

# The Ernie Kovacs Album





He once imagined a Times Square billboard that would properly describe him: “K-O-V-A-C-S . . . Z-A-N-Y . . . U-N-P-R-E-D-I-C-T-A-B-L-E” but admitted in the same cigar-swathed breath that opinions expressed by him were not necessarily. Observations spread by others about him read: “krazy,” “the last spontaneous man,” “King Leer,” “far-out” and “a once-in-a-lifetime comedian who succeeds by being simply his earthy, human self.”

Ernie Kovacs sure was. Ernie said and did a million not-your-every-day-run-of-the-mill-he-wouldn’t-dare things. “There isn’t anything that you can’t make fun of if you want to,” he believed. And saw nothing irrational about wanting to saw off a TV camera’s tripod while on the air. “Anyone who’s been in this business for longer than one guest shot has that urge.” He also wondered “what’s so eccentric about portraying a Chinese named Walter Puppybreath who sings ‘The Seagull’s Revenge’ while a happy stagehand drops two dozen eggs (one at a time) from a point above the singer’s head?”

There were a lot of other things dropped on an unsuspecting world. The offbeat comic took slanted shots at pomposity, the boring, the insanity of rules. He did it on radio, on TV, in the movies and day after day as he “shambled through life vainly attempting to cope with a world that is essentially copeless.”

He did it, too, in an endless variety of ways. He created a cast of whimsied characters who satirized contemporary life, i.e.—Wolfgang Sauerbraten, a German disc chockey (it used to be “von” but he dropped the “von” because Sauerbraten wasn’t that prosperous); Irving Wong, Chinese songwriter as well as president of the Square Wheel Rickshaw Company; Chuck Rustic, who played “whiz” football; Charlie Clod, an oh-so-clever Chinese detective; and more amazing more. He conducted wonderful in-depth interviews with such as “Howard, The World’s Strongest Ant”; told “fairly tales in French” (honest-to-God, that was a typo in a piece about him); kidded commercials—“Briefie Cigars—it’s a short, hot smoke.”

That was part of his routine when he was on radio and TV in Trenton and Philadelphia. When he left there in the Fifties, one writer remarked: “Anyone who travels from Philadelphia to New York is ahead of the game right there.”

He took on the absurdities of the world immediately—the trite was anathema, the idiocies were fair game. He once ended a show of his with “Thank you for letting me come into your living room. But it’s a shame you couldn’t clean it up a little.” Ernie admitted how planned his whole existence was, especially his shows. “Some of my scripts run to a total of maybe three or four words. (I use the fronts of envelopes. Lincoln used the backs. The difference begins there.)” They never ended.

He didn’t plan his death, either. Born January 23, 1919, he was killed in January 1962 (a week short of his 43rd birthday) when the car he was driving skidded into a telephone pole in Beverly Hills, California. In between, his addiction to poker and gin rummy was legendary. So was his cigar-smoking (20 at \$2 each day). Of course he said: “I used to be a chain smoker, but I gave it up because the chains were ruining my teeth.” He was married to Edie Adams, fathered three children (two by a prior wife), lived very high off the hog, never slept, won awards, did too many memorable things to even begin to squeeze the joys into this limited space.

This collection of bits and pieces of Kovacs’ World of Kraziness raises questions and drops them with a loud crash. He’d be upset at this attempt to put a “merry-mustached hellion” with more sides than a slaughterhouse on a two-sided disc. But listen to all that’s here:

. . . Albert Gridley, the molester, and his interview program.

. . . J. Walter Puppybreath and a bit of his philosophy.

. . . A heart-warming story of deep faith and man’s best friend or John C. Flick and his collie, Rex.

. . . Droongo—a Xmas game and how to play it. (He had written about it at length in *Mad* magazine in 1952, when the game was called Gringo. The name was changed, obviously, to protect the innocent.)

. . . John—more than a harp glissando, less than a double-entendre.

Also John was the name of his daughter Kippie’s pet turtle, who had developed a furry growth.

. . . Percy Dovetonsils’ readings—poetry to a pussycat, “Ode To An Emotional Italian Knight,” etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc.

. . . More Percy Dovetonsils. This time “Happy Birthday to a Bookworm,” and “Cowboy.” Percy Dovetonsils, who would always be found “Just Outside the Bookends.”

. . . Pierre Ragout, ze franch storyteller, with his tale of “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.”

. . . The Question Man explains science, doesn’t explain The Nairobi Trio, racketships and other things you don’t dare understand.

. . . Uncle Buddy and Let’s Take a Visit. This time it’s to Staten Island.

. . . Oddities in the News.

. . . Strangely Believe Its. (A sample, not included here: “Mrs. Arnold Frumkin of Liver Bile, Ark., raised a cat, a rat, a rattlesnake, and a racoon as pets in an apartment only 10 FEET SQUARE’ . . . Oddly enough, the animals got along very well, and shared Mrs. Frumkin equally . . . .”)

. . . And *Music*?

There was never any way to nail Ernie Kovacs down. The In-Groups used to say he was an acquired taste, like olives. Bullpippy! Just add salt and swallow. You’ll laugh yourself to death—and back.

Ernie Kovacs was an excess you’ll never get enough of. That’s how he did everything, and had his own favorite description of himself. It’s carved on his tombstone. It states: “Nothing In Moderation.”

He was zany.

. . . notes by Mort Goode

## Produced by Ted Joyce

Executive Producer: Bruce Lundvall

The tapes included in this package are from special collections, University Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

A J. & R. Production.

This is a mono recording.



SIDE ONE

**Tom Swift**

**J. Walter Puppybreath**

**Albert Gridley**

**World’s Strongest Man**

**Man’s Best Friend**

**Droongo**

**‘John’**

**Percy Dovetonsils**

**A. Ode To Stanley Pussycat**

**B. Ode To An Emotional Italian Knight**

SIDE TWO

**Mack The Knife**

**Percy Dovetonsils**

**A. Happy Birthday To A Bookworm**

**B. Cowboy**

**Strangely Believe It**

**Pierre Ragout**

**Question Man**

**Uncle Buddy**

**Oddities In The News**

**Closing: “I’ve Had It...Arrivederci”**

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**THE  
ERNIE KOVACS ALBUM**

PC 34250  
MONO

**SIDE 1**  
AL 34250  
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1. TOM SWIFT 5:18
2. J. WALTER PUPPYBREATH;  
ALBERT GRIDLEY 3:20
3. WORLD'S STRONGEST MAN; MAN'S BEST  
FRIEND 1:58
4. DROONGO; "JOHN" 4:26
5. PERCY DOVETONSILS  
(a) ODE TO STANLEY'S PUSSYCAT  
(b) ODE TO AN EMOTIONAL  
ITALIAN KNIGHT 6:36

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**THE  
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**SIDE 2**  
BL 34250  
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1. MACK THE KNIFE (Theme From "The Threepenny  
Opera") -B. Brecht - K. Weill - M. Blitzstein-  
PERCY DOVETONSILS: (a) HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO  
A BOOKWORM (b) COWBOY 4:32

2. STRANGELY BELIEVE ITS 1:10
3. PIERRE RAGOUT 6:10
4. MR. QUESTION MAN 2:49
5. UNCLE BUDDY 6:14
6. ODDITIES IN THE NEWS;  
CLOSING: "I'VE HAD IT...  
ARRIVEDERCI" 2:34

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