

Stars for Defense

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Introduction

Perhaps the only visible reminders of the United States' cold war civil defense efforts are the rusted, disregarded, yellow-and-black "FALLOUT SHELTER" signs still occasionally found in public buildings across the nation. These forgotten placards might seem archaic to modern eyes -- especially to those born after the Soviet Union's implosion. But in the 1950s and 1960s, they figured prominently in the American government's struggle to inform its populace about the dangers of nuclear war. The scope of this information campaign was stunningly enormous. Equally stunning is how little of it is remembered today. Other than the infamous "Duck and Cover" film, seemingly none of the movies, radio programs, or written material produced or overseen by the various Civil Defense agencies is retained in the modern consciousness. One of the most fascinating of these ephemeral works -- though, with a decade on the air, ephemeral might not be the best word -- is a radio program called "Stars for Defense."

"Stars for Defense" was broadcast from 1956 until the mid 1960s. The weekly fifteen-minute show featured popular singers performing their hits, with civil defense information for the public interspersed. Such performers as Johnny Mathis and The Ames Brothers appeared on the program, along with host Jay Jackson and bandleader Ray Bloch. Typically, a government official would impart civil defense advice between the songs. The more specific mechanics of the show will be detailed later in this paper.

Listening to several episodes of "Stars for Defense" reveals a host of patterns, similarities, inconsistencies, and changes across the different episodes. An analysis of these points to a few key tensions at the show's core. First is the sharply divided nature of the show -- one part being a lighthearted musical entertainment program, and the other part

being humorless, dry, information on how to survive nuclear war. The two elements remain almost completely segregated; I will examine what effect this juxtaposition has on the show. The second tension, lesser but still significant, is between the commercial and promotional aspects of the show (the performer plugging their latest record or film) and the status of “Stars for Defense” as a public service program, played on time donated by radio stations for the public good. A fair amount has been written on the intersection between civil defense and commercialism (especially when it comes to purchasing home fallout shelters and other ‘nuclear war accessories’), and this tangential meeting between the two is another interesting example.

With any research topic, it is necessary to ask, “Why is it important?” What makes “Stars for Defense” worthy of detailed study and analysis? I argue that “Stars for Defense” is important for several reasons. On the most basic level, there is a conspicuous gap in current studies of American civil defense; Stars for Defense rarely merits even a passing mention in the field’s key works. This seems bizarre for a program that ran weekly for a full decade, at a time when civil defense rhetoric was at its most intense.

Of course, a “conspicuous gap” in history does not itself merit the undertaking of a new research project. But there are also more substantial reasons to analyze “Stars for Defense,” both in terms of the mechanics of the show, and in terms of the content.

In the case of the former, it will be useful to find out not just how the show was made, but what the producers thought about it. The behind-the-scenes information gleaned from sources at the National Archives provides a view of how the civil defense agencies saw “Stars for Defense” as a part of the larger civil defense programs.

In the case of the latter, a close analysis of the rhetoric of the program will offer a insight into how the government sought to change the minds of a public largely opposed to or apathetic towards civil defense. Looking at the content will also highlight how the tensions in the show manifest themselves.

I argue that the failure of “Stars for Defense” to sway the American public’s opinions on civil defense can be traced to its failure to resolve the two major tensions at its core: that between the cheery music segments and the bleak civil defense messages, and that between the show’s embedded commercialism and its ostensible service to the public interest.

A Research Narrative

Before examining the show, I believe it is important to trace my research path, at least in broad strokes. Among the research projects I have undertaken during my undergraduate career, this has certainly been the most eventful, and it has taken the most unexpected turns of any of them. An explanation of how I got here, perhaps an interesting narrative in its own right, primarily serves as critical context for understanding my research project as a whole.

I had already been studying civil defense for several months before I hit on Stars for Defense as a potential topic for a UROP project. My Senior paper, written in Spring 2010, concerned the rhetoric of early civil defense films. I am presently expanding that paper into my summa thesis, to be completed in Spring 2011. I have been engrossed in civil defense, then, for quite some time -- but the dearth of information on Stars for Defense was such that I had never heard of it until this past Fall.

My discovery of “Stars for Defense” began with my decision to purchase a vinyl record player in August 2010. Shortly after, with no particular aim in mind, I searched for civil defense-related items on eBay. I found several LPs, which turned out to be episodes of “Stars for Defense.” Since I hadn’t heard of the program before, I did some exploratory digging on the Internet and in the civil defense books I had already checked out from the library. I found nearly nothing. The most complete resource I could find was an incomplete, poorly formatted, and unsourced list of “Stars for Defense” episodes on Wikipedia. I was shocked, then, to see that a program that had been on the air for a decade, and which covered a topic about which a sizable body of literature has been written, was almost completely forgotten. I decided to fill this gap, thereby revealing how this once-popular program functioned.

I had several resources at my disposal that ultimately convinced me to take on this project. First, my background in civil defense studies would give me a good baseline understanding of the historical context of “Stars for Defense.” My aim from the start was to take a “critical media studies” approach to the topic; such a method calls for just this kind of context.

Second, I was able to acquire and listen to several of the original LPs. These relatively rare artifacts from the heyday of civil defense were pressed only for radio stations, with between two and three thousand copies for each disc. Furthermore, stations were advised by the civil defense administration to destroy the discs after playing the weekly program (more on this later). Being able to get my hands on a total of nineteen episodes of the over four hundred produced, then, gave me an excellent resource for analyzing the program content in addition to its cloudy history.

Third, since I would be completing the research project using an Undergraduate Research Scholarship, I would be eligible to receive stipend money for the work I did. I decided to use this money to help fund a trip to the National Archives in Washington, D.C.; if any place would have the unique resources I needed, this would be it. I contacted an archivist ahead of time, and found that the Archives did, in fact, have relevant documents.

Finally, I had an unexpected opportunity to interview a few of the performers who appeared on the program. This came about after I bought one of the "Stars for Defense" LPs on eBay; the seller wrote a note to me explaining that a man living in the Netherlands representing Betty Johnson, one of the singers on that particular disc, had also bid on it, hoping to give her the record. Since all I needed was the program content, after I had ripped the episode to my computer, I was happy to send the physical album along to Ms. Johnson. I contacted her representative, who gave me an address to which to send it. I realized this was a unique opportunity to perhaps get a first-hand account of "Stars for Defense," so after shipping the record, I asked Ms. Johnson if she would share any recollections she had from working on the program. Extremely gracious, she was happy to answer my questions. With this incredible resource in hand, I realized that there must be other performers out there with recollections from the show. Using the most complete list of "Stars for Defense" performers that I could find, I contacted each one who was still living -- twelve people in all. Though none of the performers themselves contacted me, I received replies from three representatives; each of these provided valuable information, and one even sent me several Stars for Defense programs burned onto a CD.

Some Civil Defense Background

Before I begin my analysis of “Stars for Defense,” it is important to establish some background information about Civil Defense in general. The invention around which the American civil defense effort revolved was the atomic bomb (and later, the more advanced hydrogen bomb). Nuclear weapons were first developed in the United States in 1945, but it wasn’t until the Soviet Union tested its own devices in 1949 that the possibility of nuclear attack on the United States became reality.

All nuclear weapons have three basic effects. First is a brilliant, burning flash of light. Next is a tremendous blast of explosive pressure. Finally is the release of deadly radiation, which is emitted in the first minutes after a detonation. Initially, these were understood to be the only dangers of atomic weapons. But in early 1954, tests of powerful hydrogen weapons revealed another hazard: radioactive fallout. When a nuclear explosion occurs near enough to the ground that debris -- water, dust, etc. -- is kicked up into the air by the blast forces, those particles are sucked into the rising mushroom cloud. Here they are irradiated; when they eventually fall out of the cloud and drift down to earth (potentially traveling hundreds of miles), they continue to give off that deadly radiation, leaving the area in which they fall completely uninhabitable for at least several weeks, and dangerous for many years after that (Garrison 24-27).

With the advent of the atomic phase of the Cold War, the United States began making efforts to prepare for such an attack, and -- importantly for this paper -- to educate its citizens on what to do in the event atomic bombs were dropped on their cities. The first major organization created to handle both of these tasks was the Federal Civil Defense Administration, established in early 1951. Besides its task of organizing for the actual

defense of America, the FCDA oversaw the publishing of educational materials, including books, pamphlets, films, and radio programs. It continued doing so until 1958, when it was replaced by the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization. OCDM was renamed the Office of Emergency Planning in 1961, and its civil defense functions were transferred to the Office of Civil Defense, under the Office of the Secretary of Defense. OCD lasted in that form until 1964, when it was reorganized under the Department of the Army. It lasted here until 1972, when it became the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency. Finally, in 1979, it was succeeded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). By this time, the heyday of the civil defense era had long passed; the key agencies that I'll be dealing with here are the FCDA, the OCDM, and the OCD.

An Episode of Stars for Defense

Based on the episodes I was able to acquire -- which ranged from 1957 to 1962, not quite the entire span of the show -- it seems that the format and structure of "Stars for Defense" changed very little. Because it remained so consistent, a quick breakdown of a typical episode will be useful to the reader unfamiliar with the program; such a breakdown follows:

Each episode begins with a voiceover in which that week's star introduces him- or herself and explains that fifteen minutes of music and vital civil defense advice will follow. "So stand by, America," the introduction always concludes, "Here's your Stars for Defense."

The theme music begins here; it is an instrumental version of "The Civil Defense March (Heads Up America)," written in 1957 by Sammy Cahn and Paul Weston (CONELRAD website). (I will discuss this song further -- along with its interesting lyrics -- later).

Announcer Jay Jackson then formally announces the show as the theme music continues to play, introducing himself, Ray Bloch and his Orchestra, and the star. He explains that the show is presented by the station as a public service, in cooperation with the then-current civil defense agency. Jackson tells the audience which authority figure will stop by later in the program to share official civil defense advice. Finally, he turns to the star, who is in the studio with him, to begin the music portion of the program.

After a few moments of in-studio banter -- often using humor -- the star performs his or her first song. Following the song is another quick bit of back-and-forth between Jackson and the star, leading into the second performance. When the song is over, Jackson introduces the civil defense expert for that week, who speaks for a minute or two about a specific CD topic. Jackson next makes a quick transition to another song, typically played by Ray Bloch and his Orchestra. The star will usually then sing one more of their songs, concluding the music segment of the show.

Immediately following the last song, the instrumental theme music kicks in again, and Jay Jackson re-states the public service nature of the show and thanks the week's star. Occasionally the star will speak once more, reinforcing the civil defense messages stated earlier in the show. Finally, Jackson signs off and invites the listener to "join us next week, for some more good music by Ray Bloch and his Orchestra, and another famous star, on Stars for Defense."

The Mechanics of "Stars for Defense"

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, no complete, definitive history of "Stars for Defense" yet exists; mentions of the program in secondary sources are infrequent

and lacking in detail. To construct this portion of the paper, then, I turned to primary sources. The most significant of these were the documents I found at the National Archives, largely consisting of letters and memos written by employees of the various civil defense agencies. I was also able to learn some details about the program from my interview with Betty Johnson, and from my correspondence with the representatives of other performers who appeared on the program.

“Stars for Defense” was purchased on a quarterly basis, in 13-week segments. As of the autumn of 1961, according to a 12 September memo, production and distribution for each of these segments cost “about \$40,000.” Using Bureau of Labor Statistics data, that figure is equivalent to nearly \$300,000 per quarter today -- somewhere in the neighborhood of one million dollars per year (BLS website). Two additional civil defense programs -- “Entertainment USA” and “Startime USA” “use the same message, [and] same material as the ‘Stars for Defense’ program but are aired by ABC and CBS networks respectively.” Information on these two programs is almost nonexistent, but I took this to mean that they likely used the exact same content produced for “Stars for Defense.” Their budget-- a combined “\$5,200 per quarter,” which would seem to barely even cover the cost of creating vinyl transcriptions -- suggests that this is probably the case. These three programs represented the most significant forays into radio for the information arm of civil defense. Other material was limited to spot announcements, or to script kits provided to stations. In a 5 October 1963 memo to the Deputy Director of Public Information, Audio-Visual Planning director Harald Kirn notes that “because of the small Audio-Visual staff, motion pictures and television materials have been given priority. I would like to do more in the radio field.”

I found no direct indication of who actually wrote the scripts for “Stars for Defense.” Based on the difference in tone and in style, the banter between Jay Jackson and the performers, and between Jackson and Ray Bloch, was likely written entirely separately from the civil defense information, and perhaps even written by Jackson himself. (This strict separation between the “serious” part of the show and the fun, musical segments is a theme I will revisit when discussing the show’s content in the next section.) Memos from 12 September 1961 and 27 February 1963 indicate that approvals of the civil defense information were obtained from both the Office of Civil Defense and the Public Affairs department of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense. A similar approval process for the entertainment portions of the show is not mentioned, hinting at a real division between the serious and fun elements of “Stars for Defense.”

Ms. Johnson recalled that she recorded her spoken lines with Jay Jackson at Gotham Studios in Manhattan, New York City. Letters from the National Archives, dated 25 August 1961 and 6 October 1961, confirm this. Further, a 7 August 1963 letter from Harald Kirn to Fred Hertz at Gotham requesting that the theme music be re-recorded due to a preference for the “new Gotham sound” suggests that the company was used by “Stars for Defense” since at least 1957 (the earliest episode I have uses the old theme music), and probably since the very beginning.

After recording her dialogue, Ms. Johnson remembers going to a larger studio to record her songs with Ray Bloch and his orchestra. “Ray wrote the arrangements and chose the men in the orchestra. All top notch musicians.” She enjoyed doing “Stars for Defense” “because the arrangements were different from what I was recording for the record companies” (B. Johnson, personal communication, January 5, 2011).

Following the recording of the program, various companies handled pressing, labeling, and distribution of the vinyl transcriptions. Columbia Records, Capitol Records, and Allied Record Manufacturing Company were all involved with "Stars for Defense." Correspondence between the civil defense office and these corporations demonstrates some degree of micromanagement over the program. In a 24 January 1963 letter to Capitol Records, Harald Kirn describes new specifications for record labels: "The labels, as you will notice, are 4-½" rather than the usual 4". The new copy will be straight-line, silver on red background. Print 400 of each side -- a total of 800 labels -- on Clean-Stik paper or equivalent pressure-sensitive stock. Please send me a sample label to OK before the quantity is printed." This seems an inordinate amount of attention to pay to such a small detail, especially considering that the vinyl transcriptions of the show were never meant to be seen by the general public. In fact, as Kirn points out in a 28 December 1961 response to an inquiry from a radio station record librarian, "STARS FOR DEFENSE program discs, after the programs have been aired, can also be destroyed."

Once pressed and labeled, the vinyl transcriptions were sent to radio stations across the country. Stations were added to the distribution list by request; many of these letters of request were preserved at the Archives. Also preserved were numerous letters and memos detailing both the pressing orders for the transcriptions, and the number of stations on the distribution list. Pressing orders seemed to be set somewhat higher than the number actually sent out. A 25 August 1961 letter set the order at 2575, while a 7 September 1961 memo noted that only 2400 stations carried the program. This second figure may be imprecise, though -- another memo sent out less than a week later included a figure of 2500 radio stations. The pressing orders increased, with the next order set at 2600 on 6 October

1961. The number seems to level off here, with “2600 of the country’s 3600 stations” carrying the program by the autumn of 1963. The program helped fulfill the FCC-mandated requirement for radio stations to operate in the public interest; as such, the broadcasting time for the program was apparently given to the government for free. A memo arguing for the continuation of Stars for Defense explains that the show, along with “Entertainment USA” and “Startime USA,” result[s] in donated time valued at \$4-½ million annually.” For scale, that represents a savings of over twenty-five times the annual cost of producing “Stars for Defense.” The show, then, was a win-win for the government and for radio stations. The government was able to disseminate its civil defense messages relatively cheaply, while the radio stations were able to comply with their public service obligations.

Interestingly, the producers of “Stars for Defense” seemed just as concerned with creating an entertaining show as they were with spreading civil defense information, and were perfectly willing to distribute it as a pure entertainment program if necessary. A 3 November 1961 document from the Archives illustrate this. It is a response to a request from the U.S. Air Force Overseas network in Spain to play the program (the original inquiry isn’t included). Harald Kirn writes that “Stars for Defense, besides being an effective vehicle for civil defense information, is also considered a successful and entertaining series.” Assuming that the base broadcasts also reach the public, he adds: “I question the advisability, however, of programming civil defense information not applicable outside the United States.” He suggests that “the programs be taped and edited by your staff to cut out approximately 1 ½ minutes of civil defense material,” leaving the entertainment portion to stand on its own.

An interesting self-assessment of the show is seen in a 30 December 1963 response to an employee suggestion (again, only the response, and not the original document, was included). Apparently, a Pentagon employee requested that “Stars for Defense” be played in the center court of the Pentagon. Harald Kirn responds by explaining that, although the shows “are a combination of good musical entertainment and Civil Defense information,” this is a bad idea because the reverberation in the courtyard would make the message inaudible, and because little attention is paid to background music anyway. Interestingly, he includes one more reason for not playing “Stars for Defense” in the Pentagon courtyard: “There is also a suggestion of the ‘big brother’ booming out a message on civil defense.” This is something of a strange distinction -- he implies that the messages only become propagandistic when played out loud in public, but not when played over the radio.

All in all, an examination of the mechanics of “Stars for Defense” uncovers a few strange counterintuitive or paradoxical elements. The show had a great deal of work put into it, with various companies involved, micromanaging of production details, and a very wide audience -- and yet the vinyl transcriptions of the show were meant to be destroyed immediately after airing. (After discovering this I counted myself lucky for finding so many intact records). The show was ostensibly designed to spread civil defense messages, and it certainly did so -- though its producers felt they were also creating a top-notch entertainment program at the same time. A tension is hinted at, here, between the cheery, popular, celebrity-laden music portion of the show, and the gravity of the Civil Defense information. To analyze this divide further, I will examine the content and structure of the texts in question -- the actual programs themselves.

The Content of “Stars for Defense”

Though I was only able to closely analyze nineteen “Stars for Defense” episodes of the over four hundred broadcast, I found recurring elements and themes that seem to be indicative of the show’s rhetorical stance as a whole. These include a reinforcement by the performer of the program’s prestige, the positioning of civil defense as an “American tradition,” promotion of the performer’s latest projects, and the use of humor during the music portion of the show. The divide between the civil defense and entertainment parts of the program is made especially clear when listening to the show; the two are strictly segregated.

Many of the singers on “Stars for Defense,” when speaking to host Jay Jackson in the beginning of the show, make reference to the fact that the program is prestigious. In one of her episodes, Jill Corey explains that “I’ve always been a steady Stars for Defense listener. And a visit to the show is more than just fun. It’s an honor.” Similarly, Georgia Gibb notes that “Stars for Defense is my idea of a really important program.” Johnny Nash goes even further, painting the show as a cultural institution of note: “You know, a visit to Stars for Defense is quite an honor for a young performer. And, an invitation to return kind of makes a fellow feel he’s... well, he’s made it.” The fact that the performers, and never Jay Jackson himself, bring up the prestige and importance of the show superficially solves the ethical dilemma of self-praise. But the banter seems far from extemporaneous, sounding clearly scripted. Some planning, then, seems to have gone into this propping up of the show. Setting up “Stars for Defense” as an important program lends additional credibility to the civil defense messages it provides later. Jill Corey’s description of herself as a steady listener -- a sentiment echoed by Evelyn Knight in a later episode -- also serves to add

credibility through celebrity endorsement. If even the stars listen, the logic goes, then the show must be of high quality.

Such endorsement of “Stars for Defense” is not the only way that the show used celebrity to further its aims. Occasionally, at the end of the show, the week’s star would briefly chime in on the civil defense topic under discussion (a rare breach between the entertainment and information sides of the show). Johnny Nash and Jill Corey both directly address the listeners as “friends” while imploring them to follow the civil defense advice. Evelyn Knight and Georgia Gibb encourage listeners to enroll in first aid courses and write for home shelter information, respectively. And Jaye P Morgan directly endorses the message on her episode when she says, “Friends, I think these words from the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization are well-chosen.” Though it seems unlikely that the stars themselves actually wrote these messages, there are no overt indications that they did not. A listener, then, could easily interpret them as celebrity endorsements of civil defense advice.

In several of the episodes I had access to -- including those of Betty Johnson, Evelyn Knight, Georgia Gibb, and others -- mention was made of repeat appearances on the show. With a new show every week for over a decade, logistics make it clear that such repetition is necessary. But the fact that the stars appear multiple times on the show is also put to rhetorical work on at least one occasion. When Jay Jackson welcomes Johnny Nash back for a return visit, he says “It’s good to have you with us once again... your career has taken quite a stride forward since that last visit. And the way things are going, I expect we’ll be enjoying your presence on Stars for Defense many times in the years to come.” Jackson implicitly positions civil defense as a long-term prospect -- a new and permanent part of

life in the United States. In a special holiday episode, broadcast during the week of Christmas, this fact is echoed, with a special emphasis on the constant awareness demanded by the nuclear age: "But during Christmas, as throughout each day of the year, civil defense preparedness remains a vital part of our lives." Even during the happy, entertaining portions of the show, the specter of long-lasting, ever-present danger hangs over the proceedings -- this is another subtle breaching of the division between the serious and silly sides of "Stars for Defense."

Despite the show's status as a "public service," fulfilling radio stations' obligation to serve its listeners, it was frequently used to promote the performers and their new projects. Occasionally this was done subtly, without mentioning any particular projects, as when Jay Jackson introduces a performer as "star of nightclubs, recordings, radio, and TV, the very charming Miss Jill Corey." More overtly, Jackson explains to the listeners that "a short while back, at New York's famous Waldorf Astoria, musical history was made and attendance records were broken by Dick Haymes and Fran Jeffries." Sometimes the promotion was simple and direct, as when Jackson plugs an upcoming movie starring Johnny Nash, or when he speaks to Evelyn Knight, saying, "Say, I know you've come out with a brand new record since we saw you last." When commercial considerations are brought to the forefront, the show resembles a typical music entertainment program; the sharp transitions to civil defense information then become even more stark.

The producers of the show attempt to bolster the credibility of "Stars for Defense" (and of the civil defense program in general) by presenting civil defense as an "American tradition." This is done explicitly several times by Jay Jackson; in one episode with Jill Corey, his closing speech begins with "For the past fifteen minutes, you've been listening to

Stars for Defense, a transcribed program dedicated to the American tradition, civil defense..." and ends with "Civil defense starts with you: it's an American tradition." In a later Jill Corey episode, she joins in, enjoining the audience to "remember the motto: civil defense is an American tradition." This appeal to patriotism suggests that civil defense, contrary to the then-recent beginning of the nuclear age, is nothing new, or at least that it has remained relatively unchanged. This implicit equating of nuclear with pre- or sub-nuclear threats is a subtle example of what historian Guy Oakes terms "conventionalization," the comparison of atomic-age realities with more familiar dangers (Oakes 52). Further conventionalization of this type is seen in the Ted Lewis episode, when Jay Jackson says that "Show people like yourself, Ted, are always in there pitching when a cause is vital. It's one of the finest traditions in entertainment." This recalls the famous then-recent use of celebrities to help the war effort in World War II and Korea. An additional appeal to patriotism comes in the aforementioned Christmas episode, in which Jay Jackson invokes President Kennedy: "President Kennedy has said this about Civil Defense: 'It is insurance we trust will never be needed. But insurance which we could never forgive ourselves for forgoing, in the event of catastrophe.'" (The episode was broadcast during the week of Christmas 1961).

The civil defense messages of "Stars for Defense" were largely presented by various figures within the civil defense administrations. The earlier episodes I was able to find -- ranging from 1957 to 1961 -- featured Leo A Hoegh, Director of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization. Of the eight episodes I have with Hoegh, four include messages dealing with shelter from fallout. The other four discuss evacuation, civil defense for farmers, first aid, and fallout patterns. This breakdown, even with such a small sample size,

fits with the description of the show given in an internal memo dated 7 September 1961:

“Approx. 50 percent home shelter -- other 50 percent on general state of preparedness.”

The information is presented by Hoegh following an inquiry from Jay Jackson (though they were almost certainly recorded separately). The questions posed by Jackson are simple, factual queries, such as “Just what can radioactive fallout do to us?” (Episode 202) and “How will we know if our area is exposed to radioactive fallout?” (Episode 185). Only one of the questions asked of Hoegh depicts a possible opposition to civil defense, and then only slightly: “...some people are wondering in the light of new weapons and means of delivering them, has evacuation been thrown out of Civil Defense planning?” (Jill Corey Episode 2) The last episode I have featuring Hoegh is program 230; the next, 241, features Harry Roderick of the OCDM Warning Office speaking about warning time. Program 242 has an appearance by Harald Kirn, Director of Radio and Television for the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization (Kirn authored most of the correspondence regarding “Stars for Defense” found at the National Archives). The next two episodes I have, 273 and 274, feature no civil defense officials.

Finally, by episode 289, Stuart L Pittman, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civil Defense is featured on the program. Pittman appears on the last six episodes I was able to obtain. The questions he answers from Jay Jackson are much more pointed and critical of civil defense; Pittman is given a chance to deflect, dismiss, or disprove such criticism directly. For instance, in one episode Jackson asks, “Mr. Pittman, how do you answer the attitude heard frequently that all our efforts should be concentrated on attempting to ensure peace, rather than spending money and effort for civil defense?” Pittman responds by saying that people holding that attitude “do not fully appreciate the extent to which the

major effort of this administration is, directly and indirectly, devoted to ensuring peace.” He goes on to explain that he “see[s] no conflict between the objectives of peace, and protecting our population should war come” (Episode 290). In another episode, Pittman again responds to criticism by criticizing the critics. After Jackson asks whether “fallout shelter space [will] save enough lives to justify a national effort” (after noting that “a number of scientists outside the government” disagree with this), Pittman notes that the government has “made extensive studies” of scenarios, and that he “couldn’t begin to describe to you the complexity of these studies and the wide range of circumstances which were taken into account.” By simply stating that the proof is too difficult to understand for the ordinary listener, he dodges having to actually provide that proof.

The shift in tone of the questions posed by Jay Jackson came around the same time as another slight change in the show. By episode 274, a new and somewhat hyperbolic line was added to Jackson’s closing statement: “Remember, America can withstand attack. Our nation can be so well-prepared that nothing could defeat us, if we support and cooperate with our local Civil Defense officials, and learn to help ourselves.” These sentences were included in all subsequent shows that I obtained. They suggest a civil defense program so robust and effective as to be unimpeachable -- provided authority is trusted. By adding that people must help themselves, the patriotic American ideal of self-reliance is evoked and tied to the nation’s successful defense.

An even more dramatic stirring of patriotic themes can be found in the theme song of “Stars for Defense,” “Heads Up America.” As mentioned earlier, the version used on the show is purely instrumental. Lyrics for the song were written, however, and are present in

other releases. I found a recording of the song -- lyrics intact -- at the National Archives, and found its bluntness somewhat startling. The chorus and the first verse follow:

Heads up America

Let's stand, be brave, keep our defenses high,

Heads up America

A land that is prepared can never die

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Every woman and every man

Must be part of the CD plan

Must be ready with every eye up to the sky

Heads up America

For America must never, never die

The line "A land that is prepared can never die" recalls the aforementioned message about how "our nation can be so well-prepared that nothing could defeat us." Again, it implies that civil defense preparations will doubtlessly be effective, and are thus worth the expenditure of time, money, and effort. The very title of the song, along with the line about being "ready with every eye up to the sky" suggest that a constant vigilance on the part of the public is necessary, and establish nuclear war as a constant threat which should never leave one's mind. Finally, the lyric "For America must never, never die" offers a chilling warning of what could happen if the civil defense recommendations are *not* followed, while also stating that such a scenario is so dire as to be unthinkable. If following the civil defense

plan means saving America from certain death, the logic goes, all Americans *must* cooperate. Although the lyrics to “Heads Up America” are not featured in “Stars for Defense” itself, an examination of the song’s lyrics show its essential messages to be similar to those on that radio program, demonstrating some consistency between the different elements of civil defense rhetoric of the era.

Humor is a frequent feature of the banter between Jay Jackson and the performer, and between Jackson and bandleader Ray Bloch. Often this would come in the form of puns, as when Jackson plays off the names of Ray Bloch (“Let’s take a walk around the block. I refer, of course, to Ray Bloch.”) and the Ames Brothers (“...you boys really ‘ames’ to please.”). More humor is generated by Jackson’s mock confusion over the titles of Johnny Nash’s song “Goodbye” and Johnny Mathis’ song “Nobody Knows.” Jackson also affects a humorous Irish accent when speaking with Irish performer Carmel Quinn, and styles himself “Jay P. Jackson” when talking with singer Jaye P. Morgan. The humor in “Stars for Defense” is strictly limited to the entertainment portions of the show; it never makes light of any civil defense information. Jackson refrains from making jokes or puns during his brief conversations with the civil defense officials, and the officials themselves are of course humorless. The inclusion of humor, then, might serve an indirect purpose in bringing listeners back next week. But it does no rhetorical work of its own when it comes to the actual dissemination of civil defense information -- it is not allowed to.

Most of the episodes that I was able to acquire follow the basic pattern described in the “An Episode of Stars for Defense” section. However, I did notice a few interesting variations in assorted episodes. The largest departure from the typical form was the Christmas episode mentioned earlier. The episode -- as one might expect -- features

Christmas songs, sung here by the Merrill Staton Voices. Notably absent is a guest from the civil defense administration, who would usually provide civil defense advice. Even in other episodes without civil defense officials, however, Jay Jackson steps in to provide the information. But in the Christmas episode there is none of the usual civil defense information; instead, Jay Jackson simply reminds the listener that civil defense is an important part of American life, and recites the aforementioned quote from President Kennedy. This difference from standard episodes suggests that the producers of the show recognized that audiences might not be in the mood for serious civil defense pronouncements during the holidays.

Another variation from the usual “Stars for Defense” episode appears in the program featuring Ted Lewis, a performer with over fifty years in show business by the time he did the show. At the very beginning of this episode, he says his catchphrase (“Is everybody happy?”) rather than simply introducing himself, as is the case with every other episode I listened to. This difference is likely indicative not only of his stature as a veteran of the entertainment industry, but of contemporary audience recognition of his catchphrase. Using his signature line is yet another way to engender feelings of familiarity in the audience, perhaps making them more receptive to the civil defense advice to come.

The earliest “Stars for Defense” episodes I have feature Jill Corey, and date to 1957 (the next earliest episodes -- which I acquired on vinyl -- are from 1960). They were sent to me as digital files by a representative for Miss Corey. There is one major difference in format between the early shows and the later ones: in the early episodes, the show features applause after each song. Albert J. Kopec, the representative for Miss Corey who sent me the episodes, noted that “I think it is fairly obvious that the ‘audience reaction’ was pre-

recorded 'canned' applause. I really doubt very much that there was a live audience involved in any of the government sponsored programs" (A. Kopek, personal communication, November 19, 2010). Listening to the episodes, this certainly seems to be the case. It is unclear why the producers eventually decided to drop the pretense that there was a live audience listening to the performances. Considering that the change affected only the entertainment portion of the show, and not the civil defense portion, it seems likely that it was simply an aesthetic choice; perhaps the 'faux-live audience' just went out of style in the intervening years.

Conclusion

The key tension in "Stars for Defense" -- that between lighthearted music show and sober civil defense information -- is at the heart of the very idea of the program. The apparent desire of its producers to create both a highly entertaining program and a source of critical advice on nuclear war can be seen both in the mechanics of the show's production and in an analysis of its content. These disparate goals resulted in a show which, while containing both things, keeps those elements at a distance from each other. A secondary tension -- that between commercialism and the show's status as a public service -- adds to the confusion of "Stars for Defense."

The tensions of "Stars for Defense" also speak to another dilemma for the civil defense program as a whole. With the specter of an imminent attack on the United States gone after World War II, and with the economy booming in the 1950s and 1960s, the American people seemed to pay little lasting attention to civil defense. In a time of prosperity, they opted for the lighthearted entertainment over the apocalyptic warnings of

nuclear war. Though some citizens built home shelters and learned evacuation procedures, civil defense never fully caught on with the public (Garrison 13). This failure may help to explain why “Stars for Defense” is little-remembered today, despite running for over a decade. Audiences listened for the music, and stations programmed it to fulfill their public service obligations, but after hundreds of episodes, civil defense still wasn’t a key concern for most Americans. And after the heyday of civil defense in the 1950s and 1960s, the long-running show, featuring many of the biggest stars of the day, was almost entirely forgotten.

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