

How to remake an AM drama for TV

Bristol-Myers has made the jump from radio to video with "Mr. D. A." Here's how it was done

TV When shopping for a network TV show, many an advertiser with an existing radio program has asked himself these questions:

(1) Should I buy a TV program, tested or untested, that was created specifically for television? Or . . .

(2) Should I take one of my current radio properties and extend it, either intact or with alterations, to TV?

The first plan provides the easier way out of the dilemma. It avoids many a tough decision, and all the complications of "adaptation" versus "creation." In most cases, it is the path followed by advertisers who don't wish to become involved in deciding what must be left out or added in the intricate process of re-shaping radio shows for TV.

The second alternative is harder, but it has certain advantages which make it more attractive to a growing list of sponsors. First and foremost, the advertiser who is bankrolling a video version of his own (or somebody else's)

radio show has the advantage of an already-created loyal audience and a tested program vehicle. This alone has made the bringing-over of proved radio vehicles worthwhile for Gulf Oil with *We The People*, U. S. Tobacco with *Martin Kane*, Lipton with *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts* and Colgate with *Strike It Rich*. Other TV advertisers, such as Blatz with *Amos 'n' Andy*, have found it expedient to use a television version of a radio show with which they had not been associated in the past.

Still, the big questions are the same for anyone who wants to take an established radio property, make a graceful leap into TV, and land on his feet instead of his seat. Somewhere, answers must be found to such posers as: How much will a TV version of my show cost me (excluding time) in ratio to my present radio production costs? How can I evaluate whether or not the production staff, cast, talent and format of my radio show will stand up under the unwinking stare of a TV

camera? If I use the same group that produces and performs in my radio show, will I save money? Can they stand the strain of doing the same show in two media at once, or will they develop a kind of broadcasting schizophrenia? How can I adjust the radio and TV rehearsal and airtime schedules so that there's no conflict?

These, in essence, are the problems for which Bristol-Myers, one of America's leading drug firms and one of the nation's heaviest air advertisers, has had to find answers in the past year or so. After much careful preparation and considerable honest sweat, an alternate-week TV version of B-M's *Mister District Attorney* took to the air on ABC-TV on 1 October, 1951 in the 8-8:30 p.m. (live time) slot. On the basis of early ratings, the transmutation of *Mr. D.A.* into a TV series while maintaining the weekly radio series, sponsored by Bristol-Myers since 1940, has been a success. The Trendex 10-city rating on the premiere was a 19.6.

SPONSOR has selected the program

1. Basic cast moved intact to TV in the transformation of the 12-year-old radio "Mr. D. A." series for Bristol-Myers into an effective alternate-week TV program series. B-M decided that the

show's three regulars (Jay Jostyn, Len Doyle, Vicki Vola) looked the part for TV, but made a trial-run kinescope of the show just to be sure. Show pulled a 19.6 Trendex rating on its 1 October TV premiere

