

Bringing In The New Year With Guy Lombardo

Gaetano Alberto "Guy" Lombardo (June 19, 1902 – November 5, 1977) was a Canadian-American bandleader and violinist of Italian descent. Forming The Royal Canadians in 1924 with his brothers Carmen, Lebert, and Victor, and other musicians from his hometown, Lombardo led the group to international success, billing themselves as creating "the sweetest music this side of Heaven". The Lombardos are believed to have sold between 100 and 300 million phonograph records during their lifetimes, many featuring the band's long time lead singer, Kenny Gardner. In 1938, Lombardo became a naturalized citizen of the United States.

Lombardo is remembered for almost a half-century of New Year's Eve big band remotes, first on radio, and then on television. Lombardo's orchestra played at the Roosevelt Grill in the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City from 1929 ("radio's first nationwide New Year's eve broadcast") to 1959, and from then until 1976 at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. Live broadcasts (and later telecasts) of their performances were a major part of New Year's celebrations across North America; millions of people watched the show with friends at house parties. Because of this popularity, Lombardo was called "Mr. New Year's Eve".

The band's first New Year's Eve radio broadcast was in 1928; within a few years, they were heard live on the CBS Radio Network before midnight Eastern Time, then on the NBC Radio Network after midnight. On December 31, 1956, the Lombardo band did their first New Year's TV special on CBS; the program (and Lombardo's 20 subsequent New Year's Eve TV shows) included a live segment from Times Square showcasing the arrival of the New Year. During the early years, pioneer broadcast journalist Robert Trout reported from Times Square; in later years, another longtime newsman, Ben Grauer, reported from Times Square, though Grauer worked for NBC.



While CBS carried most of the Lombardo New Year's specials, there were a few years in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the special was syndicated live to individual TV stations instead of being broadcast on a network.

By the middle 1970s, the Lombardo TV show was facing competition, especially for younger viewers, from Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve, but Lombardo remained popular among viewers, especially older ones. Even after Lombardo's death, the band's New Year's specials continued for two more years on CBS. Their recording of the song still plays as the first song of the new year in Times Square.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guy_Lombardo]