

Hope Show 'Stolen' By Natalie

By EVE STARR
 HOLLYWOOD, April 20—STARR PARADE: Any time an 18-year-old girl can stand up there and feed straight lines to Bob Hope and then turn around and play a comedy sketch to perfection with him, you've got yourself a young trouper. I don't know what Natalie Wood's Warner Brothers contract has to say about television, but I would bet a slightly used silver sandal that the boys from NBC are already knocking on her door and wanting in.

Given the competition of Frank Sinatra and Janis Paige, she walked away from both of them on Hope's recent monthly show and made Hope himself look better than he's looked all year. And Hope was right—he's three times older than Natalie is. It's not how old you are in this business, it's how much talent you have. I'm looking forward now to the show that will provide a sketch for Ed Wynn and Evelyn Rudie.

NOW THAT MGM has had its commercial baptism, the studio is getting ready to get into TV in a big way, with nothing less than a series of 30-minute color spectaculars on its corporate planning boards—each with a price tag of \$300,000.

This represents a bold gamble on the part of the studio, for the \$250,000 hour-long "I Love Lucy" shows are still going begging so far as sponsorship is concerned, although I rather doubt that MGM will roll a single foot of film until a sponsor is in the bag. Deal Arnez, on the other hand, has every intention of starting production on the new "Lucy" come June, sponsor or no sponsor.

MGM's plan is to star such one-time greas as Judy Garland and Fred Astaire, incorporating some of their old movie footage into the new spectaculars, and also using such other stars as Frank Sinatra, Kathryn Grayson and Gene Kelly.

I trust they haven't overlooked the fact that Sinatra's is under contract to ABC and Kathryn to CBS. Such small legal matters have a way of being large nuisances.

DINAN SHORE, WHO HAS BEEN away too long (except for her usual weekly Thursday quarter-hour outings), returns April 19 with another of her hour-long specials, the show that won her the Emmy as the outstanding female personality in TV. Already lined up for this one are Dean Martin (and he hasn't been around in a long while either), Hugh O'Brian (who has been cashing in heavily on his "Wyatt Earp" fame with guest spots all over the spectrum), Sally Forrest and Joy Bishop. I submit that that is quite a line-up.

YOUR CURRENT TV set may be worthless if the Federal Communications Commission puts into action a plan it is now thinking over. The idea is to turn over to the Air Force all the lower channels, to away almost entirely with the present very-high-frequency stations (i.e., channels 2 through 13) and convert the entire telecasting operation to ultra high frequency. This would mean your current set would be useless unless equipped with a UHF converter, which costs money. No decision has been made, but something may very well be done about it at the current 35th annual convention of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters being held in Chicago.

HOLLYWOOD IS JUST now getting around to learning that Esther Williams will make her dramatic TV bow May 22, a bit of news you read here weeks and weeks ago. She'll do "The Armed Forces" for "Lux Video Theater." It's a matter of weeks, and she's a swimming pool mixed up in it. What else? Esther has made only one dramatic picture, "Unholy Moment," in her entire career, and now wants to find out for herself whether or not she can stand the gaff of an hour-long live dramatic TV show, the toughest test for any actor or actress. She'll wear her hair down—and that in itself is going to be a revelation for a lot of people who have never seen her in anything other than a swim cap. If you don't know, Esther's hair comes down well below her shoulders. And hey, has she had trouble with it all these swimming years?

STARDUST: That April 25 "Lux Video Theater" show, "The Man Who Played God," now includes June Lockhart along with Boris Karloff and Mary Astor. George Arliss made the original movie . . . "Andy's Gang," with Andy Devine, will be on the NBC schedule starting in September. It will be seen at 10:30-11 p.m. Saturdays . . . Look for Nat King Cole to have himself a half-hour show next season . . . Jerry Lewis has set June 1 as the date for his next hour-long solo outing. It will be done from Hollywood, and probably in color . . . Phyllis Avery has herself a new series, or will have if the pilot sells. She's in the "Colonel Flack" pilot with Alan Mowbray.

SHORT SHOTS: Now it's the files of the Post Office's Inspection Service that are being invaded for a series. Title: "Mailbox Bandits." Prediction: It will never get off the ground . . .

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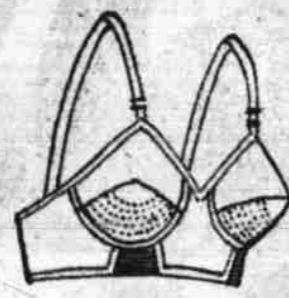


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