

New Radio Farce 'Just Misses Fire,' Says Critic

By JOHN CROSBY

In "Our Miss Brooks," a new CBS show (not broadcast in the West), Eve Arden, a capable though frayed comedienne, is cast as an English teacher in love with the biology instructor, whose biological interests are limited to the breeding of mice. Since Miss Arden's concern with biology is somewhat more extensive, this leads to one situation after another, few of them comic.

Miss Arden is also beset by a **pixilated landlady who cooks improbable and indigestible foods**, a high school principal who roars at her and a famous high school student who gets her into jams. Through it all, misunderstanding flickers like summer lightning and **Miss Arden wisecracks indefatigably and courageously**; still the program just isn't very funny.

I don't know why it isn't. This show, which seems fashioned rather too persistently after "My Friend Irma," has a number of tried and **true ingredients**. A lot of **quaint** characters have been amassed in one room; Miss Arden's personality has been given the elements of all of George S. Kaufman's comic ladies--tough, sentimental, fast on the draw. The plots, heaven help us, are **contrived with almost too much ingenuity**. Yet, it just doesn't come off.

OLD, OLD TRICK

It's a blasphemous thought, but I'd like **timidly to advance the idea** that misunderstanding isn't perhaps as funny as it was in the days of "Charlie's Aunt." There was one scene--the one where the high school student hid behind the curtains--where misunderstanding was **taken to its outermost limits**. Miss Arden's intentions were thoroughly misunderstood by every one in the room, including, as I recollect, the biology instructor's mouse. If that didn't lay 'em in the aisles--and it didn't--then the whole theory of **comedy may have to be revised**, which wouldn't be such a bad idea.

Well, perhaps it will get better as it goes along. As it was, the only time a smile forced its way through my reluctant lips was when the aged landlady quavered to the **young high school student**: "My how you've shot up since I saw you last." And the high school student shot back: "You saw me yesterday." Come to think of it this joke was phrased better when I first heard it many years ago in "The Bandwagon."

In that late, lamented show, Frank

Morgan, playing the part of a white-thatched Kentucky Colonel, quavered--no other word for it: "Seems lak only yesterday mah li'l Miranda was fifteen."

And his wife, played by Helen Broderick, snapped: "It was yesterday."

"Cabin 13," another new C.B.S. show is written by John Dickson Carr, one of the contributors to "Suspense," which should give you some idea. Don't let the title throw you off. The only thing this program has to do with the sea is the fact that the narrator is a ship's doctor, Dr. Fabian, an urbane, kindly, professionally English character who is steeped in wisdom, and Sir Cedric Hardwicke, and whose **job, of course gets him into some romantic and out-of-the-way spots**.

The best way to describe this show is to summarize one of the stories and not a bad little story it is, either. Seems there was this big offensive screen star who shed his **faithful girl friend**. In a fit of justifiable pique, she shouted: "I offer my body, I offer my soul (to the Devil) if that man faces a camera again." A moment later a shot rang out. "Shot herself through the head, suh," said the English **butler imperturbably--a line I'm not likely to forget soon**.

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