

Looking at Hollywood with Ed Sullivan

Film Career Success Story: "I Got It for a Song"

By ED SULLIVAN

Hollywood, Cal. PLEASE advise me the best way to get into the movies.

Of the considerable mail that comes to a Hollywood columnist in the course of the year, that query is in nearly every letter. After thinking it over I'm going to answer it: The best way to get into the movies is to get yourself a job with a band as the vocalist and then let nature and talent scouts take their course. Perhaps that sounds like a flippant answer, but facts bear me out.

Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour, Dick Powell, Frances Langford, Harriet Hilliard, Ella Logan, Fred MacMurray, Rosemary Lane, Priscilla Lane, Joy Hodges, Kenny Baker, Smith Ballew, Gertrude Niesen, Johnny Davis, Leah Ray, Phil Harris, Alice Faye, and Tony Martin all cracked into movies as the result of singing with bands. That means that talent scouts picked eighteen band singers for the movies, and I doubt that any other single phase of show business could show a higher percentage of successes. So if you want to attract attention get a job with a band.

Frances Langford, Harriet Hilliard, and Alice Faye, curiously enough, were graduated to the movies from the same microphone, the "mike" that once stood in the Hollywood restaurant at 48th street and Broadway in New York. The Hollywood shut down some months back, when bigger and newer night clubs made it passé, but I doubt that any other building had the same rich background. Originally the property had been

a carriage maker's shop, in the days when little old New York traveled in horse-drawn coaches. Progress put the carriage maker into bankruptcy, and then the property became the site of famous Rector's. Along came progress in the form of prohibition and put Rector's out of business, and entered then the Hollywood restaurant, first of the no-cover-charge places with



Fred MacMurray, with Carole Lombard, reverts to work that started him on film trail—that of a musician.

a floor show of semi-nude girls and a popular band to play for dancing.

If I feel a more than casual interest in Miss Langford it is because my column suggested her for the movies so often that finally she won a screen test. Her manager, Ken Dolan, vastly excited, came to me at the Hollywood one night and told the good news. "How much shall we ask?" he wanted to know. I told him to ask for \$1,000 a week. "But we'll never get it," he sputtered. "Look, Kenneth," your reporter pointed out. "If you go out there as a cheap act they'll never pay any attention to you, so it's better you don't go out. If you go out there as a \$1,000 act they have to make use of her." Dolan came back the next night beaming. "I was nervous, but I held out for it and got it," he said.

The first time I ever saw Fred MacMurray close up was at Sing Sing prison. Don't get me wrong, as I'm not suggesting that either Fred or I were serving time there. I'd taken a big troupe of Broadway performers

from New York to Sing Sing to play a benefit show for the prisoners. MacMurray was a saxophone player in one of the bands that made the trip—the Collegian band that was playing at the time as a novelty act in "Roberta," a musical comedy. If any one had suggested that day at Sing Sing that MacMurray would be a movie star within the next two years we would have put him in solitary confinement.

Bing Crosby graduated into the movies from Paul Whiteman's band. Bing was one-third of the Rhythm Boys. It was Tony Martin's delivery of "You Hit the Spot," in front of a band, that won him a movie contract. Dorothy Lamour sang with the band at the Stork club in New York City, and was fired because Owner Sherman Billingsley didn't like her style of warbling. Dick Powell, although he came from Pittsburgh, was picked up for the movies while singing with a band in Indianapolis. Kenny Baker, awkward and shy, was discovered while singing with the band at the Coconut

Grove in Los Angeles, where Bing Crosby, then one of Whiteman's Rhythm Boys, and many other singers, got first movie attention.

Grove in Los Angeles. The Lane sisters, as well as Johnny Davis, able Warner "scat" comic, bounced into the movies from Fred Waring's band. Leah Ray was with Phil Harris' band when she was signed for Twentieth Century-Fox. Ella Logan sang for several seasons with Abe Lyman's band, but didn't land a movie contract until she went out on her own as a vaudeville single.

In the silent pictures, of course, band vocalists had no chance. It was the advent of sound pictures that opened up the golden Hollywood pastures to them. It was perhaps indicative of what was to come when the first picture with sound emerged in "The Jazz Singer," for the jazz singers and the crooners and the groaners were about to come into their own.

Some of them, of course, were destined to remain singers in the movies. Fred MacMurray, Alice Faye, and Dorothy Lamour, however, either through accident or grim determination, have gotten away from the singing to insure themselves longer cinema life as actors and actresses. Alice Faye is a creditable love interest now, ranking with any of the contemporary heroines. Dorothy Lamour is better known for her sultry, tropical characterizations than for her singing. MacMurray has made the longest strides of them all. In every sense of the word he is an actor.

MacMurray's career should be of particular interest to mid-western youngsters. He was born in Kankakee, Ill., lived for years in Beaver Dam, Wis., and attended Carroll college at Wau-

kesha, Wis. His first job with a band was in Chicago.

So to all of you kids who have your heart set on breaking into the movies, let me tell you again not to neglect a talent for singing if you have it. So long as talking movies last there will be a definite market for musical pictures, and when the talent scouts need a player to yodel two choruses of a song they give first call to the band vocalists. The reason is not hard to find. In the first place, all of the big bands and many of the smaller bands are on the radio chains. In the second place, bands are booked into vaudeville, night clubs, and hotels, and these fields are readily accessible to the talent scouts and moving picture celebs. So if they don't hear a vocalist on the radio there is good reason to believe they'll see him or her in a night club.

Of all the band vocalists in the movies the biggest money maker, of course, has been Bing Crosby. He has averaged conservatively \$250,000 a year for the last five years. Among the singers Alice Faye ranks second to him in movie importance and earning power, and next would be Dick Powell, Fred MacMurray, and Dorothy Lamour. All of them, however, are doing very nicely, with years of profitable employment directly ahead.

So, my little chickadees, get yourself some popular songs and go home and practice.



Gertrude Niesen



Leah Ray and Phil Harris



Kenny Baker



Alice Faye



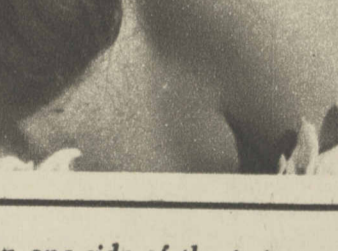
Tony Martin



Frances Langford



At left: Ella Logan



Below: Dorothy Lamour



JOY HODGES
Sang her way into films.

BUSINESS MEN BEWARE ...WARNS FLORIST

"THERE'S ONE
OFFENSE
YOUR CUSTOMERS
WILL NOT FORGIVE"

says

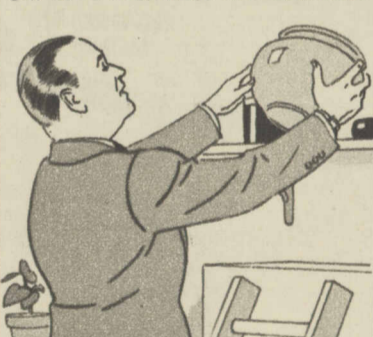
MR. ALFRED DE MERO
of Chicago



"MY BUSINESS REQUIRES A GREAT
DEAL OF CLOSE PERSONAL CONTACT
WITH PEOPLE — I CAN'T RISK
OFFENDING



"WORKING IN THE SHOP I OFTEN GET
QUITE WARM AND PERSPIRE FREELY—
I DEPEND UPON LIFEBOUY FOR
DAY-LONG FRESHNESS AND NEATNESS



"I'VE TRIED SWEET-SMELLING SOAPS BUT
THEY DON'T GIVE ME THE CONFIDENCE
I GET WITH LIFEBOUY. I'LL NEVER AGAIN
BE MISLED ABOUT BATH SOAPS!"



"I KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE NO
ORDINARY SOAP STOPS 'B.O.' AS
LIFEBOUY DOES!"



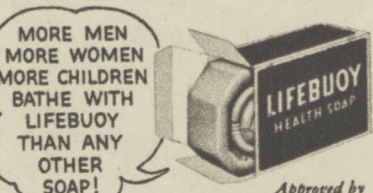
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poised, confident—at ease.

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20% milder than many leading "beauty" and "baby" soaps.

Why don't you try Lifebuoy—we know you'll enjoy its special purifying lather. We know your whole family will rave about it!



Approved by
Good Housekeeping Bureau

Voice of the Movie Fan

Letters published in this department should be written on one side of the paper. If you wish a personal reply please inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Dear Miss Tinée: There is one Hollywood star, a comedian, who deserves more recognition than he is getting at present. His name is Ben Blue.

His tall-end moniker, Blue, does not suggest gloom, for Ben is a merry old soul—that is, when he is in front of the camera. Please tell me more about Mr. Blue.

I don't expect this letter to be put into print, but its publication might help to keep me from getting blue.

Yours sincerely, IRVING KOIDIN.
P. S.—Please publish a picture of Comedian Blue. Thanks ever so much.

Editor's note: Remember that old song, "You're Going to Get Something You Don't Expect"?

Mr. Blue was born in Montreal, Que., Sept. 12, 1901. He appeared in Earl Carroll's "Vanities" and other musical shows before entering motion pictures. He's married.

Dear Miss Tinée: For years I've gone to movies because you said they were good or stayed away because you didn't like them. Recently you have grown very smug.

There is a growing conviction among a lot of people to see pictures that you knock and stay away from those about which you rave. I'm just wondering how much longer your column will have any appeal.

A case in point is this picture "Hawaii Calls." You object to the story. All right. It wasn't so hot. You pat Irvin Cobb on the back. He can't act. Makes no pretense about it. If you examine the record of the films, they grabbed him off to take Will Rogers' place, and he didn't click. Now they probably have to pay him anyway, and they put him into pictures that won't require too much from nonexistent talent.

Maybe Bobby Breen's voice was strained. I don't pretend to judge. But the kid is good, natural, and acts as a child should. Not with the wisdom of the ages, as Shirley Temple always displays, to your evident delight and to the utter disgust of any thinking person.

You don't have a word for the loveliness of Hawaii. And believe me, it is beautiful, and it was accurately shown. Hawaii is correctly pronounced Ha-Va-E. So your crack rebounds in your own face.

You would have me drawn and quar-

tered if I signed my name, so I'll be an old meanie and just say

WORLD TRAVELER.

Editor's note: O, come on! Sign your name! I'm not in the butcher business!

Dear Miss Tinée: Deanna Durbin's latest picture, "Mad About Music," is swell!

Her good acting as well as her wonderful voice will get her far in the movie world.

Could you please print a picture of her and a bit of her history, too?

Thanks oodles.

P. J. A.

Editor's note: Deanna's real name is Edna Mae Durbin. She was born Dec. 4, 1922, in Winnipeg, Man. She's 5 feet 2 inches tall, weighs 100 pounds, and has blue eyes and brown hair. Educated Manchester Avenue school and the Bret Harte school in Los Angeles.

Oodles wekkum!

Dear Miss Mae Tinée: Perhaps you can tell me who played in the movie "Lilac Time." Seems to me I remember seeing Colleen Moore and Gary Cooper in it. My husband says Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor.

Yours truly, MRS. G. TOBEY.

Editor's note: Following is the cast of "Lilac Time": Jeannie Barthelot..... Colleen Moore
Capt. Philip Blythe..... Gary Cooper
General Blythe..... Burt McIntosh
Mechanic's Helper..... George Cooper
Captain Russell..... Cleve Moore
Lady Iris Rankin..... Kathryn McGuire
Madame Barthelot..... Eugenie Besserer
The Infant..... Jack Stone

Dear Miss Tinée: Will you please help me out of an argument about a certain young actress named Annabella? Has she ever been in a movie shown here in America before making "The Baroness and the Butler"? I'm sure I have seen the picture, but cannot remember title or players in it.

Thank you. I'm a weekly reader of your column.

Editor's note: Keep right on reading the column, please, and make its conductor happy! About Annabella: In 1937 she appeared in the film "Wings of the Morning" opposite Henry Fonda and John McCormack. You're welcome.



DEANNA DURBIN
"Mad About Music"
called swell.



Bing Crosby

Rosemary Lane

Smith Ballew

Harriet Hilliard

Dick Powell

Priscilla Lane