

What Makes Tammy Run?



Everybody is mixed up about the new star of Broadway and TV—except Tammy Grimes herself, who knows precisely what she wants

By JACK RYAN

ORANGE HAIR WILD and coat-hook nose pointed to the three-dollar seats, Broadway's newest star sailed through a dizzying dance routine, followed it up with a love song which gave her normally gravelly voice a music-box delicacy—then slumped to the stage unconscious.

Tammy Grimes, who since 14 had been on a dead run for stardom, had not only slowed down but had been stopped cold.

Virus, said the doctors. Too much go-go for too long, said those who had watched her rise from a cute college cutup to the top role in Dore Schary's and Meredith Willson's successful musical, "The Unsinkable Molly Brown."

The show that January night went on without Tammy. So did the next night's performance. But when the curtain rose Jan. 16, Tammy Grimes was wrestling on stage with three huskies in the opening chorus. "I was a little weak," she says with a little-girl pride that is strangely out of place with her usual brittle sophistication, "but just being back made me feel good."

It's characteristic of Tammy, too, that not long after shaking the final stages of a serious infection, she was tramping the snow of New York's countryside with her four-year-old daughter Amanda. "She likes to sing for me," Tammy says in the clipped tones of Boston and proper schools for young ladies. "Knows all the songs from 'Molly,' but makes up her own words. Better than the real ones, I think."

Neither temporary illness, New England society upbringing, nor a disappointing series of "almosts" has deterred this fleet-witted comedienne from her destiny with bright lights. Only Amanda Michael Plummer, daughter by Shakespearean actor Christopher Plummer whom Tammy divorced in 1960, has overshadowed the lure of show business for the girl whose sole claim to the usual glamour are eyes of stormy grays and calm greens.

Determined and mature even in her early teens, Tammy planned her educa-

tion (Stephens Junior College, Missouri, which has an excellent drama school) for a career on the stage. Every waking hour was devoted to a goal that "just sort of grew as I did, and one I never doubted for a moment that I'd reach."

But there was a long period of "discovery" which must have taxed even this quiet self-assurance—discovery for a musical that closed before reaching New York; discovery by Noel Coward for a play extremely short-lived; discovery by a night-club impresario for a performance limited to singing; and finally, the discovery that "took" by Dore Schary.

In one year of stardom, Tammy has managed to headline several TV spectaculars and become the conversational favorite of show-business gossip. "I'm just an impulsive person," she says. "Impulsiveness" means throwing out a whole wardrobe of Mainbocher and Chanel gowns and a \$5,000 fur coat. "A woman gets tired of old clothes. She throws them out and buys new ones. Every woman does."

TAMMY is even more defensive about what she considers a canard about her romantic life. Linked with any number of night-club Romeos ("never seen some of them, nor the night clubs"), about the only real romance recently has been one with Rex Harrison. At the moment, though, Tammy shrugs Rex off like last year's fur coat.

Her devotion to her career has caused one acquaintance to say that Tammy will never marry again because "no man is as exciting as the stage to her."

"Foolishness," snaps Tammy. "Good heavens! Certainly, I'm interested in marriage—with the right man. What do they think I am, anyway?"

Most people think Tammy Grimes, on stage or off, is a bewitching dynamo and that the right man will have to be a fast runner to keep pace with a woman who feels she has started to move in the "only world I've really ever wanted."



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