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THE TUNESMITH: THE MUSICAL MUSICAL JOURNEY OF M.K. JEROME

A book for those who love The Golden Age of American Film, which starred James Cagney, Bette Davis, Barbara Stanwyck and Humphrey Bogart.

Gary May's *The Tunesmith* takes you from Tin Pan Alley early in the 20th Century to Hollywood when Warner Brothers first brought sound to the movies in 1929. After spending fourteen years writing hits on Tin Pan Alley, M.K. "Moe" Jerome was hired by Warner Brothers to write songs for their movies. His grandson, famed historian Gary May, tells his story filled with anecdotes about your favorite films from *Yankee Doodle Dandy* to *Casablanca*.



Required to write popular songs at a moment's notice, Jerome's life shows us what it was like to labor in the boiler room of one of the great studios, stoking the engines which allowed the production of hundreds of films every year from the 1930s through World War II, the Cold War and the 1950s. This account of one man's life sheds light on this important but overlooked chapter in Hollywood history.

His life also illustrates the dark side of the Golden Age of American film. Warner Brothers was as much a factory as was Ford and Armour, and treated their employees just as harshly. Moe's workload was often brutal. In 1937, during a single year, he wrote songs or music for 32 films of all kinds, comedies, dramas, westerns and romances. The stress produced by such daily activity led to frequent illnesses that often took him to the hospital.

The Tunesmith has already received acclaim from specialists in popular movies, culture, and politics: Leonard Maltin, film critic and historian writes, "I'm a sucker for stories of old-time show business, and this book has plenty of good ones. If you love Tin Pan Alley and the Golden Age of Film, you'll find a lot to enjoy in *The Tunesmith*."

Dahlia Lithwick, senior editor, *Slate*, and author of *Lady Justice: Women, the Law, and the Battle To Save America*: "Gary May's *The Tunesmith* brings to vivid life the sights and sounds... of M.K. Jerome, whose songs became a sort of time capsule for vivid American musical and cultural history. ..This is a beautifully researched and rendered story, not only about a moment in American history, but also a cherished relationship between a lifelong tunesmith and his grandson."

Jerry Beck, author of *The Warner Brothers Cartoons* (with Will Friedwald) and other works on American cartoon history: "As an animation historian, I'm so pleased to have such a wonderful resource to one of Warner Bros. most prolific songwriters, whose work by extension appears and is immortalized in so many Warner cartoon shorts. So many Jerome tunes are burned into

my brain, and the stories behind them are so wonderfully told. Gary May makes it as easy 'as rolling off a log.'"

Steven Bingen, author of *Warner Bros.: Hollywood's Ultimate Backlot*: "Years ago, I was tasked with inventorying boxes of old records in a dark corner of the Warner Brothers lot. I was completely astonished at how many song credits referenced the name of one M.K. Jerome. I finally know why, thanks to this tuneful, affectionate, and pitch-perfect look at the man, who, it turns out helped define the sound of that studio and of a full century of American popular music."

About the Author:



I was born and reared in a family of composers and writers. My grandfather, M.K. Jerome was a songwriter at Warner Brothers and a two time Oscar nominee for "Some Sunday Morning" (from "San Antonio") and "Sweet Dreams Sweetheart" (from "Hollywood Canteen"). My uncle, Stuart Jerome, was a veteran television writer from the 1950s until his death in 1983. He wrote for "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" and "The Fugitive."

Therefore, it seemed inevitable that I would become a writer.

Among my earlier works are the Allan Nevins Prize winning *China Scapegoat: The Diplomatic Ordeal of John Carter Vincent* (New Republic Books); *Un-American Activities: The Trials of William Remington* (Oxford University Press), selected by Alan Dershowitz for inclusion in his "Notable Trials" series. *The Informant: The FBI, the Klu Klux Klan, and the Murder of Viola Liuzzo* (Yale university Press), optioned for a television mini-series in 2023); *John Tyler: The American Presidency series* (Times Books); *Bending Toward Justice: the Voting Rights Act and the Transformation of American Democracy* (Basic Books), paperback edition, Duke University Press. Reviewed by The New Yorker, Washington Press, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Nation, Reviews in American History, Publishers Weekly, Booklist, Library Journal, African American Review, Bill Moyers and Company. *The Tunesmith: The Musical Journey of M.K. Jerome* (BearManorMedia)

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