maniacs and permitted the gold to fall thru their fingers by booking copy acts with fourth-rate actors.

Radio is retching with a surfeit of copy material. Film business is in an analogous position. Let a producer click with an idea in the fabric of a story and a score of others will follow. The public revolts in its very telling way by staying away from picture theaters. Let a company exploit a comedian or a freak entertainer successfully and it follows like flies after sugar that every company on the map will dig up marred carbon copies. The public is a wised-up public these days. The morons in Hollywood don't realize it, but the public catches on quickly. Copies and played-to-death cycles confound and annoy them.

The public's revolt is too subtle for Hollywood superficial and obvious mentality. Hank and Hannah don't picket theaters. They merely stay away from them—especially these days when there is so much money to be made in defense work and attendance at a five-hour double feature show of malodorous genre constitutes a waste of good time and money. The Einsteins of the film business fail to heed the warning because it is not thrust into their phizzes.

IN THESE cockeyed times when money is so free and when certain industries are crippled because of a shortage of materials even tho the demand for their products is unprecedented the show business is in an enviable position. Defense economy is not and will not, as far as can be seen, interfere with the growth and affluence of the film and radio industries. Folks have more money lining their pockets than at any time since 1931. They want amusement. Most of them crave it as a relief from the cares and pressure of an uncertain world. Radio will cash in as never before if it cleans up its idea factories. Ditto for films. Radio and films can work hand in hand developing new personalities and recruiting these personalities from a revived stage.

It should be acknowledged by now, with the experience of 10 years as a basis, that radio and films cannot, either by themselves or working together, develop new material. They must have the nourishment provided by the stage; by vaudeville and cafes. The film industry is in a position to encourage the stage by opening up its theaters to live attractions. The stage unions cannot continue indefinitely to thwart the progress of living entertainment. The IATSE will have to behave after the high jinks being staged by the Federal Court are over. Musicians will have to co-operate in the move to restore flesh or the musicians' union (AFM) will go the way of all unions that fail to serve their members' best interests. The unions alone—even were they so inclined—cannot bring back flesh. The move must be made by the men who control theaters and who have the wherewithal to buy talent.

BIOFF-BROWN SCANDAL

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non-IA delegate who is an IA member.

Witnesses in last week's proceedings, being held before Judge John C. Knox of Federal Court, included Louis B. Mayer, Major Albert Warner; Hugh J. Strong, confidant of Sidney Kent, president of 20th Century-Fox, who couldn't testify due to illness, and Norman Thor Nelson, Bioff's brother-in-law, who was described as the collection man in the MGM section of the alleged swindle. A series of other witnesses were also called to substantiate claims of the above.

Both Strong and Mayer described alleged pay-offs, punctuated with mystery, in hotel rooms, lobbies, in the midst of circumstances usually found in a movie script. However, this stuff was sworn to be very real, with Strong alleging that he was the pay-off man between 20th Century and Bioff. William Michel, 20th Century vice-president, said that he "raised" \$93,932 as their share of the alleged price of protection against strikes and other labor troubles allegedly threatened by Bioff.

Mayer testified that he consummated a deal whereby Nelson became a sub-agent to a Dupont firm, Smith & Aller, and collected \$77,448 in "commissions" for the purchase of raw film material. Nelson testified he received \$125 a week and turned the rest of the money to Bioff. Mayer said that Nicholas M. Schenck, president of Loew's, Inc., instructed him to establish the sub-agency to take care of the pay-off. MGM formerly bought its raw material from the Eastman Kodak Company.

Browne, so far, has gotten very little play. His role thus far, says Prosecuting Attorney Mathias Correa, has been that of a stooge to Bioff.

AFM, NBC, CBS

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it's like the income tax—you get used to it."

Other band agency execs had taken a more serious view. Tommy Rockwell, of General Amusement Corporation, stated that if the bands were not returned to remotes within a short time, band agencies would be hurt in the matter of building bands. He said other means of exploitation would have to be found. Charles Green, of Consolidated Radio Artists, stated that if the situation developed into a permanent deadlock, it would be the worst thing that could happen to the band business. "It would do for bands what it did for ASCAP."

Statements are particularly interesting in view of NBC's intention, expressed by some network spokesmen, to keep remotes off the Red network.

Prior to the settlement, NBC in New York had rounded up enough talent to program the networks for nine continuous hours in the event the New York musicians were pulled. The New York musicians were pulled, but NBC's plan did not go thru. Sidney Strotz, NBC exec, said that continuance of the strike situation was bad for radio, particularly in that it would force such programs as the NBC Symphony off the air. For a brief spell, however, talent had a holiday, and according to one NBC spokesman, the network, prior to the settlement, had already paid dramatic actors, singers and other radio artists about \$4,000 just to keep them standing by and available to fill in the sustaining time.

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