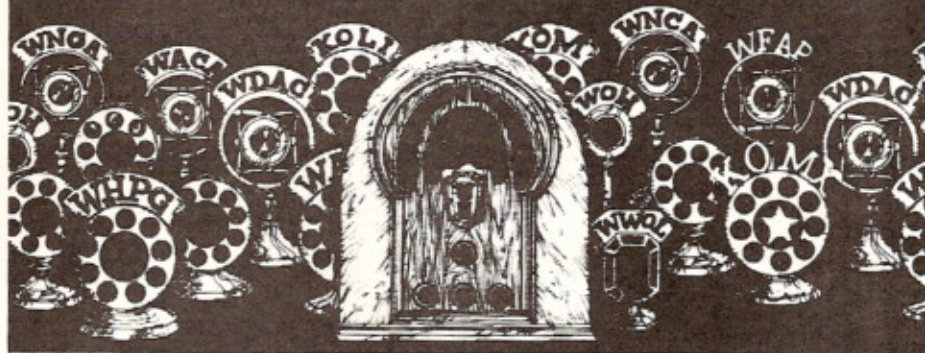
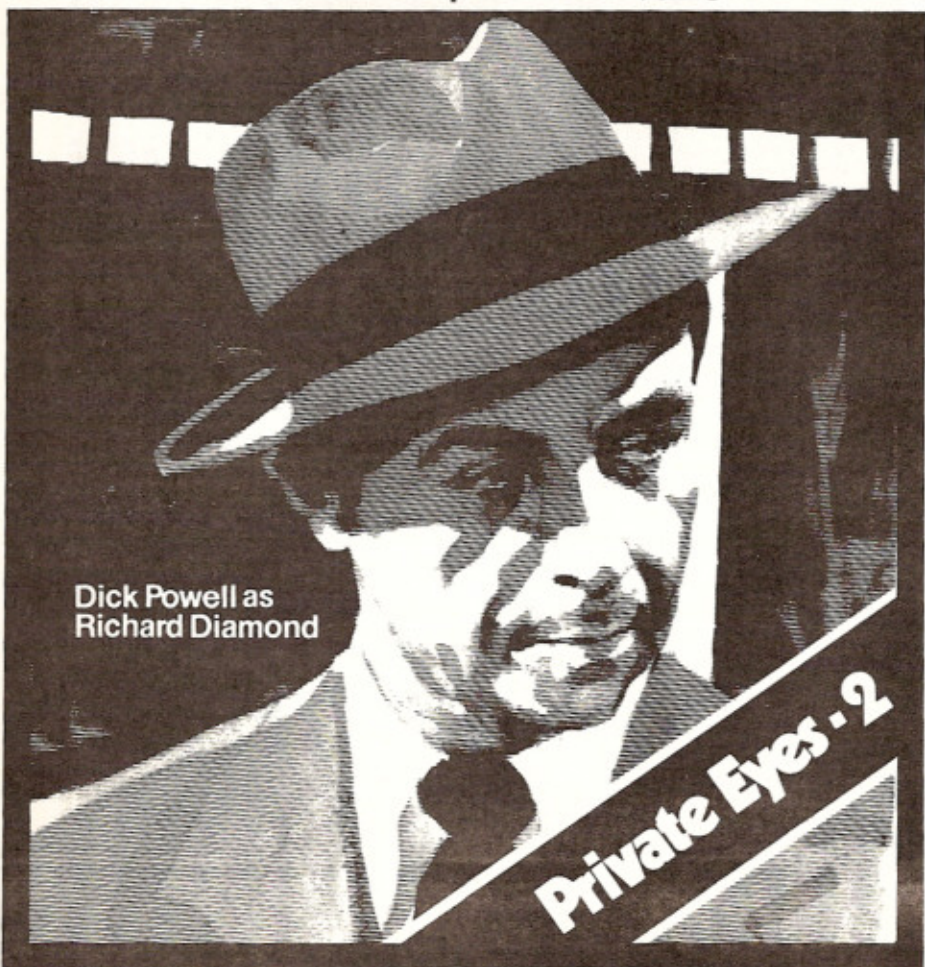


# Collector's Corner



Number 14 April 1979 \$1.25



Dick Powell as  
Richard Diamond

Private Eyes - 2

Illustrated by Dave Warren





#### DEDICATION OF ISSUE

This issue is dedicated to Allen Rockford, who died on March 29. As many of you know, Allen was co-publisher of the popular Nostalgia Radio News and also co-host of the syndicated Sounds of Yesterday OTR program.

Allen had a special place in collecting's heart. With his broadcasting efforts, and his newsletter, and his tremendous support of OTR, he played an important part in making our hobby what it is today. Many of the present collectors became interested in OTR because of Allen's work.

And he had a special place in COLLECTOR'S CORNER's heart, too. He made many constructive comments regarding CC during its inception and its early months of publishing. CC, then, owes much of what it now is to Allen.

Our heartfelt sympathies to Don Richardson, Allen's partner, and to Max Rockford, Allen's father. Donations can be made to keep Allen's OTR work going, and should be sent to WRVO-FM, Public Radio Center, Oswego, NY 13126. This will support OTR programming for the central New York area.

We will all miss him, indeed.



## Collector's Comments from Bob Burnham

Whew! Having finally finished typing up the major articles for this issue, I can finally relax and let my typewriter wander a bit. Jim MacLise has outdone himself with another article this issue on radio sleuths—the second half of his fine series which he began a couple months ago.

Also for this issue, we have a feature on Shamrock recording tape by Gary Kramer. This is an article I've been thinking about doing myself for quite a while (would you believe years?), but never got around to it. I guess I was scared off by the vast array of Shamrock grades, and was afraid I'd leave some types off, or wouldn't be able to put my hands on samples of the common ones all at once for testing purposes. Gary doesn't cover everything I've seen, but most of the "current" types most commonly available are included, plus some I haven't. At any rate, it's a well done survey—the only one I've seen on the topic—and if you're not one of his customers already, I'd recommend you give him a try for Shamrock or any other tape type.

On the subject of recording tape, lately I've found myself using large amounts of used "premium" tape for my own masters, with generally very favorable results. Some of you might remember Frank Gilmore's article on used tape buying here in CC a while ago. I've been able to come across some excellent buys on used tape in the past year—generally from other collectors or mail order tape dealers. I've paid as low as 57¢ a reel for used Ampex 641/Scotch 177 and 150 to \$1.25 a reel for Ampex 641, and \$1.00 a reel for Scotch 177. The major differences between the various priced tapes is the condition of the reel the tape is wound on and whether or not it has a box (and what type of box) and not necessarily the condition of the actual tape. Some of the 57¢ stuff had been wound too tightly and/or unevenly and stored a period of who knows how many years—consequently, it had one or more defects which make it less than "first rate"...which it could have been without the defects...Such problems as severe drop outs on the left tracks especially, were not uncommon with these tapes that were poorly wound. Their defect can be actually seen—wavy or "scalloped" edges. Generally, the percentage of these tapes was fairly low in that batch..Actually if as many as 50% of them were completely unusable, I still got a great bargain at that price. Another problem of used tape is mostly a "surface" problem generally not affecting sound is that of hacked up, old used reels as mentioned. I found price to be a fairly important factor when it comes to condition of these things. I acquired a large amount of used government surplus tape (Ampex 641) which arrived in their original red and black boxes (most of which were in like-new shape) wound mostly on their original Ampex reels (with an AFRTS sticker on each one!). Out of 50 reels, I don't think



I ran across one bad one, and about 90% looked brand new. The tape itself was flawless, except for a few I found stretched...not bad for \$1.25 a reel! Unfortunately, a deal like this doesn't come that often, but it leads me to believe that government broadcasting services take good care of their tape, and I would probably pay twice that price if I could get more of the same stuff again. The price for "new" 641 is now so high that it doesn't make sense to even go near that stuff anymore.

I once paid \$1.00 a reel for a batch of used Scotch 177. This proved to be an excellent buy as my source apparently wound the 7" reels from larger bulk pancakes on brand new reels. I found no flaws on any of the tape, however, a few of the reels ran a little short of 1800'. Also boxes were not included in that deal, but that wasn't a major concern to me anyway, and I've grown particularly fond of Scotch 177 for making my masters on lately.

Speaking of mastering tape, the one outstanding buy of the year has to be that of Capitol's Q-19, which is now discontinued, but still available from a few dealers. The lowest price I've seen is \$2.80 per reel in small quantities...that's about 2/3 off what it was selling for when it was being manufactured. I've used several reels of it myself, and while the quality doesn't seem as consistent as top grades of old reliables as Scotch, it still is a bargain you shouldn't pass up if you can afford it.

CBS tape, available exclusively from Omega, seems to be another good buy as compared with the old standard Ampex. The output is great, noise level low, and it's well worth its price. The only thing that puzzles me about CBS tape is the reddish residue it leaves on my pinch roller, yet there's no evidence of oxide shed on the heads, tape guides or capstan. That's the one way I've been able to tell the difference between it and Ampex 641—along with the texture of the "wind" on the reels being somewhat different.

In the future, it might be interesting to present an article on higher grades of tape than Shamrock in Collector's Corner, but that will depend on your feed back on this issue.

Perhaps we can shed some more light on this topic on tapes which shed nothing but mirror image audio.

What do you think?



## Private Eyes for public ears - Part 2

by Jim Maclise

In February, the first half of this survey of savvy sleuths examined seven famous airwaves investigators, including Sherlock Holmes, Nick Carter, Mr. Keen and Samuel Spade, license number 137596. This month we shall visit nine more crafty gumshoes, among them Richard Diamond, Boston Blackie, Bulldog Drummond, Mr. & Mrs. North (those talented amateurs), the Falcon, and insurance investigator, Johnny Dollar. So let's not delay, and begin our journey in Boston.

"Boston Blackie, enemy to those who make him an enemy, friend to those who have no friend," starred Richard Kollmar as the wise-cracking, suave but rough-neck detective who was always on the wrong side of the law in the person of Inspector Faraday (Maurice Tarplin), whom he needed and insulted mercilessly. Of course, without Blackie, the inspector would never have solved a single case. But considering the sort of thing he had to put up with from Blackie, it's a wonder Faraday didn't commit a homicide of his own. In "Another Man's Poison" Blackie and girlfriend Mary (Lesley Woods) are watching television at a friend's apartment.

"Just imagine," says Mary, "here we are sitting watching something taking place miles away." That something is Inspector Faraday who's participating in a televised civic forum. When the picture becomes blurred, Blackie quips, "They must be televising Faraday's mind." Mary notes how all the men at Faraday's table appear thirsty and are drinking a lot of water, all from the same pitcher. Civic leader, Cyrus Baxter sips his water and begins an accusing speech, but suddenly collapses into the arms of Inspector Faraday seated next to him. "Which means somebody just laid a murder right in Faraday's lap," cracks Blackie as he rushes off to the TV studio.

When Blackie arrives at the station, Faraday orders him out claiming troubles enough.

"I know," retorts Blackie. "I saw you on television and you photograph badly. Why did you do it, Faraday?" Then Blackie concludes, correctly, that the victim was poisoned by the drinking water from the same pitcher everyone had drank from. Off to search a suspects house, Blackie attacks another prowler and knocks him down. "How do you like your face getting a knuckle massage?" he asks. "Hand me the flashlight, Mary, so I can see what I've nabbed and what kind of head I'll have hanging in my trophy room." The beaten man cries out, "Blackie, you dope, let me up!" Mary then exclaims, "Oh no! It's Inspector Faraday! Oh Blackie!" And so it goes in the lives of Blackie and the inspector (Once inside the house, they discover the suspect has ben gassed, so Faraday decides he's the murderer plus a suicide. Needless to say, the inspector is dead wrong and



Blackie eventually solves the case.). Not only will Blackie insult and sometime assault Faraday, but he frequently impersonates him (always mildly amusing) in order to obtain information available only to the police.

"Boston Blackie" would be just one more hard-boiled detective with an anxious-to-wed girlfriend and a stupid cop to bait, were it not that Richard Kollmar's portrayal makes Blackie one of radio's genuine personalities. Kollmar has some of the rough neck charm of the early Cary Grant and is able to overcome much of the often corny dialogue. The writers provide enough variety from week to week—a disappearing train, a car explosion, jewel robberies at society balls (Blackie's specialty, like the character Grant played in Hitchcock's "To Catch a Thief"), phony perfume rackets, etc. The program's organ music expertly underlines much of the humor and suspense. So despite frequent lapses in plot solutions and dialogue, "Boston Blackie" is an easy show to enjoy and seems to be available in unlimited quantity.

One of the best actors in any detective series on radio was movie star Dick Powell. His first role was as investigator Richard Rogue in the 1946 show, "Rogue's Gallery," but this was just a warm-up and Powell bettered himself in the superior program, "Richard Diamond, Private Detective." Diamond was a whistling and singing detective who operated out of his New York office (his phone book ad said: "If you've got a case, share it with me."), had a lovely rich girlfriend named Helen Asher with a butler named Francis, and who loved to rib the police, especially Sergeant Otis who chewed bubble gum and had the intelligence of a retarded chimpanzee. Lieutenant Walt Levinson was his friend and respected Diamond for his alleged knowledge of criminal psychology. One day when Levinson is invited to attend a criminology seminar, he asks Diamond to tag along as support. When Diamond arrives at headquarters, he notes some changes and comments on them to the lieutenant: "I realize you're now a man of dignity and that you think things should be more formal, but for Pete's sake, take that doilee off the lie detector." About his girl, Diamond's philosophy was cynical: Helen has everything, money, looks ...but she had one fault. She wanted to get married."

One afternoon, he is fending her off at his office. She wants to go to dinner; he wants to begin a new case. But he's in no hurry. "I'd been up late the night before with a blonde singer and I was feeling tired. Funny how things change. My nights in college had been just as busy, but at one o'clock the next afternoon I was out playing football. I face facts pretty well, so when I got home, I took a nap." Meanwhile, as he's borrowed her car, Helen has to walk the twenty-five blocks from his office back to her apartment. He naps until seven, then drives out to the estate of a wealthy stepfather where he encounters the alcoholic stepson. "I left him leaning against the front door gagging on the fresh air," says Diamond, who reaches the library in time to hear a shot fired, and find Mr. Chase, his millionaire client, unharmed amid the smell of gunpowder with a bullet embedded in the wall...beginning of case! At the finish,

Diamond is over at Helen's nursing his wounds (Powell is expert at being sapped and blacking out and he does it with great regularity), and crooning a song—"I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm"—to Helen (Remember that Powell's original career was musical comedy.). Helen makes sexy comments between verses, finally urging "come here, Rick," in her sultry voice. "Oh honey," Diamond moans, "you're reading my mind!" At this less than opportune moment, Francis the butler arrives bringing drinks and exclaiming, "Oh, my goodness!" at what he discovers taking place in the Asher living room (Radio had no ratings system, so one could imagine anything from PG to X.). Then the whistling detective theme enters and that's it for another evening.

Virginia Gregg (Johnny Dollar's girl, Betty Lewis) played Helen and Ed Begley played Lieutenant Levinson. The clever scripts were written by Blake Edwards (yes, the same who wrote and directed Pink Panther films). Luckily, the cast remained intact from 1949 to 1952 and a good share of the programs have survived for OTR collectors. Powell's Diamond is on a par with Howard Duff's Sam Spade or Basil Rathbone's Sherlock Holmes, but with one difference. For a change, we have a radio original. Diamond wasn't borrowed from novels or the movies; your Stromberg-Carlson gave birth to him one fine Spring night in 1949 right in your very own living room!

Bulldog Drummond is the very British police inspector who steps "out of the fog, out of the night and into his American adventures" to the accompaniment of a foghorn, gunshots, a police whistle, and running footsteps. Drummond's ever-present sidekick is his valet-secretary, Denny (as resourceful as the Green Hornet's Kato). Drummond was well played by both Santos Ortega and Ned Wever (the best) and Denny was performed by that old pro Luis Van Rooten. The series was produced and directed by Himan Brown.

Bulldog Drummond originated in a series of B movies from Paramount in the 1930's and the radio show ran from 1941 to 1947, being briefly revived in 1953 with Sir Cedrik Hardwicke.

"Death in the Deep" begins with Drummond narrating while thunder rumbles in the background: "Snarling silver cracks of lightning flash across the black sky, the brooding wind whips at the heavy rain, the water churns itself into waves of whitecapped anger, the elements rage, as here in this storm swept sea man plots his age old crime against man... murder!" (Not bad writing, eh chaps?) Denny and Captain Drummond are deep sea fishing off the West Coast during this terrible storm when they spot a man in the water. They manage to fish him out, but discover that he has a bullet hole in his chest and is quite dead. Shortly thereafter, as the storm grows worse, they spot a large yacht. And because they're running out of gas, they tie up and climb aboard.....ah, but I wouldn't want to spoil it for you. Of course all of Drummond's capers are not as exciting as that one (avoid "A Ride in the Moonlight" for example), yet the Bulldog Drummond series remains one of



the better mystery programs. Listening to it with a glass or two of Guinness stout in your belly gives it the proper British flavor!

"The Falcon," like Sam Spade, begins each show with a telephone call. As the show opens, we hear the loud tick-tock of a clock and a hoarse voice saying "Avoid...five...o'clock...shadow...Use Gem blades! Use Gem blades!" Then the announcer tells us that "Gem razors and Gem blades present The Adventures of the Falcon." A telephone rings and Michael Waring, otherwise known as the Falcon (no, he's not a comic book superhero) answers: "Hello? Yes, this is the Falcon. Oh Nancy, I'm glad you called. What's on the program for tonight? (he chuckles.) Well it sounds like an awfully dead evening, baby. But you never can tell. Tomorrow there may be...mourning!"

Waring is then described by the announcer as that "freelance detective who's always ready with a hand for the oppressed men, and an eye for repressed women. So join in tonight when the Falcon learns that 'Murder is a Family Affair.'" After this introduction, there's a bit of narration to set the scene, a dramatized murder, a trial, an execution, and a family argument punctuated by gunshots. Then the Falcon finally gets to work on the case.

The Falcon is not too unlike Bulldog Drummond—smooth, unflappable, with a distinctly British accent. He handles women with the same skill with which Sterling Moss drove race cars. And, of course, he was equally adept at solving crimes, often reconstructing a murder and seeking overlooked details. A first rate detective drama, the show is unhappily as scarce as hen's incisors, although two 1951 episodes have recently surfaced. During the Mutual run from 1945 to 1954, the title role was played by James Meighan, Les Damon and Les Tremayne (the last two also split "The Thin Man.")

"The Adventures of Philip Marlowe" should have been a winner, but it wasn't. Based upon Raymond Chandler's famous Los Angeles detective from the classic mystery novels Farewell My Lovely, The Lady in the Lake, and The Big Sleep, the Marlowe show had excellent basic material. But the main problem is that Dick Powell had already created the definitive Marlowe in the movie, Murder My Sweet. Like his Richard Diamond, Powell's Marlowe was debonair, careless and witty. It was a classic (even novelist Chandler applauded) and anyone who's seen it or heard the radio version of Lux Radio Theater will find it hard to accept Gerald Mohr's heavy-handed portrayal of Marlowe in this radio series. Where Powell was casual and flip, Mohr is melodramatic and serious. And when Mohr romances women, one is reminded of the proverbial bull and the china shop, while Powell had a light and humorous touch. Nevertheless, this ~~THIS~~ show was well-produced, and the one genuine Chandler story in the series, "The Red Wind," proves the best of the lot. After Dick Powell's film version, there should have been a great radio Marlowe. After all, Sam Spade was brought to life by both Humphery Bogart on film and by Howard Duff on the air. But as things stand, Philip Marlowe is just another hard-boiled private eye show. Mohr

was Marlowe during 1949 and 1950, while a previous 1947 show starring Van Heflin has apparently not survived.

"Philo Vance" is another disappointment. The S.S. Van Dine detective originally came to radio during the summer of 1945, with Jose Ferrer as Vance, but the Ferrer shows do not seem to be circulating. What is going around is the run-of-the-mill 1948 series starring Jackson Beck. In the "Combination Murder Case," a killer is foiled because he orders a ham and cheese sandwich while impersonating a vegetarian, while "The Thundering Murder Case" hinges on the fact that it rained in one part of New York City, and not another, thus spoiling a murderer's alibi. Admitting that "whodunnits" are as unrealistic as fairytales, this show still too often depends heavily on obscure clues and far-fetched solutions. Sam Spade would never have stood still for some of the absurd deductions that poor Philo Vance has to spout at the end of his program. Sam would have laughed like hell, thrown the script (and maybe the scriptwriter) out the window, and taken Effie out for a double martini.

"Mr. and Mrs. North" was created as a group of short stories in The New Yorker by Richard Lockridge, and the originals were mere domestic comedies (as was the earliest radio series with Peggy Conklin and Carl Eastman). But when Lockridge's wife Francis joined him, they wrote a novel titled The Norths Meet Murder, and thus was born the best husband-wife detective team since Nick and Nora Charles of "The Thin Man." The Norths as amateur detectives first appeared on radio in 1942 and were expertly played by Alice Frost and Joseph Curtin and sponsored by Woodbury Soap. The advertising theme song, "The Way You Look Tonight" has always been identified with this popular show. (Barbara Britton and Richard Denning were the Norths in the 1950's and carried the show on to television, but Frost and Curtin really own the roles.)

Jerry North was just a simple wealthy book publisher whose wife Pam kept stumbling over dead bodies every week. As the murders often concerned Jerry's authors, one received the impression that people who wrote books were all involved in murder, either as victims or culprits. Pam always sounded a bit scatterbrained like a sweet little housewife, but she was really the super sleuth of the pair, employing the most accurate women's intuition since Caesar's wife urged him to stay home on March 15th.

In "Murder Threatened," a Mr. Wills contacts the Norths and tells them that his nephew and wife are planning to kill him unless he loans them \$20,000. Pam, being practical, suggests "If I were you, I'd give them the money." But Wills says he doesn't mind being murdered, he just wants the Norths as his house guests so they can witness the crime. They agree and soon arrive at the Wills mansion where an argument is taking place between uncle and nephew. The nephew shouts "All right, all right, we're extravagant! We light our cigarettes with thousand dollar bills, we fill our swimming pool with imported champagne, we use diamonds for paper-weights!" Retorts uncle calmly, "That's not much of an



exaggeration." But Pam North doesn't take nephew Raymond's threats seriously, despite his having already strangled a puppy for chewing on his jacket. So the Norths go off to bed when Pam hears something in the upstairs hall. They investigate and discover Mrs. Wills prowling about with a gun in her hand. Soon there's a murder, but not quite as advertised. Then Pam has one of her inevitable and highly accurate hunches and in no time at all, the Norths have the case solved. Back in their New York apartment, Jerry says to Pam, "You know, darling, sometimes I think you're pretty clever." "Sometimes!" replies Pam. "What about the other times?" Unfortunately for all of us, not too many of the other times exist and we'll just have to do with a handful of fine North shows left.

"Nero Wolfe" was novelist Rex Stout's creation, a detective addicted to overeating and obviously inspired by Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock's overweight but deductive genius brother. Wolfe is described by the radio show's announcer as "that corpulent, orchid raising, beer drinking gourmet, who also happens to be a genius, Rex Stout's incomparable Nero Wolfe!"

Wolfe lives in a brownstone New York apartment building where Archie Goodwin, his secretary, regularly goads him into taking cases so that he can catch up on paying Archie's salary, which is always overdue. Wolfe's cases resemble the sort of things Holmes used to tackle and "The Case of the Careless Cleaner" and "The Midnight Ride" are good examples. Early Wolfes from 1943 to 1946 included those old standbys Ortega and Van Rooten, but the shows currently available star Sydney Greenstreet from the 1950-51 series. Greenstreet is a very able Nero Wolfe, but the show's major fault is that during the course of its single year, five different actors played the important role of Archie. The rotation of Archies was so abrupt that the voice of a murder suspect one week might turn out to be Wolfe's secretary the next! This can be disconcerting to listeners trying to establish a character's identity in that theater of imagination. But if you enjoy whodunnits, you may wish to sample this "whoizit?" and play the game of who's going to be Archie next week.

"Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar" features "the man with the action-packed expense account," a Hartford insurance investigator whose itemized expenses carry the listener through each new development of his latest double indemnity murder or jewel theft case. Each week Dollar is employed by a major or minor insurance company and his expenses might begin with a \$1.50 cab fare, or \$200 plane ticket. But each item is neatly accounted through the course of the program and the total is signed "yours truly" at the close. Johnny Dollar initiated his expenses on February 18, 1949 with Charles Russell in the title role, and he closed out his final account on September 30, 1962 with Mandel Kramer. This was, incidentally, the last major dramatic show on network radio—CBS—if you don't count the recent revival. During the 13 year run, the role of Johnny changed hands several times and included Edmund O'Brien and John Lund in the early fifties. But the best Dollar was Bob Bailey (previously the star of "Let George Do It") who debuted

during the 1955-56 season, which was the beginning and end of the 15 minute five-days-a-week serial version. Other than that season (the whole of which is now available in mostly excellent sound), Dollar's was a half-hour format. Bailey was a tough, two-fisted, cynical Johnny who trusted no one and was not above occasionally padding his expense account.

In "The Curse of Kamoshek," Dollar tried to protect his client's son from an ancient Egyptian mummy curse. Typically, both the client and his son are killed, but what the hell; Dollar neatly solves the case with the help of a college professor who's an expert on poisons. Bailey's half-hour shows are at least the equals of his five-parters, some of the best being "The Burning Car Matter," "The Squared Circle Matter," and "The Lake Mead Mystery Matter." In the first of those, Johnny turns out to be a lookalike for a murderer, which makes for an interesting case. Bob Bailey played Dollar until late 1961, when Mandel Kramer took over. Despite the sometimes cliché-ridden scripts, this was a generally well-acted, fast-paced, often cleverly plotted series. Special mention must be made of the program's excellent musical theme, plus the effective use of music for dramatic underlining. Musical director Leith Stevens was known for much of the best movie music of the fifties, including that of "The Wild One" which starred Marlon Brando.

And that wraps up our survey. We've examined sixteen of the most famous detectives on radio. Those who seem to me most memorable are those most skillfully brought to life by fine actors.... Basil Rathbone's Sherlock Holmes, J. Scott Smart as The Fat Man, Howard Duff's immortal Sam Spade, Bob Bailey's rugged Johnny Dollar, and yes, even Richard Kollmar's sarcastic Boston Blackie. Of course, good scriptwriters deserve much of the credit for any show's success, but as David Reznick so effectively demonstrated in these pages last December, that is a subject in itself. And I now see it's time for me to step "out of the fog and out of the night" and into my real life adventures. So goodnight Sherlock, goodnight Sam, and a very good night to you, readers!

## **SPERDVAC to feature Jim (Fibber McGee) Jordan at annual banquet**

The SPERDVAC banquet will be held Saturday, May 12, at 7PM, at the Variety Arts Theater, 940 South Figueroa, Los Angeles. The Variet Arts Theater is an area landmark refurbished in the decor of the forties and features weekly live performances of old radio shows.

Tickets for the steak dinner affair are available at \$14.50 per person from Susan Crawford, 3146 East Orangethorpe Ave., Apt. B, Anaheim, CA 92806. Payment should be made to SPERDVAC. Seating is limited to 100 guests. Reserve now to avoid disappointment.





# SUSPENSE

=SUSPENSE 1956=

Date	Title	Stars
1/3	The Eavesdropper	
1/10	Two Platinum Capsules	Stacy Harris
1/17	The End of the String	Stacy Harris
1/24	The Cellar Door	Paula Winslowe
1/31	Arctic Rescue	John Stevenson
2/7	Variations on a Theme	Parley Baer
2/14	Listen, Young Lovers	Charlotte Lawrence
2/21	Hollywood Hostages	Eve McVey
2/28	The Diary of Captain Scott	Ben Wright
3/6	Quiet Night	Stacy Harris
3/13	The Groom of the Ladder	Hans Conried
3/20	Gallardo	Vic Perrin
3/27	The Murderess	Cathy Lewis
4/3	Game Hunt	B Lawrence
4/10	The Lonely Heart	Ben Wright
4/17	The Seventh Letter	Stacy Harris
4/24	A Case of Nerves	
5/1	The Waxwork	William Conrad
5/8	The Phones Die First	Harry Bartell
5/15	The Death Parade	Paula Winslowe
5/22	Fragile, Contents: Death	Vic Perrin
5/29	The Flame	Tony Barrett
6/5	The Twelfth Rose	Paula Winslowe
6/12	A Matter of Timing	William Conrad
6/19	A Sleeping Draught	Ben Wright
6/26	The Treasure Chest of Don Jose	Edgar Barrier
7/3	The Music Lovers	Ben Wright
SCHEDULE CHANGE		
7/11	Want Ad	Stacy Harris
7/18	The Man Who Threw Acid	William Conrad
7/25	The Tramp	Ben Wright
8/1	Massacre at Little Big Horn	
8/8	Double Identity	Vic Perrin
8/15	A Friend to Alexander	John Dehner
8/22	PRE-EMPTED	
8/29	Hold-Up	Joseph Kearns
9/5	The Security Agent	Parley Baer
9/12, 9/19	PRE-EMPTED-----SCHEDULE CHANGE	
9/25	A Case of Identity	Parley Baer
10/2	Waiting	Vivi Janis
10/9	The Digger	Torrin Thatcher
10/16	The Prophecy of Bertha Abbott	Sam Edwards
10/23	The Doll	Patty McCormick
10/30	Red Cloud Mesa	Reed Hadley
SCHEDULE CHANGE		
11/4	The Signalman	Sara Churchill
11/11	Three Skeleton Key	Vincent Price
11/18	The Long Night	Frank Lovejoy
11/25	The Man Who Stole the Bible	John Lund
12/2	The Rim of Terror	Barbara Whiting
12/9	Occurance at Owl Creek Bridge	Victor Jory
12/16	Eyewitness	Howard Duff
12/23	Back for Christmas	Herbert Marshall
12/30	PRE-EMPTED	



## Shamrock Tape: A Good Buy

(If you know what to look for)

by Gary Kramer, Omega Magnetics

Most collectors have likely had at least some experience using Shamrock tape. It's probably the most widely available tape at such a reasonable price, and tape costs can be important for the active collector. But the results obtained with Shamrock can run from excellent to mediocre, and with so many types of tape showing up under the Shamrock label, it can be quite frustrating not to know what to expect until you've started recording. The trick is to have some idea of what to look for BEFORE you start recording, and that is what this article is all about.

Shamrock consists of "factory seconds" from Ampex, one of the largest manufacturers of tape for professional use. Generally, Shamrock is tape that contains flaws that were caught in quality control, so it can't be sold under the grade label it was originally intended for. And with Ampex manufacturing such a wide variety of tape, it follows that there are a wide variety of seconds. I've tested the various types I've come across, as well as talked to many collectors about the types they've used. From this I've prepared a listing of the various types, along with brief descriptions of what one might expect from each.

In using the list, keep in mind that the number assigned to each is for reference only. While type 1 is, in my opinion, the best, the others on the recommended list (2 through 6) seem pretty much interchangeable as to relative quality for OTR use. Your particular recording equipment, and your opinion as to what constitutes "good" sound comes into play here.

Those of you familiar with my original list will note some changes. First, there are new tapes in positions 5 and 6 and these are "recommended." Also, "not recommended" types have been renumbered 10 and above. This new arrangement will allow new types, when and if they are discovered, to be added without disturbing the numbering as it stands now.

### RECOMMENDED TYPES

#### 1. REDDISH BROWN OXIDE, DULL BLACK BACKCOATING

This tape was originally made to be a studio mastering grade such as Ampex 406, 407, or "Grandmaster." As studio mastering tape is intended for the most critical applications, even a very slight flaw, such as falling a hair short of its extremely high output specification can cause a batch to be pulled and sold as Shamrock. This type of Shamrock



can be better than many first-line tapes costing much more! If you have the opportunity to get some of this, GRAB IT. It's probably worth much more than you'll have to have to pay.

If you have an older machine adjusted for standard tape, you can let the meters dance into the red with less chance of overloading the tape. And most machines manufactured in the last three or four years were set up at the factory for optimum performance from this high output, low noise tape. Available in 1200 and 1800 foot reels.

## 2. DARK BROWN SHINY BACK

Originally made to be Ampex 632/642, I've also had good luck with this Shamrock. There is another type that is somewhat similar in appearance at first glance, so watch out. The poor type is more of a dark grey, almost black (see number 11 below) shade. Type two is available in 1200' and 1800 foot reels.

## 3. MEDIUM BROWN, SHINY OR "SATIN FINISH" BACK, LUBRICATED

This is "lube" tape, originally intended for broadcast carts, 8 track cartridges, etc. If you've had problems with tape squeal, or if there is no way you can avoid storing your tapes in a dry environment, then try this tape. If you get squeal with this, it's not the tape's fault, but your machines—probably excessive tension, which should be adjusted before you damage any valuable tapes. And many reels of this are not seconds at all, but remaining lengths of first-line tape, after cartridges have been loaded. In some cases, there may be a drop off in response above 10,000 hertz, but this is not a disadvantage for OTR. In fact, some collectors consider this an advantage. In copying old radio shows, anything above that frequency is tape noise in the tape you're copying from, noise from copies that came before that, or surface noise from the original transcription. Your copy may sound cleaner than the tape you're copying from!

This tape is preferred by several collectors I've spoken with, who say it is very reliable.

## 4. REDDISH BROWN, SHINY BACK

These are seconds of Ampex 631 and 641—good output tapes. They are familiar to most collectors, so need little explanation. Usually quite reliable. Available in 1200 and 1800 foot lengths.

## 5. TAN OR BROWN OXIDE, DULL BLACK BACKCOATING

This tape was to be exported as Ampex 1044, a tape most collectors are not familiar with—good frequency response at both high and low end, and good output. The more I use this, the more impressed I am with it.

## 6. LIGHT GREY, SHINY BACK

I have seen this one in the 1200 foot length only, and while I have not yet had extensive experience with it (I've seen only a few reels), preliminary testing is favorable.

## NOT RECOMMENDED

### 10. BLACK OXIDE, DULL BLACK BACKCOATING

Actually, the recording quality of this is quite good if one problem doesn't pop up, and that is tape squeal. If you are prone to having this problem with your recorder, stay away from this tape. Apparently, some chemical imbalance causes the tape to dry out with age, so if you don't have the problem when you first record it, you may have it months or years later when you pull the tape off the shelf to play it. This tape can also be recognized by the fact that it comes about half an inch short of filling the reel to the edge. It comes in 1200 and 1800 foot lengths.

### 11. GREY-BLACK OXIDE, SHINY BACK

At first glance, this looks similar to type number two above, so examine carefully. The frequency response of type 11 is limited on both the high and low ends, to the extent that it yields a "canned" or telephone sort of sound quality. It's good for special effects, but that is about it.

### 12. DARK BROWN OXIDE, "SEMI-GLOSS" BLACK BACKCOATING

This is somewhat similar to type number five in appearance, except that the back coating on number 12 has a slightly shiny surface, and the oxide is a shade darker. Output is quite low, especially on the outside (left) tracks.

\* \* \* \* \*

If you've encountered tape with severe drop-outs, or tape that is incorrectly slit (too wide or too narrow), you might at first be concerned with Shamrock in these respects. But I have seen little or no evidence of these problems with any of the types listed, so it doesn't seem to be a problem that you would need to worry about as far as Shamrock is concerned, with one exception—watch for tape that is unevenly wound, such as an outward bulge. This is caused by uneven tension and/or a severely off-center reel, and can result in drop outs.

Collectors frequently mention splices when discussing "budget" tape. Actually, a GOOD splice will be inaudible when you record over it, and I've had no reel problem with spliced reels of Shamrock I've used. But do watch out for reels made up of two or more different types of tape spliced together. This could result in changes in level and sound quality as your recorder passes into the different tape.

One last thing—Shamrock is sometimes disguised. I've seen it under the brand name "Emerald" and heard it is sometimes labeled as "Shannon." The boxes are printed in the familiar Shamrock green. Also it is sometimes packed in a plain white box. But the type of box has no bearing whatsoever on the tape inside. They are used interchangeably depending on which style is available at the factory when the tape is packaged. As long as the tape is from Ampex and on the usual black (or grey) Shamrock reel, it's Shamrock.



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Well, that's it. Now I don't claim to be THE authority on Shamrock tape, and you may have somewhat different results, or come across different types not mentioned. But it is hoped that this info does help in the OTR collector's continual search for a good tape at a good price.

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((ED.: Another tape which can be considered "Shamrock in disguise" is Concertape, sold by Radio Shack. The biggest difference between Concertape and regular Shamrock is the price is about 50¢ a reel higher, and it's sealed in plastic, so you can't look inside before you buy. Generally, however, I've found a good many reels of Concertape to be superior in quality to Radio Shack's so-called "better" grades of tape ("Realistic" and "Supertape") which it charges two or three times the price for!

As most of you probably know, Gary Kramer sells pre-sorted Shamrock tape, as well as other types...Bob B.))

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## Collector's Classifieds

RENT OTR: Reels and Cassettes. As low as 25¢ per 1/2-hour show. Quality guaranteed. We've been renting tapes since 1976. Send \$5.00 annual membership fee or send \$8.50 for one year membership plus one year NATIONAL RADIO TRADER quarterly OTR hobby publication. Write NATIONAL RADIO TRADER, PO Box 1147, Mount Vernon, WA 98275

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