

Thursday, July 26, 1956

TV KEYNOTES

Shepherd Appeals to 'Scholars'

Unless feature films and old situation-comedy series glut the networks in the fall, the odds are good that Jean Shepherd will be turning up on CBS with his own version of what daytime television should look like.

"I don't want to talk too much about it," he said, "but when I was in Cincinnati, I did the only surrealist television show on the Crosley network. I was at it for two years. That's what I'm going to do on CBS. It's a one-man show with a difference. The difference is that I'm the one man.

"Right now," Jean added, "I'm doing a radio show which shows a little of what I mean. I'm on Mutual after midnight, but I'm not a disc jockey. I offer good conversation. I'm a professional conversationalist. I aim at an audience no one ever aims at, the over twenty-fives with a college education.

"TV IS the epitome of creeping meatballism," Jean continued, "and that's what I'm fighting. That's the opposite of eggheadism, it is the negation of intellect. Creeping meatballism is what makes Elvis

Presley a national demigod. Dog acts are considered good enough for the people. The public, in television, is always regarded as one level below the people who plan the shows.

"On TV, I would be packaged into an entertainment show," Jean went on, "which would appeal to the same people who like Edward R. Murrow. The humor will be aimed at the same people who admire Al Capp. I don't want to sound immodest, but Al Capp is one of my fans. And when the New Republic wrote me up, it called me one of the five best satirists now working."

"ON TV," he said, "I work directly with the camera. Why set the camera back from the person when he's talking directly into it. I use low key lighting and I sometimes show bits and pieces of the over four hundred odd, old movies I own while I talk. I aim at what I consider pure TV, something that couldn't be done on any other medium.

"I did one show in Cincinnati," Jean Shepherd continued, "for which I built an intricate maze. The show opened with the camera entering the maze and for twenty-five minutes, while I kept talking, the camera wandered through the maze looking for me, running into dead ends and trying new routes. It never found me," he chortled. "Now where else but on TV could you do a show like that?"

"TV's big trouble as it has been used today is that it's a camera looking in on a stage show or a vaudeville show or a movie. Intend to use the medium properly!"

Mrs. Housewife, take it away.

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