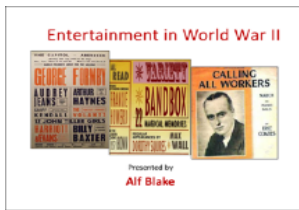


## ENTERTAINMENT IN WORLD WAR II – SCRIPT

### PICTURE 1 - OPENING SCREEN



During World War II, the entertainment industry changed to help the war effort and became closely controlled by national government.

Through regulation and censorship, they sought to keep spirits high and to depict the war in a positive light, finding new ways to use entertainment.

Censorship of mass media was enforced because of fears of threats to national harmony and security. The most popular forms of entertainment were radio, film, and music. Radio was an especially powerful communication tool.

### PICTURE 2 - ITMA



Radio stations fuelled propaganda and reached the masses. Many shows popularized and quickly gained influence in certain countries.

Broadcasts, like other forms of entertainment, were regulated and were pushed to keep citizens informed about war efforts and to encourage citizens to help the cause.

Comedian Tommy Handley utilized his broadcasts to inform about war efforts and to keep the spirits high during this time of hardship. It's That Man Again gained substantial influence - up to 40% of the population listened to this show during the War.

### PICTURE 3 - PROPAGANDA



Shown here, a shot of Noel Coward from the film "In which we serve". Some films reminded citizens that "Cromwell" was the code word to signify the invasion of Britain.

Some of the propaganda films were films with a message to motivate the audience. Even though television had been invented, it was in its infancy and very few people had a television set.

The film industry stereotyped Hitler and the Nazis as cold-hearted with an authoritarian regime. For example, the movie 'Beast of Berlin' was shot in less than a week and was the first Hollywood film to show the brutal treatment at the hands of vicious Gestapo officers.

### PICTURE 4 - PICTUREGOER



Here, during and after the war, the cinema was the most popular pastime. "The average 'A' film reached an audience of thirteen million. It was the prime form of entertainment.

Moviegoers had family members participating in the war and were suffering hardships in their daily life and cinema was an effective form of escapism from reality.

Men and women tried to imitate the fashion styles of stars in order to raise their spirits.

## PICTURE 5 - MUSIC



American singer and stage actress Adelaide Hall entertained extensively throughout WWII with both the public and the troops in the UK and with ENSA across Europe.

She starred in Piccadixie at the Finsbury Park Empire, London, 28 July 1941. "The Last Time I Saw Paris" was a 1941 Academy Award-winning song by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein, illustrating memories of Paris that had been taken over by Germany.

The evolution of music brought about new sounds such as swing music. These sounds translated to new dances. Jitterbug dancing grew in popularity including the Jive, which was taken to England by American troops.

## PICTURE 6 - ENSA (Entertainments National Service Association).



Dame Vera Lynn, known as the "Forces' Sweetheart," having given outdoor concerts for the troops in Egypt, India and Burma during the war as part of the ENSA.

The songs most associated with her include "We'll Meet Again", "(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover", "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square" and "There'll Always Be an England".

In 2009, at the age of ninety-two, she became the oldest living artist to top the UK Albums Chart with the compilation album 'We'll Meet Again': The Very Best of Vera Lynn.

In 2014, she released the collection Vera Lynn: National Treasure and in 2017, she released Vera Lynn 100, a compilation of hits to commemorate her centenary, making her the first centenarian to have a Top 10 album in the charts.

She devoted her time and energy to charity work connected with ex-servicemen, disabled children and breast cancer. She was held in great affection by Second World War veterans. She was named the Briton who best exemplified the spirit of the 20th century.

### **PICTURE 7 - ARTHUR ASKEY**



Arthur served in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in the First World War and performed in army entertainments. This would prove excellent training for his future career in showbusiness.

During the Second World War he starred in several Gainsborough Pictures comedy films, including *Band Waggon* (1940), based on the radio show.

*Band Waggon* began as a variety show, but had been unsuccessful until Askey and his partner, Richard Murdoch, took on a larger role in the writing. In 1941 a song he intended to record, "It's Really Nice to See You Mr Hess" (after Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess fled to Scotland), was banned by the War Office.

### **PICTURE 8 - GRACIE FIELDS**



She made her first stage appearance as a child, in 1905, joining children's repertory theatre groups. Her most famous song, "Sally", which became her theme, was worked into the title of her first film, *Sally in Our Alley* (1931) a box office hit.

She never enjoyed performing without a live audience, and found the process of films boring. She tried to opt out of filming, before director Monty Banks persuaded her otherwise, landing her a lucrative Hollywood deal.

In 1939, Fields suffered a breakdown and went to Capri to recuperate. World War II was declared while she was recovering in Capri, and still very ill after her cancer surgery – signed up for the ENSA.

She travelled to France to entertain the troops during air-raids, performing on the backs of open lorries and in war-torn areas. During the war, she also paid for all servicemen and women to travel free on public transport within the boundaries of Rochdale.

She spent much of her time entertaining troops and supporting the war effort outside Britain, performing many times for Allied troops, travelling as far as New Guinea.

### **PICTURE 9 - GEORGE FORMBY**



At the outbreak of War, Formby requested to sign up for ENSA, but was denied; this was relented in February 1940. He undertook his first tour in France in March, performing for members of the British

Expeditionary Force.

Formby's ENSA commitments were heavy, touring factories, theatres and concert halls around Britain. He also gave free concerts for charities and worthy causes. He joined the Home Guard as a dispatch rider, where he took his duties seriously.

Towards the end of 1940 he tried to enlist for active military service. The examining board rejected him as being unfit for active service.

The Formby's moved to London and, in May 1941, performed for the royal family at Windsor Castle. He wrote a new set of inoffensive lyrics for "When I'm Cleaning Windows", but was informed that he should sing the original, uncensored version.

He went to Normandy in July 1944 giving a series of impromptu concerts to troops in improvised conditions. In one location the German front line was too close for him to perform, so he crawled into the trenches and told jokes with the troops there.

During dinner with General Bernard Montgomery, whom he had met in North Africa, Formby was invited to visit the glider crews of 6th Airborne Division, who had been holding a series of bridges without relief for 56 days.

He did so on 17 August in a one-day visit, where he gave nine shows, all standing beside a sandbag wall, ready to jump into a slit trench in case of problems; his audience were in foxholes.

### **PICTURE 10 - TOMMY COOPER**



In 1940 he was called up as a trooper in the Royal Horse Guards, serving for seven years.

He joined Montgomery's Desert Rats in Egypt. In Cairo, during a sketch in which that required a pith helmet, having forgotten the prop he borrowed a fez from a passing waiter, which got huge laughs.

He wore a fez when performing after that, the prop later being described as "an icon of 20th-century comedy".

### **PICTURE 11 – JOYCE GRENFELL**



Grenfell was invited to perform a comic monologue in a West End revue in 1939. Its success led to a career as an entertainer, giving her creations in theatres in five continents between 1940 and 1969.

In the later years, Grenfell toured in the UK for ENSA. In late 1943 the head of ENSA, invited her to tour troop camps and hospitals in North Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere. In 1944 and 1945 she performed in Algeria, Malta, Sicily, Italy, Iran, Iraq, India, and Egypt.

### **PICTURE 12 – TOMMY TRINDER**



Tommy Trinder, was a stage, screen and radio comedian of the pre- and post-war years whose catchphrase was 'You lucky people!'

Ealing Studios signed him up to films during the war. His most famous was the comedy *Sailors Three* in which he, Claude Hulbert and Michael Wilding capture a German pocket battleship.

He also took straight acting parts in *The Foreman Went to France*, *The Bells Go Down* (a tribute to the work done by firemen in London during the Blitz).

An active member of the entertainment fraternity, the Grand Order of Water Rats, serving two non-consecutive terms as its "King Rat". He was also President of the Lord's Taverners cricketing charity in 1956.

He was a lifelong devoted supporter of Fulham football club, and was Chairman of the club.

### **PICTURE 13 – RALPH READER**



Besides the Gang Shows, in 1936, Reader wrote and directed a dramatic pageant called "The Boy Scout" with a cast of 1,500 Scouts at the Royal Albert Hall.

In November 1937 "a bunch of Boy Scouts", became the first amateurs to appear at a Royal Variety Performance sharing billing with Gracie Fields, George Formby and Max Miller.

Through the pre-war Gang Shows, Reader became friends with Air Commodore Archibald Boyle, the deputy director of RAF Intelligence. The German Ambassador, Joachim von Ribbentrop, attended the 1938 Gang Show and invited Reader to visit the Hitler Youth Movement in Germany.

Boyle persuaded Reader to become an Intelligence Officer in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve with the rank of Flight Lieutenant, although the diplomatic situation had deteriorated before he could take up von Ribbentrop's invitation.

On the outbreak of war, Boyle sent Reader to France for undercover work, in the guise of running a concert party, for which some former Gang Show members were recruited into the RAF. allowing Reader to complete intelligence tasks.

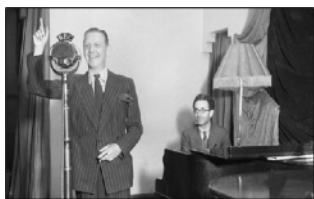
On his return, Reader was ordered to expand the Gang Shows, while his visits to RAF stations allowed Reader to monitor subversive propaganda which was a concern of the RAF high command.

Reader eventually raised twenty-four RAF Gang Show units and two female WAAF units. The RAF Gang Shows toured every theatre of war, from Iceland to Burma.

By 1944, Gang Show units were estimated to have travelled 100,000 miles and entertained 3,500,000 servicemen.

Some of those who served in the RAF Gang Shows would later become well known entertainers, such as Peter Sellers, Tony Hancock, Harry Worth, Dick Emery and Cardew Robinson.

#### **PICTURE 14 – WORKERS PLAYTIME**



It was broadcast simultaneously on both the Home Service and Forces Programme. The programme had the support of government for supporting the war effort on the home front.

Workers' Playtime was a touring show, with the Ministry of Labour choosing which factory canteens it would visit. Throughout the War, Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour and National Service, would appear on these shows to congratulate the workers and exhort them to greater efforts.

When the war ended it was realised that the show had worked, which meant that Ernest Bevin wanted Workers' Playtime to continue to raise the morale of the workers, whilst the government rebuilt Britain and the British economy.

#### **PICTURE 15 – VARIETY BANDBOX**



Presented by Philip Slessor, it became a feature of Sunday evenings for more than eight years between February 1944 and September 1952. Hosting duties would later be taken over by Derek Roy.

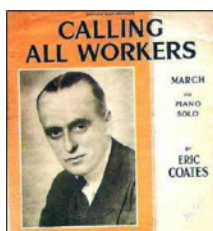
Amongst those who launched their careers on the show was Frankie Howerd, he was to become a fixture of the show and honed his catch phrase-driven comedic style in these appearances.

Tony Hancock also featured on the show early in his career. March 1950 saw the debut of a fortnightly series within the show called Blessem Hall which featured several characters voiced by a young Peter Sellers.

Arthur English, also gained prominence through his broadcasts and was for a time 'resident comedian' on the show. Max Wall was a regular performer on the show.

Although not a performer on Variety Bandbox, Eric Sykes began as a scriptwriter. Variety Bandbox also featured big band music with the likes of Ted Heath, Geraldo, Ambrose, Woolf Phillips, and Joe Loss all leading their orchestras.

### **PICTURE 16 – MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK**



The morning edition was broadcast on the BBC Home Service at 10:30am and afternoon edition at 3pm on the General Forces Programme.

Many combinations made appearances, notably Troise and his Banjoliers, Cecil Norman and the Rhythm Players, Bernard Monshin and his Rio Tango Band, Anton and his Orchestra, Bill Savill and his Orchestra and Jack White and his Band.

Although popular with domestic audiences, it was aimed at the factories, and strict rules were applied: nothing lethargic, consistent volume, avoidance of overloud drumming (which could sound like gunfire), and generally cheerful programmes to which workers could whistle or sing.

The song "Deep in the Heart of Texas" was banned from the show, because of the potential danger of production line workers taking their hands away from their work or banging their spanners on the machinery to perform the four handclaps in the chorus.

### **PICTURE 17 – STARS IN BATTLEDRESS**



Francis Charles Chacksfield was a pianist, organist, composer, arranger, and conductor of popular light orchestral easy listening music, who had enormous success in the 50s and early 1960s.



Comedian, Charlie Chester, was a major performer and in charge of the script-writing department. Among his company was Arthur Haynes who had developed his comic skills while serving in the Royal Engineers, and with whom he did a double act.

### **PICTURE 18 – KENNETH CONNOR**



As said, during the War, he served as an infantry gunner with the Middlesex Regiment. In 1941 he was performing as a comedic entertainer in a concert party named the "Tam o Shanter's".

While waiting to be demobbed in Cairo, he received a telegram from William Devlin asking him to join the Bristol Old Vic Co. where he gained a solid grounding in the classics.

## The rest is TV and Film History – I'll Carry on!

### PICTURE 19 – PETER BUTTERWORTH



Before his acting career started, Butterworth served as a lieutenant in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm during the War. After a forced landing on the island of Texel he was captured, becoming a prisoner of war.

Sent to the Dulag Luft POW transit camp, near Frankfurt, he later escaped in June 1941 through a tunnel. He travelled twenty-seven miles (43 km) over three days, before a member of the Hitler Youth captured him. Afterwards he joked that he could never work with children again.

Whilst at Stalag Luft III he met Talbot Rothwell, who later went on to write many of the Carry On films in which Butterworth was to star. Within the same camp as Butterworth and Rothwell was the actor Rupert Davies.

Butterworth was one of the vaulters covering for the escapers during the escape portrayed by the book and film *The Wooden Horse*. He later auditioned for the film in 1949 but "didn't look convincingly heroic or athletic enough" according to makers of the film.

### PICTURE 20 – JON PERTWEE



Pertwee spent six years in the Royal Navy. He was a crew member of HMS Hood and was transferred off the ship for officer training shortly before she was sunk by the German battleship Bismarck.

After the war, he began to work as a comedy actor on radio.

On 15 November 1948, at the Wood Green Empire, he was billed as "The Most Versatile Voice in Radio". From 1959 to 1977, he performed the role of the conniving Chief Petty Officer Pertwee in *The Navy Lark* on BBC Radio.

### PICTURE 21 – TERRY THOMAS



His wartime service with ENSA and Stars in Battledress experience helped sharpen his cabaret and revue act, increased his public profile and developed a successful comic stage routine.



Upon his demobilisation, he starred in Piccadilly Hayride on the London stage and was the star of the first comedy series on British television, *How Do You View?* (1949). He made a successful transition into British films.

His most creative period was the 1950s when he appeared in *Private's Progress* (1956), *The Green Man* (1956), *Blue Murder at St. Trinian's* (1957), *I'm All Right Jack* (1959) and *Carlton-Browne of the F.O.* (1959).

### **PICTURE 22 – MICHAEL BENTINE**



In World War II, he volunteered for all services when the war broke out (the RAF was his first choice owing to the influence of his father's experience), but was initially rejected because of his father's nationality being Peruvian.

Once in the RAF he went through flying training. He was the penultimate man going through a medical line receiving inoculations for typhoid with the other flight candidates in his class (they were going to Canada to receive new aircraft) when the vaccine ran out.

They refilled the bottle to inoculate him and the other man as well. By mistake they loaded a pure culture of typhoid. The other man died immediately, and Bentine was in a coma for six weeks.

When he regained consciousness his eyesight was ruined, leaving him myopic for the rest of his life. Since he was no longer physically qualified for flying, he was transferred to RAF Intelligence and seconded to MI9, a unit dedicated to supporting resistance movements and helping prisoners escape.

### **PICTURE 23 – SPIKE MILLIGAN**



After his call-up, but before being sent abroad, he and fellow musician Harry Edgington (whose nickname 'Edge-ying-Tong', inspired one of Milligan's most memorable musical creations, the "Ying Tong Song").

The unit was equipped with the obsolete First World War era BL 9.2-inch howitzer and based in Bexhill on the south coast of England. Milligan describes training with these guns in part two of *Adolf Hitler: My Part in His Downfall*, claiming that, during training, gun crews resorted to shouting "bang" in unison as they had no shells with which to practise.

Subsequently, hospitalised for a mortar wound to the right leg and shell shock, he was demoted by an unsympathetic commanding officer (identified in his war diaries as Major Evan "Jumbo" Jenkins) back to Gunner.

After hospitalisation, Milligan drifted through a number of rear-echelon military jobs eventually becoming a full-time entertainer. He played the guitar with a jazz and comedy group called The Bill Hall Trio, in concert parties for the troops.

After being demobilised, he began to write parodies of their mainstream plays, which displayed many of the key elements of what would later become The Goon Show (originally called Crazy People) with Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and Michael Bentine.

#### **PICTURE 24 – HARRY SECOMBE**



With war looming, he decided in 1938 that he would join the Territorial Army. Very short sighted, he got a friend to tell him the sight test, and then learnt it by heart.

Comedian, actor, singer and television presenter. Secombe was a member of the British radio comedy programme The Goon Show (1951–1960), playing many characters, but most notably, Neddie Seagoon. An accomplished tenor, he also appeared in musicals and films – notably as

Bumble in Oliver!

When he visited the Falkland Islands to entertain the troops after the 1982 Falklands War, his old regiment promoted him to the rank of sergeant – 37 years after he had been demobbed.

**END**