

Father Knows Best

Reviewed Thursday (15) 8:30-9 p.m. Sponsored by Maxwell House (General Foods), thru Benton & Bowles, via NBC. Producer, Benton & Bowles; director, Ken Burton; musical director, Roy Barge; writer, Ed James; announcer, Bill Forman. Cast: Robert Young, June Whitley, Rhoda Williams, Ted Donaldson and Norman Jean Nilsson.

One of the first fall shows to tee off, *Father Knows Best*, gets the new radio season off to an alkaline start. The show, featuring Robert Young as father, offers a happy combination of good scripting, sharp acting and a satisfactory, if not sparkling new premise. A family-style situation comedy, it seems to be a good vehicle for the sponsor, General Foods, for Maxwell House Coffee.

Young plays the part of the stern paterfamilias, whose ability to overcome the manifold domestic problems is supposedly self-evident. The program details some of his successes, but also takes note of those dismal failures which jolt him out of the near-glibness he approaches at times. The film actor did a thorough competent job in his initial performance as Jim Anderson.

Family Fireworks

The others in the family include a young daughter, whose precocious remarks, like those of other radio tots, are remarkably adult, and a teen-age son and daughter. The latter, at the age of 17, furnished the fireworks on the first program by announcing she planned to get married. Not immediately, of course, but at the week's end. Things were settled satisfactorily when the lass and her prospective spouse were given a hint of the financial and household responsibilities forthcoming, but not before the boy friend's family got into a spat with the Andersons over which family tree was better rooted. It's a tribute to say this routine was funny tho hackneyed. Plugs stressed flavor and quality for the fraction more per cup of Maxwell House.

Sam Chase.

The Sonny Kendis Show

Reviewed Thursday (6) 7:45-8 p.m. Sustaining via WCBS-TV Tuesdays and Thursdays. Producer, Barry Wood. Alternate directors, Alexander Leftwich and Alan Dinehart Jr. Cast: Sonny Kendis, Gigi Durston.

The Sonny Kendis Show is an interesting 15 minutes of piano playing and singing made to order for simple and viewing. Altho the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) has come up with something worth watching Tuesday and Thursdays in the 7:45-8 p.m. slot, it remains to be seen whether this cocktail type of presentation will draw enough of an audience to sell commercially.

Sonny Kendis has the flashy kind of eye-catching piano playing style which, no doubt, will appeal to many viewers. His fingers roam across the keys at breakneck speed and he really gives the impression he is doing the impossible at times. His arrangements, too, are something different. The Kendis version of *Bim, Bam, Boom* was interesting for awhile but proved too long. His *In the Good Old Summertime*, featuring a jazzy interpretation was much better. However, the Kendis kind of trick acro-playing is guaranteed to almost make the audience forget what they are hearing. They watch instead.

Good Camera Work

In this he is greatly helped by some very imaginative camera work. There were many close-ups of his finger-work and several superimposed shots of his hands in action from different angles.

Gigi Durston is the fetching lass who spells Kendis with her vocals. Miss Durston rates high on her appearance alone. Her interpretation of *I Love You So Much* was good, but her pose on the couch seemed slightly



Radio and Television Program Reviews

Arthur Godfrey and His Friends

Reviewed Wednesday (10) 8:00 p.m. EDT on the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) TV network. Sponsored by Chesterfield Cigarettes. Style-Variety. Producer, Jack Carney. Director, David Rich. Writers, Tom Adair, Al Singer, Bob Cone and Robert Q. Lewis. Announcer, Tony Marvin. Cast, Robert Q. Lewis, emcee, substituting for Arthur Godfrey; Janette Davis, Bill Lawrence and Art Carney. Music, Howard Smith and Ork. Guests, Tess Gardell, Stan Freeman and Fred and Sledge.

The Robert Q. Lewis has had difficulties snagging a sponsor in radio, on the basis of the performance he gave emceeing *Arthur Godfrey and His Friends*, on which he is the summer sub for lil' Arthur, his troubles are nearly over. Lewis unveils the kind of easy, likable manner before the TV cameras that makes him a natural for a show of his own.

Lewis, on video, is the cute type comic. He doesn't roll the customers in the aisles, but he does get plenty of laughs and by the time the show is over the audience is glad they saw the stanza. He doesn't go in for routines too much, but mostly for by-play with the cast, the guests and even with the theater audience. However, Lewis did have one routine with Jackie Grimes, in which the latter came in to interview him. Because of the stooge's lack of knowledge as to what to ask Lewis, the comic started asking himself questions and answering them. When Lewis found that Grimes had the autographs of most of the Hollywood stars, he started interviewing Grimes, the celebrity.

Interesting Guests

While not all the guests on the show turned in sock stints, all performed interestingly and held up their end. Fred and Sledge, tap-dancing team, really knocked themselves out with their splits, hops and modified Lindy Hop tapping. Tess Gardell, the original Aunt Jemima in *Showboat*, brought back memories as she sang *Can't Help Loving That Man*. Stan Freeman satirized on pianists, professional and otherwise, and even had Lewis plunking on the keys. Freeman's bumble boogie version of *Flight of the Bumble Bee* was noteworthy. And Art Carney rendered (the correct word for his effort) a comic lecture on diapering babies.

Of the steadies, the Mariners were by far the strongest with their version of *By the Sea*. With a shade more style this quartet would find their services in demand in clubs and for records.

The good looking Bill Lawrence practically threw away *The Man I Love*. Janette Davis, hampered by a piece of celery in one cheek when the ork started before cue, delivered *Some Enchanted Evening* in a pleasing style.

The camera was good and the direction was top flight. However, the show was basically Robert Q. He even delivered the commercials in a sincere style that must have impressed audiences sated by phony overselling.

Leon Morse.

strained. Miss Durston has done well in night clubs and her intimate type voice should be even better for TV if she can relax and let the nuances of her tone be heard.

The production and direction were very good.

Leon Morse.

Kate Smith Calls

Reviewed Monday (22), 9-10 p.m. & 10:15-11 p.m., sustaining via ABC. Producer, Ted Collins; director, John Cleary; writer, Bill Rafael; announcer, Doug Browning. Cast: Kate Smith, Ted Collins.

Those who love Kate Smith may glut themselves these days, with the warbler shoving the moon over the mountain for an hour and three quarters every Monday night on the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). Besides Kate's well-known girth and gaiety, there are also prizes given away with the usual nod to AT&T. It all adds up to one thing, in trying to assess the show, if the listener is a Smith-ite, Monday will be his night to stick by the radio; if not, he'll probably go to the nearest movie.

This show gives Kate every chance to ungirdle her personality and let it come billowing thru the speaker. There's Kate laughing, as Ted Collins worked at being funny; there's Kate friendly, as she talked to the loot-winners over the phone, and there's Kate being the modest American girl-success, as she shyly spun numerous Smith records as the "entertainment" portion of the program.

This much must be said: it is one giveaway which doesn't scream and grow hysterical, whether the telephone guesses correctly or not. The whole thing flows along at a single pace, which might be termed leisurely or plodding, depending on your feeling about Kate. In short, that's the only yardstick by which this program can be measured.

Sam Chase.

Name Your Odds

Sustaining over WJZ-ABC, Wednesday 8-8:30. Style—Audience participation. Producer, Martin Goodman. Writer-director, Frank Chase. Star, Arlene Francis.

Aired as a one-shot-on-the-air test, this new Marty Goodman package needs improvement if it's to gain favorable odds of its own in the commercial sweepstakes. The idea is as salable as the average studio quizzer around, altho what with the proposed ban on giveaways, there's no telling whether the program might be frowned upon. It might not be a bad idea these days for trade papers to get lawyers to review quiz and giveaway shows.

The gimmick on Odds is that the contestant is given his beginning stake, is permitted to bet as much of it as he wants at odds he himself selects. The longer the odds, the tougher the question. Each contestant gets a crack at two questions, and the one with the top score is permitted a chance—at 20 to 1—at the jackpot. The jackpot question this time was a lulu—the names of the four Day boys in *Life With Father*. The only guys who know that one are Buck Crouse and Howard Lindsay.

Poor Pacing

Odds lagged on this test airing, partly because there was too much repetition in Arlene Francis's handling of the explanations to each of the four contestants, and partly because her pre-question interviews ran way overlong. Miss Francis has a rare flair for handling this sort of show, but the pace she customarily brings to such efforts wasn't in evidence.

Payoffs are via "Arlene Francis" dollars, which aren't cash moo at all but merchandise awards donated by companies giving their stuff away for the free product mention.

Jerry Franken.

A Couple of Joes

Reviewed Friday (19), 10-11 p.m. EDT. Sponsored by Blatz Brewing Company, via WJZ-TV, New York. Producer, Allan Kent; director, Bobby Doyle. Cast: Joe Rosenfield, Joe Bushkin, Joan Barton.

A Couple of Joes is a video version of the *New Yorker's* "Department of Utter Confusion." Bugged down by too many gimmicks, slipshod production work and an ineffectual emcee, the new musical-giveaway show televised like a chaotic dress rehearsal.

Principal offender was WOR disk jockey Joe Rosenfield. It takes perfect cast co-ordination and velvet-smooth emceeing to keep a variety of elaborate participation stunts in orderly motion during an hour show. Vocally, Rosenfield might have carried it off, but visually the chore was beyond him. His harassed expression, nervous mannerisms and heavy-handed attempts at comedy were embarrassing to both cast and viewer.

Giveaway variations included (1) a pitch for viewers to bring in weird objects for *A Couple of Joes' Museum* (a mustache cup, short-snorter bill and a pair of high button shoes turned up on last Friday's broadcast); (2) a phone deal with viewers invited to call up and try to stump the Joes with tune requests. Numbers were limited to 4,000 tunes listed in *The Billboard's Fifty Years of Song Hits*, and four gals were on hand to take calls; (3) a reverse phone deal with Rosenfield calling song-suggesters back and quizzing them re the *Joe Pot* awards. It was all very confusing.

Musical portions of the show were vastly superior to the giveaway sectors. Backed by a competent group of musicians (bass, guitar, drums and trumpet), youthful Joe Bushkin, an accomplished pianist with a telegenic grin, ambled easily thru several pop vocals and instrumentals, and handled his brief emcee turn with equal authority.

Comely canary Joan Barton showed less talent, but her personal zing and well-filled sweater compensated for her lack of song-savvy.

The show's severest critic was a sad-eyed bassett hound tagged J. P. Morgan who drooped mournfully on the piano thruout the show. Morgan's presence was a doubtful asset, since his patient, long-suffering expression probably sparked a like reaction from sympathetic telewatchers.

June Bundy.

The Damon Runyon Theater

Reviewed Saturday (August 13) 2:30 to 3 p.m. EDT. Style—Drama. Sustaining over WOR, New York. Produced by Vern Carstensen. Adapted by Russell Hughes. Directed by Richard Sanville. Cast: John Brown, Sidney Miller, Joe De Santis, Olive Deering and Paul Dubov.

Damon Runyon has had such success in other mediums with his stories about Broadway characters that it would seem that radio, too, might be able to cash in on his tales of the Stern. But on the basis of hearing *The Blonde Mink*, one of the episodes, the fact is otherwise. Somehow this story of a good hearted gambler, the girl who double crossed him and his pal who murdered her failed to come off. The characters were all there—Broadway, the narrator; Slaty Slavin; Beatrice; Julie, the Starker, and others; the expressions were there, too, but still *The Blonde Mink* did not hold interest except fitfully.

One reason may have been that the pivotal character, Julie, was a bit too much on the nutty side to be credible. His obsession that his gambler pal, tho dead, was talking to him, gave a weird impression.

In any event, slotting this show on Saturday afternoon does not reach its potential audience. Even a very late hour would be better.

The show was very well acted. John Brown made an authentic Broadway; Sidney Miller, a strange Julie, and Olive Deering, a bitchy Beatrice.

Richard Sanville's direction was good.

Leon Morse.