

Ed Sullivan Notes

Ed Sullivan was a gifted athlete in high school, earning 12 athletic letters at Port Chester High School. He played halfback in football, he was a guard in basketball and in track, he was a sprinter. With the baseball team, Sullivan was catcher and team captain. He led the team to several championships.

He got his first job at The Port Chester Daily Item, a local newspaper. In 1919, he joined The Hartford Post. The newspaper folded in his first week there, but he found another job on The New York Evening Mail as a sports reporter. In 1927, Sullivan joined The Evening Graphic, first as a sports writer and then as a sports editor. In 1929, when Walter Winchell moved to The Daily Mirror, Sullivan was made its Broadway columnist.

In 1933, he wrote and starred in the film *Mr. Broadway*, which saw him guiding the audience around New York nightspots, meeting entertainers and celebrities.

In 1941, Sullivan was host of the *Summer Silver Theater*, a variety program on CBS, with Will Bradley as bandleader and a guest star featured each week.

In 1948, Sullivan was hired to do a weekly Sunday-night TV variety show, *Toast Of The Town*, which later became *The Ed Sullivan Show*. The show was originally broadcast from the Maxine Elliott Theatre (photo) on West 39th Street in New York City. In January 1953, it moved to CBS-TV Studio 50, at 1697 Broadway (at 53rd Street) in New York City. In 1967, the theater was renamed the *Ed Sullivan Theater*.

Although he was wary of Elvis Presley's "bad boy" image and initially said that he would never book him, Presley became too big a name to ignore. In 1956, Sullivan signed him for three appearances. Buddy Holly and the Crickets first appeared on the Sullivan show in 1957 to an enthusiastic response.

Sullivan witnessed Beatlemania firsthand as the band returned from Sweden and the terminal was overrun by screaming teens. At first Sullivan was reluctant to book the Beatles because the band did not have a commercially successful single released in the United States at the time, but thanks to his friend, Sid Bernstein, Sullivan signed the group. Their initial Sullivan show appearance on February 9, 1964, was the most-watched program in television history. For the slightly more than 700 seats at Studio 50, the show received 50,000 applications for tickets. The Beatles appeared three more times in person. The Dave Clark Five made a total of 13 appearances on the show, more than any other British group.

Unlike many shows of the time, Sullivan asked that most musical acts perform their music live, rather than lip-synching to their recordings. The comedy duo Wayne & Shuster made the most appearances of any act throughout the show's run, 67 appearances between 1958 and 1969.

By 1971, CBS canceled the program in March, along with some of its other long running shows throughout the 1970–1971 season. Angered, Sullivan refused to host three more months of scheduled shows. They were replaced by reruns and a final program without him aired in June of that year.

The Ed Sullivan Show presented 1,068 programs during its run. The show received seven Emmy Award nominations and won once in 1956.

REFERENCES

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The Beatles: Backstage at "The Ed Sullivan Show"

Wikipedia