



YOUR HIT PARADE

Music

FIRST TELECAST: July 10, 1950

LAST TELECAST: August 30, 1974

BROADCAST HISTORY:

Jul 1950–Aug 1950, NBC Mon 9:00–9:30

Oct 1950–Jun 1958, NBC Sat 10:30–11:00 (OS)

Oct 1958–Apr 1959, CBS Fri 7:30–8:00

Aug 1974, CBS Fri 8:00–8:30

VOCALISTS:

Eileen Wilson (1950–1952)

Snooky Lanson (1950–1957)

Dorothy Collins (1950–1957, 1958–1959)

Sue Bennett (1951–1952)

June Valli (1952–1953)

Russell Arms (1952–1957)

Gisele MacKenzie (1953–1957)

Tommy Leonetti (1957–1958)

Jill Corey (1957–1958)

Alan Copeland (1957–1958)

Virginia Gibson (1957–1958)

Johnny Desmond (1958–1959)

Kelly Garrett (1974)

Chuck Woolery (1974)

Sheralee (1974)

DANCERS:

The Hit Paraders (chorus & dancers)
(1950–1958)

Peter Gennaro Dancers (1958–1959)

Tom Hansen Dancers (1974)

ANNOUNCERS:

Andre Baruch (1950–1957)

Del Sharbutt (1957–1958)

ORCHESTRA:

Raymond Scott (1950–1957)

Harry Sosnick (1958–1959)

Milton Delugg (1974)

THEME:

"Lucky Day"; "So Long for Awhile" (closing)



The legendary *Lucky Strike Hit Parade*, which had been a radio standby since 1935, was first seen on television during the summer of 1950, as a four-time-only replacement for Robert Montgomery Pre-



sents. It became a regular series the following October, simulcast with the radio version.

The format was essentially unchanged from radio, presenting the seven most popular songs in America as performed by a regular cast of singers and the Hit Parade Orchestra. Songs were not necessarily presented in rank order, although the rank of each was prominently featured and number one was always presented last, with great fanfare. Two or three "extras"—usually standards—were also included. Elaborate production numbers marked *Your Hit Parade*, and since many songs stayed on the charts for months, considerable ingenuity was required to vary the treatment of a song from week to week. Among the songs that remained in the number one spot for long periods in the early 1950s were "Too Young" (12 weeks), "Because of You" (11 weeks), and "Hey There" (10 weeks).

The survey strove to sound official. Each week listeners were told that "*Your Hit Parade* survey checks the best sellers on sheet music and phonograph records, the songs most heard on the air and most played on the automatic coin machines . . . an accurate, authentic tabulation of America's taste in popular music." No explanation of exactly how the surveying was done was ever revealed, however, and the actual compiling took place in great secrecy at Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborne, which was sponsor American Tobacco Company's advertising agency.

The ballads of the early 1950s were fine for TV presentation by a regular cast of singers, but trouble began to brew for *Your Hit Parade* in 1955 when a new kind of music invaded the charts—rock 'n' roll. Not only were the Hit Parade regulars ill-suited to perform this new, raucous music, but the youngsters who bought the records wanted to see only the original performers. There was something ludicrous about Snooky Lanson attempting "Hound Dog" in a different setting each week (usually as a childish novelty).

Although most of the Hit Parade singers were recording artists in their own right, only one of them ever had a hit big enough to appear on the program's top seven while a regular on the show. That was Gisele MacKenzie's "Hard to Get," which made the list briefly in 1955. Ironically, one-time



Hit Parade regular June Valli had the biggest hit of her career, "Crying in the Chapel," only two months after leaving the show in June 1953.

In September 1957 the entire cast was replaced by a younger, more "contemporary" crew, none of whom were popular rock artists, however. The age-old format itself was extensively revamped the following February, with the hit parade reduced to five songs, plus five more melodious "extras" and a big \$200,000 "Mystery Tune" contest. None of this tinkering solved the problems created by drastically changing musical styles, and after a final season on CBS (during which the top-tunes list was drawn from *Billboard* magazine) the program expired on April 24, 1959. An abortive attempt was made at reviving the show in the summer of 1974, with the emphasis on *Your Hit Parade* songs from selected broadcasts of specific weeks in the 1940s and 1950s, mixed with currently popular hits performed by the original artists.

from Tim Brooks & Earle Marsh's book
"The Complete Directory of
Prime Time Network TV Shows"

