

# Collector's Corner



Number 19 September 1979 \$1.25



Illustrated by Dave Warren

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- "The Private Eye, from Print to Television"
- "Beyond Nostalgia: American Radio as a Field of Study"
- "Radio's Debt to Vaudeville"
- "Black Pride and Protest: The Amos n' Andy Crusade of 1931"
- "Radio's Home Folks, Vic & Sade: A Study in Aural History"
- "The Armed Forces Radio Service's Education Unit in World War II: An Interview with Erik Barnouw"
- "Government Propaganda in Commercial Radio--The Case of Treasury Star Parade, 1942-1943"
- "Women Radio Pioneers"
- "Daytime Radio Programming for the Homemaker, 1926-1956"
- "Critic from Within: Fred Allen Views Radio"
- "Soake Carter, Radio Commentator"
- "The Bad Boy of Radio: Henry Morgan and Censorship"
- "Radio Drama: No Need for Nostalgia in Kalamazoo"
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Each copy of THE CATALOG is complete with an index of all programs.



## Collector's Comments from Joe Webb

Hi! It's my time again to ramble on about OTR, CC, the convention, and the like!

Our July issue was jinxed from the start. No matter how much we tried to have everything done on time, some roadblock got in the way. We were indeed sorry for the delay. August was published fairly on time and this issue should be better. October will be pretty early (considering our schedules of late).

At present we have a slight backlog of articles which eases preparation of CC greatly. Many times we have been caught short and an article would come in unannounced and Bob Burnham and I would have a great sigh of relief. But now we are working to get CC on a schedule where it is mailed on the first of the month of which the issue is dated.

And we're also planning lots of other changes for CC, all of which will become definite when Bob and I meet in person (for the first time ever) at the convention. It looks like CC will become BIGGER and BETTER with many of the changes we've got up our collective sleeve. Our November or December issues will have all the details.

It's time to plug the convention again (ad and update are in this issue) and also to remind you to vote for the collector of your choice for the Allen Rockford Memorial Award to be presented at the convention (details also in this issue).

I've also got two more items to plug before moving on to other business: the course I'm teaching at Elizabeth Seton College in Yonkers and also the OTR Directory, details located somewhere in this issue of CC.

Do you remember my editorial in the July CC? That was the one where I expressed my dislike for the practice of many dealers to shield their customers from knowledge of trading and the rest of the hobby. I've heard from fans (in agreement with me) but have yet to hear from dealers. I was hoping to strike a few nerves, but guess I was unsuccessful. Oh well.

Personally, things are quite hectic. I'm beginning my second semester of graduate school and am taking

only one course, everybody's favorite, STATISTICS! So if you see me walking around in a daze, that may be the reason. So for the next few months, I'll be talking about correlation, regression, chi-square, normal distributions, probability. Fun.

Also, my wedding is in a few weeks. If anyone asks you why newlyweds smile alot after they're married, the answer that is correct is that there's no more planning, no more deposits, no more shopping, no more fittings, no more deliveries, etc. The apartment is finally getting into shape. The only things I'm waiting for is the sofa and my wife. Delivery on both is promised shortly. After the wedding, things should be quiet enough for me to resume the favorite part of the hobby---to me, that is---and that's trading. It really feels strange not having made a real trade for a tleast five months now. At first, the vacation from taping is really appreciated. Then new material to listen to slowly erodes and you find yourself listening to soap operas, newsbroadcasts, anything to stay busy!

I'll be normal again soon. I hope.

Joe



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**Collector's Corner  
presents...**

## Charlie McCarthy in 1937

by Frank Thomas

1937 was a pretty interesting year for one particular radio comedian. At a height of 38 inches and tipping the scales at a mere 40 pounds, he certainly wasn't the "biggest" star on the air. But Charlie McCarthy was very big on radio just the same.

Charlie and creator Edgar Bergen first appeared on radio with Rudy Vallee on December 16, 1937 and proved such a popular act that they were brought back again and again. When Chase and Sanborn coffee gave them their own show, the quickly topped the popularity polls. A quick note about the polls...If you were to say that Jack Benny or Amos 'n Andy were the most popular programs in 1937, you'd also be right. Charlie's was the most popular one-hour show, Jack's the favorite half-hour, and the top spot for quarter hour programs went to Amos 'n Andy.

When it came to clothes, Charlie was no slob. Although he was originally dressed in overalls and cap, the Charlie McCarthy we best remember was dressed in tails. In 1937, the public was given the full rundown of the McCarthy wardrobe. It included: Two carnations, one tail suit, one camel's hair coat, one beret, one mess jacket, one silk cumberbund, one silk scarf, four dress shirts, two white ties, one black tie, one monocle, one wing collar (size 11½) ...and to round off this list of things you could really live without, Charlie's shoe size is 2AAA. Oh yes, he didn't wear socks.

By November of 1937, the Charlie McCarthy show had hit the top of the polls and was nine points ahead of the second place show, Major Bowes. And the McCarthy brashness and wit was also becoming quite evident.

Here's a note from the New York Times of July 10, 1937:

Make not mistake about it, he is a bad egg. And his personality is developing so rapidly that even Mr. Bergen is losing control of him, and week by week has less and less to say for himself.

As you might expect, Charlie got into his share of trouble in 1937 as well.

In September, singer-comedianne Judy Canova broke off her engagement to Bergen because she didn't want to "play second fiddle to a dummy." Apparently, Charlie was taking up more of Bergen's attention than Miss Canova. But after all, Edgar had known Charlie for 17 years by then. A guy's gotta have some friends, right?

Then, as the year was drawing to a quiet close, Charlie did it again. This time his accomplice was Mae West.

On December 18, Edgar, Charlie, Miss West and Don Ameche were part of a skit about Adam and Eve. The script was harmless enough and the censors let it go. It wasn't the script exactly that got people upset, but the way Mae West read her part. Her breathy references to "swivel hips" and "that pulpitatin' python" were a bit too much for the millions of listeners back in 1937. Before the show was off the air, NBC was already being hit by the first waves of protest.

Complaints came in from all over the country. Manhattan College students called the skit "smutty suggestiveness and horrible blasphemy." The Catholic News editorialized that the show had "descended into the mire." And then there was the letter from the FCC. It had received so many complaints, it finally ordered NBC to provide a transcription of the skit, and a list of all the stations that broadcast it.

Meanwhile, apologies were coming from everywhere. A spokesman for the agency that handled the Chase & Sanborn account wrote to NBC expressing his regret over the incident and reaffirmed the purpose of the show was to "afford wholesome entertainment." NBC agreed with the statement in a letter of their own. A statement of apology was even read on the next Chase and Sanborn program.

Mae West got the worst of the whole incident. She was banned from the airwaves of NBC. As a matter of fact, NBC announced it wouldn't even allow the mention of her name over its 15 owned and operated stations.

All this hoopla didn't seem to affect young Charlie, however. He and Edgar held on to their lead in the polls of one-hour programs throughout the next year.

Like I said, 1937 was a very interesting year for Charlie McCarthy.

#### A PROJECT: MONITOR AMPLIFIER FOR ANY TAPE DECK

A schematic for a small amplifier with bass, treble and volume controls is available from Bob Burnham, 17173 Westbrook, Livonia, MI 48152. The amplifier has a power output of approximately 10 watts, and implements two very common vacuum tubes in the circuit. Cost of construction is about \$30.00. There is no charge for the schematic/parts list, but please send a self addressed stamped envelope.

The amplifier is excellent for headphones OR speakers. Two may be constructed on one chassis for stereo, or with some minor additions to the circuit, the power output may be increased.



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## **HOLIDAY INN - BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT**

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Convention opens at 9:00 AM with dealers room of over 30 tables, where radio memorabilia can be purchased, traded, or just admired.

OTHER EVENTS: Sound Effects, Acting, and Writing Workshops; Trivia Contest with prizes; The Shadow Scrapbook--how it was compiled by editor Anthony Tollin with lots of history of the Shadow series; Raymond (Your Host) Edward Johnson reads a SCARY STORY; Movies; Radio Shows performed by the guests; Meet and Mingle with the guests; Sound Processing in OTR and Video Collecting Workshops; Evening Events include cocktail hour, dinner, radio shows, awards.

Tickets for the entire day are \$16 which includes all events and the buffet dinner. Children under 16 are charged \$13.50. Participation for afternoon events only is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children under 16.

HOW TO GET THERE: Just about an hour from New York, off I-95, Exit 27A, Bridgeport-Lafayette Ave. exit; by train, take the New Haven line from Grand Central Station in New York City to Bridgeport--hotel is about five blocks from Bridgeport station; from airports (LaGuardia and Kennedy) take Connecticut Limousine which leaves every hour (costs around \$15 per person one way) to Bridgeport Holiday Inn.

Send checks to: JAY HICKERSON, Box C, Orange, CT 06477 (203)795-6261

DEALERS! Tables are free! RESERVE NOW!

Jay Hickerson and Joseph Webb, Co-Chairman  
This is a not-for-profit convention.



## Technical Tips

# Signal Processing with the DBX Unit

How it works, what it can do by Bob Burnham

The DBX system is a very sophisticated piece of equipment which operates on some very basic principles, which are very difficult to understand if you do not understand some of the basics of dynamic range. I cannot say one word about the DBX before a very rough overview of what dynamic range is, and how it can be manipulated (this is basically what the DBX does).

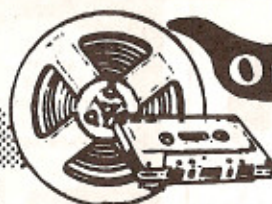
Dynamic range in general terms, is the difference between loud and soft. You can see it on your VU meters on your tape recorder. If a certain passage is averaging about 40% on the meter and at another passage, it is "in the red" at 125%, this is pretty "wide" dynamic range. The measurement between the lowest part of a recording, and the very highest peak on the meters is the dynamic range. The amount of equalization (bass, midrange, treble etc.) is not a factor, although generally heavy bass will influence your meter readings if no processing is done to the signal. A very narrow or limited dynamic range is one where your meter remains, for example, between 80 and 100% during ALL passages. Many radio stations in processing their audio to maintain high modulation over the air will restrict their dynamic range in this way. This is especially true of AM stations. The reasons they do this are to make their station sound louder than everyone else (supposedly, this attracts listeners), and on AM, to keep the modulation above the noise level characteristic with AM. Some stations will go to extremes, however. If you watch their modulation level on your tape recorder you will notice that their is almost NO movement at all. You set it on 100%, and it NEVER moves!

There are three basic concepts to understand which involve manipulation of dynamic range. They are expansion, limiting and compression.

Expansion is increasing your dynamic range, or increasing the measurement between the lowest part and the highest peaks. Limiting is limiting the dynamic range by setting a certain "ceiling level" for your highest peaks. In other words, you can run your signal through a limiter and all levels will be unaffected unless they go above a certain point. Your lower passages will still be low, your moderately high passages will still be moderately high, but your peaks will be only at one level, and no higher. This type of processing can be very useful in tape recording if not used to excess, and is a legal requirement of all broadcast stations. A limiter will keep your levels from going above 100%, if that's what you desire, but a limiter will not "ride gain" if used properly.

Compression is automatic gain control. A compressor will have an affect on your program level, regardless of how low or high it is. It will ride gain. No matter how strong or weak a signal you put into a compressor, it will always come out at the same level. In other words, if you feed a signal in that varies between, say 20 and 95% on your VU meter, your compressor will restrict that dynamic range to possibly between 80 and 100% or 90 and 100% or 80 and 125%. whatever you want it to do. If you use enough compression you can have your signal "sit" right at 100% with little or no fluctuation, even though you might put in a signal ranging from maybe 10% all the way up to 130% on your meter. Listening to music with this much compression can be very tiresome because their are no soft passages, there are no loud passages, everything is just flat. You can easily hear this effect if you hear a record on a heavily compressed AM station, then you play the same record on your home turntable. This is compression. Its uses in the OTR hobby are limited, but understanding what it is is a factor in understanding the DBX.

I own two DBX 118 units. The reason I own two I shall explain later. The DBX can perform all of the above described functions, and can be adjusted in many many different ways so various



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combinations of the above functions may be obtained, yet there are only two adjustments on the model 118, and one button (incidentally, they do not have ON/OFF switches, so that's not what the button does!). There are also two lights on the unit (LED's actually). The controls are: 1. Threshold adjustment and 2...expansion/compression ratio. The "button" determines whether the unit is in "linear" mode or "above threshold" mode. Setting the expansion/compression ratio control right in the center makes the unit inactive, as if you didn't have anything connected in the circuit. Turning the knob to the left increases the limiting/compression ratio, turning the knob to the right increases the expansion ratio. The "button" mentioned when pushed into the "linear" mode causes the unit to process your incoming signal regardless of how loud or soft it is. In the "above threshold" mode, the DBX will not have any effect on the signal until it reaches a certain level. This is where the threshold adjustment knob comes into play. It determines at which level the DBX will begin processing the signal. In other words, if the incoming signal is kept below a certain level, the DBX will have no effect on the signal. The flashing lights mentioned, show when the unit is above or below that threshold...in other words, when the unit is working and when it isn't. When the button is pressed into linear mode, the DBX is always working. To use the unit as an expander, you

would send the button in either linear or above threshold, then adjust the expansion/compression ratio to the desired level. To use as a peak limiter, the button would be run in "above threshold" position, with the expansion/compression ratio set to a moderate amount of compression. If you want compression, you either run the button in linear mode and adjust for compression desired, or run the button in the opposite position and turn the threshold adjustment up to a very high position.

The big question is how can the DBX be used to improve the quality of old radio shows? The DBX can be made to reduce the noise level of shows by increasing dynamic range. On radio shows, there are short pauses between spoken words. During these pauses, there is nothing but tape hiss, disk noise and who knows what else. The DBX can be adjusted in such a way so that the signal--the overall program level--is reduced to an extremely low level during these "pauses." It is somewhat time consuming to adjust, and varies from program to program, but the end result is quite an improvement. The tricky part of the procedure is adjusting it so you can't hear the unit working. If you can hear the hiss level go up and down with the talking on the tape, you know you've got too much processing going on. It is also true the DBX will only help reduce hiss to a certain point. If the show has enough hiss or noise, the DBX may only make it worse--everytime you hear talking, the hiss and noise will be brought right back up with what you want. In other words, the DBX doesn't know the difference between noise and desirable sound. For this reason, it is to your advantage to use the DBX in conjunction with a good equalizer. When using the DBX to improve the noise level with radio shows, you would operate it with controls set for expansion. As you will recall from earlier in this article, I said expansion is increasing your dynamic range. This means your meters will be fluctuating a great deal more than they would be without DBX processing. As a matter of fact, they might be fluctuating too much, causing peaks to over-saturate your tape very easily. Sure, you could set your meters lower, but remember also, expansion means increasing your dynamic range, which means not only loud passages will be louder, BUT quiet passages quieter. This would mean even lower readings on your VU meters, which would result in increased tape hiss, especially with no Dolby system used.

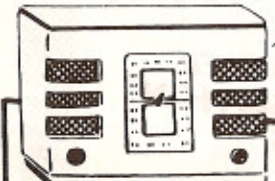
This is where the second DBX unit comes into play. I used a second DBX as a peak limiter to avoid over-modulation. But it must be used conservatively to avoid hiss levels going up and down with your modulation. This again is somewhat critical, but the end result is quite nice.

A recommended combination for upgrading sound on OTR is to feed your signal into an equalizer, out of the equalizer go into one DBX set to expand (this is the one doing most of the work), then feed to a second DBX for peak limiting to keep your levels from going too much "into the red."

I have owned mine for well over a year and have been more than happy with what I've been able to do with them. Again,

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 ASSIGNMENT.**

**'MR. PRESIDENT' SHOW IN 1947.  
 © SHERWOOD AND OWEN 1976 WERE YOU THERE?**

as Joe mentioned in an earlier article, still, nothing beats a close to source, well dubbed transcription copy, and certainly, don't expect miracles from the DBX--it can only do so much. If you have a collection with only fair to very good sounding programs, don't expect this unit to give you excellent sound...but it sure helps.

The cost? List price is \$225.00 per unit. I paid \$175.00 each, if you're shopping around.



# SUSPENSE

=SUSPENSE 1961=

Date	Title	Stars
6/25	Call Me At Half Past	Elspeth Eric
7/2	Night of the Storm	Rosemary Rice
7/9	Epitaph	Paul McGrath
7/16	The Man Who Knew How to Hate	Joan Lorrington
7/23	Stranger with My Face	Bernard Grant
7/30	You Can Die Laughing	Larry Haines
8/6	Bells	Rosemary Rice
8/13	PRE-EMPTED	
8/20	Murder is a Matter of Opinion	Paul Meador
8/27	Sold to Satan	Kermit Merdock
9/3	Juvenile Rebellion	Court Benson
9/10	PRE-EMPTED	
9/17	The Green Idol	Parker Fennelly
9/24	The Man in the Fog	Robert Dryden
10/1	No Hiding Place	Court Benson
10/8	Dreams	Phillip Sterling
10/15	Seeds of Disaster	Bernard Grant
10/22	Witness to Murder	Joan Lorrington
10/29	Death of an Old Flame	Larry Haines
11/5	Till Death Do Us Part	Sam Gray
11/12	Imposters	Reynold Osbourne
11/19	The Black Door	Robert Readick
11/26	Man Trap	Don McLaughlin
12/3	Luck of the Tiger Eye	Joan Lorrington
12/10	And So To Sleep My Love	William Redfield
12/17	Yuletide Miracle	Larry Haines
12/24	PRE-EMPTED	
12/31	The Old Man	Leon Janney

NEXT ISSUE: SUSPENSE is complete!



## News from the past by Ed Carr

Before I begin my column this issue, I thought I'd make mention of a few things. Where I list shows being broadcast on certain dates at certain times, I am using all the available information I can lay my hands on. I do not have access to say, NBC broadcast logs, so I could be off on some. But I feel these shows are of general interest and I believe the readership would like to know what was being presented back then. A good point here to make would be on Saturday July 15, 1939, NBC broadcast Arch Oboler's Plays--"Three Brides." This was a story of a prize fighter who becomes involved in a triple romance during his brief knockout from an anesthetic administered in the operating room. This show was not broadcast yet it was listed in the Radio Guide for the week ending Friday, July 21. Who knows why it was changed and where the script went to. One reason this happened could be that Radio Guide went to press at least one week in advance of the broadcast dates.. Another might be late censorship.

So to sum it all up, I try to get as close as possible to complete accuracy with the information I have, but if you notice I've slipped up, drop me a postcard.

Bessie Mae Mucho of the Abbott & Costello Show and Mayor La Trivia of the Fibber McGee & Molly program have a special something together. Bessie Mae is Virginia Gordon and the Mayor is Gale Gordon, man and wife.

Dick Powell, a favorite radio sleuth, is taking his role seriously. He's involved in a criminal psychology class at U.C.L.A.

I keep coming up with Tom Shirley as playing Jack Atmstrong in Chicago. Shirley, you know, played father Aldrich. Can anyone give light on this?

In 1939, Chicago was the origin of the country's most popular serials. Out of the top five, four came from Chicago. Ma Perkins was #1, The Guiding Light was #2, #3 was Pepper Young's Family, Mary Marlin was #4, and in the #5 position was the Woman in White. The first four were sponsored by a soap company--Procter & Gamble.

Frank Black, musical director of NBC, was originally sole pianist for a company manufacturing rolls for player pianos. Because the firm could afford only one pianist, Black worded under 40 different names.

Cousin Cassie of ABC's The Sheriff, was asked to join 24 women's political clubs in four months. Only catch is that Cousin Cassie isn't a woman. The role was portrayed by Olyn Landick.

Gene Autry just missed being a ballplayer by a margin of \$50.00. He played pro ball back in the mid 1920's, and was offered a job with the Texas league, but the money involved was only \$100.00 a month. It was \$50.00 less than what he was earning as a telegraph operator.

Kate Smith received a citation commending her radio work in war and peace. It honored her as the 1000th member of the Radio Association of Women Directors.

When Ben Bernie and "all the lads" played a one night stand in Charlotte, NC, it was so hot that nobody wanted to dance and the "lads" sweltering in evening clothes weren't so peppy either. During the intermission before the CBS broadcast over WBT, the ol' maestro outfitted the lads in swimming trunks and that's how they appeared on stage with Ben at the mike in his trunks.

Have any of you given it a thought about real-life names and character names, even though the radio announcers say "purely coincidental." For instance, in Big Sister, John Wayne is a doctor and my name, Ed Carr, was used as a heavy. It's eerie listening as your name is being used, honest though, I'm a nice guy.

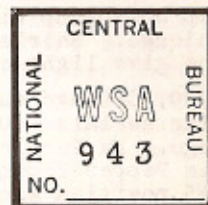
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## OLD-TIME RADIO CONVENTION UPDATE!

The latest news on the FRIENDS OF RADIO CONVENTION that did not make the official convention flyer:

**GUESTS:** Add IAN MARTIN and RALPH BELL, and also BETTY WRAGGE (Who was also there last year and promises a song and dance routine). Unfortunately, ARNOLD MOSS will not be able to attend. BOB PRESCOTT's sons, Bob, Jr. and Pete will also be giving a hand on the sound effects.

**EVENTS:** Add a newsletter workshop where you may find out about OTR newsletters that you never realized existed!

IF YOU MUST GET IN TOUCH WITH JAY HICKERSON ABOUT THE CONVENTION, YOU CAN ALSO REACH HIM AT OR LEAVE A MESSAGE AT (203) 795-3748 IF THERE IS NO ANSWER AT HIS OTHER NUMBER.

COLLECTORS ARE TRAVELING GREAT DISTANCES TO BE AT THE CON! THEY INCLUDE: DAVE REZNICK (San Mateo, CA); KEN PILETIC (Chicago); CHUCK SEELEY (Buffalo, NY); GEOFF OATES (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada!)----and there are many more!

**Collector's Classifieds**

**OTRAGAN**—fandom's newest publication reprints yesterday's radio ads and articles. Plus lots of other OTR stuff too—articles, comments, etc. Only \$3.00 for six issues, \$6.00 for twelve. Send to Rogue Press, 294 Victoria Blvd., Kenmore, NY 14217

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## Allen Rockford Memorial Award

### YOUR CHANCE TO VOTE!

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In memory of Allen Rockford, a special memorial award has been created for presentation to a collector who has helped the spreading of OTR fandom to others, or who has done outstanding services for fandom (such as compiling of logs, writing of books, others).

The award was being planned for presentation at the Fourth Annual Friends of Radio Convention. Last month, in the summer edition of NARA News, Roger Hill announced an award to be presented next year. Jay Hickerson, convention co-chairman with Joe Webb, has co-ordinated with Roger the presentation of a single award. The award will be presented by fandom as a whole, rather than two splinter groups, and it will be presented at the Friends of Radio Convention, October 20, at Bridgeport, Connecticut (see information elsewhere this issue).

So fandom has an award and no one to give it to---YET!

It's up to individual collectors and clubs to vote on the recipient of the award.

Individuals: send your vote to either of the two addresses below.

Clubs: Please have an election and send all votes, not club winner alone to either of the addresses below. Club participation would be the most gratifying part of this election, because Allen tried to belong to as many as he could and also because his support of OTR was truly outstanding.

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#### SEND YOUR VOTES TO:

Jay Hickerson  
Box C  
Orange, CT 06477

OR

Joseph Webb  
PO Box 267  
Centuck Station  
Yonkers, NY 10710

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Award recipient will be notified before convention so as to arrange travel to presentation. If recipient cannot attend, award will be sent to him/her.

VOTING ENDS SEPTEMBER 30, 1979

VOTE TODAY!