Swanee River

Don Ameche • Andrea Leeds • Al Jolson
"SWANEE RIVER," COLORFUL FILM BIOGRAPHY

Story of Stephen Foster, Great American Troubadour Comes to TV

Don Ameche, Al Jolson and Andrea Leeds Star in Drama
On Channel

One of the most colorful periods of American history—the days of minstrels and river boats—will be recaptured day at p.m., when Station presents the 20th Century-Fox National Telefilm Associates tv film release, "Swanee River," the story of Stephen C. Foster. Don Ameche is starred as the great American troubadour in this film which features Al Jolson singing Foster's songs.

In the South, Foster finds the great love of his life—Jane McDowell (Andrea Leeds)—who inspires "Jeannie With The Light Brown Hair." He also meets E. P. Cristy (Al Jolson), the minstrel man, who buys "Oh! Susanna!" and successfully introduces it to the public. But Foster is unable to make a living and feels he cannot marry the gently reared Jane. He takes to drink—but soon he and Christy both are winning fame and fortune from such songs as "De Camp-town Races" and "My Old Kentucky Home."

He then weds Jane and they live happily in New York. During the Civil War, the Southern themes of his songs cause him to be considered a traitor. Again Foster seeks solace in liquor and Jane leaves him. His new songs are rejected and disillusionment drives him lower and lower till Christy finds him in a Bowery saloon.

It is then he writes his best loved song "The Old Folks At Home" (Swanee River) before his untimely death.

Darryl F. Zanuck was in charge of production of "Swanee River" and the National Telefilm Associates tv film release was directed by Sidney Lanfield.

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New York Daily News:

20th Century-Fox has made an elaborate and eye-filling picture of Foster's brilliant rise and his degeneration into a morose and drunken misanthrope. Don Ameche gives an effective performance as the unhappy composer. Six or more of (Foster's) most famous tunes are sung in the film, with each given special production and setting. Al Jolson, as E.P. Cristy, makes the old minstrel man come alive again. He gives the character much of his own exuberant vitality and he puts over the old songs with all the showmanship at his command. Sidney Lanfield has made the most of the drama of Foster's sad decline. It is a touching story, one that long will be remembered by those who see it. 3 1/2 stars.

Variety:

...liberal spotting of eight Foster songs that are both familiar and popular. Jolson sings "Oh, Susanna!" "Camp-town Races" and "Swanee River" in minstrel show setting putting them over in showmanly presentations. His offering of "Swanee River" ... is dramatically impressive. Jolson gives out here as in the old days at the Winter Garden on Broadway. The Hall Johnson choir (singing) "Old Black Joe" is memorable in its setting and rendition. Jolson puts both voice and punch into the role of the minstrel man.

New York Post:

Al Jolson plays the part of E.P. Cristy, the black-face minstrel who introduced all of Foster's songs. Jolson is at fine and experienced a choice as could be found for such a role. He plays it with confidence and vigor. It is a nice picture with a lot of good and famous songs.

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SHORT TAKES

Cloth Quantity Makes Quality

Seventy-five yards of cloth went into the making of the three petticoats worn by Andrea Leeds in "Swanee River," to be seen day at p.m., on Station, Channel. Twenty-five to thirty yards of material were required for each of her dresses and suits. As Stephen Foster's bride, Andrea has 24 complete changes of costume in the film which gives her the distinction of wearing more material than any 20th Century-Fox star had ever worn before.

Ameche Acquires Accomplishments

In order to portray Stephen Foster in "Swanee River," this day's presentation on Station, Channel at p.m., Don Ameche had to acquire an odd variety of accomplishments. So versatile was Foster that Ameche, already a splendid singer and pianist, had to learn to whistle, dance a buck-and-wing, play a violin and to box.

Song Title in an Atlas

Research for "Swanee River," the dramatization of Stephen Foster's life to be seen day at p.m., on Channel, Station, revealed that one of America's best-loved songs, "Old Folks At Home," might have begun "Way down upon the Pedee River...", or "Way down upon the Yazoo River..." Foster wrote the song about the "Pedee" but he didn't like that name. He asked his brother to suggest the name of a two syllable Southern River and got "Yazoo." Finally, he went to an atlas, found the Suwanee River in Florida and shortened it for his song. He never saw the river.

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HIGHLIGHT LISTING

While writing the familiar melodies which embody the heart of America, Stephen Foster struggled for success and knew a great love. After the country's minstrel king began to introduce his songs, he won fame and fortune only to find disillusionment when the public rejected his songs during the Civil War because of the Southern themes.

Don Ameche, Al Jolson, Andrea Leeds, Hall Johnson Choir.
SYNOPSIS

Those colorful days of minstrels and river boats... when a stormy love wrote the songs America took to its heart forever!

IN TECHNICOLOR!

SWANEE RIVER

The Story of Stephen C. Foster, the Great American Troubadour!

with

Don Ameche, Andrea Leeds, Al Jolson, Felix Bressart, Chick Chandler, Russell Hicks, and Hall Johnson Choir

CAST

Stephen Foster.................. Don Ameche
Jane.............................. Andrea Leeds
E. P. Christy.................... Al Jolson
Henry Kleber.................... Felix Bressart
Bones............................ Chick Chandler
Andrew McDowell.............. Russell Hicks
Old Joe......................... George Reed
Hall Johnson Choir........... Themselves
Tom Harper..................... Richard Clarke
Marion Foster................... Diane Fisher
Pond............................. Charles Halton
Ambrose......................... George Breakstone
Tambo............................ Al Herman
Mr. Foster...................... Charles Trowbridge
Henry Foster.................... George Meeker
Mrs. Foster...................... Leona Roberts
Morrison Foster................ Charles Tanneu
Erwin......................... Harry Hayden
Mrs. Griffin.................... Clara Blandick
Mrs. McDowell................ Nella Walker
Temperance Woman............. Esther Dale

CREDITS

Darryl F. Zanuck, in Charge of Production
Directed by...................... Sidney Lanfield
Associate Producer............. Kenneth Macgowan
Screen Play by................. John Taintor Foote and Philip Dunne
Photographed in Technicolor

SYNOPSIS

To Louisville, Kentucky, a city gay with the color of minstrels and river boats, comes Stephen C. Foster (Don Ameche). Here is a young man, outwardly blithe and carefree, inwardly consumed with love of music—the man who, out of his stormy, exciting life, is destined to set the heart of America to music.

Completely enchanted by the songs of the Negroes at work and play, he dreams of getting the mood of this marvelous music down on paper. In the South, he also finds the great love of his life—beautiful Jane McDowell (Andrea Leeds), the inspiration for his famous "Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair."

Foster sells "Oh! Susanna!" outright for $15 to E. P. Christy (Al Jolson), the minstrel man, who successfully introduces it to the public and who makes a small fortune out of it.

Meanwhile, Foster, unable to make a living, feels he cannot marry the genteely-reared Jane. Despondent, he turns to the saloon of liquor—but soon he and Christy are both winning fame and fortune from such songs as "De Camptown Races" and "My Old Kentucky Home."

He hurries back to reclaim his beloved Jane. He finds her about to marry another suitor and carries her off in her wedding dress.

The happy couple settle in New York and the success of his matchless songs brings them comfort and happiness.

But his failure at a more serious type of music turns the erratic troubadour to drink again. Jane loves and forgives him, however, even though he is not with her when their daughter is born.

Then comes the Civil War. The Southern themes of his songs cause him to be considered a traitor. Again Foster seeks the solace of drink—and this time Jane leaves him.

All his new songs are rejected. Loneliness and disillusionment drive him lower and lower, until Christy finds him playing the piano in a Bowery saloon. Jane returns to him and, encouraged, he writes his greatest song, "The Old Folks at Home (Swanee River)."

A hostile audience assembles to greet Christy's introduction of the new song with hisses... At that very moment the troubadour is seized with a heart attack in his shabby room and dies—peniless and forgotten. The announcement of his death silences the audience and, their hatred swept away, they are deeply moved by the true greatness of the song and of its composer.
10 seconds
The story of Stephen Foster starring Don Ameche and Al Jolson has been made into stirring entertainment for you in SWANEE RIVER ____________ day at _______________ p.m. over this station.

10 seconds
You'll enjoy listening to songs which have been on America's hit parade for ninety years ____________ day at ______________ p.m. when this station presents SWANEE RIVER, the life of Stephen Foster.

20 seconds
One of the most colorful periods of American History—the days of the minstrels and river boats—will be recaptured ____________ day at ______________ p.m. when this station presents SWANEE RIVER, the story of Stephen Foster. Don Ameche stars as America's greatest troubadour and Al Jolson will be seen as the minstrel king who sings Foster's unforgettable songs and plays an important role in his life. Don't miss the colorful and vivid romance of Stephen C. Foster.

20 seconds
America's most beloved and famous music and the story of the man who wrote it comes to this station ____________ day at ______________ p.m. when Don Ameche stars as Stephen Foster in SWANEE RIVER. His inspired, but unstable temperament, first brought him success and finally disillusionment and despair. As the minstrel king who introduced Foster's songs to the public, Al Jolson sings with vigor and style which are unparalleled.

SLIDE
This 2"x2" promotion slide or telop is available free of charge four weeks prior to playdate. Order by number from the NTA Promotion Department in New York.
SHOWMANSHIP

Exploitation Tips to Build Audiences and Help Garner High Ratings for Your Telecast of "Swanee River"

Get your school and public library to make up a display of books and articles relating to the life of Stephen C. Foster. The music department of your school and library can garnish the book display with Foster music.

If your local high-school orchestra or glee club gives weekly or monthly concerts in the school auditorium, interest the faculty head in devoting a night to Stephen Foster music. In reciprocity you might supply programs (with telecast plug) for the concert.

Foster was born on July 4, 1826 and Independence Day of 1957 is the 131st anniversary of his birth. The music editor of your tv station and your radio station might be interested in arranging an interesting program tracing Stephen Foster’s influence on American music in commemoration of his birthdate.

If scheduling permits, it would be appropriate to show "Swanee River" on July 4. In connection with the anniversary of Stephen Foster’s birth, your local music leaders and directors of civic orchestras might be willing to stage a "Stephen Foster Night." Since Foster’s music is considered typically American, the July 4 concerts should include some of his songs in their patriotic salute.

The romance and costuming of this period in American history readily lends "Swanee River" to street ballyhoo. Place several girls dressed in crinolines in an open carriage which tours the town. Picture and telecast date could be marked on their parasols. Same girls also might be used as herald distributors.

If you are fortunate enough to telecast this film in or near one of these cities where there is a Stephen Foster memorial, you can line up local cultural groups and get extra newspaper breaks if you use showmanship!

Pittsburgh, Pa.—
Foster’s birthplace at 3600 Penn Ave.
Stephen C. Foster Memorial Association
Building at University of Pittsburgh.
Foster is buried at Allegheny, Pa.
Statue in Highland Park.

Athens, Pa.—
Library has a bronze plaque.

Baltimore, Md.—
Foster visited Edgar Allan Poe’s grave on his honeymoon.

Bardstown, Ky.—
State memorial home named after “My Old Kentucky Home.”

Indianapolis, Ind.—
Stephen Collins Foster Public School.

Cincinnati, Ohio—
Foster worked at 4 Casilly’s Row.
Bust of Foster in Cincinnati Music Hall.
University of Cincinnati has a Foster Memorial Room and Guilford School has plaque.

Fletcher, N.C.—
Memorial plaque in local churchyard.

Frankfort, Ky.—
Statue of State Capitol.
Historical Society has bust of Foster.

Fargo, Ga.—
Source of Swanee River.
Foster Statue.

Rochester, N. Y.—
Eastman School of Music has a Foster Hall.

Florida—
"Old Folks At Home" is a state song.

STILLS

Order your 8” x 10” glossy photos four weeks prior to playdate from the NTA Promotion Department in New York. Additional star heads and production shots are available on request for special promotions.
TV's BEST...TONIGHT

Colorful, exciting days of minstrels and river boats... when a stormy love put America's heart to music!

Swanee River

The Story of Stephen C. Foster, the Great American Troubadour

Don AL ANDREA AMECE LEEDS JOLSON
FELIX BRESSART - CHICK CHANDLER
RUSSELL HICKS - GEORGE REED

WXXX channel 00
TONIGHT at 0:00

TV's BEST...TONIGHT

When America put its heart to music in the songs born of a great and stormy love!

Swanee River

The Story of Stephen C. Foster, the Great American Troubadour

DON AL ANDREA AMECE LEEDS JOLSON
FELIX BRESSART - CHICK CHANDLER
RUSSELL HICKS - GEORGE REED
HALL JOHNSON CHOIR
A 30th Century Fox Picture

WXXX channel 00
TONIGHT at 0:00

One-column and two-column ad mats, as well as other sizes, are available to assist you in promoting and merchandising this fine feature. Order by number, four weeks prior to playdate from the NTA Promotion Department in New York. Cooperation in creating special layouts will be readily extended by our Art Department.