

Sound Effects Fill Three Storerooms With Gimmicks, Doo-Dads, Whatzits, Thingumbobs

"We've never been stumped" is the proud boast of the sound effects department of the Columbia Broadcasting—a crew of 19 men and one woman. Whether it be the sound of a guillotined head dropping into a basket, the smash of a 100-ton drop thundering down on a forge or the rattle of the first linotype machine, this staff has always come up with the proper sound effect.

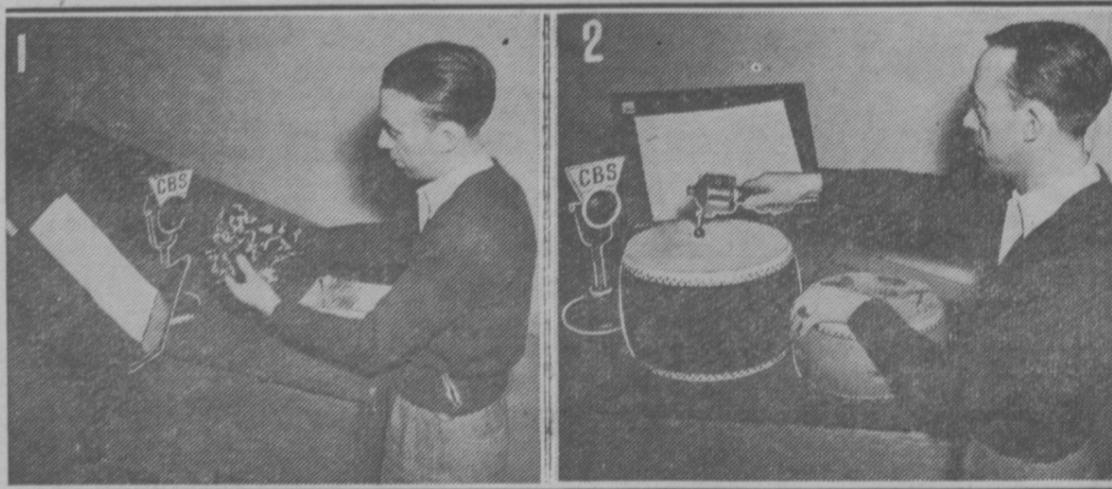
A recent script called for the sound of a man losing his head via the guillotine, followed by the sound made by the head as it dropped into the executioner's basket.

The creak and whine of the descending knife was simulated easily enough, but it took a lot of experimenting and hard work before it was discovered that dropping a bundle of rubber sheets into a basket produced an effect guaranteed to make even the most hardened listener shudder.

7 Kinds of Doors

The clatter of the first linotype machine was a tough one until somebody had the bright idea of getting the man who had run the first linotype to help out. Diligent research unearthed the information that the veteran was still working in the composing room of the New York Herald Tribune. He was brought over to the sound effects workshop, worked right along with Pierson's men and the result was a contraption which sounded so much like that first linotype that the silver-haired printer could hardly believe his ears.

Every machine in Columbia's \$50,000 stock of sound effects paraphernalia was built by the CBS workmen themselves. Included are seven different kinds of doors. Whether it be the sound made by the shutting of



DRAMATIC ADDITIONS . . . to any broadcast are the sound effects accompanying the program. Pictured above are (1) crunching cellophane when picked up by a microphone sounds like a fire; (2) an electric-powered massage button running on an Indian drum simulates the tones of an airplane motor; and (3) coconut shells clapped in a bed of gravel sound exactly like horses' hooves galloping to the rescue. In the left foreground a recording machine is making a permanent record on a disc which is then filed away for future broadcasts.

a closet door, the slamming of a front door or the gentle opening of a screen door by a burglar, Pierson's crew is prepared to simulate them all.

Two hundred compressed air tanks are used for sound effects in an average year. They produce the sound of hissing steam, air brakes on railroad trains and steam whistles, and when bubbling up through water, the compressed air also gives an excellent effect of spraying water.

Sound for Anything

Bundles of corn broom are always to be found in the sound effects workshop. Crushing the thin end of a bundle produces the sound of walking through heavy grass; work the heavy ends around with your hand and

you'll swear you're listening to the crackle of sparks in a bonfire.

Even before the builders finished the \$2,000,000 buildings at Columbia Square in Hollywood for Columbia's Pacific Coast headquarters and before erection of the new KNX transmitter was started in Torrance, Columbia ordered for use in the film capital the most complete collection of modern sound effect devices procurable.

There are three storerooms full of gimmicks, doo-dads, whatzits and precision instruments for use by sound engineers in creating audible backgrounds for all KNX originations—a score of transcontinental programs and many more programs



on smaller networks.

Thingumbobs which look as if the late Thomas A. Edison thought them up stand next to whatchamacallits apparently burst from the imagination of Rube Goldberg, ready to make for microphones the patter of baby feet across the nursery floor, or the drone of bombers over China or the roar of Niagara Falls.

PHOTO-EYE CELLS AUTOMATICALLY LIGHT TOWER

Electric-eye cells automatically turn on lights placed atop the new KNX transmitter tower here to warn away airplanes when the sun sets low enough to dim daylight below 30-foot-candles.

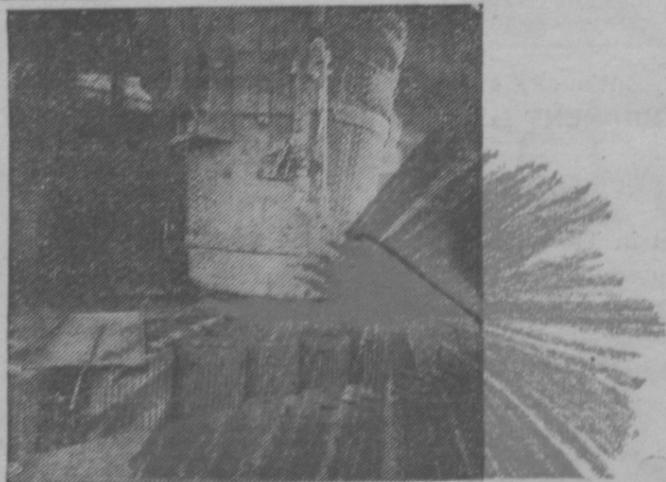
The device also extinguishes the lights as soon after dawn as the sun has provided 50-foot-candles of light, by which aviators may see the 510 foot tower.

TESTS SHOW TRANSMITTER'S EFFICIENCY

Extensive tests during the last month have shown the signal intensity of the new KNX-CBS transmitter to exceed by several percent the specifications laid down for the last year. Some idea of the delicacy and complexity of this huge transmitting instrument may be gained from a glance at the amplification range over which it must carry program impulses without the slightest distortion.

The impulses emanating from the studio microphone are so weak that it would require the output of some 24 billion microphones to illuminate a single 40-watt light bulb.

Amplified for transmitting purposes, the same impulses leave the 490-foot tip of the KNX antenna tower with enough power behind them to illuminate a small town. The output ratio of microphone to transmitter is one to 36 trillion.



FROM COLUMBIA STEEL
to
COLUMBIA BROADCASTING,
"CONGRATULATIONS!"

STEEL Used in New KNX TRANSMITTER Was Made by COLUMBIA STEEL COMPANY

It is appropriate that the new KNX tower—latest beacon of industrial progress in Torrance—should be made of products from the City's basic industry.

Ever since the inception of the City, the substantial payrolls of Columbia Steel Company have been an important

factor in the growth and life of the community. The striking KNX antenna is therefore a monument to one of the City's most important assets.

Columbia Steel and Columbia Broadcasting not only have names common to both organizations, but the activities

of Columbia Steel and its kindred companies in the vast United States Steel Corporation extend to the far corners of the earth as certainly as the radio messages of Columbia Broadcasting System. And So—Congratulations to CBS, and TORRANCE!

COLUMBIA STEEL COMPANY



UNITED STATES STEEL