

The Old Time Radio Club

Established 1975

THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS

Number 217

October 1994

WORLD SERIES BEGIN OCTOBER 1ST

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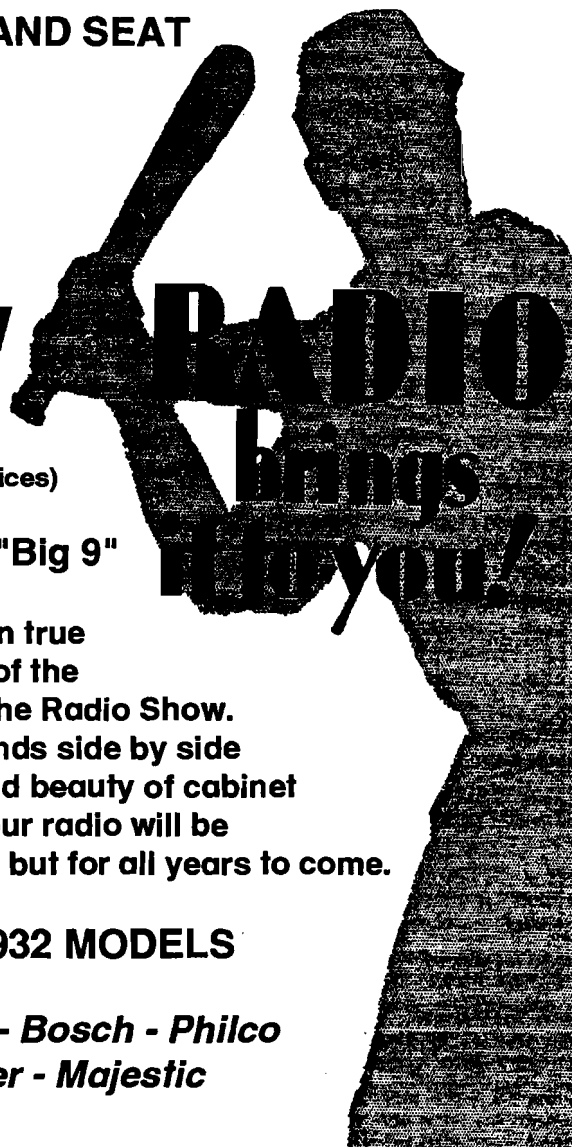
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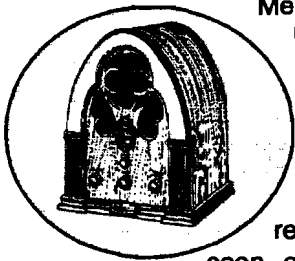
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Publication of the *Old Time Radio Club*

Membership Information

New member processing, \$5.00 plus club membership of \$15.00 per year from Jan 1 to Dec 31.



Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing, and a monthly newsletter.

Memberships are as follows:
If you join Jan-Mar, \$15.00;
Apr-Jun, \$12.00; Jul-Sep,
\$8.00; Oct-Dec, \$5.00. All

renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets the first Monday of every month at 7:30 P.M. during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd. Cheektowaga, N.Y. 14225. The club meets informally during the months of July and August at the same address. Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with The Old Time Radio Network.

Club Mailing Address

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P.O. Box 426
Lancaster, N. Y. 14086

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The Whistler

by Dom Parisi

With echoing footsteps and a haunting 13 note whistle, the Whistler ruled the night. "I am the Whistler. And I know many things, for I walk by night I know many strange tales hidden in the hearts of men and women who have stepped into the shadows. Yes ... I know the nameless terrors of which they dare not speak."

Yes, the Whistler knew many secrets and he didn't keep quiet about them either. If he didn't tell the world in general, and he did of course do that, every week over radio beginning in 1942, he told the people themselves. For example: "You are Henry Jones, and you are fed up with being a bank teller. Wouldn't you, just once, like to have one of those six-figure amounts you add and subtract..." The Whistler was as bad at telling people what they were doing and thinking (that's what made him so good) as the anonymous narrator of that newspaper program *The Big Story*.

If you had to compare *The Whistler* to other radio programs, I guess a close comparison would be *The Shadow*. It was the Shadow who clouded men's minds and knew what evil lurked in their hearts, and even though he did not usually walk by night (Shrevie the cabbie drove him and his lovely companion, Margo) and could not carry a tune, his haunting laughter was even more chilling than the tune The Whistler whistled.

Actually, the Whistler was carrying on a tradition that began with his competitor, the Shadow, in the early days of *The Shadow* program. The Shadow only narrated stories about other people. Later the stories came to be about him. Being less pushy, more of an observer, the Whistler was content to remain merely a storyteller.

Where the Whistler had an advantage over the Shadow was in the stories themselves. The tales were more devious and clever than the ones in which the Shadow appeared. You knew every time that the Shadow was going to reveal himself at the last moment to save the lovely Margo Lane from a man and his evil deeds! Listeners of *The Whistler* weren't always able to guess how his stories were going to end.

The man with insomnia who walked by night always went for the big finish. He played by his own rules and did not reveal everything he knew until the climax so that it was often impossible to figure out things in advance. How could you guess that when the American swindler killed that rich Australian ranger and assumed his identity, he would find that he was allergic to the sheep on his ranch and would itch to death in ironic retribution?

Some of the broadcasts were even better. In fact, *The Whistler*, which began as a West Coast broadcast, went on the full CBS network in 1947 and 1948 and lasted regionally until 1955. It took more than his whistling a catchy tune to do that. It took a long series of well written and well acted stories that took hold of your imagination and never let go!

For most of its run, the Whistler was played by Bill Formam and Martin Miller was the announcer. The music and original theme was written by Wilber Hatch. The hard to whistle, two octave theme was whistled by Dorothy Roberts.

In a nation wide poll, *The Whistler* was picked as the most listened to radio program by the public! Now that was something to whistle about.

the Whistler was carrying on a tradition that began with his competitor, the Shadow

RADIO MEMORIES

by Francis Edward Bork

The time, Sunday evening, the place, the mystic world of *The Shadow* on radio, that magic box that brought the entire world into our homes during those wonderful innocent years of our childhood. Maybe that's why radio story collectors enjoy these old (and sometimes corny) radio programs. We long once more for those carefree days of pure youth.

Case in point, Joe is waiting in his cell on death row in the Big House. His lawyer speaks, "Sorry Joe, I've done all I can to help you. The Governor just won't give you another stay of execution. Hey Joe, you had a lot of good times with the money you got. You made the hit Joe, and you almost got away with it. Why not go out in style Joe, take it like a man and just keep quiet about it."

Joe speaks, his voice is strained, he's afraid of dying, "Yea it's OK for you to talk Mr. Murdock, you're not gonna fry in the chair tomorrow night at midnight, ya gotta get me off Murdock, I don't wanna die like this!" "Joe, listen to me, there's nothing left for me to do to help you. I've done everything I can, used every legal trick I know." Besides Murdock adds, "they tell me that you never feel a thing, they strap you in the chair, then the guard throws the switch, bam it's all over. You never know it, I'm sorry Joe, really I am." Joe screams at his lawyer, "I'm not gonna die alone Murdock. I'll tell the warden it was you who paid me to rub out Baxter, then you'll fry right next to me." Now the lawyer's voice sharpens, "who do you think they'll believe Joe? You a hardened criminal or me a respected lawyer and fellow lodge member of the Governor?"

Later that day Joe convinces the warden to phone Inspector Weston. "You want to talk to the Shadow?" Inspector Weston asks Joe. "Well I'll do my best for you Joe, but I can't promise you anything." Well, to make a long story short and interesting, Joe did go to the chair at midnight the next day, but at least he

knew that the Shadow would get the crooked lawyer Murdock.

That was *The Shadow* on radio. A thousand great stories. How many of you guys and gals remember the Saturday afternoon matinee at your local theater with Paul Kelley playing the part of the Shadow in a twelve week long serial? Boy, wasn't that just great to see the Shadow after all those Sunday evenings listening to him.

I remember one Saturday afternoon when my pals Butsey and Dirtyneck and me took our cap pistols (the detective model 45s) minus the caps, with us to help the Shadow by shooting the bad guys. We were joined in our front row seats by Ducky George (the kids in school gave George the name Ducky because he always said, "everything's just ducky"). Now Ducky was always for the bad guys and when the Shadow trapped one of the bad guys, ole Ducky starts to blast away with his cap pistol. He's shooting at the Shadow, bam-bam-bam. "Yeks," I shouted, "Ducky's got real caps in his gun." Mr. Graham the theater owner comes flying down the aisle on one side, while that big guy from the high school, old man Graham's football player usher comes down the other side. We're trapped, me, Butsey, Dirtyneck and that jerk Ducky George. After a lot of pleading and begging Mr. Graham just took away our cap pistols and let us stay to see the rest of the movies. We all sat in the very last row near the exit sign where Mr. Graham always stood. There he watches us like a hawk sitting on an egg. We were not allowed to shout or yell. We sat there for almost three hours, just like little gentlemen. Gees, what a rotten day that was. Thanks Ducky George. By the way, Ducky George, the guy that routed for the bad guys, well he became a police officer in Buffalo years later. That was the Shadow in the movies as I remembered him when I was a kid.

A few weeks back while I was enjoying a cup of coffee and reading The Buffalo News, I turned the page to read Jeff Simon's column. Wow, *The Shadow*, a new movie. Let's see, the Shadow played by Alec Baldwin, a good choice, and Margo Lane played by Ann Miller.

I'm sorry to say Jeff Simon was not too kind to my childhood hero. I recalled those Sunday evenings in our little home on Northampton Street when our entire family listened to *The Shadow* and how I

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**Dr. Christian cures a woman of a common
malady known as gossiping.**

WGR 550 on your dial

[1947]

waited and waited for my Shadow ring that glowed in the dark and the real piece of Blue Coal mounted in it. I made up my mind, I'll go see *The Shadow* movie tomorrow. The next afternoon I took a slow drive to the Maple Ridge Theater Complex while listening to one of my Shadow tapes just for old times sake.

I bought my box of popcorn and headed down to the front row seat. Well that's not for me anymore, I decided and walked back to the rear of the theater, this is more like it I thought. The house lights dimmed, the music started, the curtains parted and then on the screen, *The Shadow*. Jeff Simon is right, it was a cheesy "B" movie, that's if it made it to a "B" rating. I LOVED IT!

I sat back and looked around to see if any kids had their cap pistols ready to help out The Shadow. Nope, not one. My thoughts went back to my pals and that Saturday afternoon at the Sylvia Theater on Fillmore Avenue in Buffalo, oh so many years ago. The special effects in *The Shadow* were great. The Monolith Hotel (that could be the Ghost Hotel of radio days) and the pneumatic tube I thought were quite good. And how about that super charged taxi cab, a Cord 810, that the Shadow rode in. It seemed to always be there whenever he needed it.

Jeff writes, "mostly it's tedious junk trying to do for radio cum comic hero of 30's and 40's what "Batman" did for the caped crusader."

A couple of days after I went to see *The Shadow*, I called Jeff Simon at his office at The Buffalo News building. I really didn't expect to get to talk with Jeff, but surprise, surprise, Jeff answered the phone himself. Jeff is a very pleasant man to talk with and I enjoyed our conversation very much. We talked about the movie, the special effects, the story line, etc., and of course the actors who played in the movie. I told Jeff about our Radio Club and of the many cassettes, reels and videos the club has in its library. He was interested in hearing about old time radio and the variety of shows still around. Jeff told me his views of *The Shadow* movie and being a young man hadn't really heard much of old time radio. TV was blasting all the air waves when he was growing up.

He listened while I told how radio was for me and my friends as kids during radio's hey-day. I told Jeff that when I saw the movie I put my mind back to those childhood days where you didn't question how

could that be, a huge invisible hotel? How could a descendant of Genghis Khan buried a hundred years in a sarcophagus come to life? There were a dozen or more super special effects just as impossible in the movie. How? Easy. You just accepted what you saw and enjoyed the movie.

I'd like to thank Jeff Simon for a very pleasant and enjoyable conversation, and for listening to my view point and for explaining his. Jeff, go see *The Shadow* again and this time think like a kid and I know you'll enjoy the movie.

Thanks to The Buffalo News and to Jeff Simon for their kind permission to reprint Jeff's column on *The Shadow*.

That's it for now, till next time, Happy Radio Memories.

**TONIGHT, THURSDAY
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starring

☆☆Ed "ARCHIE" Gardner☆☆

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[1950]

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WBEN - 9:30 P.M. E.S.T.

Movie Review SHADOW OF A DOUBT

By Jeff Simon, News Critic for
The Buffalo News

Every five minutes or so, someone in "The Shadow" laughs-m-m-m-w-w-w-ha-ha-ha-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!" It's always the same stagey laugh. It starts with a low hum, then takes a sharp turnoff into peals of psychotic non-merriment that, in the '50s, would have gotten one packed off to the nearest asylum.

This cheesy B-movie quasi-"Batman" is set in the hallucinogenic '30s and '40s, though, so they can get in all the vintage taxis, rainy streets and monolithic Gotham backdrops that Tim Burton and his production designer Anton Furst did such eerie things with in "Batman." There's even a Hotel Monolith, one of the nicer ideas of scriptwriter David Koepp (of "Jurassic Park" and "Carlito's Way" fame).

It's a silly movie with highly infrequent patches of very silly fun. I particularly liked a message flying through the world's longest pneumatic tube and the sight of Penelope Ann Miller and Sir Ian McKellen chasing a rolling atomic bomb through all the corridors, bathrooms and elevator shafts of the Hotel Monolith. At such moments, Koepp, director Russell Mulcahy and his production designer are in playful sync.

Then there's the delightful moment in the bowels of the old museum when a silver sarcophagus horrifically opens up and the evil descendent of Genghis Khan emerges -- alive and ready to boogie. The lone security guard present in the dead of night draws his gun and says, "Uhhhh, we're closed."

They are few and far between.

Mostly it's tedious junk trying to do for the radio cum comic book hero of the '30s and '40s what "Batman" did for the Caped Crusader. For those who just came in, the Shadow is a reformed Oriental despot (big in the '40s -- World War, you remember) who has the power to cloud men's minds and make them think whatever he wants. Pretty cool if you're 9, I must say.

He has a squadron of helpers from whom he collects

favors and whom he contacts by saying "the sun is shining," whereupon they're supposed to say "but the ice is slippery." (I was hoping someone would add, "However, because of an occluded cold front coming in from the Maritime Provinces...")

Alec Baldwin plays him listlessly in a sort of actor's homage to Michael Keaton's stricken and melancholy "Oh God do I have to wear the costume again?" look. As Lamont Cranston, though, Baldwin's costume is no big deal -- just a fedora the size of Milwaukee, a false nose and a red scarf over his mouth.

Except for Baldwin and Miller's cute, breathy sexiness, all the actors are a veritable orchard of citric overkill with, however, none of the loony pleasures of Jack Nicholson in "Batman" or Danny DeVito in "Batman Returns."

It's hard to watch it without thinking of things it could have done better.

1. Instead of being just free-lance and righteous, why not make "The Shadow" that most maligned and misunderstood of modern creatures, an old-fashioned liberal doing battle for the persecuted and oppressed underdogs everywhere. Even the "Lethal Weapon" movies know that a cause helps occasionally when all else fails (and in this movie, it does, except for the special effects.)

2. If you're going to hire Jonathan Winters to play the Police Commissioner, why not let him cut loose? No matter how visually interesting, this movie could have used about five minutes of lunar Winters improv.

3. Why have the villain the last descendant of Genghis Khan? Why not make him old Genghis himself? In the sequels, the Shadow could do battle with a host of historical villains - Hitler, Stalin, Caligula, Vald the Impaler, Harry Cohn.

Did someone say "sequels?" To coin a phrase, m-m-m-w-w-w-ha-ha-ha-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA.

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WGY


[1947]



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Member's Mike

Dear Editor,



I received a phone call from Mrs. Emmy Barrett. Her husband John was the first Lone Ranger when the show was broadcast locally (Buffalo, NY) on radio station WEBR in 1933. Mrs. Barrett told me that John has suffered a stroke and doesn't get around too well. I told her that I would send her some Lone Ranger cassettes. "John would like that," she said. John and Emmy Barrett live at 200 Johnson Avenue, Teaneck, N.J. 07666. I bet he would really appreciate hearing from some Lone Ranger fans.

Dom Parisi
Buffalo, NY

Dear Editor,

It's me again, the #1 Buffalo Bills fan from Indiana. Enjoyed the review of *The Shadow* movie by Robert Brown, but felt he was somewhat too critical of the movie. Movies will never take the place of the OTR programs because they are visual, and never live up to what's in our mind's eye. Keep up the good work.

Jerry Doidge
Valparaiso, IN

From the Editor's Chair

I would personally like to thank Jeff Simon for allowing us to re-print his review of *The Shadow* movie. For members outside the Western New York area, Jeff is a much respected movie/TV critic for The Buffalo News, the largest newspaper in the Western New York area.



The 19th annual Friends of Old Time Radio Convention is being held on October 20-22 at the Holiday Inn in Newark, NJ. A great many OTR personalities will be in attendance including John Archer (*The Shadow*), Larry Dobkin (*Escape, Gunsmoke*), Rex Koury (Musical Director), Harlen Stone (*Archie Andrews*), Lon Clark (*Nick Carter*), Gwen Davies (*Let's Pretend*), Raymond Edward Johnson (*Inner Sanctum*), Clive Rush (*Bobby Benson*), Arthur Tracy (*The Street Singer*), and many more. Some of the re-creations include *Lights Out, Let's Pretend, The Shadow, Escape, and Archie Andrews*. There are many special events including OTR Aviation Heroes by Jack French, and tributes to Jack Benny and Fred Allen, etc.

For more information contact Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514 (203) 248-2887

SPERDVAC is celebrating their 20th anniversary as an OTR organization by holding their annual OTR Convention on November 11-13 at the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, CA. Arthur Anderson, Steve Allen, Frank Bresee, John Reyburn, Les Tremayne, Dick Van Patton, and many, many more OTR personalities will be in attendance. Among the re-creations planned are *Suspense, Let's Pretend, the First Nighter Program, and The Shadow*.

For more information contact SPERDVAC, PO Box 7177, Van Nuys CA 91409 or Larry Gassman at (310) 947-9800.

And speaking of anniversaries, next year marks our twentieth year as an OTR organization. The staff at the IP would like all members, especially members from the '70s and early '80s, to write their remembrances of our club, hobby, whatever, and we will print some of them in each issue of the IP during our 1995 anniversary year.

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