

# THE CROSBY STORY

"No matter what I've done to date, or no matter what I'm likely to do, there's little promise of any great artistic satisfaction in it. With the exception of a gramophone record or two, I don't think I've ever done anything worthwhile."

The man who wrote that was Bing Crosby, in his autobiography, *Call Me Lucky*. And though the more cynical among the highbrows might wonder where the exceptions had got lost, it is still a well publicised fact that 19 of Crosby's recordings went into a million homes each, homes from the wilds of northernmost Norway to those of Invercargill. Among the records were *White Christmas*, which sold over nine million discs, *Silent Night*, over six million, and *Jingle Bells*, over five million.

Note those titles, all of them about Christmas; and note the date of recording, the first two in 1942 and the third in 1943. No doubt that combination of Christmas songs, pleasantly and sentimentally crooned, on the one hand, and total war on the other, will have a different significance for the psychiatrist, the *Readers' Digest*, and the cynic, but one thing is quite certain: if ability to entertain a fantastically large audience

and do it over a period of 20 years (still going strong) is the test of showmanship, then Crosby is certainly the finest showman of this century. And after all, that can't be any mean achievement, for man does not live by art alone—though the rewards given to artists seem to indicate that the public thinks they can.

Those who want to find out what Crosby's got that they haven't will have 10 25-minute chances of doing so when he sings and tells his musical autobiography in his own quite inimitable style in a series of programmes over the YA stations at 8.30 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, starting Monday, February 7. (On February 28 and March 3, 1YA's programmes will be taken over by 1YD.)

During the programme Crosby sings 89 of the songs which he made pop classics. For the numbers he sang early in his career when radios in the stricter musical homes got turned off as he came on, he is accompanied by the Buddy Cole Trio. For the songs sung in later years the original discs are used and the listeners will hear Crosby with the Andrews Sisters in "Pistol Packin' Mama," Crosby with Al Jolson in "Alexander's Ragtime Band," Crosby with Mary Martin in "The Waiter and the Porter and the Upstairs Maid," Crosby with son Gary in "Play a Simple



CROSBY AND SONS

With Bing are (left to right) Gary, Phillip, Dennis and (in front) Lindsay

Melody," and still more Crosby in all those old favourites you love to hear.

For anybody who didn't guess, Crosby sang and whistled from a very tender age, took in every vaudeville show in his home town, Spokane, earning the admission price by doing anything from milking cows to working in a lumber camp—"Get that kid out of here before he kills himself," said his boss after

Crosby had hacked open his kneecap a couple of times. His first big musical break came when he joined Paul Whiteman's band in 1927, and there he imbibed the music of such masters of their trade as Bix Beiderbecke, Joe Venuti—who every Christmas sent a single cuff link to his one-armed friend, Wingy Manone; the Dorsey Brothers, Mike

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