

Insomniacs Unite—You Have Nothing to Lose But Your Sleep

By C. J. SKREEN

The battle for the late-night television audience was joined the past week with the premiere of the United Network's two-hour Las Vegas Show, hosted by Bill Dana.

TV's Jose Jimenez thus will compete head-on in many markets with the veteran Johnny Carson's N. B. C. Tonight Show and A. B. C.'s new Joey Bishop Show.

At stake are millions in sponsor revenue. (As anyone who has viewed these midnight gambols is aware the commercials come at such a rapid-fire pace that they almost obliterate the programs.)

No one expects either Bishop or Dana to bring down N. B. C.'s long-established Tonight Show, which has become pretty much of a nightly habit with millions of viewers. Still, a pretty fair case might be made out that one or the other of the newcomers has a good chance of survival.

THE NUMERICAL advantage in this battle is clearly with Carson: N. B. C. has cleared 70 or more stations to carry Carson than the 135 outlets A. B. C. could muster or the United Network's 127 for Dana. This disparity could prove crucial in the financial success of a show.

Then there is the difference in the personalities of the three head men. While Carson has been described as the "small-town wise-guy nephew" and Bishop as "the city boy with a night-club sense of humor," Dana might be characterized as a wistful, lost puppy who needs mothering.

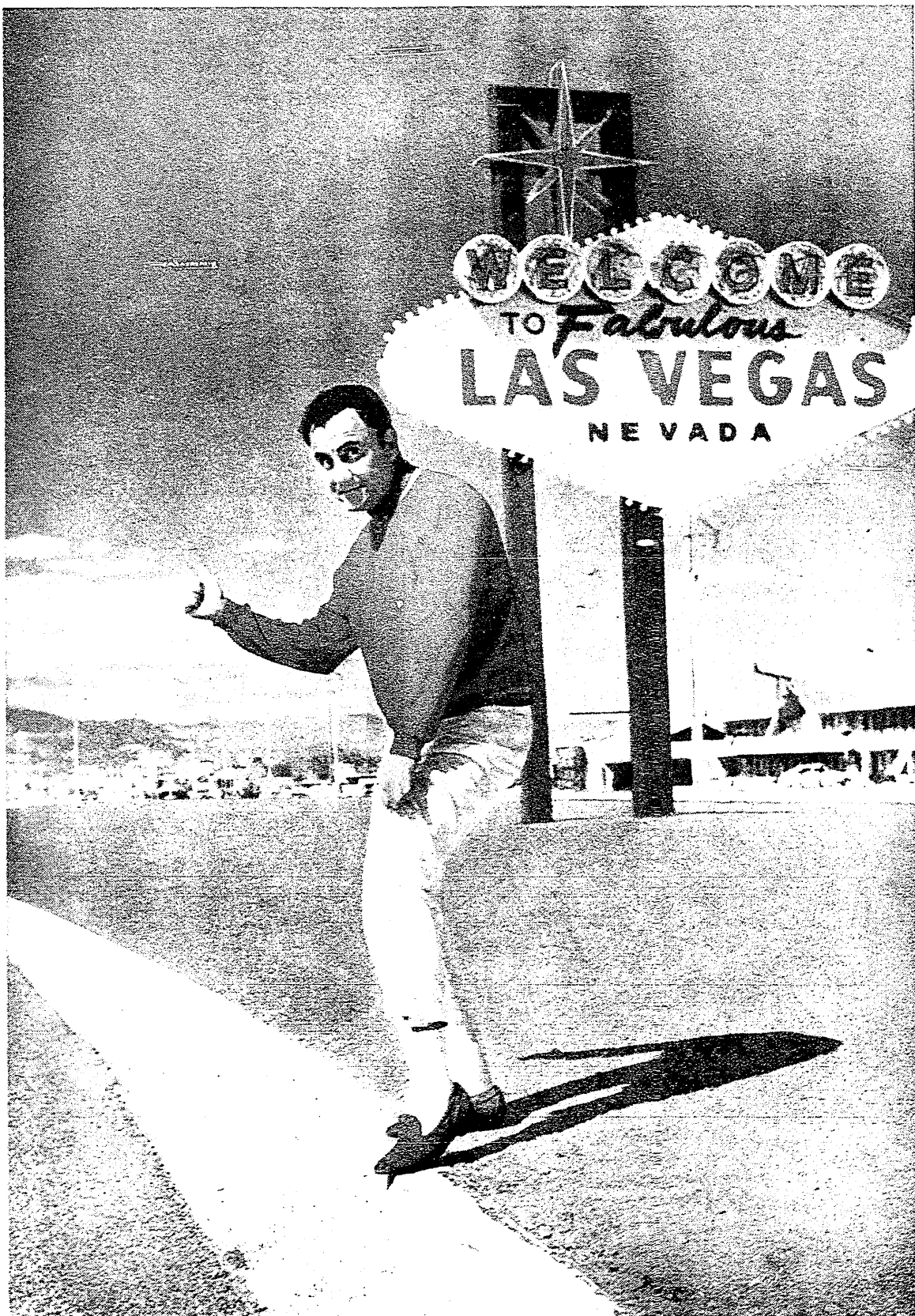
Based on his first-week performance, the forecast here is that Dana (unless the new United Network falls apart) will outlast Pal Joey in the night-owl sweepstakes. And it is noteworthy that on its opening telecast, Dana's show outpointed both Carson and Bishop in the New York audience ratings.

APART from a warmer personality (and Dana has the added asset of being a top-notch comedy writer), he has a distinct advantage over Bishop in that the Las Vegas Show is an altogether different kettle of entertainment from the lookalike Carson and Bishop programs.

On the telephone from Las Vegas shortly before his show's opening, Dana spoke of his imminent bow in "Sin City."

"I hate to let down all those girl-watchers out there, but we are not allowed any nude chorus girls on the show."

DANA'S fast-moving two-



hour cabaret revue is taped nightly at 1 a. m. for telecasting the next night. It is staged before an audience of 240 guests seated at tables in the theater-cafe room of the Hacienda Hotel. Pre-taped remote pickups are made at nine other Strip hotels (except the Sands, Caesar's Palace and the Flamingo, which refused to cooperate.)

Asked if he had any qualms about being able to maintain a talent-burning show of that magnitude and hold his audience, Dana

countered, "If we run out of talent we can fill the screen with Las Vegas' leading horticultural products—lemons, oranges and cherries—that should hold 'em."