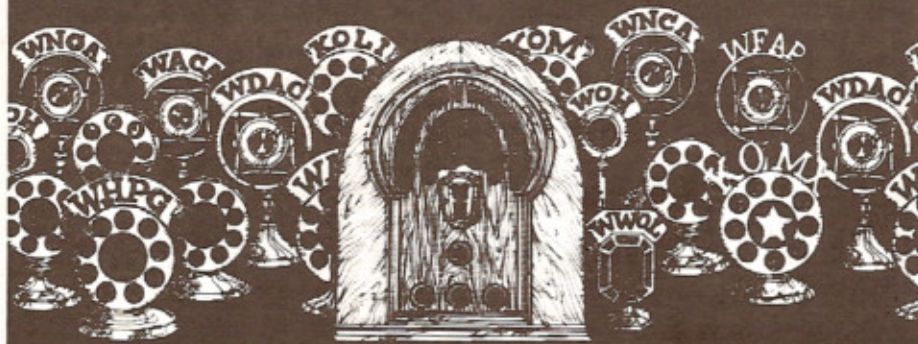


Collector's Corner



Number 21 November 1979 \$1.25



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4/5/50
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Our Holiday '79, Winter 1980 flyer is finally in preparation and will be mailed to interested parties in mid to late November.

Important changes which will be described include a change in our shipping method. Because of a large number of lost packages, all shipments are being made United Parcel Service, when possible.

All orders placed from our catalog should be accompanied by your street address, otherwise the shipment will be made special fourth class, via the regular postal service. First class mail is still available at the additional charge, but is not recommended if United Parcel Service shipping is satisfactory for you.

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OLD TIME RADIO TAPE SALES



Collector's Comments from Bob Burnham

A LITTLE POST-CONVENTION BABBLE...

Well! What's my excuse this year for not showing up at the convention this year!? I accepted a bribe from Thomas Riggs--he gave me a lifetime subscription to Radio Nostalgia, then I talked to Tommy Salome and he said he'd give me a free year of Ancient Radio---all if I didn't appear at the convention...hmmm...would you believe there was a strike at Metro Airport in these here parts and all flights were cancelled? Didn't think so. Actually I cancelled the flight, myself--I got so nervous about meeting Joe W. for the first time--he's taller than me ya' know. Maybe I'll tell you at the end of the editorial why I couldn't make it, really and truly.

Well (again), as winter is slowly letting itself loose on us, the usual heavy trading binges are starting to get moving--people are starting to trade heavier, they're buying OTR more regularly, and those of us who are selling are busier than usual, which is good for the whole OTR scene. The more cash flow, the more that is available to invest in acquiring and/or finding more new material. After all, that IS typical of what some sellers end up doing anyway--pumping all their left over profits right back into the hobby. I certainly have nothing against those who are trying to make a living off of the hobby (it certainly has helped me through some otherwise rough times), but I'm not particularly impressed by those who charge \$15 an hour. You'd think their volume would be so low they could make a lot more \$\$\$ charging "normal" prices--only if they did that they'd end up spending so much more time and money on materials, their profit margin would shrink, although total income would be much higher. Figure that one out, I've already totally confused myself.

Speaking of selling OTR, a new entry into this field is Omega OTR, operated by Gary Kramer of Omega Magnetics fame. Omega is offering tapes, records, books, and related publications, including Collector's Corner. Based on his fine reputation for blank tape sales, Gary should do well with OTR. At one time, it seemed like there was a new OTR company springing up every month--this is no longer true, and to the best of my knowledge, the only other new entry into OTR selling this year (and not a very ambitious one) was Andy Blatt's "VINTAGE BROADCASTS." Perhaps the reason for this lapse in new dealers is the competition. Fewer and fewer dealers are using mimeographed catalogs, and the size of ones collection is also a factor. It stands to reason offset printing is expensive and it also takes a whole lot of time and money to build a substantial collection then get it organized and cataloged, especially when there's a dozen or more dealers who have already done it and have been doing it for quite a while. It's a slow process to build an OTR company--there are ways of speeding

it up though, if you make the right moves and know the right people. I started getting to know some of these people four or five years ago. Some people turned out to be problems later on--like the people mentioned at the beginning of this article. Others turned out to be some of my best friends--Joe W., Jerry Chapman, even Hy Daley with his world famous Corry dubs from Pennsylvania go back to those earlier days for me. Other people came along in later years who made equally important contributions to my OTR career. Sooo, if you're new to the hobby either just collecting or selling and collecting and things seem to be a touch slow at first, hang loose 'cause everything will fall into place soon enough.

Speaking of having things fall into place, another fine article by David Reznick (which I was clever enough to lose last summer) was recently found, so we're presenting that to you--if it's not in this issue, perhaps it was in the last issue. If not, it will be in the next issue.

So yes, we all had a great time at the OTR convention. Joe and I gave a great presentation on signal processing, Ken Piletic was given his award, Jay Hickerson and Joe W. and the rest did a terrific job, the food tasted great. Yes, Bob B. was actually there in spirits. The physical body was at the controls of WAAM radio that Saturday morning and afternoon. The station called me and offered me a job on the very day I was planning to make plane reservations. So instead, I sent my "spirit" via special fourth class (with special handling) that same day and it arrived just in time for the festivities.

Well, we'll see what happens next year, right? Honestly, I wanted to take my physical body along this year so people would notice I was there—I wasn't even actively looking for another position in radio, but you see Thomas Riggs and Tommy Salome worked out a little deal with the radio station....

Hope y'all had a great time. Really sorry to have missed out. By the time I'm married and have children, I guarantee I'll have attended at least five or ten conventions!

Bob B.



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

Radio acting: The anonymous art by David Reznick

The media have made actors the most famous, glamorized, and sought-after people in the world. Today we can find out almost anything about our favorite actors—much more, in some cases, than we want to know. The recent proliferation of hatchet jobs on well-known actors—Clift, Crawford, Power and a particularly odious kiss-and-tell character assassination of Brando by his ex-wife, attest to the public appetite for intimate details of famous lives. And it is certainly understandable; we become emotionally involved with them when we see and are moved by their performances; we identify with them, sometimes perhaps more strongly than with our friends and families. To the same degree, I think, we OTR collectors are likely to identify with our favorite radio actors. But I have found that many people who can rattle off the names of hundreds of TV and film stars are hard-pressed to name many radio actors. They were uncelebrated in their time, and remain so. They were practitioners of an anonymous art.

In some ways this anonymity worked greatly in their favor. It allowed them an outstanding opportunity to demonstrate their versatility. An actor could play many different kinds of roles, sometimes two or more in a single broadcast. And it let them live a normal social life; radio actors, after all, are unlikely to be mobbed at the supermarket. But presumably one cannot be an actor without a large and healthy ego, and I'm sure that many resented the lack of recognition.

I don't know why, even as a young child, I paid attention to the credits at the end of radio shows, but I always remember doing so. Perhaps it was because I was born and raised in Los Angeles, and therefore had the opportunity to visit the studios and watch the radio shows being broadcast. I knew the names of the actors from listening to the credits, and I remember always being astonished that the actors invariably looked startlingly different than my mental pictures of them. I began to understand what a rewarding field radio acting must be for those without compelling physical endowments; a balding scarecrow and a 300-pound matron might be, in NBC Studio A on the corner of Sunset and Vine, a compelling, convincing Romeo and Juliet.

Of course, many radio personalities and comedians were well known by name and face to the public. But I was always fascinated by the nameless, faceless journeymen artists who showed up in a thousand different guises, on a hundred different programs, and whose virtuosity and professionalism were responsible in large part for the consistently high

production values achieved on big time network radio. Many of them are gone now, and the programs exist only on our reels and cassettes. But I remember them, and celebrate them herewith.

These are the names that reverberated through my childhood, and whose work still commands my attention when I hear them again, so many years later. This is no "ten best" list, no attempt to name the all-time greats, no objective compilation (surely obvious from the fact that my list contains only one woman). But they were voices that seemed to speak directly to me. Some were well-known, but most were anonymous. I've named no comedians, personalities, or one-character players, nor have I included the many screen and stage stars who also did radio. They are people who deserve to be known. Here in alphabetical order, is a distinguished group of radio artists:

Lionel Barrymore: the most famous person of my list, and one who doesn't seem to meet the above criteria. After all, he was a famous star of stage and screen. But after seeing many of his movies, I believe that his greatest contribution, and his natural environment was radio. His larger-than-life declamatory style often came out on the screen as hamminess, but it was just right for radio, the perfect medium for his

warmth and magnetism. And, on stage and screen, he often played second fiddle to his more gifted brother; on radio, he was the main attraction. His work on the radio Kildare series, during which the Gillespie character was worked, reworked and refined through constant usage, overshadows his screen appearances in the Kildare films. This isn't true in the case of his co-star, Lew Ayres, a natural film actor even though he possessed one of the most marvelous voices in radio. Barrymore's annual portrayal of Scrooge came to be an important part of America's Christmas celebration. And his non-dramatic series, At Home With Lionel Barrymore, showed him perhaps to his greatest advantage, as a superb communicator. In this series, he used radio as Godfrey Garroway and Paar would later use television: he became not a personality, but someone who dropped in to chat (and to influence) a family friend.

John Brown: a deft and resourceful comic actor. Brown was heard on a bewildering variety of network comedy shows, but always sounded different on each one. Although millions eagerly awaited his appearances each week, it is doubtful that many people knew his name even in his heyday. One would be hard-pressed, for example, to connect Al, the cheap tinhorn gambler who was Marie Wilson's boyfriend in My Friend Irma ("Hiya, chicken!") with the lugubrious Digbe O'Dell from Life of Riley, but these were only two of Brown's successful characterizations.

Ernest Chappell: Not many actors had the assignment of playing every leading role in a weekly dramatic anthology, and such an assignment would be unthinkable on television. But it was Chappell's task to translate the eccentric ideas and preposterous situations provided by the singular Wyllis Cooper into solid, disbelief-suspending performances on the well-remembered Quiet Please. He starred in every story, and that often meant reading a half-hour soliloquy; in Cooper's stories there was usually more internal than external dialogue. His style was cool and understated, at variance with the scenery chewing going on at the time in many dramatic series. He was a straightforward speaker, not a voice disguiser, and so was identifiable on each broadcast; but he was such a good actor that he always seemed different. And just for good measure, he also served as announcer on the program.

Hans Conreid: my choice, if I had to make one, for best radio actor, ever. He did it all. There was simply no genre of radio show on which Conreid did not show up, week after week. Best known in comic roles, he was equally at ease in crime stories, melodrama—anything. Conreid was far from anonymous, of course compared to people like Chappell and Brown; we know him from his TV work on Stump the Stars, and he was the host of Jay Ward's engagingly goofy Fractured Flickers. And his work in the film The 5000 Fingers of Dr. T suggests that a brilliant career in movie character parts might have been available to him. But he was a radio actor in every sense of the word. He is still active today, and the Sears and CBS Mystery Theaters have performed no finer service than allowing actors

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like Hans Conreid to work again in their chosen medium. Listen to his work on "Sha-nama," the 6/29/79 broadcast of Sears Radio Theater (a program, by the way, which has often been hurt by bad acting). You will hear how a consummate professional can make a bad script come alive while giving acting lessons to almost everyone else in the cast.

Sam Edwards: If Edwards has any degree of name recognition at all, it is probably for his role as Dexter Franklin on Meet Corliss Archer. Yet he often worked on dramatic shows, and I've noted many times his depth and virtuosity as an actor. Listen to the Escape program, "A Diamond As Big As the Ritz." This show is a typical example of Edwards' superior technique. Note how he progresses from wide-eyed innocence at the beginning to incredulity and terror as his predicament becomes clear. And listen to his memorable reading of the final lines of the script. Like Conreid, he is still active, and his performance on Sears' "Powder River Policy," (3/12/79) constitutes, in my opinion, that program's finest moment so far.

Raymond Edward Johnson: It's as unfair to think of Johnson only as the Inner Sanctum host as it is to write off Edwards as Dexter Franklin. He was one of radio's busiest actors, bringing skill, intelligence and a wonderful vocal apparatus to each role, large or small. Burdened by poor health for many years, he nevertheless still has what it takes to hold an audience spellbound. Anyone who wants a lesson on how to give a dramatic reading could do no better than listening to Johnson's recording of "The Monkey's Paw" made at the FOR Convention in 1978.



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Cathy Lewis: Possibly the most versatile performer on my list, Cathy Lewis did absolutely everything there is to do on radio. The co-star of My Friend Irma, she was at the same time radio's best dramatic actress, heard time after time on Suspense, Lux, and practically everything else. She was equally at home in broad comedy, light farce, understated contemporary plays, and overwrought dramas. Listen to her as Jane Stacy in Irma, followed immediately by her chillingly convincing portrayal of the haunted Ellen Woods in the Suspense episode, "The House in Cypress Canyon." Her achievement in dealing with a series of the most noxious scripts ever foisted off on the listening public is nothing short of astonishing—in the fifties, Lewis finally received star billing in the On Stage series.

Elliott Lewis: This actor-producer, has for my money, the most wonderful voice on radio. He could sound richly romantic and sophisticated; catch his memorable performance on the Capitol recording of Gordon Jenkins' pop cantata Manhattan Tower. He could be virile and swashbuckling, as on Voyage of the Scarlet Queen. Or he could be the seedy bum Frank Remley on the Harris-Faye series. The comments above concerning the work of his ex-wife in On Stage apply equally to him; Cathy and Elliott Lewis were the Lunt-Fontanne of radio, turning one leaden script after another into gold. I wish I could be as enthusiastic about his behind-the-scenes attempts to rescue radio, first with the dreadful Zero Hour and currently with Sears Radio Theater; but as producer he seems to have a knack for finding scripts so bad that only an actor like Elliott Lewis can make them interesting or believable. But he has appeared in several Sears segments, and I'm willing to wade through anything to hear him behind the microphone again.

William Redfield: a truly anonymous actor, not even known for a co-starring role on a big-time series, Redfield was perhaps the most serious, methodical, and well-trained performer of all those mentioned here. Believability and integrity were the keystones of his art, making him a standout on some of the unbelievable and sleazy soap operas on which he spent so much time. He was often heard on X Minus One, and was a regular member of the CBS Mystery Theater repertory company until his death a few years ago. Redfield was a classical actor, and the extent of his penetrating intellect can be seen by reading his book, Notes from an Actor; Written while he was playing in the Richard Burton Hamlet, on Broadway, it is perhaps the finest book about acting ever written by an actor. You can't read it without wanting to go back and hear some of his radio performances. A fine one to start with is the CBS Mystery Theater story, "Boy Wonder."

Mentioning each of these actors has brought to mind ten more I could talk about as well; most veteran radio character actors will never get the recognition they deserve. But when you are listening to your tapes, take note of the credits if you don't already. Knowing and appreciating the actors will add significantly to your enjoyment of the programs.

the Prisoner newsletter

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Artist: Tim Fuller

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We are an intimate little group who are devoted to examining and perpetuating the ideas of THE PRISONER, but also that magnificent man behind this flawless work of film art, Patrick McGeehan. We run Keno Don Rosa's SECRET AGENT index; have a campaign to get SA on late night t.v. in place of BARETTA or M*A*S*H; PMcG's movie index; photos; a listing of TP societies and materials; Essays on the Morality play and the tie-in with TP; Dealers with PMcG material; Classified Ads; Swap Shop to trade articles on PMcG ... and much more!

But most of all A FRIENDS OF THE PRISONER CONVENTION planned for mid-year 1980!

Collector's Corner presents...

The crazy guys of the Goon Show by Frank Thomas

Maybe this has happened to you...you're listening to a tape you just got in the mail from some guy you trade with in New York. You're enjoying another Sam Spade adventure when you decide to cut to the other channel to see what's going on... and here's a story about a murderer being described as wearing a sock and eating a jelly. Or maybe it's the story of a grand plan to export snow to the Sudan. Well, my friend, you've stumbled onto one of the Goon Shows.

You may or may not be familiar with the series, but by the time you've finished reading this article, you'll know more than you could possibly need to about the crazy folks who created a comedy cult classic in the 1950's.

Although in the Goon Shows that are in circulation these days, you'll find only three major actors, the Goons originally were made up of four people: Michael Bentine, Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan (the writer of most of the scripts) and Peter Sellers. Actually, there's a fifth person who must also be considered: Jimmy Grafton, the man who brought the four together.

Following World War II, Bentine, Milligan, Secombe and Sellers all pursued careers on the stage as comics. Much like the situation in America in the early 1930's, British stage comedians of the 1940's were trying to break into radio. The problem with these four was that they were all stark raving loonies...and the BBC...well up until recently, the BBC still required its announcers to wear dinner jackets. Anyway, our four loonies started hanging out at a Westminster pub called Grafton's, run by Jimmy Grafton who also wrote comedy scripts for an occasional radio show. Bentine brought in his friend Secombe who brought in his friend Milligan and Grafton introduced them to Sellers. Immediately recognizing their common craziness, the five of them would spend hours after closing time assembling fantasy scripts and bizarre scenarios on Grafton's tape recorder.

By 1949, the four comics were doing well in front of the microphones and Grafton was writing for a weekly series. Sellers had debuted in 1948 after he had called a BBC producer and impersonated his own references. Secombe was playing in "Rooftop Rendezvous." Secombe, Bentine and Sellers starred in "Third Division." And Milligan was working on a show titled "Hip Hip Hoo Roy," written by Grafton.

In 1950 a pilot was produced for the BBC which combined the four comics. Since Peter Sellers was the most famous of the four, he was billed as the star and the show was called "Seller's Castle." The BBC turned it down because it was

'too crazy.' In 1951, they tried again and made it. The group wanted to call their show the "Goon Show" naming their characters after those big, stupid creatures they'd seen in some of the pre-war Popeye cartoons. The folks at the BBC wanted to call it "The Junior Crazy Gang." A compromise was reached and the show was called "The Crazy People Show." Not to be outdone by a few producers, the writers made several references to Goons within the shows, and opened each show with....".....and here they are, those crazy people, the Goons!" So by the time their second season rolled around, the four were able to call their series The Goon Show.

Pretty exciting so far, right?

The early Goon Shows consisted of four or five unconnected skits which were separated by music, including appearances by harmonica player Max Geldray and the Ray Ellington Quartet, two acts that stayed with the Goons to the end.

After the second season, Bentine left the show and Spike Milligan began taking on major responsibilities for scripting of the shows. By the third season, the shows had cut the number of unconnected comedy bits to three, still separated by music. A month into the third season Milligan suffered a nervous breakdown that kept him off the show for



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three months. After his return, the shows began to sound more like the Goon Shows we're familiar with, often presenting a single story line for an entire program.. One of the earliest examples of this program format is "The Mystery of the Cow on the Hill." Here's the plot:

Major Bloodnok is trapped in Khartoum which is under seige by the Mahdi. Hoping to hear news of relief forces, he is infuriated when he instead receives the latest football scores. After a complaint to Queen Victoria, Bloodnok learns the Third Filth-Muck Whitechapel Fusiliers are one their way under Henry Crun. Upon arrival they present Bloodnok with still more football scores. And then there's Intelligence Officer Eccles....

The Goons even presented their own version of Queen Elizabeth's coronation! By the time the fourth season was rolling, many major characters were developing: Bluebottle, Moriarty and the beginnings of what was to become Hercules Grytpype-Thynne in the fifth season.

The fame of the Goons was soon to spread. When the fifth season premiered in late 1954, the BBC Transcription Service began making copies of the series for distribution world-wide. Here in the States, National Public Radio and its predessor, the National Educational Radio Network, have syndicated close to 50 programs from the series. As a matter of fact, NPR stations still have rights left on the last set of 26 shows that were released in 1976.

Back to history...The Goons last program was supposed to have been "The 50 Pound Cure," which was first broadcast on February 23, 1959, but the BBC was beset by thousands of Goon fans who wouldn't let it quit. So six more programs were produced. But when announcer Wallace Greenslade announced at the end of "The Last Smoking Seagoon," "...yes, that was it, the last of them," that was definately the end of the Goon Show series.

Then in 1972, as part of the BBC's Jubilee celebrations, the Goons all got together for "The Last Goon Show of All." Needless to say, the studio audience was filled with Goon fans, including the Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Anne, Princess Margaret and Lord Snowden. The man claiming to be the biggest Goon fan of all, Prince Charles, was not able to attend because of Naval duties, but he sent a telegram to the cast wishing them all luck.

Goondom is still not dead. There is even a Goon Show Preservation Society with branches in England, the United States and I imagine, other spots all over the world. Of the nine years worth of Goon Shows produced, 135 shows are currently in circulation. The existing shows begin late in the fourth season and run chronologically through the end of the series. In addition, there are another 14 programs featuring one or more of the Goons in circulation, including a stereo version of "The Last Goon Show of All."

So whether your taste is for unsolved murder mysteries featuring clues like a man eating a jelly in his socks or if you go in for historical drama like the story of Lord Seagoon's efforts to thwart Dr. Londongle in his quest to steal the teeth of everyone in town.... you should definitely look into acquiring the Goon Show tapes. If you're not a big fan of the musical bridges in the shows, look for "The Great Tuscan Salami Special." The BBC musicians were on strike during the taping of the show so a non-playing musician named Adolphus Spriggs (Spike Milligan) entertains with a rousting version of "I'm Walking Backwards for Christmas." See? There's something for everyone...everyone who's pretty crazy, that is.

WHO'S PLAYING WHOM IN THE GOON SHOW

- HARRY SECOMBE** -Neddie Seagoon and various other minor characters
- PETER SELLERS** -Henry Crun
-Hercules Grytpype-Thynne
-Major Dennis Bloodnok
-Bluebottle
-William ("Mate") and other assorted characters.
- SPIKE MILLIGAN** -Eccles
-Count Jim Moriarty
-Throat
-Little Jim
-Fred Fu-manchu and other assorted characters.
- RAY ELLINGTON** -Gladys (when he's not singing)
- WALLACE GREENSLADE**-the announcer



LUX RADIO THEATER

Date	Title	=1934=	Stars
10/14	Seventh Heaven		M. Hopkins
10/21	What Every Woman Knows		Helen Hayes
10/28	The Barker		Walter Huston
11/4	Smilin Through		Jan Cowl
11/11	The Nervous Wreck		June Walker
11/18	Rebound		R. Chatterton
11/25	Mrs. Dane's Defense		Ethel Barrymore
12/2	Let Us Be Gay		Tallulah Bankhead
12/9	Berkely Square		Leslie Howard
12/16	Turn to the Right		James Cagney
12/23	The Goose Hangs High		Walter Connolly
12/30	Daddy Long Legs		John Boles

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