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## The Fat Man

LISTENERS to *The Fat Man*, a crime detection series now being heard from the ZBs on Friday nights, know that Brad Runyon divides his interests between crime and good food. The man behind Brad's voice, Kevin Brennan, admits that he finds detection an interesting opportunity for using his own wits, when it's connected with the TV panel game, *What's My Line*, but there is more enthusiasm in his voice when he speaks about good food. "Unfortunately," he comments, "because I'm one of those people who can get fat on the smell of a meal cooking. I like savoury food, especially with garlic in the preparation, and food cooked with wine. At home when we entertain and split up the cooking, I'm usually in charge of the sweets—I can make a mean pavlova."

Kevin Brennan recently toured New Zealand with *All For Mary*, when he took part in several NZBS productions, including the Spring Poetry programme and *An Occasion for Fireworks*, the play being heard this Sunday, November 3, in which he plays Guy Fawkes.

One of Australia's leading radio actors, he was, he says, destined (or condemned) to the theatre from the beginning, for his father was a theatrical journalist and the Australian representative of *Equity*. When Kevin left school he joined his father on the *Film Weekly*, until he entered the Army at the outbreak of war.

In the Army he was in his unit's Concert Party, and soon was producing their shows. As he was stationed near Sydney, and had as commanding officer an old ex-professional friend of his father, he managed to get enough leave to take part in Little Theatre shows. From these he got his first radio part, that of Father Smyth in Richard Lane's *Stockade*, and this was followed by other plays.

When he was invalided out of the Army he decided to take the risk of permanent radio work, and he has stayed there ever since, at the same time taking parts in Little Theatre and professional shows. In 1947 he renewed acquaintance with *Stockade*, now *Eureka Stockade*, in the film version. In 1950 in Melbourne he took part in *Dark of the Moon*, and from this he was cast as the Squadron Leader in *Worm's Eye View*, which ran some 575 performances, including those of a New Zealand tour. In that visit here Kevin Brennan took part in some NZBS productions, including *Mr Hartington Died Tomorrow*. Back in Australia he continued with radio drama and serials, and helped to found the Metropolitan Theatre with May Hollinworth. In 1954-55 he won the Macquarie Award for the best comic



KEVIN BRENNAN

performance of the year for his part in *Home Is the Hero*.

"One job I'm quite proud of," he says, "is the commentary in the Shell film, *Back of Beyond*, about the Birdsville Track in the Dead Heart of Australia. It won the Grand Prix Assoluta at the Venice Festival, and has been shown around the world and always highly praised."

When he began playing in *All For Mary* in Sydney, he appeared on the TV show, *What's My Line?* as a publicity tie-up. He stayed on the show to the end of the Sydney run, and thinks he may return to it, finding such work an opportunity to *ad lib* and use his own ideas for effect, but he's not sure.

"Conditions in Sydney are rather chaotic at the present," he says. "I've been in only a couple of test plays for the ABC TV, but I much prefer radio work. For one thing, rehearsals take some 30 hours for a half-hour play, which interferes too much with my serial work. Stage training helps with TV acting, but it's all in miniature, rather like acting in a telephone booth. Good TV is more movement in camera angles and close up than actor's movement. There are three cameras going all the time, and there's supposed to be a red light on the one that's actually being used. But sometimes it's not on, and sometimes all three are showing red, and you never know quite where you are. There's a monitor screen in front of the set on which you can watch yourself as the audience sees you. It tends to draw your attention away from the set."

Some shows are now being telecast, which means in Australia that they are being recorded and edited for both radio and television audiences. But when they bring in a visual emphasis for the televisioners, the radio audiences miss much of the fun. "People forget," Kevin Brennan says, "that the cost of receivers is so high that the radio audience will remain. Then it's not always convenient to be in front of a TV set, and it's rather tiring to watch anyway. Recently I was with some other radio actors in a Sydney restaurant, and a gentleman with dark glasses got up from a neighbouring table and came over to us. 'Excuse me,' he said, 'but aren't you Kevin Brennan?' When I admitted it, he went on to say how much he'd enjoyed my work on radio, and how much he was looking forward to still hearing me, even on television. For some people, TV will always be invisible."

"I don't think it will kill radio or theatre. It may seriously wound it for a few years, then people will begin to pick and choose their programmes."



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