

# A Not-So-Funny Thing Happened To Mort Sahl on Way to Opening

By JACK ROBBINS

This ought to be a funny story, but it isn't.

Mort Sahl, the irreverent night club and TV writer, who once earned \$400,000 a year, then drifted into partial eclipse, will probably make his next public appearance in a New York court room.

Michael Brandman, producer of "An Evening with Mort Sahl," which was scheduled to begin previews last night, and which didn't, says he will sue the comedian for breach of contract.

## Show Dead

Sahl and Brandman agree only on the obvious fact that the show didn't open last night, and with Sahl suddenly back in Hollywood.

It's not going to open any time soon.

Brandman says the show is dead, and adds that he will never again become involved in a production with Sahl—except in court. Sahl says he hopes the show will open, "it's worth doing and I'm willing to do it."

Brandman claims that Sahl violated an agreement to provide all the material for a two-hour show, either alone or with other actors.

Sahl replies that "constant in-

terference from the producer," kept the show from being ready.

"I don't want to wrap myself in the flag but I'm not going on stage with a show that isn't ready," he said.

According to Sahl, Brandman fired the three actors who Sahl had brought with him from California. Brandman says he fired them at Sahl's insistence.

"He thought they had betrayed him," Brandman said.

"The producer told me I couldn't satirize Lindsay," Sahl claims. "Not true," says Brandman.

There was squabble over a stenographer.

## Surprise Party

Sahl says he was never notified of a technical rehearsal last Wednesday night. Brandman says he was. Sahl didn't show and there was no rehearsal.

Elaine May, production supervisor of the show, said through

a spokesman that "Brandman's story is true."

The incident is another setback in the career of Sahl, a man once hailed as the brightest comedian of all.

Sahl was fired by WNEW-TV for an alleged breach of contract. He was fined by Actors Equity for alleged breach of contract. His income has fallen by more than 90 per cent.

Sahl has said he believes there is a conspiracy to silence him. Some believe his troubles stem from a change in public taste.

Brandman said yesterday that while he intends to sue Sahl for recovery of substantial damages—he claims to have lost \$20,000 on the production—"He is the most brilliant performer, the best stand-up comic in the country. It's a shame that he . . . well that's all I'll say. It's a shame."