

New Styled 'Hit Parade' Sells Appeal

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News Review: By Bob Bernstein

Your Hit Parade" returned to video (10) with new stars, new format, new philosophy and tunes drawn from the charts of The Billboard. The CBS TV stanza is now neatly divided into four departments. First, a trio from the "current favorites from the Top 12". Second, numbers from the "LP Albums department". Third, a medley from the "All Time Hit Parade". Finally, the Top Three tunes of the week.

The opener as viewed at dress rehearsal (9) was a well-placed, beautifully produced (be Perry Lafferty) musical revue, with Peter Gennaro's choreography a standout. The six dancers are refreshingly non-uniform in appearance, some of them even a bit bizarre, and it adds immeasurably fresh routines which support the vocalists.

Dorothy Collins, blonder and more sophisticated and dapper Johnny Desmond make a slick pair of hosts, discharging their chatter chores and format explanations with aplomb and singing warmly in a variety of styles. To put over "Rockin' Robbin", "Near You" "Tea For Two Cha Cha" (the opening trio) is no small accomplishment. The LP segment found guests Barbara Cook and Eddie Hodges doing "Music Man" tunes pleasantly. The nostalgia section reprised hits of 1935 briefly. The Accents, vocal quintet, rendered "Bird Dog", the number 3 song, amusingly. Desmond did a great Louis-Prima styled "Volare" for No. 2 and Miss Collins charmed in mink amid five juke boxes for the No. 1 tune, "It's All In The Game."

The lower nine places of the Top 12 were delightfully announced in rhymed couplets by the singing chorus, who also delivered a flock of new continuity ditties which have replaced the long-run signatures of the old "Hit Parade". Norman Jewison's staging was novel and varied with attractive from Josh Ward's sets and Robert Mackintosh's costumes.

The American Tobacco Company seems to have made a wise move in the direction of mass viewing appeal, with something for everybody, no matter what the musical preference may be. The guest star policy and the "family" time slot should also give its famous series new blood aplenty.