

## NON-NET REVIEWS

MPA-TV Readies  
39th 'NOPD' Film

By SAM CHASE

This series is unusual in several ways. That it has the full confidence of its producers, MPA-TV, is evident from the fact that shooting is about to commence on the 39th episode, yet only in the past few days has any attempt at all been made to sell it. A regional sale was made immediately in its home territory. It will be a few weeks

**N. O. P. D. (TV Film)**  
Cast: Stacy Harris, Detective Louis Sirgo, others. Producer-writer, Frank Phares. Director, John Sledge. Chief editor, Sylvia Poche. Produced by Motion Picture Advertising Service Company, Inc. (MPA-TV). Distributed by U.M.&M.

(Reviewed at special screening.)

before it is placed on the open market for regional and local sales. It is also the first major effort to be shot in New Orleans.

The initials of the title stand, of course, for New Orleans Police Department. The series is a documentary adventure approach to crime, based upon files of the above-mentioned organization. Only the names of those directly involved with the crime have been changed.

If this reminds anybody of "Dragnet," it should. Producer-writer Frank Phares has made no bones about that stanza being his inspiration for this series. This shows up quickly enough in the average "N.O.P.D." film, the key structural difference being the use of a non-participating narrator rather than the voice of the central character.

Some series go to vast expense to obtain authenticity. "N.O.P.D." has stressed it, and saved plenty in doing so. The series is shot entirely on location at the many colorful and picturesque sites in and around the Crescent City. Jazz, Dixie-style, is usually used as background music. Well-known New Orleans personalities play themselves.

The lead role, Det. Victor Beaujac, is played by Stacy Harris, who played in both the broadcast and movie versions of "Dragnet" and in the AM "This Is Your FBI" series, among others. Producer Phares is an old pro, too, having scripted such stanzas as "Mr. D. A.," "Rocky King," and other network shows.

The inevitable sidekick lends more authenticity, with Det. Louis Sirgo playing the role of Det. John Conroy.

With a mixture such as this, involving professionals and non-pros, one would be entitled to wonder just how palatable the ultimate dish would turn out to be. Well, it's pretty good. It isn't "Dragnet," but then it didn't cost as much as that show to produce, and it can be bought for a lot less too. (New York asking price will be \$1,700.)

## Interesting Locales

The locales lend great interest to the pictorial quality, which is generally good. MPA-TV, which handled the physical production, is a 35-year-old firm, with competent and experienced crews and staff.

Harris, playing the lead, does a workmanlike job. Detective Sirgo looks and acts the way one imagines a cop should. The local talent rounding out the casts usually prove surprisingly able to play themselves without self-consciousness.

From an entertainment point of view, one wishes the shows got off to a swifter start. Narration and build-up are a bit long, and the viewer is not gripped by the throat from the opening as he should be. But there is no dearth of action in the body of each show, and some probe motivations more than the average mystery vidfilm series.

## Williams Touch

There was a touch of Tennessee Williams, for instance, in one show about a gal, the last of an aristocratic family, who would work for charity but considered it beneath her lineage to hold a job for cash. Her younger sister, who kept the mansion functioning by operating

a gift shop, decided to give up that business in favor of marriage.

Since this would leave the Blanche Dubois-like protagonist without support, she poisoned her sister for life insurance and the proceeds to be realized from sale of the shop. It was an excellent story, well done.

In all, the series should prove of special interest to the smaller sponsor who is looking for a less expensive property with established values.

'Request Performance'  
Uses 2 Series Reruns

**Kodak's Request Performance (TV Film)**  
Cast for "Afraid to Love": Thomas Mitchell, Dorothy Malone, Charles Drake, Robin Hughes and others. Producer, Frank Wisbar. Story, John Vandercook. Teleplay, Charles Bennett. Presented by the Eastman-Kodak Company thru J. Walter Thompson. (NBC-TV, 8-8:30 p.m., EST, April 20.)

When a sponsor buys a group of anthology films for rerunning it is fair to assume that he will select top stories. This assumption, however, is not justified judging from the program reviewed on "Kodak's Request Performance," a series consisting of reruns of "Ford Theater" and "Fireside Theater."

"Afraid to Love," the drama viewed, was a contrived, unbelievable yarn about a Mr. Fixit on the Fiji Islands who has found peace and happiness in those surroundings. When a poor little rich girl happens on the island beset with the problem of choosing her mate—shall it be the dashing English diplomatic type or the earnest young marine biologist?—he proceeds to straighten her out and shows her there is more to life than material success. She naturally picks the right man and the cause of science is further bolstered.

The moral may be a sound one, but it was written in such a stupefyingly boring fashion and projected thru such vapid artificial people that it contained little of interest. Thomas Mitchell was the Mr. Fixit, and Dorothy Malone the confused wealthy object of his solicitude. Robin Hughes did well as her first choice, and Charles Drake as her second.

The commercials for Kodak were more interesting than the show. They again stressed the power of the camera to capture eventful moments in our lives.

Leon Morse.

Newest Episode in Oil  
Series Shot in France

**Journey (TV Film)**  
(Reviewed at special screening. Caught again.)

The third quarter-hour episode in this free-loan series of Standard Oil (New Jersey) depicts the recent explorations for oil in Southwest France titled "Operation Mano I." Some of the scenes were used in a film on the same subject that ran on "Omnibus" this season. It offers a poignant contrast between the provincial background and the

Ted Mack Plays  
To Wives on NBC

**Ted Mack's Matinee**  
Emcee, Ted Mack. Cast: Eddy Manson, Beth Parks, the Dreamboaters, others. Producer, Louis Graham. Director, Lloyd Marx. Assistant director, J. Robert Blum. Editorial director, Wanda Ellis. Sponsors, participating. (NBC-TV, 3-3:30 p.m., EST, April 20.)

Unpretentious and easy-going, NBC's new "Ted Mack's Matinee" looks as if it's going to provide housewives with a smooth, relaxing stanza to break up her daytime chores.

The half-hour, across-the-board strip is strong in the music sphere but liberally sprinkled with enough items in other departments to give the show a variety of flavors.

Outstanding feature of the stanza is that the quality of its musical entertainment is top-notch. The entire package is neatly wrapped together with a minimum of fuss and very few rough spots. It flows easily from bit to bit, thanks to Mack's low-pressed but smooth ability for banter.

The episode reviewed started off with an interview by Mack of an uncommonly pretty commercial photographer, Doris Pinney, who chatted easily and charmingly of her specialty, photographing children. Housewives were treated to a few tips on how to get their babies to come up with cute expressions for the camera.

## Guest Manson

Next on the agenda was a musical number by guest harmonicist Eddy Manson, who's booked on the show for a full week. Manson did an excellent job of entertaining with his rendition of "Pop Goes the Weasel," first as Bach might have composed it and then again as Stravinsky might have done it. The show's format calls for an "undiscovered" professional performer to be spotlighted for a five-day period. Inasmuch as Manson has already achieved quite a name for himself as one of the best harmonicists in the business, he cannot exactly be termed "undiscovered." But this is only quibbling with terminology. The fact remains Mack picked up some good talent for his show.

Other musical items included the Scotch-flavored singing of "Someone to Watch Over Me" by a pretty and fine-voiced young songbird, Beth Parks; an excellent group rendition of "Pass It On" by the Dreamboaters, and a 15-year-old amateur violinist, Lucy Martin, who was billed as auditioning for the "Amateur Hour."

Another bit on the show, somewhat "corny" but one that might have some appeal to the hausfrau, was Mack's reading of letters from viewers on why their husbands should win the show's "Husband-of-the-Week" award.

Jack Singer.

technological invaders. Some of the scenes showed touching peasant charm.

Unlike the first two segments, this was a special production job. The others were edited from the footage used in the Sylvania award-winning institutional commercials on the 20 local "Esso Reporter" shows.

The first episode was used by 58 stations out of the 70 contacted. They used it an average of twice in a three-month period. The next episode will show an oiler's voyage up the Mississippi.

Gene Plotnik.

## NETWORK REVIEW

'Mr. Citizen' Steps  
In as 'Father' Sub

By GENE PLOTNIK

"Mr. Citizen," which bowed on ABC-TV as L&M's replacement for "Trouble With Father," is clearly a commercial show. That is to say it is composed of show values that have already proved successful in other programs. As such, it is not likely to make discriminating critics gasp. But it will probably do a pretty good selling job for the cigarette maker.

## Mr. Citizen (TV)

Host, Allyn Edwards. Cast: Hal Holbrook, Nancy Kenyon, Beverly Lunsford, Elizabeth Lawrence, Kevin Loughlin. Writers, Robert J. Shaw and Howard Rodman. Set designer, Maurice Gordon. Director, Charles Tate. Producer, Edward Byron. Sponsored by Liggett & Myers for L&M Filter cigarettes thru Cunningham & Walsh. (ABC-TV, 8:30-9 p.m., EST, April 20.)

"Citizen" will strike indiscriminating viewers as a combination "Big Story" and "This Is Your Life." The dramatic portion deals not with reporters or detectives but with ordinary, unglamorous people who suddenly reveal an heroic streak. After the dramatization, the camera zooms into the studio audience, where the hero himself is revealed in all his modesty. He is then ushered up to the platform for an embarrassing interview and the bestowal of the "Mr. Citizen" award.

## Bank Clerk

The subject of the debut stanza was a Jersey City bank clerk who last December jumped under the wheels of a commuter train to rescue a little girl. The play built remarkable tension, not by any inherent dramatic devices but by the narrator's constant repetition that this was a day the hero would remember forever.

Obviously such a format has high identification potential for the average viewer. And it has a genuine do-good value in that it might inspire private citizens to face their public responsibilities.

The show had its share of pre-

Lehn & Fink Airs CBS  
Sun. Reruns of 'Lucy'

## Sunday Lucy Show (TV Film)

Cast: Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz, William Frawley, Vivian Vance, Mary Wickes, Frank Scannell, others. Producer, Jess Oppenheimer. Writers, Madelyn Pugh, Bob Carroll Jr., Jess Oppenheimer. Director, William Asher. Musical director, Wilbur Hatch. Produced by Desilu Productions. Sponsor, Lehn & Fink thru McCann-Erickson.

Lehn & Fink's early Sunday evening reruns of "I Love Lucy" hit the air this weekend with what must have been a resounding ring of laughter from coast to coast. The episode selected, "The Ballet," was a good example of "I Love Lucy" at its best.

Lehn & Fink's decision to give full network play to the "Lucy" reruns is the latest move by an advertiser to put into effect on a network level the tenet that popular film shows can deliver hefty ratings in their residual runs.

This theory gained even greater validity this week with the release (Continued on page 12)

miere problems. The little girl's slipping off the platform was skillfully staged. But the business underneath the train was unclear.

The blooper of bloopers, however, came when Sen. Clifford Case was switched in to present the award. The Senator's lips moved, but over audio came the voice of a technician saying, "What about this guy, Roy? Are you finished with me? Well, here's the show, etc."

Host Allyn Edwards suavely picked up his interview again. But no viewer could doubt someone had made a booboo.

Betty Furness Returns  
To First Love—Acting

**Studio One (TV)**  
(CBS-TV, 10-11 p.m., EST, April 18. Caught again.)

Betty Furness, one of TV's top sales personalities, was given a chance to return to her first love, acting, on "Affairs of State," which was presented on "Studio One." The vehicle selected was not a strong one. And Miss Furness' portrayal of the cinderella-like character was disappointing.

A Broadway success of several seasons ago, "State" is a contrived story about a marriage of convenience made to effectuate the career of a rich and ambitious politician. It is basically an unbelievable situation which demands playing of a high order to overcome the inadequacies of the script.

This it was not given in the production, direction nor much of the playing. On the plus side it had strong and believable contributions by Walter Hampden's acting the part of a foxy elder-statesman and by Rita Vale's portrayal of his wife. But neither Miss Furness nor Jeff Morrow did much with their roles. She was much too cold and hardly the efficient drab she was supposed to be. Morrow also did not project warmth and believability. As a result, their scenes together were stiff and artificial.

June Graham substituted for Miss Furness on the show and turned in her usual sparkling pitch. Her middle commercial was keyed to the "extra hands" theme, an idea that could have been more persuasively suggested than by making her look like an octopus.

Leon Morse.

Thomas Mitchell Plays  
In 'Star and the Story'

**Star and the Story (TV Film)**  
(WRCA-TV, New York, 7-7:30 p.m., EST, April 16. Caught again.)

This dramatic series of Official Films assuredly has a most impressive roster of stars. But a re-viewing this week indicates that not as much thoughtfulness is going into the stories, which, after all, get equal billing in the title.

The script centered around a rich tycoon who bitterly resents his daughter's fiance because his wife was killed in an auto accident in which the boy was driving. Despite the tearful pleadings of his daughter, the tycoon goes to extraordinary lengths to wreck the lad's budding career in the theater. But a doleful confession of the old family gardener finally shows the tycoon the folly of his ways. The gardener, a favorite of the tycoon's late wife, reveals that it was his carelessness that led to a boat accident in which the wife's sister was killed years ago, and the wife never held it against him.

All the plot elements fell right into place, and every action was more than amply motivated. But the total effect was just too pat to be convincing. And the further the story went, the more the dialog and direction tended to cliches. So, despite the best efforts of Thomas Mitchell as the tycoon and a fine supporting cast, this episode had an uncomfortably hollow ring.

Gene Plotnik.

## NEW TV FILM RELEASES

A preview summary of information about Pilot Films and New Series prior to regular review

## Frankie Fontaine

Distributor, Studio Films. Produced by Ben Frye and Sam Costello. Director, Ralph Staub. How selling: national, regional and then into syndication. Number currently completed, four. When available, late spring.

Frankie Fontaine is the glue that ties this half-hour variety show together. The distinctive comedian acts as emcee and presents many of his own routines on the show. The performer has a warmth and sincerity that comes over in his delivery.

Fontaine works before a big

curtain on a large stage, and the show has the flavor of vaudeville. There are many kinds of acts, ranging from straight pop singers to dancers, novelty acts and the like.

## Long John Silver

Sales agent, Mitchell Hamilburg Agency and Gradwell Sears. Producer, Joseph Kaufman. Star, Robert Newton. How selling, national. Number currently completed: 26. When available: this fall.

The TV series was made concurrently with the feature film now playing first-run theaters. The

story material consists of further original sequels on the Robert Louis Stevenson classic, "Treasure Island." It was filmed in Australia in Eastman color, with plenty of color values in the period costumes, sailing vessels and beautiful scenery.

The pilot film tells how Long John and his ship mates rescue a peace-loving tribe of islanders from the yoke of some Spanish pearl seekers. Aside from the exploitation value of the picture, the TV series will get a boost from the line of Long John merchandise now being franchised.