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## Anyway, They Can't Say This Kovacs Isn't Trying

—By John Crosby—

ERNIE KOVACS, a moustached gentleman of all work who aroused a frenzy of enthusiasm among Philadelphians



Crosby

when he started the first early morning program, has been acquired by the Columbia Broadcasting System which has large plans for him. The Ernie Kovacs Show, a full hour operation in the evening (CBS-TV 8 p. m., Tuesdays), has as competition on other networks—Milton Berle on NBC and Bishop Sheen on DuMont.

The Kovacs personality is a prickly one which may not appeal to just everyone. The Kovacs type of humor is wacky stuff, some of which is astonishingly funny and some of which is just plain astonishing. His first evening show opened with people shooting at him for no apparent reason, then switched to a lot of crazy credits written across the soles of peoples' shoes and other unlikely places and including among the cast of characters "two passing strangers."

Then Kovacs swam into view clad in a ragged old bathrobe. "Paley will catch cold tonight," he exclaimed. I guess all new comedians on CBS have to genuflect to Paley to the extent of one joke. There ensued a sight gag involving a bit of scenery which didn't work.

"Friends," muttered Kovacs, "and I do call you friends because I need friends badly tonight." He did indeed.

THE REST of the hour was filled with a lot of crazy gags many of them ingenious but all of them either over-long or muddled up by sloppy execution. Much of the material looked as if Kovacs was making it up as he went along and, while he is pretty fast on his feet by ordinary standards, he couldn't quite ad lib an hour show. Not even Godfrey could get away with that.

One gag involved Kovacs getting himself up as Wolfgang Sauerbraten, Disk Jockey, and talking an atrocious German dialect. This particular sketch was considered enlivened by a young blonde lady named Edie Adams who acted out the dizzy mock commercials. Miss Adams does a perfectly wonderful imitation of that simpering smile worn by all those girls when they're demonstrating the shampoo. When she isn't playing patsy to Kovacs, Miss Adams sings and she's pretty special at that, too.

THERE WERE a few pretty funny bits. One was a weird verse recited by Kovacs about a man who fell off the Empire State Building, detailing his reflections on the way down. And the credits at the end of the show were pretty amusing too. ("Mr. Kovacs' suits hand-knitted by his mother.")

But in general the program had an awfully amateur air about it and I doubt that CBS can catch up to Berle and Bishop Sheen, two real old pros, with amateurs.

