

# PROGRAMS IN REVIEW

## A Good Police Show—"My Good Wife"— "Make Believe Town" and Ethel Merman

By VAL ADAMS

ONE of the few satisfactory radio dramatic shows which has come along this summer can be heard on the NBC network each Thursday (10:30 P.M.) under the title "Dragnet." The stories are adaptations of true cases taken from the files of the Los Angeles Police Department.

The listenable quality of "Dragnet" is rooted in the dramatically simple way in which two detective sergeants methodically track down law-breakers.

While the program's basic appeal rests on the old sure-fire, mass-appeal formula of cops chasing robbers, this one, for the most part, is devoid of sensationalism. Gun play largely is omitted and, in general, the sound effects man is called upon for light duty only.

There was one broadcast, for instance, where no criminal was involved—just a "routine" matter of locating a missing person who turned out to be an amnesia victim. The young woman was found and put in touch with her frantic mother on Christmas Eve.

There is nothing particularly creative about "Dragnet"—the stories already are on paper—but there is nice work in the way the show is put on the air. Jack Webb and Barton Yarborough, who play the principal roles of the detective sergeants, turn in a commendable job with no false histrionics. William Rosseau, the director, can be credited with smooth handling in bringing alive the script adaptations by Bob Ryf.

### "My Good Wife"

The residents of Westchester County have every reason to be amazed at the NBC Friday eve-

Beggs dream up for the program are plausible enough but the execution of those fundamentals comes out with a finish like sandpaper. Without some changes in the script, plus an effort to give the characters more real substance and less froth, no achievements can be chalked up in this series for Wynn Wright, the producer and director.

At the opening of each broadcast Miss Francis describes the program as "the adventures of a happy marriage." Indirectly, the show suggests that the other kind is more interesting.

### Hollywood Stories

The CBS radio network is attempting to put glamour into its mid-afternoon schedule, Mondays through Fridays from 3:30 to 4 o'clock, with dramas about Hollywood people. The main trouble with "Make Believe Town," is that some of the stories are incredible.

Virginia Bruce, the movie actress, introduces each broadcast and also wraps it up when the story has been unfolded. Her function on the show is not unlike that of a sideshow barker. It would appear that Miss Bruce is used on the program for reassurance purposes—that is, to halt any listener realization that the title, "Make Believe Town," is an understatement.

### Ethel Merman

The Ethel Merman radio show on NBC offers no great amount of entertainment at the moment but it is a newcomer well worth watching. The program is broadcast Sunday evenings at 9:30 o'clock. So far, the show sags for a lack of format into which the rough-and-tumble appeal of Miss Merman can best be fitted. However, the second broadcast was a slight improvement over the first.

A standout distraction is that Miss Merman insists on doing songs which just are not for her. The proceedings would be more acceptable if she would forget such things as "Some Enchanted Evening" and "Over the Rainbow" and stick to the "Tropical Heat-wave" type of song.

Miss Merman is looked upon as a new entry in radio but actually she did a network summer series some years back. For all practical purposes, however, she is starting from scratch, as any Sunday night on NBC will attest. It appears to one listener, at least, that Miss Merman's talents could be used to better advantage to blast the tired mediocrity of the air waves.

ning (9:30 o'clock) radio comedy show entitled "My Good Wife." The program has a Larchmont locale, and the real-life residents of the suburban community no doubt would deny indignantly the radio shenanigans.

"My Good Wife" concerns the experiences of a young couple and their neighbors. Arlene Francis is the female better half and John Conte plays the husband. The actress is completely miscast as a somewhat dull, blundering housewife.

On the stage, and also in radio and television, Miss Francis has made a reputation of being a verbal sharpshooter. When she is forced to read a line—as she did on the broadcast of Aug. 5—to the effect that the Hope diamond obviously is owned by Bob Hope, the listener may be inclined to turn off the radio and remember Miss Francis as he used to know her.

The basic situations which writers Samuel Taylor and Russell