



# RETURN WITH US NOW...

RADIO HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
COLORADO

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## "Lux Misrepresents Hollywood?" or, "Why Radio Movie Adaptations Aren't Such A Good Idea."

by Elizabeth McLeod

It's one of the benchmark programs of the entire Old Time Radio era -- the very essence of Big Time Radio Drama. The biggest stars, the biggest stories, broadcasting to tens of millions of listeners every Monday night, for nearly twenty years. And the passing of the decades has done nothing to dull its aura -- even today, forty-five years after its final broadcast, "Lux Radio Theatre" is still one of the best-remembered, most recognized, most collected of OTR programs.

So why am I not impressed?

I've listened to many dozens of Lux shows over my twenty years of OTR collecting and research -- virtually all of the surviving programs from the 1936-44 Cecil B. DeMille era, and a healthy sampling of those from the William Keighley and Irving Cummings shows of the late forties and early fifties. The shows are highly polished and well-produced, presenting appealing stars in an attractive setting. I've never heard a really \*bad\* "Lux Radio Theatre."

But -- and this is the key -- I don't think I've ever heard a really \*great\* one, either.

Part of the problem is the shallow slickness of its productions. "Lux" was never a show on radio's creative cutting edge -- it depended on star power for its appeal rather than technical wizardry. Its early episodes, beginning with the New York run of 1934-35 and continuing into the early months of the Hollywood run were actually a bit \*behind\* the creative curve, comparing most unfavorably with the far-reaching dramatic productions of NBC's "Radio Guild" or the "Columbia Workshop." As the show

matured, it settled into a middle-ground complacency, neither retrograde nor progressive. Other shows could explore the creative boundaries of the medium -- Lux didn't need to, not with Hollywood's biggest names coming to the microphone each week. And with thousands being paid out to the Gables and the Stanwycks and other such stars, there wasn't much left in the budget for great writing or innovative sound



effects. Despite its pretentious format and prestigious casts, Lux's dramas never approached the made-for-the-microphone snap of many of the most humble Mutual sustainers.

(Continued on Page 3)

# RADIO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

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**Mid-Atlantic Nostalgia Convention**, Sep 14 - 17, 2006 at Four Points Sheraton, Aberdeen, MD Web site is [www.midatlanticnostalgiaconvention.com](http://www.midatlanticnostalgiaconvention.com), For information call Michelle or Martin at (717) 456-6208

**31st Friends of Old-time Radio Convention**, Oct 19 - 22, 2006 at the Holiday Inn, Newark, NJ; For information contact Jay Hickerson, Box 4321, Hamden, CT 06514 (203) 248-2887 JayHick@aol.com or check our web site: <http://www.fotr.net>

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**RETURN WITH US NOW...**

-2-

August, 2006

And this points up the greatest weakness of "Lux" -- and its many imitators in the Hollywood Movie Adaptation genre. They were trying to be something they weren't -- trying to make radio into movies. Trying to make movies into radio. And these shows all overlooked an important point: Radio *isn't* the movies. And a good movie isn't necessarily a good radio drama.



Lux Radio Theater Director, C.B. Demille (right), discusses show details with Don Ameche and a lovely but unidentified young lady. Can anyone tell us who she is?

Films usually suffered in their Lux adaptations. The forty-five minute scripts required the stories to focus almost exclusively on plot points -- losing much of the subtleties of characterization that could be found in the full-length films. The "Lux" adaptation of "Casablanca" is a good example -- stripping the story down to its most basic points leaves it as little more than a common potboiler. Casting adds to the weakness of this particular show: so much of the charisma of the character of Rick is tied in with Bogart's on-screen interpretation of the role that Alan Ladd's wooden "Lux" performance is painful to hear. And Hedy Lamaar, needless to say, is no Ingrid Bergman.

Similarly, for a fan of "The Philadelphia Story," none but Grant and Hepburn will do in the lead roles. "Lux's" 1943 adaptation with Robert Taylor and Loretta Young simply doesn't make the cut. And when casting changes are combined with substantial alterations in the script itself, the offense is even greater. Lux's 1944 adaptation of "Wake Up And Live," a delightful Fox musical from 1937 which had starred Jack Haley, Alice Faye, Ben Bernie and Walter Winchell, is in no way representative of the original film - rewriting the story to fit an annoyingly callow Frank Sinatra and replacing the exquisite 1937 musical score with an assortment of forgettable bobby-soxer pop tunes.

But all that said, there *are* some "Lux" shows that are very enjoyable. Usually these are the lighter stories -- comedy films tended to condense much better than heavy dramas. The 1936 version of "The Thin Man" brings Myrna Loy and William Powell to

the microphone with little lost in the translation, and the 1939 adaptation of my all-time favorite movie, "It Happened One Night" manages to retain much of that film's goofy charm. And, very rarely, "Lux" would actually *improve* on the original. This is certainly the case with the 1947 adaptation of "The Jazz Singer." The original film, despite its place in legend as the harbinger of the talkie era, is a maudlin piece of trash, rescued from its own wretchedness only by Al Jolson's larger-than-life musical numbers. But the radio version draws more from the original stage play than from the film, and is much easier to take. It's also one of Jolson's finest radio performances.

Perhaps "Lux's" greatest weakness, from a modern-day listener's perspective, is this: we today are *much more familiar* with the original films than their original audiences. We see them over and over again on TV or on videos -- whereas the audiences of the thirties and forties usually saw them only once. To these audiences, a Lux adaptation was probably a welcome remembrance of a pleasant night at the movies, but to a hard-core movie fan today these same adaptations can often come across as second-rate imitations.

In a way, it's unfair to judge "Lux" by this standard -- after all, no one expects a "Classic Comic" to be judged by the same standard as a great novel. But, by the very nature of its format, the series invites comparison with the films on which it was based: and in these comparisons, it will almost always come up short. A twelve-inch speaker isn't the same as a forty-foot screen -- and what works for one usually doesn't work for the other.

Movies are movies -- and radio is radio. Movies are Stupendous, Colossal, and Larger Than Life. Radio is as intimate as your living room.

And when you try to mix them -- neither can possibly live up to its full potential.

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*Elizabeth McLeod is a journalist, researcher, and freelance writer specializing in radio of the 1930s. She is a regular contributor to "Nostalgia Digest" magazine and the Internet OldRadio Mailing List, maintains a website, Broadcasting History Resources, and is presently researching a book on Depression-era broadcasting. Elizabeth is always looking for 1930s radio recordings in all formats -- uncoated aluminum or lacquer-coated discs, vinyl or shellac pressings, or low-generation tape copies. You can contact her at [lizmcl@midcoast.com](mailto:lizmcl@midcoast.com)*

## Radio Personalities: Sam Edwards

by Stewart Wright Copyright 2002

CORR-LAISS! OH, CORR-LAISS!

was one of the many memorable lines from the Gold Age of Radio. It was the bellowing cry of love-sick teen-ager Dexter Franklin for the one, true, love-of-his-life, Corliss Archer and was sometimes used as the opening for episodes of the series Meet Corliss Archer.

A year or two ago, I wrote an article about Janet Waldo who played Corliss Archer. This time we will look at the career of the actor behind that love call, Sam Edwards.

### The Family Business:

Sam Edwards got an early start in show business. As part of his family's repertory company, he had lots of years to develop his acting talents.

While the family was living in San Antonio, TX, his mother wrote a kid's radio serial - *The Adventures of Sonny and Buddy*. Sam and brother Jack played the kid's roles, while his mother and father played the most of adult characters. The entire family made a total of \$50.00 a week and had to pay the other actors and the musicians out of it.

Later, the Edwards moved to San Francisco and Sam's parents wrote the series *Sons of the Lone Star* which starred the members of the family: Sam's Father and Mother, John and Edna, Sam, Jack, and sister Florida. They also did the first true-life family radio show in which family members played themselves, appropriately called - *The Five Edwards*.

### Radio:

Not surprisingly, Sam's favorite show is *Meet Corliss Archer*. His brother Jack tipped him off about the audition for the Dexter role. Although Sam didn't think he could play a teen-ager, he auditioned for the part. The series director suggested that Sam develop a distinctive laugh for Dexter. Sam came up  
**RETURN WITH US NOW...**

with something even better: his CORR-LAISS yell.

Later, Sam wanted to audition for the Walter Denton role on *Our Miss Brooks*, but he couldn't because he already was doing Dexter on *Meet Corliss Archer*. He was able to appear on other shows; he just couldn't do a character similar to Dexter.

Brothers Jack and Sam Edwards sometimes competed for the same role during auditions. Both auditioned for the role of Wayne Grubb on *One Man's Family*. Jack won the role. The next summer, Sam got the role of Tracy Baker on the same series. Ironically, both characters were unsuccessful suitors for Paul Barbour's adopted daughter, Teddy.

Sam also appeared in featured roles in several other radio series: *Hawthorne House* as Billy Sherwood, *Doctor Kate* as Morris Young, *Father Knows Best* as Billy Smith, *The Guiding Light* as Roger Collins, and *The Life of Riley* as Egbert Gillis.



Some of the less well-known shows Sam appeared on included *Deadline Mystery*, *My Hometown*, *Those O'Malleys*, *Thrills*, *Wanted By The Law*, and *Whispering Streets*.

One of the most satisfying roles he ever had was in the radio play "The Game" which aired on both *Escape* and *Suspense*. Sam and Gil Stratton Jr. co-starred in it. It is a story about two bored teen-agers who decide to play Russian roulette. Writer/director Tony Ellis had Sam and Gil put an unloaded gun to their heads while doing the show.

There is a very unusual aspect to another of Sam's favorite *Escape* roles, that of John Unger in the F. Scott Fitzgerald story "The Diamond As Big As The Ritz." It aired three times on the series *Escape*. Each time the Unger role was played by an Edwards brother. Jack played him on 07/21/1947 and Sam did the honors on 08/29/1948 and 03/27/1949.

John Dunning once asked him, about projecting a whole character with just a voice. Sam replied, "In your mind's eye you see the character. You put yourself into the place of the character."

Sam remembers that *Lux Radio Theater* was considered The Big Show in Hollywood. With its

August, 2006

multi-day rehearsals, it was almost like a stage production. Lux was the best-paying radio show. Supporting actors got \$125.00 for 3 days work; the stars got between \$2,000 & \$10,000. Some of the big movie stars were terrified when they got in front of the microphone.

During the Golden Age of Radio Sam was quite a busy actor. Four of the best producer/directors in radio used Sam's talents on a frequent basis: Jack Johnstone on *The Six Shooter* and *Your's Truly*, *Johnny Dollar*; Norman Macdonnell on *Escape*, *Gunsmoke*, *Fort Laramie*, and *Have Gun, Will Travel*; Elliott Lewis on *Crime Classics*, *Suspense* and *Broadway Is My Beat*; and Jack Webb on *Pat Novak for Hire* and *Dragnet*. His ability to do an authentic Texas drawl got him lots of appearances on Westerns radios series such as some of the preceding shows and *The Adventures of Red Ryder*, *The Cisco Kid*, *Death Valley Days*, *Luke Slaughter Of Tombstone*, *The Roy Rogers Show*, and *Tales of the Texas Rangers*.

Sam liked working for Jack Webb even though some actors had trouble working with him because you had to play your role Jack's way. When *The Five Edwards* was on the air, Jack auditioned for the role Sam's sister's boy friend and didn't get the part. Webb sounded too flat and wooden; in other words, too much like "Joe Friday." When Jack did *Pat Novak For Hire*, he used both Sam and Jack Edwards a lot. Later, when Sam told him that he was sorry Jack didn't get that role on *The Five Edwards*, Jack said when he auditioned he sounded too much like "Joe Friday."

#### Voice Work:

As did many radio actors, Sam also worked for the Disney Studios. In the 1942 animated feature *Bambi*, he provided the voice of the adult Thumper the rabbit. For *America Sings*, an audio animatronics show, Sam provided the voice of Mr. Owl. He narrated the *Disneyland Storyteller* albums of "The Cowardly Lion of Oz" and "The Tin Woodman of Oz" and supplied the voice for the character of Owl in the Disney "Winnie-the-Pooh" stories.

#### Television:

Sam was quite busy on television too. He appeared in the first television episode of *Dragnet* and many later episodes of the series. In 1961 he was cast in the *Lum and Abner* TV pilot that never made it onto the air. On the long-running series *Little*

*House on the Prairie*, he played Mr. Anderson. Sam appeared on several television series that had their roots in radio - *The Adventures of Ozzie & Harriet*, *The Burns and Allen Show*, *Death Valley Days*, *Gangbusters*, *Gunsmoke*, *The Jack Benny Show*, *The Red Skelton Show*, and *You Are There*. Some of his other TV credits include *Adam-12*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *Cannon*, *Days of Our Lives*, *Gunsmoke*, *Happy Days*, *Hawaii Five-O*, *I Love Lucy*, *Lou Grant*, *Mannix*, *Mission: Impossible*, *Perry Mason*, *Petticoat Junction*, *Playhouse 90*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, *Studio One*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The Virginian*, *Wagon Train*, and *Zane Grey Theater*.

#### Movies:

He also appeared in many motion pictures including *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Flight of the Grey Wolf*, *Escape to Witch Mountain*, *Hello, Dolly!*, *Gang Busters*, *Flying Leathernecks*, *Operation Pacific*, and *Twelve O'Clock High*. Sam also played Chuck in the *Captain Midnight* movie serials.

#### He's Still Got It!

Sam plays a convincing teenager when doing recreations at the Old-Time Radio conventions. But, can he still do his CORR-LAISS yell like a love-struck teen-ager? You betcha!

[Sam Edwards passed away in July of 2004 - Ed.]



## New in the Tape and CD Libraries

by Maletha King

This month we go back go back to filling in 32 more CDs for your enjoyment. This consists of the rest of the "Speed Gibson of the Secret Police" series, all the "Green Llama" shows we have and then continuing on with "The Shadow of Fu Manchu" series from late 1939.

It has been very hot here the past few weeks, and I have had a chance to listen to quite a few shows, both from the club's libraries and Dick's own collection. It certainly has been a pleasant way to pass the time when going outside is too risky in the heat.

# CROSSWORD PUZZLE

by Jack Richards (answers on back page)

1	2	3	4			5	6	7		8	9	10	11	12
13					14				15		16			
17					18			19			20			
	21			<b>R</b>		22	23			<b>H</b>		24		
25			26		27				28		29			30
			31					32						
33	34	35				36	37				38	39	40	
41												42		
43			44			45		46			47			
			48		49			50	51					
52	53	54			55		56				57	58	59	
	60			<b>A</b>		61					<b>C</b>		62	
63			64		65			66	67		68			69
70					71		72				73			
74						75					76			

ACROSS		DOWN	
1	Member of the Aldrich family	61	Played Benny's violin teacher
5	Public transportation	62	Where's the (?)
8	Canine	63	An Age
13	Fake butter	65	Preceeds iou
14	Beds	66	Either companion
16	Single one	68	Tops a beer
17	On guard	70	Nevada city
18	(?) the Twiq is Bent	71	Dead one
19	He phoned home	73	Fishing need
20	Special cares	74	Paradices
21	Downfall of OTR	75	Use TFF
22	(?) We Meet Again	76	Obliactions
24	International Hospice		
25	Where's the (?)	1	Reporter question
27	Airs	2	Make happy
29	Part of a flower	3	Sense organ
31	Culture medium	4	Triqaer's rider
32	Single time	5	Gang (?)
33	Finished a test in record time	6	World organization
36	Family member	8	He was a mean little kid
38	Thunder God	9	Umpire call
41	Shv	10	Not burning
42	Mv gal	11	Special place
43	Lea joint	12	Too much wine?
45	Belonging to a lady	14	Symbol for barium
47	Cartoon doog	15	Ave.
48	(?) Mater	23	Not out
50	Bia. bia production	25	Boston (?)
52	Compass direction	26	Newest craze
55	Brown color	27	Organization for old soldiers
57	Required for saving OTR	28	Use SN
60	That thing	29	Place
		30	Phillip (?)
		34	Type of artist
		35	Look at
		37	Iron souce
		39	Thirty-third President
		40	Feedbag content
		44	Consume
		45	Created Sam Spade
		46	Name quickly (2 words)
		47	Fall mo.
		49	Greek letter
		51	Dept. which talks to the press
		53	Broadcasted
		54	Played 1 across
		56	Exist
		58	In reference to
		59	Played Gilderersleeve
		63	Anger
		64	Prefix meaning not
		65	Gally cargo
		67	Radio Frequency
		68	The new one is bird (?)
		69	More than one of ME
		72	Starts a question

1H	2E	3N	4R	Y		5B	6U	7S		8H	9O	10U	11N	12D
13O	L	E	O		14B	U	N	K	15S		16U	N	I	T
17W	A	R	Y		18A	S		19E	T		20T	L	C	S
	21T	V		R		22T	23I	L		H		24I	H	
25B	E	E	26F		27V	E	N	T	28S		29S	T	E	30M
L			31A	G	A	R		32O	N	C	E			A
33A	34C	35E	D			36S	37O	N			38T	39H	40O	R
41C	O	Y					R					42S	A	L
43K	N	E	44E			45H	E	46R			47O	T	T	O
I			48A	L	49M	A		50E	51P	I	C			W
52E	53A	54S	T		55U	M	56B	E	R		57T	58A	59P	E
	60I	T		A		61M	E	L		C		62B	E	
63I	R	O	64N		65A	E		66O	67R		68F	O	A	69M
70R	E	N	O		71S	T	72I	F	F		73L	U	R	E
74E	D	E	N	S		75T	F	F		76D	U	T	Y	S

Answers to this month's crossword puzzle (don't peek)

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