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LAUGH

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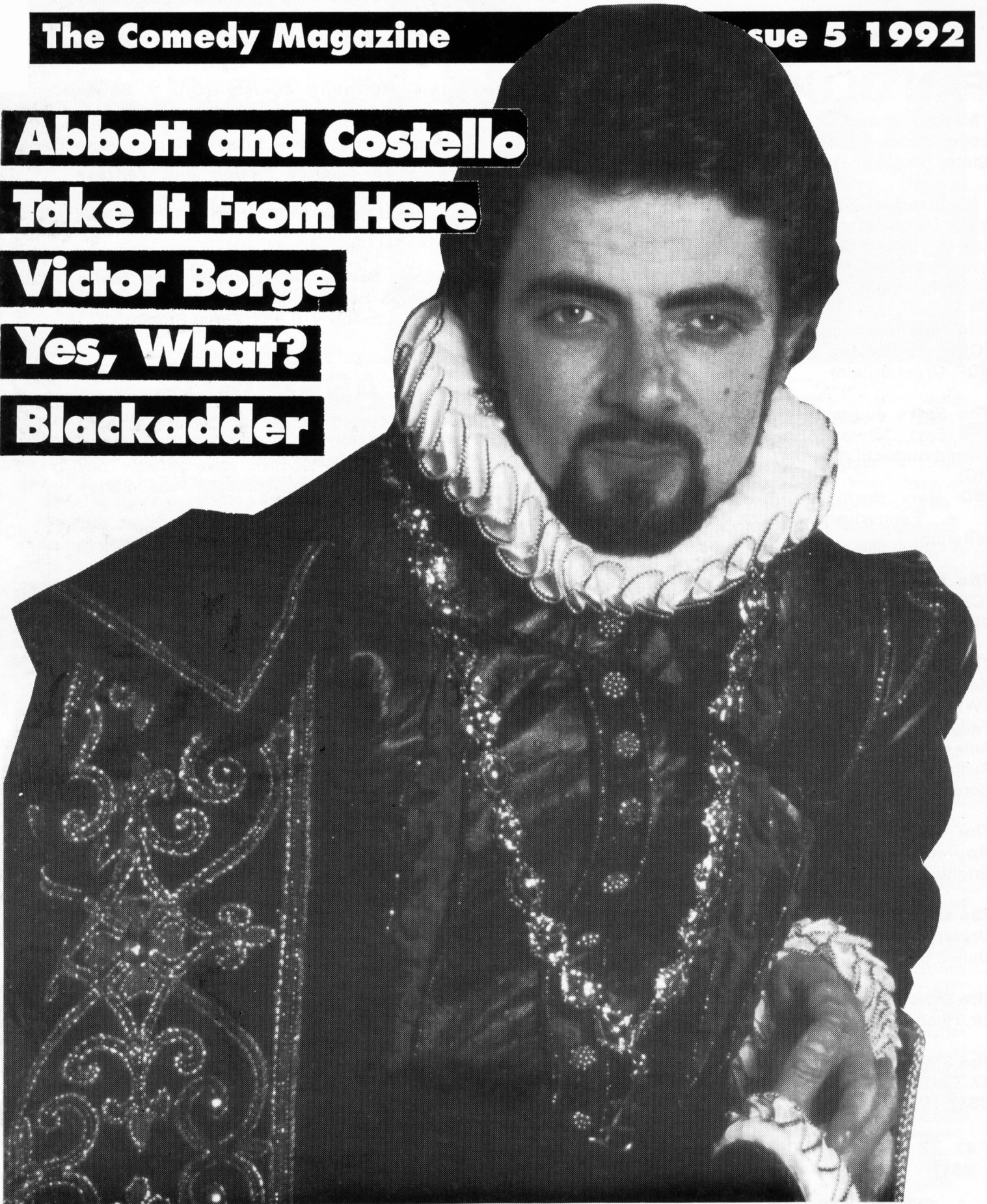
Abbott and Costello

Take It From Here

Victor Borge

Yes, What?

Blackadder



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Take It From Here

by Mark McKay

In 1947 the recently demobbed Windmill theatre graduate, Jimmy Edwards, got his first regular radio booking in a series called *Navy Mixture*. This seems rather incongruous given that he spent the war as a pilot with the RAF, and still sported the trade-mark handlebar moustache. Jim appeared in a lecture spot with material written by Frank Muir; the producer was Charles Maxwell; the show's commère (female compère) was a young Australian radio prodigy, Joy Nichols and one week the guest star was a fellow countryman of Joy's, Dick Bentley, whose scripts were penned by Denis Norden. That week all the components for one of the most successful British radio shows were in place. After the series ended, Maxwell joined Muir and Norden to plan a new program featuring Joy, Dick and Jimmy. The Keynotes, a top vocal group of the time, were approached but were reluctant to join a show whose cast and writers were all unknowns. It seemed like a recipe for disaster.



The first *Take It From Here* broadcast was on 23rd March 1948, coinciding with Jimmy's twenty-eighth birthday, but seemed to pass by unnoticed according to reactions the next day. In fact the audience figures for the whole series were low, but largely thanks to Charles Maxwell's support, it lasted six months. The shows settled into a format which was to see them through the next five series as well, and already familiar characters emerged, such as Dick Bentley's poet who always began his monologue with the strangulated cry "Oh Mavis!", and Joy's husky-voiced Miss Arundel, who interpreted every remark as a reference to her red-blooded fiancé, Gilbert.

TIFH was still not widely known at the end of the first series, but shortly into the second series, with a variety of voices provided by Wallas Eaton for the first time, came the unexpected death of Tommy Handley and the end of his famous radio show *ITMA*, leaving its repeat time slots vacant. *TIFH* filled the Saturday lunch spot and, gathering regular *ITMA* devotees, started to achieve national popularity. The shows were typically divided into three spots: the opening 'stage patter', where issues such as Jim's waistline or Dick's cigarette advertising deal were discussed, a 'gimmick' sketch on a recent news event or a series of sketches on a particular topic (eg: country life, education or popular music) and finally a film parody. Muir & Norden tackled these in reverse order, allowing them to include topical references in the gimmick and the opening dialogue.

Muir & Norden delighted in puns, and later continued to indulge with their own radio show *My Word*. *TIFH* scripts were liberally injected with exchanges such as this between King Henry VIII and his valet: 'Cornelius, I must find a man who is minded to show his fealty towards me' - 'Me, your majesty, me! No man is more fealty-minded than I am!'. Another favourite mirth-raiser was the personal reference, and not a show went by without a gag about Dick's age. So there was Jimmy unable to count the candles on Dick's birthday cake because the heat

drove him back, Jimmy agreeing that Dick is his oldest friend: 'There are friends I've known longer, but you're the oldest!', and in *TIFH*'s contribution to a special gala radio show for the coronation, Dick is informed that he was asked to attend because he is the only actor on the BBC who's been an Elizabethan both times! Jim, of course, also comes in for a serve, common topics being his girth and his nasal appendages. In one opening, Joy is praising window boxes with flowers in full bloom: 'It must be lovely to lean out of the window and have a mass of sweet smelling foliage growing right under your nose, Jimmy' - 'Aren't you being rather personal, dear?'

Catchphrases had been a staple ingredient in comedy shows of the period, and *TIFH* continued the tradition, Jim winding up with the lion's share. He began his monologues with '*Greetings, gentlefolk!*' (which he was able to modify when addressing a party of opticians to '*Greetings focal gents!*') and if the audience failed to respond, his school-masterly cry '*Wake up at the back there!*' was always effective. Dick would be put in his place with '*Gently, Bentley*' (which later became the title of a Muir-Norden penned show for Dick) or '*Black Mark Bentley!*' and when Wallas Eaton mentioned a girl supposedly from Jim's past, Jim's reaction was '*What a ghastly name!*'. Wallas's character was 'Old Wal from The Buildings', who saw through Jimmy's 'posh talk', being familiar with his working class background, and always urging him to '*Take the plunge, Jim Edwards*' and '*Learn a trade*'.

Other program conventions such as the trite theme song and the staid closing credits were perverted: the *TIFH* theme boasted that this was the show with 'every minute packed with seconds', and the announcements at the end were of the ilk: 'Frank Muir & Denis Norden wrote the script in a weekend and Charles Maxwell produced it in a weak moment', or for a special broadcast from the Naval barracks at Portsmouth: 'Charles Maxwell captained the crew, while Frank Muir and Denis Norden as usual pumped the bilge'. Amongst the closing credits



was the name Herbert Mostyn, which was not in fact a real person but rather the middle names of Frank and Denis respectively and represented their contributions, reading odd lines or taking on regular small parts.

With increasing popularity during the third series, impresario Jack Hylton suggested that the show could transfer to the stage, and the three stars appeared at the top of a variety bill at the Victoria Palace for a short while before moving to the Prince Of Wales theatre. After a summer season at Blackpool, the show opened at the Adelphi in London on 31st October 1950 under the negotiated title *Take It From Us*. It was a spectacular production with a troupe of chorus girls, an adagio act, lavish sets, solo spots for Joy, Dick and Jimmy (the latter with assistance from his euphonium) and a finale sketch 'Friends, Romans, Countrymen' or 'What A Sphinx!', adapted by future *Carry On* script-writer, Talbot Rothwell from a radio script by Muir and Norden. The show was a success, as proven by its long run of 580 performances over a period of a year, and it closed with only Jimmy remaining of the three principals.

After the sixth series, in 1953, Joy Nichols decided to depart, returning to Australia and taking a rest to help the career of her husband, Wally Peterson. She was replaced by two girls: Alma Cogan to sing (and act in occasional small parts) and an unknown young actress, June Whitfield, to perform alongside Dick and Jimmy. Betty Marsden, of *Beyond Our Ken* and *Round The Horne* fame was a runner-up for the job. Hence it was a 'completely new' *TIFH* that went out on 12th November, however Jimmy reassured the audience: 'Don't worry everybody -next week it's back to the tried and true'. And indeed this program featured a new segment which might have only lasted for a week or two, but for the following it soon acquired. It was to run for the next seven years, ultimately as the main feature and the most famous contribution to *Take It From Here*.

Sickened by the plethora of really nice radio families in shows such as *Meet The Huggetts* and *Life With The Lyons*, who spent each week solving minor domestic problems, Muir and

Norden invented a fairly awful family all of whom were 'shifty, obstinate, argumentative and dim' — they were the Glums. Mr. Glum was the boozy, brash, irascible head of the household, portrayed by Jimmy and modelled on the landlord of the *Market Gardener* pub in Barnes. His missus was played by Alma Cogan, usually as a muffled whine from an upstairs room, but in the first episode she is actually heard to speak (clearly), and sounds inappropriately pleasant. Their son is the intellectual dwarf Ron (Dick Bentley), who became more stupid and gormless as the series progressed, much in the same fashion as another Australian, Bill Kerr in *Hancock's Half Hour*. Ron's fiancée, Eth (June Whitfield) is very plain in looks, but not being a Glum (yet) she is much more industrious, intelligent and honest, displaying total loyalty to Ron, her one hope for marriage.

In the first episode Eth is introduced to the family, which includes grandmother who came to live with them during the war: 'The zeppelins frightened her, you know'. Ron informs his father that he and Eth are the future and they have modern ideas on marriage. Mr. Glum is shocked: 'Is this the golden-haired boy in the sailor's suit what used to climb onto his dad's knee and recite *Goblin Market*?' — 'I've grown up dad — that was last Christmas! I've met Eth now and become a man!' — 'When?! When was that?! Where's me strap?' By the fourth show the Glums segment was preceded by its own little sig tune, usually the signal for Eth's pining wail 'Oh Ron!' as, sitting with Ron on the sofa, she explained what was upsetting her. Pa Glum timed his entrance brilliantly, arriving with his surprised cry of 'Hello, hello, hello!' just as Ron was making his unproductive attempts to get passionate with his intended (or 'converting a try' as his boorish dad expressed it). The writers soon became surprised at the number of letters they received from young engaged couples, who saw the Ron and Eth situations mirroring their own lives. Engagement in those days was a dubious state: it was described in one episode as 'like trying to drive a car with one foot on the accelerator and one foot on the brake'. Updating this simile, Denis Norden sees modern-day engagements as driving with both feet flat to the floor on the accelerator!

Wallas Eaton temporarily hung up his 'Old Wal' hat, and became the spluttering newspaper letter-writer, '*Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells*', who literally showers his listeners with complaints. For the next season however, Wal was back but now as one of the nouveau riche with pots of money, allowing him to buy his wife a diamond tiara to prevent her hair from dangling when she was frying fish.

Recordings took place on Sunday afternoons at the Paris Studio in Lower Regent Street, the audience filing in at 8.00pm. Frank Muir started the warm-up, followed by Dick Bentley who introduced the others: 'Jimmy, for instance. His horses occupy a large part of his life, and most of his drawing room...' At 8.30 it was all over and all that was needed was an OK from the recording engineers. By 1956 there had been only two sessions when a part of the show required re-recording. The first was due

to the needle sticking or some other technical reason, and the second was when Jimmy tripped over the cables lying on the stage, pulling them out of their sockets and leaving the Keynotes singing into a dead microphone!

The spirit of *TIFH* continued in the theatre, but without the original cast. Back in 1952, a follow-up to *Take It From Us* was planned, but Joy had temporarily left to have her baby and Dick had a disagreement over the billing, so Tony Hancock was brought in to become the second comic. The show was *London Laughs* at the Adelphi Theatre in London, which featured two sketches written by Muir and Norden: 'A Seat In The Circle' and 'Polly Does Everything'. This proved to be a successful partnership and consequently they were back at the Adelphi on 16th November 1954 for the West End opening of *The Talk Of The Town*. Featured were several items from the 7th series: Jim expounded the principles of "Jimmunism" in 'Vote For Jim!' (which became more pertinent in 1964 when Edwards stood for election as the Tory candidate for North Paddington), and 'Judge For Yourself' saw Jim as a lecherous and heavily biased judge from the same school as Peter Cook's judge twenty-five years later in *The Secret Policeman's Ball*. The court was convening a breach of promise case concerning a gaiety girl, and Justice Jim made it quite clear to the jury who he had *his* money on: 'You have to decide in your own minds whether the chinless wonder here is guilty, which he *is*, or not guilty, which he *isn't*'.

The 10th series began with a celebration, the 250th episode, and the Glums became the main feature at the end of each show, a flashback story recounted by Mr. Glum into the uninterested ear of Ted, the barman of his local. After a duet by Dick and June (Alma had left after the last series) the listener would be transported into the pub and above the noise of the crowd Wallas Eaton would insist 'Time, gentlemen please! ... Drink up, Mr. Glum ...' There followed some classic stories, many involving Ron in a predicament of his own design, with a sixpence stuck up his nostril, a Yul Brynner haircut, his head stuck between park railings, or marooned all night on an island in the middle of the Serpentine. On other occasions it was Mr. Glum who was out of luck, deserted by his wife after he pawned her teeth, or suffering the indignity of getting his toe stuck in the bath plug hole. In this latter saga, Eth's assistance is required, but there is a problem with Mr. Glum's delicate situation, so Ron is ordered to empty packets of gravy browning into the bath till the water becomes so opaque they'd have got a 'U' certificate from any censor in the country.

With the following two seasons the musical contribution was reduced to one song by the Keynotes. This was preceded by a long sketch with different characters each week, similar to the film parodies that used to close the program. The historical and mythological classics were explored, with skits on the Roman occupation of Britain and Homer's *Odyssey*, maintaining the intellectual reputation of the show. Another sketch 'The Cartwright Affair' later surfaced on *The Cream Of TIFH LP*, for which the cast re-recorded some favourite pieces before a specially invited audience. The closing Glums episode was dispensed with in the show of 26th March 1958, which marked the 10th anniversary of *TIFH* and an excellent excuse to wallow in nostalgia. Jim remembers earlier members of the cast: 'David Dunhill, the madcap of the announcers' common room — I used to call him "Dunners". Frank Cantell, our first orchestra conductor — I used to call him "Canthers". Joy Nichols — I used to call her... "Miss Nichols".' Perhaps to compensate for this Glums deficiency, two shows were entirely devoted to the famous family. As the years rolled by, Ron and Eth were still

"going steady" ('Any steadier and they'd be motionless', was Mr. Glum's opinion) and listeners were kept wondering whether it would go any further. They came the closest to matrimony with the last show of the 12th series, but an uncovered manhole in front of the church soon put paid to that.

This show represented the last written by Frank Muir and Denis Norden, however *TIFH* was to run for one more series with the same cast, but with scripts by Barry Took and Eric Merriman, who had been writing *Beyond Our Ken*, and production by Charles Chilton. Took and Merriman disagreed over what was good for the program and split up, leaving Merriman to write the middle section, *The Sunday TIFH* magazine, while Took joined with an uncredited Marty Feldman to provide the Glums and the opening sketch, in which Dick Bentley was planning construction of a Richard Bentley theatre along the same lines as Bernard Miles's *Mermaid*. One major problem lay in the fact that most of the possible situations for the Glums had already been done, and so old plots such as Ron's amnesia, resurfaced. The sacred institution of Mrs. Glum's silence was maintained, although her shoes could now be heard shuffling across the floor. The last program went out on 3rd March 1960, with the Glums emigrating for Australia.

The end of *Take It From Here* however, did not mean the end of the Glums. Pa Glum went on to make an EP record *Pa Glum Sings*, which featured Jimmy's beer-soaked voice accompanying pub-singalong-type songs, one of which, a version of Leslie Sarony's 'Rhymes', had the honour of being banned by the BBC! Then the whole family was reunited on BBC TV in 1962 for an episode of *Six More Faces Of Jim* called 'The Face Of Fatherhood', Jimmy and June Whitfield playing their old rôles and Ronnie Barker appearing unconvincingly as Ron. Later came a record release of old Glum segments from *TIFH* and then in 1978, the young television producer Simon Brett brought them regularly to television, as a 10 minute segment weekly from 7th October, as part of the Bruce Forsyth show. The next year they were in their own London Weekend Television series, featuring Jimmy as Mr. Glum, Patricia Brake who was perfect as Eth and Ian Lavender less accurately as Ron. The scripts were updated by Muir and Norden from the original radio versions, each half-hour TV episode containing two stories. Thirteen of these stories were published that year by Robson Books. More recently, for the first time complete episodes of *TIFH* have been released on double cassette sets and the shows are still being repeated on radio stations around the world — a fitting tribute to the first post-war comedy series to provide intense enjoyment and amusement forty years on.

Episode Guide:

Take It From Here ran for thirteen seasons amassing some 325 episodes. The BBC's Transcription Service issued 282 of these (from all but the first series) for broadcast overseas, and in the mid-1960's repackaged 104 programs (edited to 27 minutes, and in some cases made up of segments from different broadcasts) as a "best of" collection. This latter batch were taken from series 7 to 12 only, and are still being aired more than thirty years after the show completed its run.

Series #1 (Light Program Tuesdays March 23 to September 14 1948. 26 shows)

Starring Joy Nichols, Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, Wilfred Babbage (until April 20th), Clarence Wright (from May 11th) and The Keynotes.

Only two editions are known to survive:

1/21 Aug 10 1948 Late Night Final (main sketch)
1/23 Aug 24 1948 My Sister And I

Series #2 (Light Program Tuesdays December 28 1948 to June 28 1949. 27 shows)

Starring Joy Nichols, Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, Wallas Eaton, Alan Dean and The Keynotes.

Nine editions are known to survive:

2/3 Jan 11 1949 The Bentley Boy
2/4 Jan 18 1949 You're The Crime In My Caf e
2/5 Jan 25 1949 Forever Edwards
2/6 Feb 1 1949 The Scarlet Pimple
2/13 Mar 22 1949 Desert Island Risks
(broadcast from Portsmouth)
2/17 Apr 19 1949 Forever Caramba
2/18 Apr 26 1949 The Way To The Tsars
2/19 May 3 1949 Utility Cr pe
2/20 May 10 1949 Another Part Of The Forest

Series #3 (Light Program Tuesdays October 11 1949 to May 30 1950. 34 shows)

Starring Joy Nichols, Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, Wallas Eaton, Alan Dean and The Keynotes.

Eight editions are known to survive:

3/1 Oct 11 1949 Strauss In Your Hair
3/2 Oct 18 1949 Sixty Seconds Got Together
3/3 Oct 25 1949 Africa Squeaks
3/4 Nov 1 1949 Mrs. Vinegar Rides Again
3/17 Jan 31 1950 Chilblain's Hour
3/18 Feb 7 1950 Knights At The Pintable
3/21 Feb 28 1950 My Friend Elizabeth
3/22 Mar 7 1950 Ten Little Diggers

Series #4 (Light Program Sundays October 22 1950 to May 20 1951. 31 shows)

Starring Joy Nichols, Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, Wallas Eaton and The Keynotes.

Three editions are known to survive:

4/1 Oct 22 1950 Soil Erosion
4/2 Oct 29 1950 Juvenile Delinquency
4/6 Nov 26 1950 Now It Can Be Sold

Extracts from three or four later editions also exist.

Series #5 (Light Program Tuesdays December 4 1951 to June 3 1952. 26 shows. Broadcast of Feb 12 cancelled owing to the death of King George VI)

Starring Joy Nichols, Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, Wallas Eaton and The Keynotes.

Three editions are known to survive:

5/9 Jan 29 1952 No Better Than She Should Be
5/20 Apr 22 1952 The African Jack
5/26 Jun 3 1952 Lady Godiva

Series #6 (Light Program Mondays January 5 to June 29 1953. 26 shows)

Starring Joy Nichols, Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, Wallas Eaton and The Keynotes.

Four editions are known to survive:

6/16 Apr 20 1953 Outside Of Helen
6/18 May 3 1953 Of Martian Men
6/20 May 18 1953 Hup The Working Classes
6/24 Jun 15 1953 The Cruel BBC

(broadcast from HMS Indefatigable)

Extracts from two earlier editions also exist.

Series #7

Light Program Thursdays November 12 1953 to May 6 1954. 26 shows

Starring Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, Wallas Eaton, Alma Cogan, June Whitfield and The Keynotes.

Fifteen editions are known to survive:

7/1 Nov 12 1953 Eth is introduced to the Glums
Pygmalion
7/2 Nov 19 1953 Ron & Eth consider a maisonette
Mona Lisa
7/4 Dec 3 1953 The Glums discuss budgets
Trawler Fishing
7/9 Jan 7 1954 Eth's first meal
Rasputin
7/10 Jan 14 1954 Eth's pre-wedding anxiety
The Highwaymen
7/11 Jan 21 1954 Ron's moustache
The Breach Of Promise Case
7/12 Jan 28 1954 Ron & Eth's first wedding present
The Sacred Scarab Of Salome
7/13 Feb 4 1954 Eth's cold
The American Couple
7/16 Feb 25 1954 Eth's wedding dress
Shangri-La
7/18 Mar 11 1954 Ron gets sacked
The Return Of The First Husband
7/19 Mar 18 1954 Ron is jealous
Henry VIII
7/20 Mar 25 1954 Ron goes to night school
Cornish Smuggling
7/21 Apr 1 1954 Ron & Eth enter the pools
Palaeolithic Man
7/22 Apr 8 1954 Eth knits a pullover
The Tea Room Trio
7/24 Apr 22 1954 Ron & Eth's honeymoon plans
The Student Prince

In addition, the Transcription Service issued extracts from the broadcasts of Nov 26, Dec 17, Dec 31, Feb 11, Feb 18 and Mar 4 in 1960's reissues TS 3, 5, 18 and 28.

Series #8

Light Program Thursdays December 9 1954 to June 2 1955. 26 shows

Starring Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, Wallas Eaton, Alma Cogan, June Whitfield and The Keynotes.

Seventeen editions are known to survive:

8/1 Dec 9 1954 Ron & Eth are reunited
Beau Brummell
8/3 Dec 23 1954 Christmas at the Glums'
Court Martial Of Major Beamish
8/4 Dec 30 1954 New Year's Eve at the Glums'
Africa Story
8/7 Jan 20 1955 The Glums have a tiff
The Clifton Suspension Bridge
8/8 Jan 27 1955 Eth phones home
The Harley Street Surgeon
8/9 Feb 3 1955 Mrs. Glum's leg is in plaster
Mystery Of Maltravers Grange
8/10 Feb 10 1955 Family Favourites for Mrs. Glum
The New Headmistress

8/11	Feb 17 1955	Mrs. Glum is welcomed back The Escaped Convict
8/12	Feb 24 1955	Ron plans to emigrate The Old Tivoli
8/14	Mar 10 1955	Ron is in trouble with the police Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde
8/15	Mar 17 1955	Ron on probation B.O.A. Jim Air Charter Service
8/20	Apr 21 1955	Ron's crew cut Strange Affair Of Major Dawlish
8/21	Apr 28 1955	Ron & Eth plan Whitsun wedding Pepe Le Moco Of The Casbah
8/22	May 5 1955	Ron & Eth select a page boy The Sex Change Experiment
8/23	May 12 1955	Ron & Eth's wedding present list Lucrezia Borgia
8/24	May 19 1955	Ron considers his upbringing Circus Story
8/25	May 26 1955	Ron & Eth's wedding arrives King Arthur

In addition, the Transcription Service issued extracts from the broadcasts of Dec 16, Mar 3, Mar 24, Mar 31, Apr 7 and Apr 14 in 1960's reissues TS 18, 28, 31, 32, 33 and 47.

Series #9

Light Program Tuesdays October 11 1955 to April 4 1956. 25 shows. Broadcast of Nov 29 was a repeat
Starring Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, Alma Cogan, June Whitfield, Wallas Eaton and The Keynotes.

Twelve editions are known to survive:

9/2	Oct 18 1955	Ron & Eth run a shop The Matrimonial Agency
9/3	Oct 25 1955	Ron & Eth stock their sweet shop Madame Butterfly
9/4	Nov 1 1955	Ron & Eth's sweet shop opens The Country Doctor
9/12	Dec 27 1955	Aftermath of a Glum Christmas Robin Hood
9/13	Jan 3 1956	Glums' New Year's resolutions The Murder Trial
9/14	Jan 10 1956	Eth and the gas manager The Pantomime Horse
9/15	Jan 17 1956	Eth's agony column worry The Prison Governor's Story
9/17	Jan 31 1956	Ron & Eth elope Marble Hall School
9/18	Feb 7 1956	The Glums go to the theatre The World War II Boffin
9/20	Feb 21 1956	Ron in <i>Private Lives</i> The Scarlet Pimple
9/23	Mar 14 1956	The Glums at the home exhibition Harry's High Class Hairdressing
9/24	Mar 21 1956	The Glums consult a dictionary The David Dunhill Murder

In addition, the Transcription Service issued extracts from the broadcasts of Oct 11, Nov 8, Nov 15, Nov 22, Jan 24, Feb 14, Feb 28 and Mar 6 in 1960's reissues TS 31, 32, 43, 47, 50, 52 and 53.

*** **Take It From Malta** (Home Service Monday December 25 1956)

Dick Bentley and Jimmy Edwards appeared in this special edition recorded in Malta.

Series #10

Light Program Wednesdays January 2 to May 15 1957. 20 shows

Starring Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, June Whitfield, Wallas Eaton and The Keynotes.

All editions exist:

10/1	Jan 2 1957	This Is Your TIFH Ron goes on <i>Money Or Nothing</i>
10/2	Jan 9 1957	Lady Godiva The Glums take in a lodger
10/3	Jan 16 1957	Booklover's Corner Ron the babysitter
10/4	Jan 23 1957	Movie Roundup Eth wants a bedroom suite on sale
10/5	Jan 30 1957	Hypochondriac's Guide The Glums locked out
10/6	Feb 6 1957	Wild Bill Brady M.A. B.Sc. Ron's will bequest
10/7	Feb 13 1957	Libel In Broadcasting Ron gets amnesia
10/8	Feb 20 1957	How Ron & Eth first met (2 parts)
10/9	Feb 27 1957	Dramatic Dialogue The Glums on the Serpentine
10/10	Mar 6 1957	My Most Famous Distrials The Glums go to a fancy dress ball
10/11	Mar 13 1957	The Private Life Of Henry VIII Ron plans to emigrate
10/12	Mar 20 1957	Ideal Home Life The Glums are burgled
10/13	Mar 27 1957	Edward Ewart Barnacle, P.M. Ron's pet tortoise
10/14	Apr 3 1957	Admiral Cuthbert Cuttlefish Ron's birth certificate
10/15	Apr 10 1957	Summer Time Mr. Glum gets stuck in the bath
10/16	Apr 17 1957	Difference Between Radio Services Ron's Yul Brynner haircut
10/17	Apr 24 1957	Inventor's Corner #1 Eth v Mr. Glum consent battle
10/18	May 1 1957	Celebrities At A Garden Fête Ron's lucky day
10/19	May 8 1957	Inventor's Corner #2 The Glums dine out
10/20	May 15 1957	Gems From Guildford & Surbiton The Glums visit Eth's father

Series #11

Light Program Wednesdays January 8 to May 21 1958. 20 shows

Starring Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, June Whitfield, Wallas Eaton and The Keynotes.

All editions exist:

11/1	Jan 8 1958	The Party At Dick's Flat Mr. Glum's cousin Wilbraham
11/2	Jan 15 1958	Dick's Publicity Stunts Ron's tattoo
11/3	Jan 22 1958	Jim's Rich Girlfriend Mrs. Glum leaves
11/4	Jan 29 1958	Dick Tries To Rent His Flat How Ron & Eth got engaged
11/5	Feb 5 1958	Jim Fakes A Broken Leg The Glums' house is on fire

11/6	Feb 12 1958	Roman Occupation Of Britain Ron caught in park railings
11/7	Feb 19 1958	Shepherd Of The Hills The Glum bagwash service
11/8	Feb 26 1958	Memoirs Of A Ship's Purser Ron, the artist's model
11/9	Mar 5 1958	Soho Beat The Glums' train trip to Brighton
11/10	Mar 12 1958	The Cartwright Affair Eth's £42 tax refund
11/11	Mar 19 1958	Homer's Odyssey Ron, the budgerigar teacher
11/12	Mar 26 1958	TENTH ANNIVERSARY includes Pygmalion remake
11/13	Apr 2 1958	Swan Lake Mr. Glum borrows furniture
11/14	Apr 9 1958	Charles II Eth's old flame
11/15	Apr 16 1958	The Rubaiyat Of Omar Khayyam Eth is accused of stealing
11/16	Apr 23 1958	The New Steel Works Boss Ron's new suit
11/17	Apr 30 1958	The Italian Restaurant Ron, the daddy's boy
11/18	May 7 1958	Night Train To Paris Ron and a saga of sixpence
11/19	May 14 1958	Inspector Chatsby Investigates Ron's grandfather
11/20	May 21 1958	The Pantomime Horse Mr. Glum's permission to wed

Series #12

Light Program Thursdays November 27 1958 to March 12 1959.
16 shows
Starring Dick Bentley, Jimmy Edwards, June Whitfield, Wallas Eaton and The Keynotes.

All editions exist:

12/1	Nov 27 1958	Tales Of London Airport The Glums move a bed
12/2	Dec 4 1958	I Was Napoleon's Double Ron joins the Police Force
12/3	Dec 11 1958	Woman Pirate Captain Ron needs a dinner suit
12/4	Dec 18 1958	Johnny Guitar Mr. Glum's Christmas raffle
12/5	Dec 25 1958	(All Glums episode) The Christmas hide-and-seek
12/6	Jan 1 1959	The Farmer's Boy Ron changes his name
12/7	Jan 8 1959	The Thing And I The Glums are locked in a store
12/8	Jan 15 1959	The Tree Surgeon Ron gets trapped in a sofa bed
12/9	Jan 22 1959	Search For Black Pearl Oysters Ron & Eth's wedding reception
12/10	Jan 29 1959	The Camp On Mud Island Mr. Glum tries to sell the house
12/11	Feb 5 1959	Cut And Come Again Ron & Eth plan to elope
12/12	Feb 12 1959	WW II Surrender Document Ron & Eth inspect a flat
12/13	Feb 19 1959	The Punch And Judy Story Mr. Glum's honeymoon promise

12/14	Feb 26 1959	French Musical: Trilby Ron loses an eternity ring
12/15	Mar 5 1959	The Rock 'n' Roll Singer Ron's steamship job
12/16	Mar 12 1959	(All Glums episode) Ron & Eth's wedding day

Series #13

Light Program Thursdays October 22 1959 to March 3 1960. 20 shows
Starring Jimmy Edwards, Dick Bentley, June Whitfield, Wallas Eaton, Toni Eden (until Jan 14) and The Polka Dots (from Jan 21).

All editions exist:

13/1	Oct 22 1959	Pagan Love Rites In Outer London Ron feigns amnesia
13/2	Oct 29 1959	I Was King Of The Underworld Ron is taken to the pictures
13/3	Nov 5 1959	Binnie Burke Ron regains his memory
13/4	Nov 12 1959	Jim Of The Porchester Ron learns French
13/5	Nov 19 1959	I Was A Boffin For Britain Ron the actor
13/6	Nov 26 1959	I Practised In The Bush Ron the athlete
13/7	Dec 3 1959	Stop That Racket! Mr. Glum writes to Mrs. Glum
13/8	Dec 10 1959	Watch This Space Ron the newspaperboy
13/9	Dec 17 1959	The Wallas Eaton Story The Glums go carol singing
13/10	Dec 24 1959	Room At The Big Top The Glums' Christmas party
13/11	Dec 31 1959	The Story Of Georgi The Glums & the light that failed
13/12	Jan 7 1960	Around The Floor In Eighty Ways The Glums go to a fancy dress ball
13/13	Jan 14 1960	Cheapside Story Ron's new suit
13/14	Jan 21 1960	Johnny Pizzicato Mr. Glum loses a wager
13/15	Jan 28 1960	The Love Game Ron learns ju-jitsu
13/16	Feb 4 1960	Horrible Thing On Isle Of Wight Ron, the masked bandit
13/17	Feb 11 1960	Pardon My Glove Mrs. Glum leaves
13/18	Feb 18 1960	The Greasepaint Jungle Mr. Glum sells the furniture
13/19	Feb 25 1960	The House Trap Ron learns to swim
13/20	Mar 3 1960	Bonjour Trusthouse The Glums leave for Australia

The Glums On Television:

The Six Faces Of Jim: The Face Of Fatherhood

BBC November 15 1962

With Jimmy Edwards, June Whitfield and Ronnie Barker.

Bruce Forsyth's Big Night

ITV Saturdays October 7 to November 18 1978

Featured a Glums segment starring Jimmy Edwards, Ian Lavender and Patricia Brake, reworking the original 1950's radio scripts.

- Oct 7 1978 How Ron & Eth first met (from 20/2/57)
Oct 14 1978 Ron's birth certificate (3/4/57)
Oct 21 1978 Ron's Yul Brynner haircut (17/4/57)
Oct 28 1978 Mr. Glum's permission to wed (21/5/58)
Nov 4 1978 Ron goes on *Money Or Nothing* (2/1/57)
Nov 18 1978 The Glums take in a lodger (9/1/57)

The Glums

(ITV Sundays November 11 to December 30 1979)

Starring Jimmy Edwards, Ian Lavender and Patricia Brake, reworking the original 1950's radio scripts.

- Nov 11 1979 Mr. Glum stuck in bath (from 10/4/57) & Ron's new suit (23/4/58)
Nov 18 1979 How Ron & Eth got engaged (29/1/58) + Eth v Mr. Glum consent battle (24/4/57)
Nov 25 1979 Ron changes his name (1/1/59) & The Glums are burgled (20/3/57)
Dec 2 1979 Ron and a saga of sixpence (7/5/58) & Eth is accused of stealing (16/4/58)
Dec 9 1979 Ron, the daddy's boy (30/4/58) & Ron's tattoo (15/1/58)
Dec 16 1979 Ron, the artist's model (26/2/58) & Mrs. Glum leaves (22/1/58)
Dec 23 1979 Ron's Christmas party hangover & Mr. Glum's Christmas raffle (18/12/58)
Dec 30 1979 Ron & Eth plan to elope (5/2/59) & Ron's pet tortoise (27/3/57)

Discography:

The Little Red Monkey/Me An' Johnny

(Parlophone 78rpm single R 3684)

Vocals by Joy Nichols, Dick Bentley and Jimmy Edwards.

The Cream Of Take It From Here

(Fontana TFL 5103/STFL 534)

A Saga Of Sixpence (The Glums)/Inventor's Corner/ Hiawatha/ Quiet Evening At Home (The Glums)/The Cartwright Affair/ Wanted (The Glums)/The Strange Affair Of Major Dawlish
In 1960, Bentley, Edwards, Whitfield & Eaton rerecorded the above seven sketches for release on LP.

Jimmy Edwards Sings Pa Glum

(Fontana TFE 17296)

I've Never Seen A Straight Banana/Across The Bridge/I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles/Rhymes

I've Never Seen A Straight Banana/Rhymes

(Fontana H 260)

The above Jimmy Edwards vocals were issued as a 7" EP and 7" single.

Vintage Variety (BBC REC 134M)

Contains an extract from the Glums sketch of 20/2/57

Fifty Years Of Radio Comedy (BBC REC 138M)

Contains an extract from the Cream Of Take It From Here remake of the Glums sketch 'A Quiet Evening At Home' (originally broadcast on 14/4/55).

From Take It From Here - The Glums (BBC REH 161)

Boy Meets Girl (20/2/57)/Stigmatised! (17/3/55)/Danger -Man At Work! (4/12/58)/A View From The Park (12/2/58)/A Night Out (23/1/57)/The Lady Vanishes (22/1/58)/A Fine Predicament (10/4/57)/Here Comes The Bridegroom (12/3/59)

Contains edited extracts from the Glums sketches of the dates noted.

Fun At One (BBC REB 371)

Contains an extract from the Glums sketch of 22/1/58

Cassettes:

Take It From Here (Volume 1)

(BBC double cassette ZBBC 1113)

Contains four complete broadcasts (Mar 26, Apr 9, May 7 and May 21 1958)

Take It From Here (Volume 2)

(BBC double cassette ZBBC 1217)

Contains four complete broadcasts (Feb 20 and May 15 1957, Apr 23 1958 and Jan 1 1959*)

* with the Glums sketch of Mar 12 1958 substituted

Video:

Comedy Classics Of The 60's

(Watershed Pictures WSP 1054)

Contains an extract from The Six Faces Of Jim: The Face Of Fatherhood

Books:

The Glums

by Frank Muir and Denis Norden

(Robson Books, 1979)

Contains the thirteen Glums scripts from the 1950's reworked for the 1979 television adaptations:

The Sixpence/The Burglar/The Deed Poll/Pilfering/The Engagement/The Elopement/Artist's Model/Mrs. Glum Leaves/The Job Interview/The Bath/The Tortoise/Daddy's Boy/The Tattoo

Frank Muir Presents The Book Of Comedy Sketches

(compiled) by Frank Muir and Simon Brett

(Elm Tree Books paperback, 1982)

Contains four untitled non-Glums *Take It From Here* sketches (three from the Joy Nichols era and one from June Whitfield's)

Son Of Curried Eggs (compiled) by Roger Wilmut

(Methuen, 1984)

Contains the Glums script from May 7 1958

Film:

Three Men In A Boat (Romulus Films, 1956)

The characters of Ron and Eth can be heard in a brief non-visual sequence of this Jimmy Edwards film.

Victor Borge

by Peter Tatchell

For over half a century Victor Borge has been travelling the world spreading his own particular blend of music and comedy to the joy of untold millions of people. His approach to the classics and pop pieces is the same ... instil into his interpretations a sense of fun and gentle mockery without losing touch with the artistry of the composer.

Borge was born in Denmark in 1909 to a musical family. At an early age he was regarded as a child prodigy but not for him the strict reverence to classical compositions. By his early teens he was pricking the pomposities of concert performances, much to the delight of the audience. By the 1930s he'd become a popular favourite in his homeland and had even appeared in a series of motion pictures. His satire was not limited to music; one of his targets was German leader Adolph Hitler and by the time the Third Reich marched into Copenhagen Borge was high on their list of undesirables.

By a lucky stroke of fate, Victor was performing in Sweden at the time and was able to escape to New York on the last ship leaving Finland. Despite his success in Scandinavia, Borge was unknown in America and wasn't able to speak English. His solution to the problem was to spend hour upon hour in movie theatres until eventually he was able to learn the language.

This not only allowed him to communicate and resume performing, but it created a fascination of the idiosyncrasies of the language itself. From that point on, his stage routines would rely on clever puns and word-plays sprinkled amongst his piano offerings.

Finding few openings in New York, Victor headed for Los Angeles and was soon hired as a "warm up" man for studio audiences to Rudy Vallee's network radio series. Despite receiving enthusiastic response to his routines, Vallee's format didn't include guest artists and Borge had to be content with his off-air acclaim. Before long, however, he was asked to appear on Bing Crosby's *Kraft Music Hall* broadcast and his sensational performance garnered so much listener approval he was signed as a regular.

Victor stayed with the Crosby program for just on a year before freelancing on other popular shows. In 1943 he appeared in his first English language film *Higher And Higher* in a support role (in what was to be Frank Sinatra's breakthrough movie).

Then in 1945, he was given his own nationally broadcast network radio series *The Victor Borge Show*, as a summer replacement for *Fibber McGee And Molly*. The following year he joined Benny Goodman for a prime-time network program, again over NBC.

When television came into its own in the early 1950s, Victor was soon starring in his own coast-to-coast series, but it was not until 1953 that he was finally regarded as a show business legend. In October that year he opened his one-man show *Comedy In Music* on Broadway, and stayed there for a record-breaking 849 performances.

It was basically a mixture of all his finely-honed musical lampoons, dialogue routines and piano slapstick he'd built up the preceding twenty years. And it became the Borge career path



from that day on. In the decades since that Broadway triumph, he's toured the world and filled theatres and concert halls by virtue of his inimitable style and roguish humour, and though he may now be in his eighties people everywhere are still enchanted by his childlike sense of fun. Long may he continue.

Radio

The Kraft Music Hall

NBC

Victor made a guest appearance on December 4 1941 and was signed as a regular performer on the show from then on. He stayed with the program for just on a year.

The Victor Borge Show

NBC Tuesdays July 3 to September 25 1945. 13 shows.

With Pat Friday and Billy Mills Orchestra.

The Victor Borge/Benny Goodman Show

NBC Mondays Sep 9 1946 to June 30 1947. 43 shows.

Film

Higher and Higher

RKO 1943 feature.

Victor played a supporting role in this Frank Sinatra musical.

Television

The Victor Borge Show

NBC

Saturdays February 3 to June 30 1951. 22x30m shows.

Victor has also hosted the following one hour specials:

All Star Revue

NBC Saturday October 27 1951

Victor Borge's Comedy in Music - 1

CBS June 14 1956

Victor Borge's Comedy in Music - 2

CBS December 11 1956

Victor Borge's Comedy in Music - 3

CBS February 9 1958

Victor Borge's Comedy in Music - 4
CBS November 29 1958

The Victor Borge Special
NBC February 18 1960

The Victor Borge Show
NBC
March 18 1960

The Victor Borge Show
ABC
October 6 1960

Victor Borge's 20th Anniversary Show
CBS September 27 1961

The Hollywood Palace
ABC

Victor hosted the editions of May 23 1964, November 14 1964, March 13 1965, April 23 1966, December 3 1966, October 3 1967 and February 2 1968. He also guested on the edition of October 31 1967

Victor has appeared on a number of specials on British television:

A Gala Evening With Victor Borge
ITV June 18 1972

The Complete Victor Borge
BBC 2

Thursdays October 31 to December 5 1974. 6x30m shows.

Victor Borge in Concert
Thames Television
June 27 1979

Books

My Favourite Intermissions
by Victor Borge and Robert Sherman.
New York, 1971

Also published as *My Favourite Intervals* (Woburn Press, 1974).

Victor Borge's My Favourite Comedies In Music
by Victor Borge and Robert Sherman
Robson Books, London, 1981

Discography

Phonetic Punctuation (Parts 1 and 2)
Columbia 78rpm 36911

Blue Serenade/A Lesson In Composition
Columbia 78rpm 36912

Brahms Lullaby/Greig Rhapsody Columbia
78rpm 36913

Mozart Opera By Borge/All The Things You Are
Columbia 78rpm 36914

Brahms, Bizet and Borge
Columbia 10" LP CL 2538

The Blue Serenade/Brahms' Lullaby/All The Things You Are/Bizet's Carmen/Greig Rhapsody/A Lesson In Composition

Comedy In Music
Columbia CCL 554

Also issued as two 10" Lps CL 6292/3, and on Compact Disc CBS A 554

Comedy In Music/Medley Of Popular Songs (incl. The Donkey

Serenade + Falling In Love With Love + Let Me Call You Sweetheart + Farmer In The Dell + Always + Mary Had A Little Lamb + Ol' Man River + Oh What A Beautiful Morning + Some Enchanted Evening + So In Love + Without A Song + Happy Birthday + Summertime + Rhapsody In Blue + Tenderly)/Warsaw Concerto + Auf Wiederseh'n Sweetheart

Caught In The Act

Columbia CCL 646 and Compact Disc CBS A 646

Requests (incl. Tea For Two + Malaguena + Stardust + Nola + Trees + One Fine Day + Tales From The Vienna Woods + Third Man Theme + Nocturne + Blue Danube Waltz)/A Mozart Opera By Borge/Three Borge Favourites (incl. Tango + "Minute" Waltz + Liberstraum/Family Background/Phonetic Punctuation

Victor Borge Live

Sony compact disc MDK 48482

Features highlights from the above two recordings: Comedy In Music/Medley Of Popular Songs/A Mozart Opera By Borge/Three Borge Favourites/Family Background/Phonetic Punctuation

A Mozart Opera By Borge/Phonetic Punctuation

Phillips single bbe 12154

Borge's Back

MGM (S)E 3995P

Introduction/Inflationary Language/The Blue Danube Waltz/Requests/Duets

(reissued as *Great Moments of Comedy With Victor Borge* Verve V-15044

and *Borgering On Genius* MGM 235 4029)

Victor Borge Live At The London Palladium

Pye NSPL 18394 and Compact Discs

Pickwick PKD 3147 and Castle DUO 121

Double CD with Tony Hancock material.

Night And Day/Happy Birthday To You/Chopsticks/Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody/The Folk Song/The Russian Opera

My Favourite Intervals

Pye double-LP NSPD 502

Borge On Bach And Beethoven/Borge On Handel/Borge On Mozart And Offenbach/Borge On Rossini

• Victor's performances on several *Kraft Music Hall* broadcasts may be heard on the following LPs:

The Kraft Music Hall of March 12 1942
Spokane 2

The Kraft Music Hall of April 30 1942
Spokane 3

The Kraft Music Hall of April 16 1942
Spokane 4

The Kraft Music Hall of January 29 1942
Spokane 11

• Victor also appears on the following non-comedy LPs:

Piccolo, Saxie and Company
Columbia CL 1233

Victor Borge Plays and Conducts Concert Favourites
Columbia CL 1305/CS 8113

Hans Christian Andersen
Decca DL7 34406

Blackadder

by David Hirsch

If you take some material from European history, give it a dose of theatrical quality found in Masterpiece Theatre and more than a hint of naughtiness found in *Python* and *The Young Ones*, chances are the result will be something like one of the hottest BBC programs of the '80s: *Blackadder* (also written as *Black Adder*). Just as *Fawlty Towers* was the more sophisticated flip-side of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, *Blackadder* may very well be



Tony Robinson as Baldrick and Rowan Atkinson as Blackadder

the cultural Yin of *The Young Ones'* deranged Yang. Though it started shakily, it has developed an international cult following, and acquired a 1988 British Academy of Film and Television award for best comedy series.

The theme is unique enough, a situation comedy taking place in historical times. The storyline revolves around Edmund Blackadder, played by comic actor Rowan Atkinson (whose credits include *Not the Nine O'Clock News* and *The Witches*), and his misadventures through the Medieval times, the Elizabethan period, the Romantic era, and World War I. Each time period is divided into a series of six episodes, and in the last episode of each he would inevitably be killed, only to be reincarnated into the following one. (It's been accepted that one Blackadder is the descendant of a previous Blackadder, although many of them died before ever getting around to sleeping with women.)

Blackadder is a nickname that Edmund gave himself in the very first episode. It had little to do with an actual snake, it's just that "The Black Vegetable" simply didn't sound right. In the first series, it was merely a handle shared by Edmund and a select few, but by the second series, Blackadder became a proper surname. The character of Edmund Blackadder that fans have come to love (established by the second series) is an intellectual, sophisticated gentleman, usually the most intelligent in a group, as well as a rude, avaricious sadistic villain who seeks to better his social standing by any means possible. His extensive vocabulary allows him to say things in a roundabout way: "Your brain is like the four headed man-eating haddock-fish-beast of Aberdeen. It doesn't exist." He tries to fabricate his appearance by pretending to sail across a deadly sea, or creating a fictional

tale of rescuing an aristocrat from revolutionary France, and often his schemes backfire. But it doesn't discourage him from trying again another day.

Also accompanying Blackadder through all his incarnations is his sidekick Baldrick, performed by Tony Robinson. His first name is unknown, but it might be Sodoff, since that's what the children often told him. (Note: the credits in the fourth series identify him as "S. Baldrick.") He is dull, odorous, illiterate and incompetent, with a memory span just short of a television advertisement. He is unable to master mathematics, play Charades, and when two people he knows well exchange clothes, he is in a dither telling who is who. He is known for his abysmal culinary skills, usually consisting of natural things (mud, animal fluids, dandruff, etc.) His utmost desire is the acquisition of turnips. (For some reason, turnips have been a running joke throughout the series, most notably at a dinner party with a turnip shaped like a thingy.) When trouble arises, he can always be counted on to announce, "I have a cunning plan".

The relationship between Baldrick and Blackadder closely parallels *Fawlty Towers* characters Manuel and Basil Fawlty; Baldrick has no control over his life, with no thoughts or opinions, and his main purpose in life seems to be the punching bag for Blackadder, who could never pick on anyone his own size. There are great communication barriers between the two, although Baldrick, unlike Manuel, spoke the same language as his employer.

The first two series gave Baldrick a form of big brother or partner in idiocy called Percy, played by Tim McInnerny. Although much cleaner and in a better social standing than Baldrick, he cannot stand the sight of water, wears ruffs too big

or small for him, and takes pride in inventing gold — the greenest messiest gold ever. Percy is loyal, patriotic and well-intentioned, but his clumsiness, cowardice and lack of self-confidence almost always gets the better of him. He wants to be friends with Blackadder, who in return sees him as “an utter prat.” Nevertheless, he is often used as Blackadder’s right-hand man in many schemes. The moronic performance by McInnemy is hilarious, and often overshadows Baldrick altogether.

The program often had other performers pop up in different time periods playing the same role. Gabrielle Glaister appears as a girl who tries to pass for a man by calling herself Bob. Rik Mayall is the high riding, sword wielding, pelvic thrusting Lord Flashheart. Miriam Marygolyes appears as someone regal, be it the Spanish Infanta or queen Victoria. However, sometimes some actors would appear playing a variety of different roles. Regulars included Stephen Fry, Hugh Laurie, and Miranda Richardson.

The first series, written by Richard Curtis and Atkinson himself, was entitled simply, *The Black Adder* although loyalists have dubbed it *Black Adder I*. The premiere episode *The Foretelling* was broadcast on BBC 1 on June 15, 1983. The scene is Medieval England in 1485, the night before the Battle of Bostwick. At a banquet dinner, we are introduced to King Richard III, played by Peter Cook. Contrary to popular history, he was not a hunched villain who killed his nephews, but a kind loving gentleman. One of his nephews, also at the banquet, is soon to be King Richard IV, played by Brian Blessed. He is a booming, bloodthirsty madman, always ready for a fight, and usually steals the thunder when he is on screen. Beside him sits the Queen, played by Elspet Gray. They have two sons, Harry (Robert East) and “another one” soon to be princes. Harry, the favourite son, is responsible, but a bit of a goody-goody. The other one, seen as the misfit son, is Edmund, Duke of Edinburgh. Having overslept on the day of the battle, Edmund, eager to prove he’s a man, inadvertently chops off Richard III’s head. He is overwrought with fear and sorrow, especially with a beheaded ghost haunting him, but when Edmund becomes Prince and receives news from three witches that he will one day be King, his remorse takes a holiday. Setting the tone for the rest of the 4 programs to come, the villainous Blackadder tries to scheme ways, with the help of Baldrick and Percy, to one day rise to the throne and then rule the world.

The idea of this series was an innovative one, setting a situation comedy into a specific historical period, and was a good setting for a Medieval parody, very much in the vein of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. However, when compared to the other series, the first was the least successful and was not to reward Blackadder with its cult status. Some critics did not well perceive the blood and gore, such as from people getting their heads lopped off. The least settling scene was to see Edmund mangled up in the last episode after being tortured. While its strengths were strong acting (and some times overacting) by Blessed, and visual humour from Atkinson’s many funny faces, when the booming voices and the silly jumping died down, so did the rest of the program. The biggest flaw was that the characters were not well defined. Prince Harry and the queen were rather bland. Percy and Baldrick were not as moronic as they later came to be. Blackadder himself is a slightly hunched, squeaky voiced, shaky, stuttering mad creature, almost resembling something out of Jim Henson’s workshop. The lack of witty script-writing left him without his snakebite mannerism.

At times he wasn’t on an even intellectual level with Baldrick. But the downfalls of the first series were soon to be rectified by a new writer for the second series.

Blackadder II appeared on screen in January 1986. The time period has jumped 100 Years to the Elizabethan Age, and Edmund is now Lord Blackadder. The arrival of Ben Elton, replacing Atkinson as co-writer, allowed the script to be given a fast paced, witty and extensive vocabulary, as he has used in his stand-up acts, and the naughtiness partly responsible for *The Young Ones*, which he had completed in 1984. This Blackadder is far more mature, with his lip uncurled, and his vocabulary broadened, and is to become the bitter curmudgeon that audience were going to love to hate. It became clear that this Blackadder was here to stay, and so was Elton.

Lord Blackadder seeks the hand of queen Elizabeth, played by Miranda Richardson (this would be the first of several roles she would play as Edmund’s lover.) She is a jumpy, childish, enthusiastic Queen, who also has a thing for Edmund. (“Sometimes I think of having you executed just to see the look on your face.”) She also relishes living in royalty and having her merest whim catered to, but deep down she is really depressed. Along her side in the throne room, Patsy Byrne plays her nanny Nursie, very maternal and mad, and often rehashing nappy stories much to the embarrassment of the queen. Also in her chamber are Lord Percy, a well established buffoon, and Lord Melchitt, by Stephen Fry. He is a solemn, God worshipping man who usually plays the straight man. The viewing audience doesn’t know much about Melchitt until the final episode, *Chains*. He and Blackadder are both imprisoned and we learn that as a youngster he was not so solemn with a sheep.

As successful as the second series was, it was soon to meet its match — the third series. In September 1987, *Blackadder the Third* was unleashed. The period is 1768-1815, the Romantic Age. Edmund, no longer a member of the aristocracy, is the butler to the Prince Regent, George the Prince of Wales. As well as a parody of the times, this series was a spoof on programs on *Masterpiece Theatre*. Even the titles had names like *Sense and senility* or *Amy and Amiability*. That year, the series not only won awards for best comedy, but for best costumes. The regal setting for the Prince’s abode is delicious. Prince George, played by Hugh Laurie, is “young and foolish with a peanut for a brain” as put by Blackadder. He is an upper-class twit with difficulties putting on trousers, serenading women, and understanding that a Shakespeare play is fiction. While Parliament is making plans to bankrupt him, the Prince wonders why he never has enough socks. Helen Atkinson-Wood plays Mrs. Miggins, the proprietor of a pie shop in the town. She is very cockney, but a colourful woman. She wishes to marry Blackadder and they could run away together. His response on the subject: “Mrs. Miggins, if we were the last three people in the world, I’d be trying to start a family with Baldrick.”

Two Blackadder specials were taped between the third and fourth series. *Blackadder: The Cavalier Years* was a 15 minute story that was part of Comic Relief’s Red Nose Day, a telethon broadcast on BBC. The Year is 1648, and Sir Edmund Blackadder and Baldrick are protecting the incredibly thoughtful King Charles the First, who is being pursued by Oliver Cromwell and the Round Heads. When he gets captured, the two try to prevent the beheading of the King, or else face certain Puritanism. In December 1988, a *Blackadder’s Christmas Carol* was broadcast for the holidays. This 45 minute story is set in the Victorian age. Ebenezer Blackadder, proprietor of a moustache shop, is the kindest, nicest man in England. Baldrick is simply

Baldrick. After giving away all his money and presents to his greedy friends and relatives, Blackadder decides to take in an early Christmas Eve and go to sleep. He is visited by a ghostly spirit played by Robbie Coltraine, who shows him visions of Blackadders from the second and third series, and a possible outcome in the *Doctor Who*-like future. He inadvertently learns the true meaning of Christmas: "Bad guys have all the fun!" The next day, Blackadder is thoroughly rude to everyone, including Queen Victoria and Prince Albert who intended to grant him £50,000 and the title of Baron.

On September 1989, the fourth series was broadcast. Entitled *Blackadder Goes Forth* it was stationed at World War I. The setting here is far more modern looking and less glamorous, but still maintains the high level of humour achieved in the third series. Captain Blackadder is in a trench with Private Baldrick and Lieutenant George (again by Laurie, and identical to the Prince Regent character). Fry is General Melchitt, a walrus-moustached mad old military git, and McInnerny is now Captain Darling, a pencil pushing lad behind a desk. Darling is rather intelligent and on the ball, and is usually aware of Blackadder's cowardly schemes to escape the trench. He is the only one on equal terms with Blackadder, but lacks the proper authority to do anything about it. (This role is very un-Percy.) The final episode entitled *Goodbye-e-e* ends the series on a depressing and powerful note, because now the war becomes horrifying and real. After reflecting on the good old days, and becoming scared, it's time for the Big Push. Darling is sent unwillingly to join-Blackadder, Baldrick and George, and all four of them, with many other soldiers charge into No-Man's-Land. As the theme music plays softly on a lone piano, presumably from a funeral, the scene fades slowly to an empty battleground, and rather than the customary credits, the caption BLACKADDER slowly fades in. The series has been put to rest.

Blackadder Episode Guide

Rowan Atkinson (Edmund Blackadder), Tony Robinson (Baldrick)

Each program is 30 minutes unless otherwise noted. All shown on BBC 1.

The Black Adder

Tim McInnerny (Percy), Brian Blessed (King Richard IV), Elspet Gray (The Queen), Robert East (Prince Harry of Wales)

The Foretelling

June 15 1983

Despite popular history, Edmund, Duke of Edinburgh was responsible for the accidental killing of his uncle, Richard III (Peter Cook) whose ghost comes back to haunt him. Three witches tell Edmund that he will one day be King. Or was that message for Henry Tudor?

June 22 1983

Born to Be King

While the King is fighting the Turks, Harry is appointed Regent, and Edmund is to do the domestic work. The arrival of Scottish warrior Dougal MacAngus (Alex Rorton) further angers Edmund, until he finds information questioning Harry's legitimacy.

June 29 1983

The Archbishop

The dying Duke of Winchester has not decided to give his land to the Crown or the Church. Edmund the Unwilling has been appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, a rather unsafe position to

hold, especially with two drunken murderers after him.

July 6 1983

The Queen of Spain's Beard

In order to get out of marrying the Spanish Infanta (Miriam Margolyes), Edmund will feign homosexuality, try to borrow someone else's wife, and even use Baldrick to take her virginity.

July 13 1983

Witchsmeller Pursuivant

When the King gets a touch of the Black Plague, witchcraft is suspected. A mad treacherous witchsmeller (Frank Finlay) puts Edmund, Percy and Baldrick on trial for being witches. Now only a bit of magic can save them from being burned.

July 20 1983

The Black Seal

Edmund searches for the six most evil men in Britain to overthrow the King, but gets temporarily imprisoned with Mad Gerald (Rik Mayall). Even worse, the six men turn on Edmund and put him to a torturous machine.

Black Adder II

Tim McInnerny (Lord Percy), Stephen Fry (Lord Melchitt), Miranda Richardson (Queen Elizabeth I), Patsy Byrne (Nursie)

January 9 1986

Bells

Lord Blackadder falls in love with his manservant, Bob (Gabrielle Glaister). When it is discovered that Bob is in fact Kate, a wedding for the two is prepared. Too bad the sexy and violent Lord Flashheart (Rik Mayall) is the best man.

January 16 1986

Head

Lord High Executioner Blackadder orders the premature beheading of a Lord Farrow in an effort to maintain efficiency. Now, lady Farrow wants a final goodbye with her husband. Blackadder must wear a bag over his head and tuck in one arm to impersonate him in an effort to avoid his own beheading.

January 23 1986

Potato

In an attempt to outdo Sir Walter Raleigh (Simon Jones), Blackadder sets sail on a fake journey to the Sea of Certain Death. The voyage is under the leadership of Captain Rum (Tom Baker), long on beard, short on legs, no sense of direction and completely mad.

Feb 6 1986

Money

It's time to pay the piper, or rather, the Bishop of Bath and Wells (Ronald Lacey). While Blackadder tries to raise £1000, the Queen keeps playing practical jokes on him.

Feb 13 1986

Beer

Blackadder is to dine with his Puritan relatives Lord and Lady Whiteadder on the same evening he is to host a very rude drinking party. He manages to have it both ways, until he gets intoxicated.

Feb 20 1986

Chains

Blackadder and Melchitt have been kidnapped by an evil German prince (Hugh Laurie) who is also master of disguise, intending to conquer Britain. (This is one of the few times Laurie has not appeared as an upper-class twit.)

Black Adder the Third

Hugh Laurie (The Prince Regent), Helen Atkinson-Wood (Mrs. Miggins)

Sep 17 1987

Dish and Dishonesty

The House of Commons makes a move to cut off the Prince's allowance, and to save him, the Adder Party puts up Baldrick as an MP candidate in a rotten borough election-

Sep 24 1987

Ink and Incapability

The Prince intends to patronise the dictionary of the world renowned and bad tempered Samuel Johnson (Robbie Coltraine) but when it appears that Baldrick burned it, Blackadder must rewrite it in two days or else face certain death.

Oct 1 1987

Nob and Nobility

With the Scarlet Pimpernel, all the rage, Blackadder makes a bet with Lord Topper (Tim McInnerny) and Lord Smedley (Nigel Planer) to rescue an aristocrat from France. His attempt to cheat lands him and Baldrick in prison at the French Embassy. But they will be rescued by the Scarlet Pimpernel, won't they?

(This episode, although sold on video, has not appeared on any American networks due to copyright problems regarding the Scarlet Pimpernel.)

Oct 8 1987

Sense and Senility

To show the oppressed masses how unusually sensitive he is, the Prince-seeks advice from two posh Shakespearian actors. Meanwhile, Blackadder just can't stop saying "Macbeth" and Baldrick has news suggesting the actors might be anarchists.

Oct 15 1987

Amy and Amiability

The Prince is out of money, and Blackadder tries to get him married to the wealthy Amy Hartwood (Miranda Richardson). But when it is learned that she is broke as well, Blackadder becomes a highway robber.

Oct 22 1987

Duel and Duality

After the Prince has had a naughty evening with the nieces of the Duke of Wellington (Stephen Fry), he is challenged to a duel. Blackadder tries to get his mad Scottish cousin MacAdder (Rowan Atkinson) to fight in his place, but circumstances pit himself against the Duke.

Feb 5 1988

Blackadder: The Cavalier Years

15 min

Sir Edmund Blackadder and Baldrick try to protect King Charles the First (Stephen Fry) from Oliver Cromwell and the Roundheads.

Dec 23 1988

Blackadder's Christmas Carol

45 min

Ebenezer Blackadder, the kindest man in England, sees visions from his ancestors (the Blackadders from the second and third series) and his future intergalactic self, learns that bad guys have all the fun Too bad this newly found cruelty costs him £50,000 and the title of Baron.

Black Adder Goes Forth

Stephen Fry (General Melchitt), Hugh Laurie (Lieutenant George), Tim McInnerny (Captain Darling)

Sept 28 1989

Captain Cook

An artist is needed to paint for a military magazine, and Blackadder claims credit for George's masterpieces, only to learn only that the artist is needed to paint in No-Man's-Land. Melchitt and Darling get their just desserts-cooked by Baldrick.

Oct 5 1989

Corporal Punishment

Blackadder shoots and eats a messenger pigeon, which was General Melchitt's favourite. He faces court-martial, with George representing him. Now it seems he will be executed by a friendly firing squad.

Oct 12 1989

Major Star

A concert party for the soldiers' morale stars George as the Lovely Georgina, with whom the mad Melchitt falls in love. An alternate woman must be found. Can Private Bob (Gabrielle Glaister) think of anyone?

Oct 19 1989

Private Plane

Blackadder crashes his plane behind enemy lines, where he and Baldrick face a fate worse than a fate worse than death. (That's pretty bad!) They are saved by Lord Flashheart (Rik Mayall) who finally meets Baron von Richtoven (Adrian Edmonson).

Oct 26 1989

General Hospital

There's a leak of a German spy who might be at the hospital where the wounded George is. There's a patient with a German accent, but Blackadder spends more quality time with the nurse (Miranda Richardson).

November 2 1989

Goodby-e-e-e

In a final attempt to escape the Big Push, Blackadder feigns madness and tries to get help from Field Marshall Haig (Geoffrey Palmer). Melchitt sends Darling to unwillingly join the other soldiers. When it's time to charge into No-Man's-Land, the war isn't fun and games any more.



Yes, What?

The Vintage Radio Serial

by Vern Sundfors and Bob Hawker

Back in the 1930s, before most of us were born, something wonderful happened on Australian radio (on Adelaide Advertiser station 5AD) that still inspires us with awe. It was a radio comedy show unmatched since, and unequalled anywhere. Never off the air somewhere, it is hit with every laudatory superlative in the thesaurus. Most of all, it is "timeless", although it is more than half a century old.

The 1930s was a decade of much interest, musically for instance, but great or classic comedy seems not much to have visited the 1930s. Therefore, with few exceptions, such as the Marx Brothers, a lot of thirties' comedy was quite awful.

But we remember the radio serial *Yes, What?* set in St.Percy's School, not least because it was syndicated to all Australian states on vinyl transcription discs, and therefore it survived and was broadcast continuously, being then taped by listener-collectors. This went on for 50 years, never skipping a decade. In pre-tape days, fans collected it on home disc-cutters, and it is just as well they did, as we shall see.

In the 1980s, *Yes, What?* was included on two LPs produced by Glenn A. Baker "The Wonderful Wireless" (Volumes 1 and 2) and as a result radio stations could include a representative sample in general comedy programming. And since the world is divided into two kinds of people: those who have heard *Yes, What?* and those who haven't, the latter will have plenty of opportunity to hear and own some of it on a forthcoming Compact Disc set. We are writing this piece for *Laugh Magazine* largely for existing (and future) fans of the comedy of *Yes, What?*.

It is difficult to imagine a classic property about which so little is known by the listening public. Radio serials were thin on credits anyway, and in the case of *Yes, What?*, care was taken by the creator/producer to keep it that way. In fact, he gave his first magazine interview two years later, in NSW. That one interview gives us virtually all we know about the private thoughts and feelings towards his comedy phenomenon.

If you love *Yes, What?*, his name, Rex 'Waca' Dawe is greater than Roy Rene and other top Aussie comedians. I mean, we love Roy Rene, but he's getting a bit dusty, or "less timeless", whereas *Yes, What?* always sounds like a keg of gunpowder going off. It goes up like a bottle rocket and explodes in a burst of comic absurdity, even insanity. It sounds so "live" and natural that some have refused to believe it was scripted. We suspect that it will sound this way forever.

But fans, of course, want to know everything about everything. Dawe's name was kept aloft by Adelaide journalist Max Hollingsworth who periodically gave biographical background, all of it correct. But there is little else to read, and information about what happened in the 1930s has been disappearing fast. We were able to talk to the actors who played



pupil Bottomly, caretaker Snootles, and Greenbottle's mother; the others were gone. We talked to the widows of the nephew, and to recording engineers working on the show.

It has been something of a life's ambition for both of us to unlock *Yes, What?*'s mysterious past, to correct misinformation, and to tidy up those episodes which have previously defied cataloguing. If you are doing a broadcast, or writing something, now there is no excuse for saying that *Yes, What?* came from 5DN, as a nostalgia presenter recently did.

The cast

Doctor Percy Pym:	Rex 'Waca' Dawe (Writer/Producer/Director)
Rupert Bottomly:	Ralph Peterson
Greenbottle:	Jack Craig-Gardiner
Ronald George Standforth:	Jim Williams
dePledge:	Richard Harding-Brown
Mr. Basil Cornelius Snootles:	Frank McCarron
Daphne:	Alice Creed
Mrs. Greenbottle (and others):	Marjory Irving
Policeman:	John Dobbie
English Policeman (and PT instructor):	Walter Dyer

How they came to, and left *Yes, What?* in radio's earliest days is a story that was a delight to unfold, and full details will be found in our forthcoming book on the series which will hopefully be available in the near future.

Casual players were sometimes drawn from Dawe's theatre friends (Kenny Brenna) and from 5AD's stable of performers (Keith MacDonald). References to other names, such as Frank Strain and George Wallace Junior relate to stage performances of a Tivoli pantomime nature, or to attempted revivals on radio (with Owen Ainley and others) which were never a success.



The Episodes

At first, in its home town of Adelaide, *Yes, What?* aired once a week, on Sunday night, live. There, it was always known by its original title "The Fourth Form at St.Percy's". This was after English comic Will Hay's "Fifth Form at St.Michael's", a series of records and films, and possibly broadcasts, on which *Yes, What?* was modelled. Everybody involved swears that *Yes, What?* was not recorded throughout its first year. Recording only commenced when interstate sales began and new technology was installed. There is no point in weeping for this lost material, firstly because we now believe it was re-recorded for discs numbered 1 to 50, and secondly because the magic spark of comedy genius had not yet manifested. The early episodes were not so hot, and if you hear them you might wish you hadn't.

Sponsor and owner, Samuel Taylor apparently thought that, and banished the first 208 episodes to an unknown fate. If you joined *Yes, What?* with or after its 1957 revival, you will be unfamiliar with the first 208 episodes, or "lessons" as they were always called. We do not know how many sets of discs were pressed, but one set possibly escaped into the hands of collectors, for some copies have come our way.

Magic moments commence to appear around about Lesson 50, and increase towards Lesson 208, where Bottomly and Percy reportedly blow up the school. We've never heard it. Have you? As mentioned, some "lost" episodes turn up on home cut or local station cut discs, but their cracked acetate surfaces have scarcely lasted the distance. One of these tells of the party that Greenbottle's father threw. Craig-Gardiner played both Greenbottles, Jr and snr.

Lessons 209 to 520 are the remaining output, and we hear them on the radio today, leased to stations by Grace Gibson Productions (NSW). Although Taylor was too ruthless, the remaining 316 lessons represent a level plateau or constancy of comic brilliance. But only about 300 of these actually circulate to stations (now on 7-1/2"/sec tapes), and they have been re-numbered in a regrettably random order. Missing seem to be lessons 209, 210, 212, 217, 283, 286, 322, 331, 333, 503, 504, 510, 512 and 513. They could prove difficult to replace. Our above-mentioned book gives an episode listing with an AWA disc number and a paragraph synopsis for each lesson.

Briefly, history went something like this:

- First broadcast 5AD Adelaide: 7th July 1936 (one reference puts it at a week earlier).
- First recorded: mid-1937
- First heard in Melbourne from 3XY: 2nd October 1939
- Last episode (Lesson 520) recorded: 7th December 1940
- Repeated immediately and continuously throughout World War 2, in Melbourne until mid 1944.
- Nationally revived 1948-1952 and again in 1957-1959
- Thereafter, periodic revivals by individual stations to this day, sometimes on public FM stations, currently at 3UZ on Sunday nights, at virtually the time slot in which it began.

Records

1942

A special disc was planned for despatch to Australian troops overseas, but the project did not eventuate.

1982

The Wonderful Wireless

Telmak TMAK 046

2LPs

Contains a short extract from the start of Lesson 226, derived from a sampler tape once prepared by the National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra

1983

More Of The Wonderful Wireless

Telmak TMAK 081

2LPs

Featured a whole episode (number 487)

1991

The Best of Yes, What?: The School Fire

Cassette tape, first authorised sale material, produced by us as a limited souvenir edition and available only to visitors to the Golden Days of Radio Exhibition at the Melbourne Exhibition Building. Collector's item.

Featured four Lessons which were:

416 The school fire

417 At the police station

426 Policeman visits the school

436 Opening ceremony of new classroom

1992

Radio Revisited - Yes, What?

Sony double CD 472832-2

Contains ten episodes interspersed with recollections by Williams, McCarron, Gardiner and Peterson Opening Ceremony For Classroom (436)/The Royal Show (227 and 228)/The School Fete (233)/ The School Fire (416 and 417)/Greenbottle Leaves For University (342)/New Boy dePledge Arrives (344)/Visit Of The School Inspector(388) Bottomly Arranges Morning Tea (390)

- The episode numbers given on the CDs are reissue numbers.

The allegedly enduring properties of CDs should ensure that *Yes, What?* is available for future archaeologists to laugh at.

Abbott and Costello

by Peter Tatchell

For fifteen years they were the most popular comedy duo in show business. From the rough and tumble of the burlesque stage to the heights of movie stardom, Bud Abbott and Lou Costello held an appeal that was universal. They were past masters at turning the pratfalls and patter of a theatrical era on the verge of extinction to pure gold on the cinema screen. For much of their career they were also headliners on radio, and when television emerged in the early 1950s they conquered that as well.

The boys first worked together in 1936 ... Bud following on from a family tradition of circuses and sideshows, Lou having tried his luck as a stuntman in Hollywood's early days of the talkies. Both found themselves in the knockabout world of burlesque, then sinking fast from the honest vulgarity of its heyday to a tawdry parade of stripteasers. Each was working with other partners, and success was eluding them. Together, though, they clicked from the start.

Their first big break came with a weekly spot on the popular Kate Smith Hour heard nationwide over CBS stations. Despite initial opposition from the "powers-that-be" who thought they might be too visual for radio, Bud and Lou helped lift the show's ratings across the country. Their only real problem was in sounding alike over the air, so Lou gave his voice a higher pitch which in fact suited his "I'm a baaaaad boy" characterisation anyway.

Each week they'd perform one of the classic routines they'd perfected on stage ... "The Lemon Bit", "Mustard", "The Horse's Mudder", etc. Ironically, the program's producer couldn't see any humour in "Who's On First" and wouldn't let them include it in their spot. In desperation, Bud and Lou insisted they'd finally run out of material and would have to drop out that week. Faced with the loss of one of the show's most popular segments, the routine was given the go ahead, and CBS was inundated with listener response as a result. From that day onward it became their most requested sketch and the one with which they'd be most readily identified for the rest of their career.

Abbott and Costello stayed with Kate Smith for three seasons until the middle of 1940. By then, they'd appeared in a Broadway show *The Streets Of Paris* (stealing the kudos from Bobby Clark and Carmen Miranda) and had made their movie debut in *One Night In The Tropics* for Universal. NBC signed them for a 13-week series as a summer replacement for Fred



Allen in 1940, and they were given the starring roles in the film *Buck Privates* later that year. With a modest budget and a shooting schedule of under three weeks, the studio wasn't exactly going out on a limb for the duo. However, when it premiered the following February, the public took Bud and Lou to their hearts and the picture became a huge money-spinner.

Needless to say, Universal rushed them into a series of features to capitalise on their success and in all, the boys made some three dozen movies as a team. Despite their enormous fame in front of the camera, their next radio venture was in support to Edgar Bergen on his Sunday night NBC program. As with their time on the Kate Smith show, Bud and Lou appeared in their own segment every week, performing their traditional wordplay routines.

After a year with Bergen, NBC gave them a series of their own and *The Abbott And Costello Show* debuted on October 8th 1942 where it became a Thursday night favourite for five seasons. At its height the show attracted an estimated twenty million listeners across America. Like the other comedy-variety programs on air during those years in the midst of the second world war, Abbott and Costello's half hour featured a regular vocalist (Connie Haines) and a guest from the movie world. Such stars as Marlene Dietrich, Charles Laughton, Lucille Ball and George Raft shared the microphone with Bud and Lou during their premiere season, and in subsequent series Cary Grant, Alan Ladd and Frank Sinatra joined the roster.

Apart from their radio and film work the boys also spent a lot of their time selling war bonds for "Uncle Sam". They were at the peak of their careers, but things weren't always rosy for the pair. In March 1943 Lou was struck down with rheumatic fever and had to cancel all work until he recovered. Bud continued on with the radio show for a couple of broadcasts before he was forced to abandon the program until his partner could resume. Eight months later their eventual return to the airwaves was marred by tragedy when Lou's baby boy drowned in the family swimming pool just hours before the broadcast. On hearing the news, Jimmy Durante, Bob Hope and Red Skelton offered to fill in for him, but Lou insisted on going on. It was only after the show had been performed that Bud told the audience the heartbreak his partner had endured.

In 1947 Abbott and Costello switched to ABC for a couple of seasons, and in addition to their night-time show did a special children's edition on Saturday mornings. At the time, ABC was the only major network allowing their programs to be prerecorded (following a precedent set by Bing Crosby who was involved with a company developing the new technology of recording tape).

By the end of the decade radio was being usurped by television, and Bud and Lou were signed to join the rotating list of stars on the *Colgate Comedy Hour* on NBC each Sunday night. (The boys actual television debut had taken place on July 19 1939 during the run of *Streets Of Paris*, but at that time only a few hundred sets would have been in operation.)

The first of the Abbott and Costello specials aired on January 7 1951 and like much of their radio work featured tried-and-true material from their early days in burlesque, including a version of the perennial "Crazy House". The critics may have made note of the age of the material but the public was delighted. For their second telecast (on March 11) Bud and Lou performed "Who's On First" and revived scenes from their Universal movies (including a confrontation with Frankenstein's monster, played by Lon Chaney Jr.).

NBC signed the two for more *Colgate* appearances the following season, but Lou decided to produce a separate batch of half-hour episodes featuring Bud and himself which would generate additional income in the form of residual payments each time the programs were screened. Filming of *The Abbott And Costello Show* began at the old Hal Roach studios in mid-1951 with a supporting cast of Sid Fields, Joe Besser, Hillary

Brooke, Gordon Jones and Joe Kirk. Eventually fifty-two editions were made, and forty years later they serve as a delightful showcase of just about every burlesque routine the team ever did.

The live shows for *Colgate*, meanwhile, continued on at the rate of four or five a year and saw Bud and Lou in their element ... reacting and ad-libbing in front of a live audience. Despite their ages (Lou was in his late forties and Bud was a good ten years older) the shows were filled with the knockabout bits and pratfalls they'd been doing since the mid-1930s. Invariably props went wrong and more often than not Lou was a bundle of bruises by the time the credits rolled.

Along with their film work, Abbott and Costello continued to appear on the *Colgate Comedy Hour* until May 1955 by which time their teaming had reached a crossroad. Their contract with Universal was not renewed and they were perceived as being unwilling to update their material for newer and more "sophisticated" audiences. Over the years Lou had harboured a desire to be regarded as a performer in his own right, and to a degree felt limited within the confines of the partnership. Finally, in late 1956, he decided it was time to call it quits.

Apart from voicing a series of *Abbott and Costello* cartoons in the 1960s Bud virtually retired from show business, but Lou branched out as a solo comedian and occasionally a straight actor. He starred in the movie *The Thirty Foot Bride Of Candy Rock* and made a number of guest shots on Steve Allen's popular *Tonight Show*. His health (which had been a problem since the early 1940s) was now a major concern and in February 1959 he was felled by a heart attack and died some days later. Bud survived his partner by fifteen years but a series of strokes in the mid-1960s left him in poor health for the rest of his life and he died in 1974.

It's been fifty years since Bud Abbott and Lou Costello were at their peak on movie screens around the world and from radio sets across America. Highlights of their broadcasting career have long been available on record and with the proliferation of the video cassette we can now enjoy their routines from the early days of television. In both mediums we have vibrant examples of two very funny performers exhibiting the talent and artistry of an age of entertainment now gone from the scene. And the laughter will go on for many years to come.

Radio

The Kate Smith Hour (CBS)

Thursdays February 3 to June 23 1938 (21 editions)

Thursdays September 29 1938 to June 29 1939 (39 editions)

Fridays October 6 1939 to June 28 1940 (38 editions)

The Abbott and Costello Show (NBC summer season)

Wednesdays July 3 to September 25 1940 (13 editions)

The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show (NBC)

Sundays September 7 1941 to June 28 1942 (42 editions)

The Abbott and Costello Show (NBC)

Thursdays October 8 1942 to March 18 1943 (not on Jan 21st)(23 editions)

Thursdays November 4 1943 to June 15 1944 (33 editions)

Thursdays October 5 1944 to June 28 1945 (39 editions)

Thursdays October 4 1945 to June 27 1946 (39 editions)

Thursdays October 3 1946 to June 26 1947 (39 editions)

The Abbott and Costello Show (ABC)

Wednesdays October 1 1947 to September 15 1948 (51 editions)

Thursdays September 30 1948 to June 9 1949 (36 editions)

The Abbott and Costello Children's Show (ABC)

Saturdays December 6 1947 to March 26 1949 (69 editions)

Television

The Colgate Comedy Hour

NBC Sundays

January 7 1951

March 11 1951 with guest Lon Chaney Jr.

October 14 1951 with guest Gale Storm

November 18 1951 with guest George Raft

January 13 1952 with guests Errol Flynn and Rhonda Fleming

April 6 1952 with guest Charles Laughton

May 4 1952

October 19 1952 with guest Lisabeth Scott

November 23 1952

December 14 1952

January 11 1953 with guests Victor Borge, Allan Jones and President Truman

March 22 1953 special 100th *Comedy Hour* with Bud and Lou sharing with

Bob Hope, Eddie Cantor, Donald O'Connor and Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis

April 26 1953

November 1 1953 with guests Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis helping Bud fill in for Lou who was absent through illness.

February 21 1954 Bud and Lou made an appearance on Sonja Henie's edition.

March 21 1954

April 18 1954

May 23 1954

March 13 1955

May 15 1955 with guest Gordon MacRae

The Abbott and Costello Show

Originally aired by CBS from December 5 1952 with Sidney Fields, Gordon Jones and (series one only) Hillary Brooke, Joe Besser and Joe Kirk.

The Drugstore

Mr. Fields employs Bud and Lou in his drugstore and they cause havoc.

The Dentist Office

Lou tries to get arrested to make him eligible for free dental treatment.

Jail

Lou is sent to prison for shooting a hole in a neighbour's bucket (includes the "Niagara Falls" routine).

The Vacation

The boys are worried Mr. Fields will rent out their apartment while they're away on holiday.

The Birthday Party

Lou's birthday celebrations result in his guests going down with food poisoning.

Alaska

When Lou's uncle strikes gold in Alaska the boys decide to help him spend his newfound wealth.



The Vacuum Cleaner Salesman

Lou isn't all that good at selling vacuum cleaners door-to-door.

The Army Story

Bud and Lou enlist in the army reserves (includes the dice game and drill routines).

Pots And Pans

Selling kitchen utensils door-to-door leads Lou to preparing dinner for his neighbours.

The Charity Bazaar

Bud and Lou take part in the annual bazaar (includes the "Lemon Bit").

The Western Story

The boys visit a dude ranch where they encounter cattle rustlers.

The Haunted House

Bud and Lou help Hillary stay overnight in a creepy mansion to inherit a fortune.

Peace And Quiet

Lou checks into a sanatorium to help cure his insomnia (includes "Crazy House" routine).

Hungry.

Ordering a meal in a restaurant proves to be a problem for Lou

The Music Lovers

Lou has to attain some musical prowess to impress Hillary's father.

The Politician

Lou's attempts at electioneering result in a riot.

The Wrestling Match

Lou agrees to wrestle Stinky for charity, but a last minute substitution by his big brother threatens life and limb.

Getting A Job

The boys' attempts at delivering a consignment of straw hats results in altercations with passers-by (includes "Susquehanna Hats").

Bingo

Getting a licence for Lou's pet monkey causes trouble.

Hillary's Birthday

The boys' surprise party for Hillary leads to an argument with the landlord over noise (includes "Go Ahead And Sing").

Television

Lou wins some bubble gum on a TV. quiz show and ends up in court following a dispute with a neighbour.

Las Vegas

The boys drive to Las Vegas where Lou has a violent game of billiards.

Little Old Lady

Bud and Lou raise some money for an elderly lady who has just been dispossessed but she immediately bets it on a horse.

The Actors' Home

Bud becomes distraught when he learns he's destroyed a perfectly good \$500 bill and has to rest up at the Actors' Home (includes "Who's On First").

Police Rookies

Bud and Lou join the police but hand grenade practice creates havoc.

Safari

Lou thinks his chimp is homesick so the boys take him to Africa.

Series 2

The Paperhangers

When the boys' attempts at wallpapering end in disaster they get work at a seafood restaurant.

Uncle Bozzo's Visit

The arrival of Lou's uncle leads to a jail term when his loud singing cause an argument with Mike the cop.

In Society

Bud and Lou are hired to masquerade as English aristocrats at a banquet.

Life Insurance

Lou must spend a few weeks in the country to be fit enough to pass an insurance medical.

Pest Exterminators

The boys are mistaken for psychiatrists when they undertake a job of removing an infestation of ants.

Killer's Wife

Lou is in trouble with an ex-prize fighter neighbour who thinks he is fooling around with his wife.

Cheapskates

The boys buy a crate containing stolen diamonds hidden in hundreds of roller skates.

South Of Dixie

Lou overhears some actors rehearsing a Civil War melodrama and thinks a girl is about to be murdered.

From Bed To Worse

The boys try to beautify their garden to win a prize but end up arguing with a neighbour.

\$1000 TV Prize

While the boys are trying to fix Mr. Fields' television, Lou answers a phone competition on his number.

Amnesia

To break up Lou's romance, Bud tries to convince him he has amnesia and is really already married.

Efficiency Experts

While trying to curb the spending habits of two sisters, the boys are lured into a casino.

Car Trouble

Lou wins a dud automobile but their motoring trip to Michigan to buy a new one is fraught with difficulties.

Wife Wanted

Lou will inherit a large sum of money providing he is married.

Uncle From New Jersey

To stop Mr. Fields evicting them, the boys try to convince him Lou is the sole heir to a very rich uncle.

Private Eye

Lou wants to be a detective and offers to help a girl find some bonds that are believed hidden in a creepy mansion.

The Tax Return

Lou is mistakenly sent a one million dollar tax refund which attracts the attention of some gangsters.

Public Enemies

When criminals move into the boys' apartment house, Lou is mistaken for a fellow crook and taken along on their heist.

Bank Hold-up

Bud and Lou are conned into helping two bank robbers stage a hold-up.

Well Oiled

Lou poses as a rich Texan to help Mr. Fields get out of a breach of promise suit.

The Pigeon

Lou becomes the middleman when a gangster's lady friend wants to ditch her beau and run off with another man.

Honeymoon House

Lou's attempts to build a prefabricated house for his fiancée are sabotaged by a jealous rival.

Fencing Master

Lou is suckered into being the guinea pig for a scientist who claims he can be made immune to injury.

Beauty Contest Story

The boys agree to help judge a beauty pageant but when Mr. Fields' niece becomes a contestant their impartiality is threatened.

Fall Guy

While helping two men get their girlfriends out on a date, Bud and Lou are coerced into helping their father put a TV antenna.

Barber Lou

While taking part in a neighbour's theatrical production, Bud unwisely gets Lou to give him a massage.

Discography of Radio Material

Who's On First (parts A and B)(Castle 78rpm 1253)

Mudder And Fodder Routine/How To Bet The Horses (Castle 78rpm 1256)

At The Drug Store/Down On The Farm (Castle 78rpm number unknown)

Who's On First (parts A and B)(Enterprise 78rpm 501)

Who's On First/How To Beat The Horses (no label 45rpm AC 100)

Who's On First (parts 1 and 2)(Campbell 45rpm CR 1001)

• Abbott and Costello also made studio recordings of "Laugh, Laugh, Laugh" (Victor 78rpm 27737) and "Jack And The Beanstalk" (Decca 78rpm and 45rpm 88096)

The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show

Radiola MR-1034

Features the complete broadcast of May 3 1942 with Abbott and Costello

Who's On First? — Abbott and Costello On Radio

Radiola MR-1038

Features the complete broadcast of November 9 1944, plus four excerpts: Who's On First (wartime)/The Story Of Moby Dick (1947)/In Alaska (1947)/Hertz U-Drive (1945)

Abbott and Costello On Radio

Nostalgia Lane NLR 1001

Features the complete broadcast of December 12 1946, plus five excerpts: Who's On First/Costello's Farm/The Famous "Board" Routine/Hertz U-Drive/ The Story Of Moby Dick

Abbott and Costello

Nostalgia Lane Double-LP 2NLR 1019

Features four complete broadcasts: February 11 1943/November 9 1944/ April 5 1945/June 14 1945

Abbott and Costello — When Radio Was King!

Memorabilia MLP-731

Features the complete broadcast of December 12 1946, plus Who's On First

Hey AAA-Abbott!

Murray Hill Three-LP Set 899981

Features four complete broadcasts: February 11 1943/November 9 1944/ April 5 1945/June 14 1945 and two complete television soundtracks: Getting A Job/The Actors' Home

The Great Radio Comedians

Murray Hill Five-LP Set 931699

Features the complete broadcast of January 25 1945

The Best Of Abbott and Costello

Murray Hill Three-LP Set M 58039

Features three complete broadcasts: November 11 1943/October 5 1944/ May 5 1948, the complete Lux Radio Theatre "Buck Privates" of October 13 1941, plus excerpts from two other broadcasts and four television soundtracks

Buck Privates

Radiola MR-1135

Features the complete Lux Radio Theatre broadcast of October 13 1941 (60m)

Christmas Stockings

Holiday HDY-1939

Features the complete broadcast of December 12 1946, plus two excerpts: Who's On First/Costello's Farm

The Best of Abbott and Costello And Amos & Andy

(Radiex-6) features the complete television soundtrack of The Actors' Home

Television Material Available On Video

The Best Of Abbott and Costello Live

Warner Home Video

Features highlights from the team's appearances on *The Colgate Comedy Hour* including "Who's On First", "Drill Routine", "Crap Game", "Necklace-In-The Hamburger", "Bryant 4444" and "Don't Order Anything"

Who's On First

Viking Video

Features the complete *Colgate Comedy Hour* of March 11 1951

Abbott and Costello - Volume 1

Viking Video

Features the complete *Colgate Comedy Hour* of April 6 1952

Abbott and Costello - Volume 2

Viking Video

Features the complete *Colgate Comedy Hour* of May 4 1952

Abbott and Costello - Volume 3

Viking Video

Features the complete *Colgate Comedy Hour* of February 21 1954

Abbott and Costello - Volume 4

Viking Video

Features the complete *Colgate Comedy Hour* of January 11 1953

Abbott and Costello Television Shows - Volume 1

Shanachie 401

Contains four 25m episodes: Duck Dinner (aka Pots And Pans)/Hillary's Birthday/Million Dollar Refund (aka The Tax Return)/Actor's Home

Abbott and Costello Television Shows - Volume 2

Shanachie 402

Lou's Birthday (aka The Birthday Party)/Getting A Job/Uncle Bozzo (aka Uncle Bozzo's Visit)/Stolen Skates (aka Cheapskates)

Abbott and Costello Television Shows - Volume 3

Shanachie 403

Lou Falls For Ruby (aka Killer's Wife)/Hillary's Father (aka The Music Lovers)/Uncle Ruppert (aka Uncle From New Jersey)/Bingo's Troubles (aka Bingo)

BACK ISSUES:

Limited stock of back issues are available at regular prices & postage. See page 2 for details.

ISSUE ONE:

Barry Humphries
Jack Benny on TV
Monty Python on Disc
The Young Ones
Band Wagon

ISSUE TWO:

Steptoe and Son
The Marx Brothers
Not Only... But Also
Police Squad
George Wallace
Craig Ferguson

ISSUE THREE :

The Goodies
Roy Rene "Mo"
Eddie Cantor
Tom Lehrer
The "Doctor" Movie

ISSUE FOUR:

Norman Gunston
Not the Nine o'clock News
Fred Allen
"Doctor on Tv"
Bob Newhart on Disc

WHAT'S NEW?

VIDEOS

Tony Hancock Collector's Classic (Hollywood House) A 75 min collection of the three colour episodes filmed in Australia in 1968.

Bottom (BBC Video) Three Series 1 episodes of the Rik Mayall/Adrian Edmonson series: Smell/Gas/Contest.

The Best Of 25 Years Of Billy Connolly 90 minutes of extracts from concert performances and television interviews.

Rowan Atkinson Live An hour of highlights from his two 1980s revues, specially performed in Boston, December 1991.

The Strange Case Of The End Of Civilization As We Know It A 50 min London Weekend Television production starring John Cleese and Arthur Lowe, originally screened in 1977.

BOOKS

Naked Beneath My Clothes by Rita Rudner (Viking)

More Please by Barry Humphries (Viking) (John) **Cleese Encounters** by Jonathon Margolis (St. Martin's Press/Chapmans)

The Official Red Dwarf Companion by Bruce Dessau (Titan ppk)

The New Statesman (scripts) by Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran (Andre Deutsch ppk) Contains nine scripts covering all three series: Passport to Freedom/Friends Of St. James/Three Line Whipping/Live From Westminster/The Haltemprice Bunker/Piers of the Realm/A Labour Of Love/The Party's Over/Natural Selection.

The Bewitched Book by Herbie J. Pilato (Delta ppk)

Wanted For Questioning by Murray Bramwell and David Matthews (Allen & Unwin ppk) Contains over two dozen interviews with leading Australian comedians and print humourists (including Barry Humphries, John Clarke, etc.)

More Great Interviews by John Clarke (Allen & Unwin ppk) A further collection of satirical segments originally performed on Channel 9's "A Current Affair" television program.

COMPACT DISCS

A Gift From The Gobs (Mushroom GOB 1) Tim Smith/Just A Stage/Problem Line/Grouse Blokes (1)/Andrew Goodone/Anthony Morgan/Grouse Blokes (2)/Empty Pockets and Greg Fleet/Trevor Marmalade/Grouse Blokes (3)/Greg Fleet/Jacky Jacky Gleeson/Operation Sandstorm.

Live Australian standup compilation.

Beyond The Fringe (E.M.I. dble CDECC 1) reissue of the original British cast album, plus tracks from the two American cast albums, all from the early 1960s (previously available as a double cassette).

Woody Allen - The Nightclub Years 1964-1968 (E.M.I. dble CDECC 3)

reissue of early 1970s double LP which included most of Woody's three 1960s albums (for Colpix and Capitol).

The Goon Shows - Volume 1 (E.M.I. dble CDECC 4) reissue of Tales Of Old Dartmoor, Dishonoured, Tales Of Men's Shirts and The Scarlet Capsule (originally issued on LP in the late 1950s).

Spike Milligan - A Collection Of Spikes (E.M.I. dble CDECC 11) The Q5 Piano

Tune/Ning Nang Nong/The Python/Silly Old Baboon/Call Up/Purple Aeroplane/Another Lot/The Sewers Of The Strand/Frank J. Itchikutchi/ Brass Band Samba/My Darling Little Baby/ Nothing At All/I've Got A Photograph Of You/ Postman's Knock/Sex Food And A Pig/ Wormwood Scrubs Tango/Cougher Royal/ Morning In Puckoon/Tower Bridge/Word Power/You Gotta Go Oww!/Escape/Fun Fun Fun/Wish I Knew/Father Rudden/Silent Night/Hit Parade/R.A.F. Interview/ Underneath It All/Good King Ecclesias/Q8 Theme/Finale/Q8 Theme Reprise/Will I Find My Love Today/After Lights Out/Ning Nang Nong/I'm Walking Out With A Mountain/ Woe Is Me/Australia/The Pukoon Flyer/My September Love/Hippo Rhinostriocow/The Power of Licorice/Have They Gone

reissue collection of singles and album tracks (previously available as a double cassette)

Glynn Nicholas - More Pate Please (A.B.C./ Phonogram 512 801 2)

Nature's Way/Edmund The Whale/The Boy Who Wears Glasses/Sit Up Sit Down/The Prince, The Peasant And The Mushroom/Can You Sing In Tune?/The Day Eric Exploded/Henrietta The Hen/Can You Keep A Secret?/ The Adventures Of Fairy Bluebell/The Bot Who Liked Cake/You Are What You Eat/Runny Poo/Lullaby

Col Elliot - Just A Regular Bloke (A.I.C. COL 30012C)

Problem Drinking or "it's Not My Fault Ossifer"/The Back Seat Sat'dy Night/Ain't Nobody's Business/Chooka Dennis (The Life And Times Of)/The Tax Man/Are You Regular?/The Nervous Flyer/Nashville Will Never Be The Same/Any Distinguishing Marks?/Hankies From Nanna

