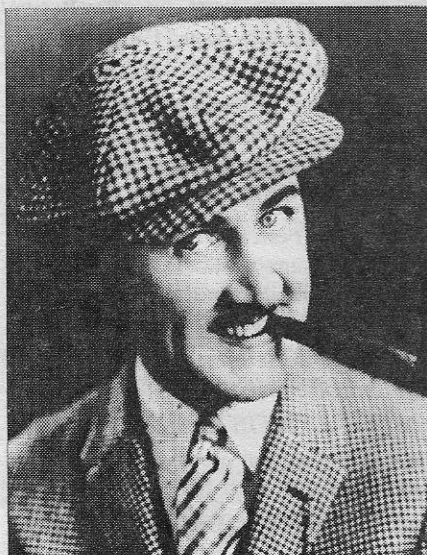


Past Times

No. 31 THE NOSTALGIA ENTERTAINMENT NEWSLETTER \$5.00

Making a Case For Charley Chase



Laurel & Hardy were rediscovered by a new generation in the early '50s. Buster Keaton was finally appreciated as a great artist in the early '60s. The Marx Brothers became a huge hit all over again in the early '70s. Charley Chase has deserved a major rediscovery for the past fifty years, but it hasn't happened yet.

Still, we keep hoping. Chase—whose real name was Charles Parrott—was uniquely talented as a writer and director of short comedy films. In front of the camera, he had an engaging screen presence. He could play a henpecked husband, a brash go-getter, sometimes a completely obnoxious heckler—but if his character's traits changed somewhat from film to film, Chase's personal charm and charisma always shone through. He made the transition from one-reel silent comedies to two-reelers in 1925,

and four years later he was one of the few silent comedians to adapt well to talkies. (He sang splendidly in many shorts, often performing songs he'd composed.)

The films themselves ranged from pleasant domestic comedies to wild and wacky comedy-fantasies. Most people remember Chase for the films in which he got into an embarrassing predicament and then had to dig his way out of it—such as *Limousine Love*, in which Charley innocently finds himself with a nude young lady in the back seat of the car which is taking him to his wedding ceremony! One of Chase's last silents was entitled *Imagine My Embarrassment*, a phrase which could apply to most of his work.

Unfortunately, many of his films have been difficult to see for many decades. Some of his best silents were never transferred from nitrate stock to safety film, and are presumably lost forever. Many of the early talkies exist only in mute prints with no soundtrack discs. Even the 1930-36 sound shorts, which have the best opportunity for revival, have been only sporadically available in 16mm prints and on videocassette.

But Chase has a devoted core of fans, and two of them have written a fine biography of this long-neglected talent. **Smile When the Raindrops Fall** (Scarecrow Press; 255 pages, hardcover; \$49.95) is the product of fifteen years' research by filmmaker-historian Brian Anthony and writer Andy Edmonds, whose previous books include volumes about Roscoe Arbuckle and Thelma Todd. The current work is told in straightforward fashion; despite the fact that Chase and most of his associates had passed on long before work began on this book, the few who remained (including producer Hal Roach, co-stars Anita Garvin and Dorothy Granger, and crew members Roy Seawright and Ed Bernds) had vivid memories and are liberally quoted. Daughter June Chase Hargis also helped provide vital information about the comedian's offscreen life.

Continued on Page 4

PT Now On Line, On the Air

Past Times may be just an unpretentious little newsletter, but we do admit to having one lofty goal. We'd like to raise the level of current popular culture by educating people about the great talents of the past. Movies, popular music, radio drama and other entertainments of the 1920s, '30s and '40s had a level of craftsmanship—and sometimes real artistry—which seems to be sadly lacking in most of today's offerings.

Fortunately, there's a growing army of folks who share our viewpoint, and many of them can be found in cyberspace on the World Wide Web. Well, *Past Times* is finally on the Web, too. You can see our site at <http://www.ptnostalgia.com>.

We've got a listing of all articles from previous issues, so you can quickly see what we've published about your favorite personalities. Selected articles are reprinted in their entirety to entice the uninitiated.

Perhaps the most exciting and useful part of our website are three sections which provide dozens of links to other Websites devoted to vintage films, music and radio. It's gratifying to see the creative ways in which people celebrate the popular entertainment of the past, and we're happy to help promote their causes.

As we continue, we'll be adding graphics and sound files to our site; if you have suggestions for it, e-mail us at skretved@ix.netcom.com. Subscribers who live in Southern California might want to sample our weekly radio show called *Forward Into the Past*, which airs Sundays from 2 to 5 p.m. over KSPC-FM (88.7). We play all manner of pre-1950 recordings—big bands, comedy records, show tunes, soundtracks, but with an emphasis on the dance bands of the '20s and early '30s.

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Love Vintage Movies, Big Bands, Old Time Radio?
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NOSTALGIA NEWSWIRE

The **Eddie Cantor** Appreciation Society just published another issue of its newsletter, *The Cantor Connection*. Included are profiles of songwriter **Henry Tobias**, who passed away last December, and singer-actor **Robert Clary**, who was married to Eddie's late daughter **Natalie**. Several vintage articles about Cantor from the early '50s are reprinted. You can join by sending \$15 annual dues (\$25 overseas) to The Eddie Cantor Appreciation Society, P.O. Box 312, Mount Gay, WV 25637.

Donald Mills and his son **John H. Mills II** continue their long-running engagement at the Palm Springs Follies (and at time of writing, Donald is about to celebrate his 83rd birthday on April 29). You can send a greeting to him in care of the Palm Springs Follies, 125 E. Tahquitz Cyn. Drive., Suite 209, Palm Springs CA 92262. The Mills duo will continue in Palm Springs through May 30, then will tour Northern California and the East Coast. The Mills Brothers were honored with Lifetime Achievement awards at the Grammy festivities on February 25. Plans are underway for the first convention of The Mills Brothers Society, to be held June 26-28 in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania—the ancestral home of the Mills family. For more information about the event, write the Society in care of **Daniel R. Clemson**, 604 N. Market Street, Mechanicsburg PA 17055-2727.

Happy birthday wishes to jazz trombonist **Spiggle Willcox**, who will turn 95 on May 2. Mr. Willcox played alongside **Bix Beiderbecke**, **Frank Trumbauer** and (at recording dates) **Joe Venuti** and **Eddie Lang** in the legendary **Jean Goldkette** orchestra of the mid-1920s. He's still very active today, playing at jazz festivals all around the country; a couple of years ago he released a CD entitled *Jazz Keeps You Young*, and he's living proof of that. We're eagerly looking forward to a forthcoming book about Bix which is being written by **Philip R. Evans** and his wife **Linda**. Phil's previous works include "Bix: Man and Legend," "Tram: The Frank Trumbauer Story," and a volume devoted to **Red Nichols**—all of them meticulously researched and highly readable.

In our last issue, we reviewed the book version of *A Personal Journey With Martin Scorsese Through American Movies*, which is heavily oriented toward films of the silent era through the '40s. The 3 hour, 45-minute film which spawned the book is now available on laserdisc from Criterion for \$99.95. And if you, like Scorsese, are fond of film noir, you'll want to pick up some new titles from **Universal Home Video**: *Ministry of Fear* (1944) starring **Ray Milland**; *Black Angel*, a 1946 thriller with **Dan Duryea**, **Peter Lorre** and **Broderick Crawford**; the 1944 noir *Phantom Lady*, with **Franchot Tone** and **Ella Raines**; director **Fritz Lang**'s *You and Me* (1938), starring **Sylvia Sydney** and **George Raft**; and the 1946 classic *The Killers* with **Burt Lancaster**. Each is available for \$14.98. Newly repackaged and repriced at that rate by Universal are some other vintage goodies, among them *The Blue Dahlia* (1946), *Criss Cross* (1948), *This Gun For Hire* (1942), *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Big Clock* (1948) and *The Glass Key* (1942).

Warner Bros. has been celebrating its 75th anniversary with a 33-title "Festival of Classics," making its way to repertory houses around the country. Thanks to Time-Warner's merger with Turner, the vintage Warners classics of the '30s and '40s are once again owned by their home studio. The titles to watch for: *The Jazz Singer*, *42nd Street*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Public Enemy*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Now Voyager*, *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon*. And we have to admit that *The Searchers* and *Dial M for Murder* are worth seeing, too...

New in bookstores: a lavish volume about the New Amsterdam Theatre, published by Hyperion. On April 13, 94-year-old **Doris Travis**, who'd tap danced at the theatre 79 years earlier as a Ziegfeld Follies girl, recreated her act as part of an AIDS benefit. Congratulations, Doris!

When ordering books reviewed in *Past Times*, please note that prices are retail and do not include shipping. You should add \$4.00 for the first book, .75 each additional book, plus applicable state sales tax.

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CALENDAR

Please send notice of forthcoming events to: Past Times, 7308 Fillmore Drive, Buena Park CA 90620. Be sure to include a phone number for additional information.

FILM EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Screening of Keaton's *The General* and *One Week*, Alex Theatre, Glendale CA, May 16. Scores by Carl Davis performed by Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. Info: (213) 622-7001, ext. 275.

Roy Rogers Festival, Portsmouth OH, June 4-6. Special guests, dealers' room. Info: Roy Rogers/Dale Evans Collectors Assn., P.O. Box 1166, Portsmouth OH 45662; (614) 353-0900.

Buck Jones Film Festival/Banquet, Rochester NY, June 13-14. Guests include actress Peggy Stewart. Screenings, raffle, dealers' room. Info: Dom Marafioti, (716) 359-8987.

Memphis Film Festival, Hollywood Casino, Memphis TN, August 5-8. Dozens of movies screened; memorabilia on display and for sale. Guests include Frances Dee, Joan Leslie, Sean McClory. Info: P.O. Box 40272, Memphis TN 38174; e-mail: rnielsen@aetn.org

MUSIC EVENTS & FESTIVALS

A Gala Salute to Britain, Redwood City CA, May 29 (8:00 p.m.) and 30 (2:30 p.m.). Includes the 40-piece Vintage Theatre Orchestra, British song hits from WWI and WWII, and a centennial tribute to entertainer Gracie Fields. Information: (650) 341-7690 or 345-5469, between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. Pacific time.

Kate Smith Festival, Lake Placid NY, May 29-31. Info: Raymond Wood, 6437 E. Seneca Turnpike, Box 368, Jamesville NY 13078.

Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival, Sedalia MO, June 3-7. Information: (816) 826-2271.

Glenn Miller Festival, Clarinda IA, June 11-14. Big Bands, panel discussions, museum, big band dance, more. Info: Glenn Miller Birthplace Society, P.O. Box 61, Clarinda IA 51632; (712) 542-2461. gmbs@clarinda.heartland.net.

All That Jazz, Sequim WA, June 26-28. Traditional jazz bands and ragtime/honky-tonk pianist Big Tiny Little. Details: P.O. Box 3848, Sequim WA 98382; (253) 833-7946.

OLD-TIME RADIO/TV EVENTS

12th Annual Old-Time Radio and Nostalgia Convention, Marriott Inn, Cincinnati OH, May 29-30. Info: Bob Burchett, 10280 Gunpowder Rd., Florence KY 41042; (606) 282-0333.

REPS Radio Showcase VI, Seattle, June 19-20. Convention will spotlight "Radio Families," with many performers from the world of OTR in attendance. Info: Showcase VI, P.O. Box 723, Bothell WA 98042; e-mail: hrrmikes@aol.com

Lum & Abner Society Convention, Mena AR, June 26-27. Info: Tim Hollis, 81 Sharon Road, Dora AL (205) 648-6110.

Movies

A Universal Dream

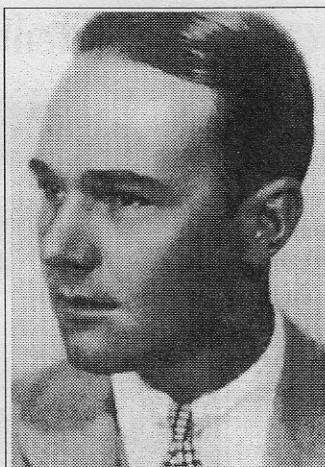
Think about Universal movies, and what comes to mind? Abbott and Costello, a whole bunch of classic horror films, Deanna Durbin musicals? Maybe even Francis the Talking Mule? Well, there's more to the studio's story than this, as detailed by Bernard F. Dick in **City of Dreams: The Making and Remaking of Universal Pictures** (Kentucky; 249 pages, hardcover; \$29.95).

A German immigrant named Carl Laemmle, formerly a clothing store manager, opened a nickelodeon in Chicago in February 1906. Success as an exhibitor brought him into the film distribution business, and finally to the production end. He'd already been a prolific filmmaker when Universal City opened in March 1915. Laemmle felt that a film business should be self-contained; his lot not only had stages, a film lab and a prop shop, but a post office, police and fire departments, a zoo, a greenhouse and a hospital.

The author details how Laemmle gave early training to Irving Thalberg, William Wyler and Harry Cohn. In the early '30s, Carl Laemmle Junior took over production and began making costly prestige films, with the result that both Laemmles were out of the company by 1936. From then on, the studio has changed hands regularly: Decca Records bought it in 1951; MCA took over in 1958. In 1989, Matsushita bought the studio until Seagram's took the reins in 1995. Even so, Universal kept releasing popular product and its prestige has increased over the past decades.

Most of the book, thankfully, is about the studio's first three decades; the '40s are clearly the author's favorite period. (He proclaims his allegiance to Abbott & Costello early on; however, he notes that the team's *Lost in a Harem* and *Africa Screams* are lesser efforts, without bothering to reveal that these were made for other studios.)

The financial aspects of the studio's history are emphasized more as the book goes on, but all of this is clearly and entertainingly written. Sixty photos depict notable films and the individuals who helped make them. (Available from University Press of Kentucky, 663 S. Limestone Street, Lexington KY 40508-4008.)



Silent No More

William Haines is virtually forgotten now, but he was a popular, charismatic and dynamic actor in many MGM silent features. He played bit parts in several films before making his mark in *Brown of Harvard* (1926) and solidifying his stardom in Lon Chaney's *Tell It To the Marines*. He became a top star and made the transition to talkies quite smoothly (his pleasant baritone was considered so fine that he was the first MGM star to face the mikes). In 1932, MGM let him go and by 1934 he was out of the movie business. This was due to more than just a change in the audience's preferences: Haines was gay, had a devoted lover, and didn't really care who knew it.

As William J. Mann tells it in **Wisecracker** (Viking; 444 pages, hardcover; \$29.95), the enforcement of the Production Code in '34 not only put an end to the saucy situations on-screen; it had a chilling effect in the formerly free-and-easy Hollywood community as well. Haines became a top interior decorator, designing for Joan Crawford, Carole Lombard, Jack Warner and, later, Nancy Reagan. He and his companion, Jimmie Shields, were often referred to as the most devoted couple in Hollywood, and indeed, when Haines died in December 1973, Shields was so distraught that he committed suicide the following March. Thanks to prevailing attitudes, much of Haines' life was shrouded for decades in secrecy, and many who could add the details have passed on. As a result, sometimes Mann is forced to speculate, although he generally bases his theories on solid research. He sometimes goes astray in describing the gay show-business community (despite his friendship with Orry-Kelly, Jack Benny was known as a confirmed ladies' man before he married Sadie Marks/Mary Livingstone). Still, this is a compelling read about an aspect of Golden Era Hollywood that's rarely discussed. (Available in bookstores.)

A number of actors and actresses who had been successful in silent films just couldn't make the transition to talkies, but dozens of them did—although with varying degrees of success. Five hundred of these actors are profiled in **From Silents to Sound** by Roy Liebman (McFarland; 309 pages, hardcover; \$69.00 postpaid). This "Biographical Encyclopedia" reports on how well a given performer fared in the new medium. A birthdate and location is given for each, along with summaries of the actor's work in silent films and then in talkies. Period reviews of notable talkies provide the scorecard; Liebman himself assesses the performer's career in a contemporary context. Many of the biographies here are rather sad, particularly for actresses who were nearing 30 just as the talkies hit. However, it is surprising to realize how many silent-film veterans adapted to talkies with no trouble whatsoever. (Available from McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640.)

With the exception of a gibberish song in 1936's *Modern Times*, Charles Chaplin refused to talk in movies until 1940. His second wife sure told all, though—in 1927 when she filed for divorce, in 1966 with the publication of *My Life With Chaplin*, and in 1995, the year of her passing, with a second manuscript designed to correct the inaccuracies put into the first by a co-author. **Wife of the Life of the Party** by Lita Grey Chaplin and Jeffrey Vance (Scarecrow Press; 306 pages, hardcover; \$39.50) has little of the bitterness so prevalent in the earlier book; Mrs. Chaplin seems to have reassessed the whole experience. She also must have had a photographic memory—this book, begun in the last year of her life, has some amazingly detailed accounts of events which took place in the early 1920s.

She met Chaplin at age twelve when she appeared as a flirtatious angel in *The Kid*. Three years later, she was signed as the leading lady for *The Gold Rush*, a production which she had to leave a year later when, at 16, she became pregnant. Married in November 1924, the Chaplins had two sons (Charles, Jr. and Sydney) and split up exactly two years later. The divorce was very public, and Lita's settlement of \$825,000 made headlines.

Chaplin comes across as a man who could be charming one moment and furious the next, but his idiosyncracies are similar to those described by other associates. A little over half of the book is taken up by the original divorce documents. These will be of interest to the Chaplin scholar, but their legalese makes for pretty dry reading to most of us. The 40 photographs include wonderful candids from *The Kid* and *The Gold Rush*. (Available from Scarecrow Press, P.O. Box 191, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214-0191; (800) 462-6420.)

L&H Trivia Book is Essential

A year ago, we learned about a Laurel & Hardy trivia book which was in the works. Frankly, we weren't expecting much, since most such books are—well, trivial. So, we were very happily surprised with **Laurel & Hardy in "Big Quizness"** (Plumtree Publishing; 394 pages, paperback; \$25.00). Written by siblings Robert and Tracie McFerren and copiously illustrated by Robert, the book is an entertaining parade of unusual aspects of the L&H films.

Only the first third of the book is the expected Trivia Contest. Questions are posed about almost every L&H film, going chronologically from the first (*Lucky Dog*) to last (*Atoll K*). Some of the questions are fairly easy for L&H buffs (in *Come Clean*, which flavors is ice-cream vendor Charlie Hall out of? Orange, gooseberry and chocolate!), while others are head-scratchers even for longtime aficionados (in what month does *Way Out West* take place?).



The authors are kind enough to refrain from asking about the lost L&H films *Hats Off*—a vitally important but long-gone 1927 two-reeler—and *The Rogue Song*, a 1930 Technicolor musical starring Lawrence Tibbett with Stan and Ollie in support. However, in one of the most valuable portions of the book, these two lost gems are recreated in detailed descriptions of each film's action.

Chapters four through ten are probably the most enjoyable, focusing on unusual facts about the films. Films with "Weird or Uncontrollable Laughter" are listed, along with the perpetrator; all of the gags involving feet are described; all of the scenes in which the telephone is used for laughs are summarized. We found only a couple of mistakes (*Pardon Us* at its original 56 minutes is the boys' shortest feature, not the 58-minute *Block-Heads*; Roy Seawright did *not* win four Oscars for special effects in L&H movies) and a few omissions (Stan sings—briefly—in *Busy Bodies* as well as the eight listed films; the most outrageous double-entendre in an L&H film is delivered by Ollie to Mae Busch during *Tit For Tat*, not listed in the "Read Between the Lines" section).

Sections about the Boys' characteristics are quite interesting; we learn that Stan scratched his head 256 times, doing it first in 1928's *From Soup to Nuts*, and most frequently—15 times—in 1935's *Bonnie Scotland*. Stan's greatest quotes, collected here, are as funny as ever. A chronology of the boys' lives will prove useful to the more scholarly L&H admirers, as will a lengthy listing of non-L&H film appearances made by the supporting players. Not only are regulars such as Charlie Hall thus documented; even Fred "Snowflake" Toones—who appears in just one brief shot of *Way Out West*—gets a listing of notable films.

Although there are a few stills and bits of memorabilia reproduced, most of the illustrations are charming drawings by Robert McFerren. This book is obviously a labor of love by two devoted L&H fans. It's an entertaining, amusing and enlightening read that any devotee of Stan and Ollie should own, and it's certainly going to enliven future meetings of the Sons of the Desert. (Available from Plumtree Publishing, 9420 Stratton Road, Salem OH 44460-7618.)

Turbulent Life, Classic Comedy

Continued from Page 1



Unfortunately, his life away from the cameras was often as vexing as his onscreen predicaments—but without the humor. Parrott was born in Baltimore in 1893; his father, a heavy drinker, died suddenly of a heart attack in his mid-40s, leaving the family in a precarious financial plight. Young Charles became a street performer, singing and dancing for coins; this ultimately led to a vaudeville career, which took him to Los Angeles in 1912. He began acting in short

comedies for Al Christie and then for Mack Sennett; by 1914 he was writing and directing. He honed his craft at Fox, King Bee and Paramount, and by 1921 he'd secured a position at Hal Roach Studios, directing and supervising dozens of shorts before winning his own starring series in 1924.

He was businesslike and surprisingly introverted off camera, finding release in alcohol. Marital problems, often caused by his drinking, led to more drinking—and by the time Chase was 35 he wound up in the Mayo clinic having part of his stomach removed. Another such operation in 1934 did little to convince him of the dangers of booze. His closest friends were his brother, writer-director James Parrott, and neighbor Will Rogers; the deaths of both men before their time, and Chase's inability to graduate to starring features, exacerbated his demons.

Roach let him go in 1936; he soon found work starring in two-reelers at Columbia (where he also directed some of the best Three Stooges shorts), but the emotional and physical strains were taking their toll. A binge in June 1940 proved to be his last; he died of a heart attack, only 46.

Anthony and Edmonds do an excellent job of evoking the worlds in which Chase lived and worked. Although there's a healthy amount of attention paid to Chase's movies, this book is primarily a biography; one wishes that more space was given to illuminating his distinctive gifts as comedian and filmmaker. The storylines of his key films are placed throughout the book as boxed sidebar articles, but many excellent films aren't discussed at all. A filmography with full credit information (but, very unfortunately, lacking synopses) and a listing of Chase's known songwriting credits are provided.

The 80 well-chosen photographs are unfortunately lumped together as a separate section at the back of the book instead of being integrated into the text, a strange decision since the pictures are on the same paper stock. And someone at Scarecrow deserves a strong rap on the knuckles for the dreadful dust jacket photo—a blurry frame blow-up from *Mighty Like A Moose* in which Charley has buck teeth. This is a mystifying choice, given the many fine portrait stills available showing the handsome comedian in his prime.

Despite some of the curious flaws, this is a worthwhile and valuable book. It admirably champions a sensitive and often bedeviled man whose best work—when it can be seen—transcends the decades with indelible charm and humor. (Available from Scarecrow Press, P.O. Box 191, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214-0191; 1-800-462-6420.)

A Rare Pleasure: Charley Chase on Video

Although many of Charley Chase's finest films are extremely difficult to see, a handful of them are—or have been—available on home video.

One source for Chase comedies is Videobrary, which has a wide variety of short comedies, silent features and a few early talkies in its impressive catalog of VHS videocassettes. Currently, the company has four volumes of Charley's silent shorts; the tapes range in length between 70 and 100 minutes.

Volume One starts off with five one-reelers Chase made for Keystone in 1915, most of them more valuable as history than as entertainment. Chase generally plays disreputable characters here, as can be gathered from the titles of *Peanuts and Bullets*, *A Versatile Villain* and *The Rent Jumpers*. The latter is the funniest of the five and affords Charley a chance to do some characteristic "embarrassment" comedy during a restaurant scene in which his girl discovers another female's stocking in Charley's pocket. (This is not nearly as embarrassing as when Charley discovers his wallet is empty.) *A Lucky Leap* has some energetic knockabout comedy, but one might be wary of *Colored Villainy*, a rather distasteful film in which the whole cast cavorts in blackface.

Fortunately, the collection is more than redeemed by three excellent Hal Roach two-reelers, all revolving around matrimony. *His Wooden Wedding* (1925) has Charley perplexed on his wedding day when a rival slips him a note stating that his bride-to-be has a wooden leg. In *Be Your Age* (1926), Charley is forced by his boss to pursue a wealthy widow. Charley has been forced into a pre-arranged marriage in *Crazy Like a Fox* (1926), which is exactly how he acts to get out of it. The prints are quite good—not pristine, but complete, sharp and with generally good picture quality (although *Fox* is slightly dark in spots). Oliver Hardy, incidentally, provides fine support in the last two pictures. The scores leave a lot to be desired, ranging from acceptable piano ragtime to treacly '60s easy-listening music.

The great mid-'20s period is revisited in **Volume Two**, with four of Chase's finest two-reelers. In the 1926 *Mighty Like a Moose*, bucktoothed Charley and big-nosed wife Vivien Oakland both have plastic surgery, unbeknownst to each other; afterwards, they meet, don't recognize one another and begin a flirtation. *Innocent Husbands* (1926) involves a mystic whom Charley exposes as a fraud; *The Caretaker's Daughter* (1926) affords us a chance to see Charley perform with his brother, Jimmy Parrott, during an elaborate and funny disguise sequence. In *Looking For Sally* (1925) Charley is to meet his pre-arranged fiancée at a dock, but each mistakes an unattractive stranger for the betrothed. The scores on this Videobrary release are better ('20s jazz and dance records) and the prints are fine and in sharp focus—unfortunately, they've been severely cropped in the transfer, to the point that heads are cut off and titles are indecipherable. The tape is still worth watching, but we hope Videobrary will consider making a new transfer of these films.

Volume Three includes two one-reelers (the great *All Wet*, in which Charley fixes his car while submerged in a mud puddle, and *Big Red Riding Hood*) and three 20-minute films. In *Bad Boy* (1925), he has to disguise as a rough Irish hooligan to rescue his sweetheart from a rowdy dance hall; *Tell 'em Nothing* (1926) has Charley in a typical marital dispute; and *Long Fliv the King* (1926) is an elaborate film in which Chase is a condemned man who,

through a fluke, suddenly becomes King of the far-off land of Thermosa. We haven't seen this tape and can't comment on print or transfer quality, but the films are certainly entertaining.

Volume Four is devoted to eight of Chase's 1924 one-reelers, all of them quite funny and briskly paced. Among the highlights: *The Fraidy Cat*, which plays like a Harold Lloyd film—cowardly Charley is convinced that he has only months to live and summons up the nerve to confront the Our Gang kids who've been tormenting him. In *Jeffries, Jr.*, Charley takes lessons from boxing legend James J. Jeffries. *Sittin' Pretty* has Charley being mistaken for a policeman and ordered to collar a madman (played by brother Jimmy, who performs a "mirror" routine with Charley). The prints are fine, the authentic '20s music scores are enjoyable, and the transfers are sharp and properly cropped, making this an entertaining and technically excellent release. These VHS cassettes are transferred at Standard Play speed and are available for \$14.95 each (or three for \$40.00) from Videobrary, 5812 Wish Avenue, Encino CA 91316; (818) 881-2640. The company also has a cassette devoted to eight one-reelers starring Chase's brother James, who went under the professional name of Paul Parrott.

Chase's talkies are harder to find on video, with the exception of the public-domain *On the Wrong Trek* (1936) a fine short which was the comedian's last for Hal Roach. Highlights include a song and dance with the lovely Rosina Lawrence, and a cameo appearance by Laurel and Hardy (with whom Chase appears in *Sons of the Desert*, last available on VHS from Video Treasures). An excellent copy of *Trek* has been made available on VHS tape as part of **Laurel & Hardy and Friends, Volume Five** (LH 205; \$19.95) by The Nostalgia Archive; the company's current status is in doubt, so call 1-800-572-4624 for ordering information.

If you're really devoted, you can seek out some long out-of-print VHS releases. Chase's wonderful 1931 three-reeler *Rough Seas*, a World War I comedy featuring fine songs, inventive gags and pretty Thelma Todd, was added to a 1987 videocassette of Laurel & Hardy's *The Bohemian Girl* released by The Nostalgia Merchant (NM 4008). In 1985, a video company calling itself Hal Roach Studios Film Classics, Inc. released four volumes of *Hal Roach Comedy Classics*; among the titles included were Charley's imaginative fantasy *Life Hesitates at Forty* (1936), a domestic comedy called *Fate's Fathead* (1934), a reworking of *The Fraidy Cat* entitled *Nurse To You!* (1935), and a film about Charley's disastrous camping trip with a Boy Scout troop, *Midsummer Mush* (1933).

The latter was one of the few Charley Chase titles offered on Super 8 and 16mm prints by Blackhawk Films of Davenport, Iowa. That firm went under in the mid-1980s, but the library has been licensed to film preservationist David Shepard, who has several Chase films available in fine new 16mm prints—including the wonderful *Limousine Love* and *Mighty Like a Moose*. For information on titles and prices, write Film Preservation Associates, P.O. Box 71, Hatcreek, CA 96040.



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New Video Marx the Brothers' Unknown Antics

If you've seen all of the Marx Brothers movies and find yourself wishing for more, you'll find a treasure trove of rare and unusual material in **The Unknown Marx Brothers** (WinStar Home Entertainment WHE71033; \$19.95) a 126-minute documentary produced in 1993 and just made available on VHS. Narrated in straightforward fashion by Leslie Nielsen, this production assumes that you've already seen the 13 key Marx Brothers features—because, apart from a few very brief clips from *Horse Feathers* and *Duck Soup*, those features are represented here only by the original trailers and publicity material. Producers-writers-directors David Leaf and John Scheinfeld aren't concerned with reprising the team's greatest moments on film; they care more about exploring the Brothers' careers apart from the films that Marx fans already know.

This film won't convert the uninitiated, but those who are already devotees will find much to savor. The entire documentary makes great use of rare stills, theater programs, original advertisements and other memorabilia. There are unusual film clips galore, ranging

Illustration by Al Hirschfeld



from home movies (some of them in color) to Harpo's appearance in a 1925 silent feature (he speaks, via title card), to newsreels, television guest appearances and commercials. Interviews with Chico's daughter Maxine, Groucho's daughter Miriam, and Harpo's children Bill and Minnie provide background information about the team's career; more importantly, the Marx kids give us an insight into their famous fathers as people.

The first section traces the Brothers' career path—struggling in small-time vaudeville, making the leap to Broadway, becoming international favorites in movies, officially dissolving the act after *The Big Store* in 1941, and working separately during the WWII years. The second part focuses on Groucho's unexpected success on radio—a medium in which he'd been a notorious flop—thanks to producer John Guedel's idea for *You Bet Your Life*. Guedel, director Bob Dwan and

announcer George Fenneman describe how the show came about, and show why it transferred well to television. An unscreened audition film for the TV version—and many hilarious out-takes—are among the highlights. (So is a wonderful Jack Benny sketch spoofing the show.)

Much of the funniest material is saved for last, with a wealth of unusual television appearances made by Harpo and Chico. Harpo does a pair of great guest shots with Spike Jones and Milton Berle, appears in some truly surreal beer commercials, does a dramatic turn as a mute who witnesses a murder, and reduces John Daly to hysterics when promoting his book on the *Today* show. Chico is seen in some charming TV appearances on the BBC, and likewise is shown in a dramatic program called *Papa Romani*. The Harpo-Chico TV film *The Incredible Jewel Robbery* is largely ignored (probably because it's been frequently screened), but there's some fascinating footage from the never-completed 1959 Marx Brothers TV pilot *Deputy Seraph*. Groucho's 1973 guest shot on Bill Cosby's variety show proves that his mind was still quick even if the body was frail. (Cosby: "You're one of the truly great names in comedy. How would you classify me?" Groucho: "You'd come right after Nixon....and so would I, if I had the chance.")

This documentary shows that there are many other wonderful moments of Marxian comedy that we haven't memorized yet. It's an essential purchase for Marx buffs or those who would like to be. (Available in video stores.)

Gloria Stuart's Earlier Voyages

Well, the Academy voters didn't give her a deserved Oscar for *Titanic*, but it's terrific anyway that a new generation has discovered the talent of Gloria Stuart, who's better known at 87 than ever before.

Some of her earlier filmic voyages are worth embarking upon, too. Among the items available on video are *The Invisible Man*, *Gold Diggers of 1935*, the Eddie Cantor musical *Roman Scandals*, and the Shirley Temple films *Poor Little Rich Girl* and *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*.



Gloria Stuart in the '30s

However, the best video release of her work thus far is Image Entertainment's laserdisc of **The Old Dark House** (ID3146KN; newly repriced at \$24.98). This droll horror-comedy directed by James Whale brings Miss Stuart together with Melvyn Douglas, Boris Karloff, Charles Laughton, and assorted other unusual characters to the title structure on a rainy night. Years ago, available copies were so bad we used to refer to this as *The Old Dark Print*, so it's wonderful to see it much improved in picture and audio quality.

There are abundant extra goodies, too. A gallery of production stills is very interesting; so is the filmed interview with Whale's associate Curtis Harrington, a collection of lobby cards for Whale's films, and the audio commentary by Whale scholar James Curtis. The real joy of the package, though, is Gloria Stuart's commentary. She provides charming reminiscences and some astute observations about the film; she also talks about her stage and film career and her many outside activities such as helping found the Screen Actor's Guild and the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League. This is a treasurable souvenir of a charming and talented lady.

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Above and Beyond

A lot of the movies' heroes were actually more heroic off-screen, especially those who served in World War II. Thirty-seven men who served in the U.S. Navy and the Coast Guard during that conflict—or in World War I, Korea or Vietnam—are profiled in **Stars in Blue: Movie Actors in America's Sea Services** (Naval Institute Press; 320 pages, hardcover; \$29.95). Author James Wise was researching World War II when he stumbled upon the impressive service record of actor Wayne Morris; Wise began researching other actors' naval careers, and then enlisted co-author Anne Collier Rehill to help with other biographical matters.



Lt. (jg) Eddie Albert

Some of the actors' naval careers were unremarkable, but for others it was a life-changing experience. Young sailor Jack Benny first found he could get laughs during a camp show in 1918. (Pat O'Brien, Wallace Beery, Spencer Tracy and Humphrey Bogart wore

blue during that conflict, too.) Robert Montgomery, Eddie Albert, Henry Fonda and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. served with special courage during World War II. Glenn Ford, having served during that war, joined the Naval Reserve in 1958, did annual tours of duty and spent a month in Vietnam in 1967.

Filled with dozens of fine and heretofore unpublished photos, this book illuminates a part of its subjects' lives that is rarely touched upon in standard biographies. The details of battle are dramatic, but many entertaining anecdotes provide some humor. The contribution of many actresses is noted too, in photos of USO shows and other wartime contributions. A tribute is given to Hedy Lamaar, who invented a communications anti-jamming technology still in use.

Bandleaders who saw active duty, among them Eddy Duchin, Artie Shaw, Claude Thornhill and Paul Whiteman, are also acknowledged. This is a welcome salute to men who did their profession, and their country, proud. (Available from Naval Institute Press, 118 Maryland Avenue, Annapolis MD 21402-5035; (800) 233-8764.)

A Saturday Matinee With Buck Jones

In recent months, the folks at Universal Home Video have become much more interested in mining the treasures of their vaults. We're thrilled to see a number of major features such as *The Major and The Minor* and *All My Sons* finally getting their initial release on VHS, and we're even happier to see the debut of the Universal Matinee series. Thus far, the series consists of three Buck Jones westerns from the '30s: **Law For Tombstone**, **The Ivory-Handled Gun** and **Stone of Silver Creek**. Each retails for \$14.95.

We bought ourselves copies of the first two titles above, and for the most part we're very impressed with these releases. First off, the prints of these B-Westerns are in surprisingly fine condition; the image is sharp and the sound is clear and full. Since so many B-Westerns seem to survive only in splicy, scratchy, nth-generation dupes, it's really a pleasure to see these films in pristine condition. The features run just about an hour, but it turns out that they're only half the fun. The aim of this series is to bring back the experience of a mid-'30s Saturday matinee, so the producers have included a newsreel, a cartoon, a vintage trailer and a serial chapter, bringing the total program time to more than 90 minutes.

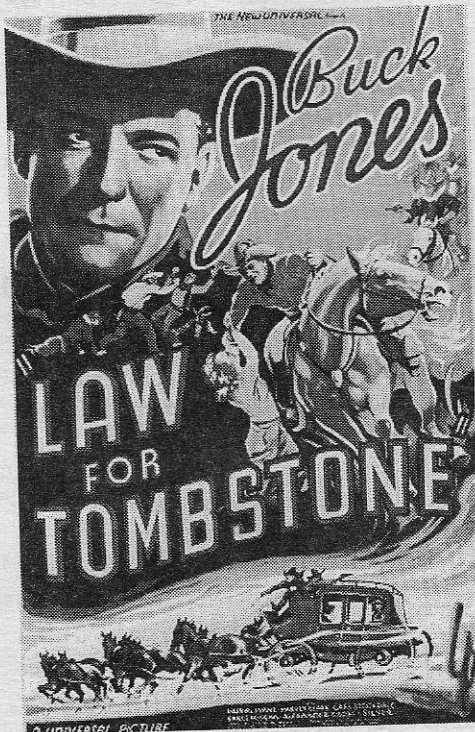
The "newsreel" is the only false note of each package, since segments from the *Universal Newspaper Newsreel* series have been given newly-recorded music and narration. One suspects this was done to allow re-editing and tightening of the footage; in any event, the new soundtracks sound anything but authentic.

Animation buffs will appreciate the inclusion of a black and white Walter Lantz cartoon in each package. *Tombstone* includes a wonderful 1938 short called *Hollywood Bowl*, loaded with caricatures of celebrities from the film and music worlds, and a Realart reissue trailer for *Bride of Frankenstein*. *Ivory-Handled Gun* has a less-impressive cartoon starring Jock and Jill (The Simple Simeons) in *Ghost Town Frolic*, and a reissue trailer for the Karloff-Lugosi thriller *The Invisible Ray*. The cartoons are in excellent shape, the trailers slightly dupey but welcome additions nevertheless.

I doubt if a Buck Jones feature would have been supported by a chapter of a Buck Jones serial—but the actor's fans will appreciate having a 20-minute episode of *Gordon of Ghost City* before the main picture. The serial looks a bit low-budget (and matters aren't helped any by heroine Madge Bellamy, who looks a bit older than her supposed age of 35), but the action scenes are fine and Jones has a deft way with a funny line.

In fact, Jones' excellent acting is a real pleasure to discover. These films demonstrate why he easily made the transition from silents to talkies, remaining a popular star for over 20 years (and occasionally playing leading roles in non-Westerns). Jones is the credited producer on both features; his real name was Charles Frederick Gebhart, and one wonders if he isn't the "Charles Jones" named as director of *Law For Tombstone*. There's no question that he had a hand in the creation of these pictures, since the scripts are well suited to his low-key, dryly funny delivery.

Congratulations to Universal Home Video for making these little gems available, and for going the extra mile in providing the supporting program. Other vintage westerns newly added to the Universal stable and selling for \$14.95 each include the Fred MacMurray and Jack Oakie oater *The Texas Rangers* (1936), directed by King Vidor; a sequel of sorts entitled *Texas Rangers Ride Again* (1940) starring John Howard, Anthony Quinn and Broderick Crawford; and the 1938 epic *The Texans*, starring Randolph Scott. (Available in video stores, or by mail from Movies Unlimited at 1-800-4-MOVIES.)



Singing Cowboys and Sidekicks on New Simitar CDs

If you have fond memories of the Singin' Cowboys, you'll want to saddle up and ride over to your favorite CD emporium—Simitar Entertainment has just released six new CDs in a series devoted to *Western Movie Singing Stars*. Each disc contains twelve tracks and runs about a half-hour, retailing for the budget price of \$7.98 (cassettes are also available for \$5.98 each). Most of this material has been unavailable for years, and some of it has never been previously released to the public at all. The discs have informative and entertaining booklet notes by Joseph F. Laredo. The packaging is top-notch, and so is the sound quality; producer Pete Kline and the folks at Simitar have turned out some first-rate releases whose value far exceeds their modest price.



Jimmy Wakely

and Charles Starrett before he attained star billing in 1944 at Monogram. The Wakely westerns continued through 1949, but sadly the parent studio has not maintained the negatives well and very few of the films are available for viewing today. The twelve songs on the Simitar CD are from 1940s transcriptions and have excellent sound; among the selections are a gutsy version of "Milk Cow Blues," a reworking of Jimmie Rodgers' "For the Sake of Days Gone By," and Wakely's own compositions "Too Late," "Oklahoma City Blues" and "I'm Gonna Marry Mary."

One of the last Singing Cowboys was **Rex Allen** (Simitar 55672), who made his movie debut for Republic in 1950 at a time when other Western series were coming to an end. "They forgot to tell me that the whole thing was over when I started," he quipped. Still, his good looks, engaging personality and terrific singing voice helped him find success in 19 feature films and a bunch of hit records for Decca. (His distinctive speaking voice can be heard narrating dozens of Walt Disney nature documentaries and hundreds of commercials.) As with the Wakely tracks, the twelve Rex Allen selections come from 1940s broadcast transcriptions. Rex's mellow baritone is backed by an excellent small band and vocal group on spirited songs such as "My Dear Old Arizona Home," "There's An Empty Cot in the Bunkhouse" and "Riding the Sunset Trail," and Rex proves himself a pretty mean yodeler on "Texas Plains." If these songs aren't exactly standards, they're perfect examples of the western sound of the '40s and early '50s.

Although they never had a starring film series of their own, **Foy Willing and the Riders Of the Purple Sage** (Simitar 55922) appeared in support of Charles Starrett, Tom Tyler, Jimmy Wakely, Monte Hale and Roy Rogers; they also appeared regularly on radio with Rogers and with the Andrews Sisters, and had hit records for Capitol, Decca and Majestic. The latter label provides the twelve tracks, which date from around 1946. The Riders were often thought of as a soundalike of the Sons of the Pioneers, and the inclusion of

"Cool Water" and "Tumbling Tumbleweeds" would seem to support that notion. However, the Riders had their own distinctive talents, as clearly shown on the jazz-tinged rendition of "Blue Tail Fly," a very funny "Jack O'Diamonds" and a haunting reading of "Oh, Bury Me Not On the Lone Prairie."

The remaining three CDs were recorded in the hi-fi era of the late '50s; they have more modern-sounding arrangements, but they're still charming and entertaining. **Eddie Dean** (Simitar 55692) made a fine series of Westerns for the low-budget PRC/Eagle-Lion studio, notable for their strict 1880s setting. Dean was handsome and had a spectacular singing voice, the power and resonance of which comes across forcefully on these twelve selections. Five of them are associated with Hank Williams ("Hey, Good Lookin'," "Half As Much," "Cold, Cold Heart") and two of them were co-written by Dean himself—the romping "Boogie Woogie Cowboy" and the great cheatin' song "One Has My Name (The Other Has My Heart)." (It's too bad that Dean's other big hit composition, "I Dreamed Of a Hillbilly Heaven" isn't here, but his only recording of it was for the tiny Sage & Sand label.) This fine collection spotlights a major talent who has been overlooked.

There was no way anyone could overlook **Judy Canova** (Simitar 55682), however; her extroverted cornpone comedy made her a top attraction in films, on radio and on recordings during the '40s and '50s. She began recording in 1931 with her sister and brother (I've got an old Oriole 78 called "Whoa Back Buck," credited to Annie, Judy and Zeke Canova), and later she made singles for RCA, Okeh, Mercury and Varsity. Strangely, she only made one album, twelve stereo tracks cut in 1958 for the Tops label. The sound quality of the new CD version is light years ahead of the hissy old LP pressings, allowing us to hear Ms. Judy's powerful vocals in all their glory. She tackles a wide range of material, from a hilarious version of "Just Because" to a sophisticated reading of "I Don't Know Why," to the lovely hymn "Follow Me." The backing band, including guitarist Speedy West and country/jazz fiddler Harold Hensley, copes splendidly with the diversity of styles.



Smiley Burnette

One of the jewels of this series is **Smiley Burnette** (Simitar 55702), which has 12 tracks (three of them previously unissued) recorded in 1959 for the Cricket children's label. This is no mere kiddie album, though, since the quality of the songs and the arrangements should delight any grown-up fan of the B-Westerns' greatest sidekick. Smiley's warm, gentle baritone is a genuine pleasure to hear on a sensitive reading of "Red River Valley," and his humor comes over fully in the very funny "That's All Brother, That's All," and "I Wish That I Said That," two of several Burnette compositions contained here. For those of you who cherish Smiley's trademark "Frog" voice, its growly rumble is heard in high-fidelity on "Deep Froggy Blues" and "Gran'pa Frog." Anyone who loves the Old West—that is, the West of the '30s and '40s—will enjoy these beautifully produced reissues, and we hope the Simitar folks will bring forth more treasures like these from the vaults.

A Song and A Dance

What would *The Wizard of Oz* be without "Over the Rainbow"? Obviously, music is an integral part of movies—and it was even during the silent era. Prints of many silent features were accompanied by scores to be played by the theatre's organist or house orchestra; there were even hit songs from silents. Author Gary Marmorstein fully explores the many worlds of Hollywood music and its practitioners from 1900 through 1975 in **Hollywood Rhapsody** (Schirmer; 456 pages, hardcover; \$30.00).

This is a delicious book, snappily written in prose that's as fun as it is informative. Not only does Mr. Marmorstein celebrate the great film composers—Steiner, Korngold, Waxman, Herrmann et al—he examines every aspect of film music, from the Tin Pan Alley songsmiths who came in with Talkies, to the jazz-influenced scores of Alex North. He notes the tremendous influence of Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby, Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra over popular songs written for films, and also delineates the differences between the studio styles of Paramount, Columbia, Fox and MGM. While the author justly acclaims the work of Arthur Freed and Alfred Newman, he also notes the contributions of Columbia's George Duning and Paramount's Victor Young.

The scope of this book is astonishing—it details the political in-fighting at the studio music departments, profiles the individual quirks of the composers, traces the history of film music through the decades, and describes the peculiar strengths of varied tunesmiths, all in brisk and lively prose which, appropriately, often sings. (Available in bookstores.)

Of course, with all those songs, you've got to have dancers, and that means you need **Film Choreographers and Dance Directors** (McFarland; 652 pages, hardcover; \$113 postpaid). Larry Billman's mammoth, superbly executed tribute to these overlooked but vitally important practitioners of terpsichory is definitive, first providing a history of dance on film from 1893 (!) to the present, and then providing full biographies and credits for 970 choreographers—even including those who design fight scenes in action films. Profusely illustrated, nicely designed and meticulously researched, this is one of the best film-related books issued by McFarland—or any publisher—in recent years. (McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (910) 246-4460.)



Betty

Kisses," "You Can't Have Everything" and "No Love, No Nothing." The packaging includes a lengthy biographical essay by producer Geoff Milne.

Faye co-starred with up-and-coming Betty Grable in Fox's *Tin Pan Alley* (1940), and as a result two songs from that film appear both on the Jasmine Faye collection and on **Betty Grable: The Pin-Up Girl** (Jasmine JASCD 103/4; \$30.00). Likewise, this is a two-CD set with lovely packaging, exemplary sound quality, and a lengthy appreciation by Geoff Milne. This album is even more important for Grable fans, since she made a grand total of one commercial record during her heyday (a vocal on husband Harry James' 1945 "I Can't Begin to Tell You," under the pseudonym of Ruth Haag). In an effort to include all of her important early songs, producer Milne has given us such delights as the 1930 "Cowboy Number" from *Whoopie!*, the charming "Let's K-nock K-nees" from 1933's *The Gay Divorcee*, and "Music In My Heart" from Wheeler and Woolsey's 1935 *The Nitwits*. Thank goodness for liberal British copyright laws which allow exemplary, all-inclusive CD sets like this to be created! This collection only goes up to Grable's 1945 film *The Dolly Sisters*, but we can enjoy the lush Fox orchestrations and Grable's lovely voice on another bunch of old standards ("Pretty Baby") and newer numbers such as "I Wish I Knew" and "The More I See You."

Another famous movie blonde worked over at Paramount; she made far fewer films and only six commercial records during the '30s, but she left an indelible impression anyway. You can experience it by listening to **Mae West: I'm No Angel** (Jasmine JASCD 102; \$15.00). The single CD starts off with Mae's six 1933 sides, songs from *She Done Him Wrong* and *I'm No Angel*. The balance of the CD is sequenced slightly out of order (a track from 1940's *My Little Chickadee* comes next), but all of Mae's songs from her eight major films are here. There's a bit of distortion on "Fifi" from *Every Day's a Holiday*, but generally the sound quality is fine. It's also interesting to compare the soundtrack renditions with the commercially-issued records, which are longer and have more elaborate arrangements. It's a joy to hear Mae strut her stuff on numbers such as "My Old Flame," "I Like a Guy What Takes His Time" and "I'm an Occidental Woman In an Oriental Mood For Love." These Jasmine releases are often in Tower Records stores and are available by mail from Catalogue Services, P.O. Box 368, Palm City FL 34990; prices listed above are approximate.



Mae

Alice, Betty and Mae

Recently, we've been blessed with a number of CDs which collect the soundtrack songs of film-musical personalities who rarely made commercial records. Some of them are from the Jasmine label, which is based in London but whose products are readily available in better Stateside record stores.

Alice Faye was the exception to the 20th Century-Fox rule of no recording for its contract players; she managed to make 23 sides between 1933 and '37. Most of her film songs went unrecorded, however, so it's lovely to have 62 of them on a double-CD set, **Alice Faye: Got My Mind On Music** (Jasmine JASCD 105/6; \$30.00). Songs from 20 films between *George White's 1935 Scandals* and *The Gang's All Here* (1943) are provided in excellent sound quality. Some of them are brief, but all of them are presented in complete soundtrack form. Alice's unusually dark and full-toned voice makes us understand why she was a favorite of Irving Berlin. Along for the ride are fellow Fox-ers Jack Oakie, Shirley Temple, Don Ameche, John Payne and others. A number of very vintage standards are included (Faye often did period pieces such as *Hello, Frisco, Hello*, *Alexander's Ragtime Band* and *Tin Pan Alley*) but so are "You Turned the Tables On Me," "This Year's

Laserdisc Roundup: Garbo, Lorre, Curtiz and Disney

The new DVD format has quickly superseded the laserdisc, it seems, but a few last hurrahs have been released, among them MGM/UA's **The Garbo Silents** (ML 105728; three discs, 278 minutes; \$89.98). As a cost-saving measure, the three features have been spread out over five sides, instead of each film properly being on its own disc. (This causes the second film, *Love*, to be spread out over three sides instead of the usual two.) Even so, we're grateful to own these enjoyable silents. *Ibanez' Torrent* is Garbo's first American film, filled with drama and eroticism. She plays a Spanish peasant girl in love with young scion Ricardo Cortez, whose wealthy parents warn him not to marry beneath his station. The film is tinted in some sequences, black and white in others; this is pleasingly done for the most part, although a couple of lavender scenes seemed a bit extreme. (All other prints in this video collection are solely in black and white.) The source print is sharp, although some titles had noticeable nitrate decomposition. The score by Arthur Barrow is largely played on synthesizers, but it's better than the usual ersatz orchestra; a dance sequence has honest-to-goodness flamenco guitars.



We go from sunny Spain to shivering Russia for *Love* (wouldn't you?), in which Garbo and John Gilbert generate their own brand of heat. (*Heat*, incidentally, was supposedly the working title for this film, until an MGM executive realized the marquees would read, "Greta Garbo and John Gilbert in *Heat*.") This adaptation of *Anna Karenina* is still dynamic and entertaining; the print is excellent. We

were a bit disappointed that only the "happy" ending is included in the video package; the original downbeat finale exists, and is even referred to in the laserdisc packaging, so it's a shame that it wasn't included here. The orchestral score was recorded during a screening before an audience at UCLA, so you'll hear audience applause, gasps, laughter and other reactions. Maybe it's not the way we'd like every silent to be released on video, but it's an interesting change of pace and if you've got your speakers strategically placed it'll certainly give you the live theater experience.

Garbo falls in love with Nils Asther during a trip to Java in *Wild Orchids*, a standard soaper co-starring Lewis Stone which is unremarkable except for Garbo's acting. This was released during the silent-to-sound transition; as a result this silent film has an original 1929 score—with surprisingly ostentatious sound effects. Finally, the lone surviving reel, running about eight minutes, of *The Divine Woman* is included; the titles are in Russian, with subtitles in English (!). A Tchaikovsky score accompanies the print, which is understandably a bit contrasty. While pictorially it's not of the high quality of the three features, this fragment is certainly enjoyable, and Garbo is the whole show.

Maybe you dislike foreign films, and the idea of a movie about a child murderer is repellent to you—but we'd wager that you'll find Fritz Lang's *M* riveting and suspenseful, particularly in Voyager's excellent new laserdisc release (CC1508L; \$49.98). Peter Lorre is unforgettable as the tormented little man consumed with a fatal attraction for little girls; it's easy to see why his

compelling performance made him an international star. The whole gallery of characters is indelible—the overworked and befuddled police who are trying to capture the murderer; the underworld crooks who decide to capture him themselves in order to stop all the police activity that's cutting into their business; and the frightened and agitated citizens. Most prints of this exciting (and in places, surprisingly funny) film run 99 minutes, as did the laserdisc released by Embassy Home Entertainment in 1986. Voyager's new Criterion Collection release runs 110 minutes. The long-coveted extra scenes at the film's end run only about one minute and are not vitally important; the main difference is that practically every shot is slightly longer. As a result, the entire film plays more smoothly and is more richly textured. The original main titles have been restored (no "Peer Gynt" on the soundtrack!); the print and sound quality are excellent and the subtitles have been newly translated from German. For this reviewer, no devotee of foreign films, *M* is a haunting and memorable moviegoing experience.

It's unusual that Michael Curtiz is rarely mentioned in the pantheon of great movie directors; critics today don't seem to think of him when they're rattling off the list of Welles, Hawks, Ford and the other giants. He'd probably rather be remembered for *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *Casablanca*, *Mildred Pierce* and *Life With Father* than for **The Kennel Murder Case** and **Santa Fe Trail** (Roan Group RGL 9626; \$69.98), but this double disc Curtiz retrospective is very entertaining and extremely well-presented. As you might expect, these two features are in the public domain; nevertheless, the 35mm source prints are pristine and the transfers are excellent, easily the equal of what's being produced by the home video divisions of the original copyright holders. *Kennel* is a 1933 Philo Vance whodunit starring William Powell as the suave detective; Mary Astor and Eugene Pallette add to the fun as Vance investigates a "suicide" connected with a high-society dog show. *Trail*, from 1940, is muddled but this Old West saga with Errol Flynn and Olivia DeHavilland still has some bright moments; most watchable is Raymond Massey as rabid abolitionist John Brown. Ronald Reagan appears as George Custer, which may have some significance depending on your politics. The sepia-toned print is beautiful, as is the laserdisc packaging, which includes original promotional artwork.

Walt Disney never surrendered his sense of childlike wonder, just like **Peter Pan** (CAV edition; Walt Disney Home Video 13971; \$50). Although the CLV-edition laserdisc is \$20 cheaper, you really ought to splurge for the more expensive CAV, since it includes an abundance of fascinating supplements to the 77-minute color feature. A 28-minute documentary with Leonard Maltin details the history of J.M. Barrie's play, includes some gorgeous clips from the 1924 Betty Bronson silent version (making us eager to see and own that film!), and includes storyboards, live action test footage and interviews with the participants in the Disney production. We were captivated by the great stills of Captain Hook as portrayed by radio great Hans Conreid, who supplies the voice for that character. (Old-time radio buffs will also enjoy hearing *Fibber McGee* cast member Bill Thompson as Mr. Smee; Jimmy Durante's radio sidekick Candy Candido plays an Indian chief.) An analog audio track provides the film's score without dialogue throughout the feature. On Side Four, you'll find some wonderful demo recordings for the songs, often featuring variations in the lyrics.

Music

Aleman: El Rey De Ritmo!

Oscar Aleman is the great undiscovered genius of jazz guitar. A star for decades in his native Argentina, he's known in the States by a handful of dedicated Swing fans. Years ago, a bootleg label released a couple of Aleman LPs, and in the mid-1980s a better album, *Swing Guitar Legend*, was released on the Rambler label. Finally, a two-CD overview of his work from 1938 through '54, **Oscar Aleman: Swing Guitar Masterpieces** (ACD-29) has been released by David Gisman's Acoustic Disc label.

A few months ago, Acoustic Disc gave us a fine two-disc set devoted to mandolinist Dave Apollon (reviewed in PT 30). The Aleman set is similarly impressive. Clean copies of the original records, made in Copenhagen, Paris and Buenos Aires, can't have been easy to come by, but they have crisp, full sound quality. An essay by Dexter Johnson details Aleman's amazing career.

And what does Aleman sound like? He plays acoustic guitar (a National metal-body model) and swings like mad; think of an Argentinian variation on Django Reinhardt. (Aleman may have cut short his career expansion by moving to Paris in the late '30s and trying to compete with Django on his home turf; nevertheless, the two were good friends.) A 1938 "Sweet Sue," with Danish violinist Svend Asmussen taking the role of Stephane Grappelly, is a hot and happy treasure. Aleman's solos on "Nobody's Sweetheart" and "Whispering" are impressive, but so is each of the 52 selections. The tunes are generally American standards ("Sweet Georgia Brown," "Bye Bye Blues"), but some are originals or songs native to Argentina. The only language you need to understand here is jazz, and Aleman plays it nimbly and forcefully. (Available in record stores and from Acoustic Disc, Box 4143, San Rafael CA 94913; (800) 221-DISC; <http://www.dawgnet.com>.)

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Dance Band Delights From the '20s and Early '30s

The Old Masters, a CD company based in Northern California, continues to issue excellent new discs of vintage recordings which haven't been available since the heyday of the 78. Dance-band enthusiasts should rejoice over **Russ Carlson and The High Steppers** (MB-115), 24 tracks recorded between 1931 and '33 by the "house band" of Crown Records, a Depression-era label. A couple of the tunes are standards ("Keepin' Out of Mischief Now," "In A Shanty In Old Shanty Town"), but most are now-forgotten uptempo gems such as "How's Your Uncle?" "Is I In Love, I Is" and "When You're Over Sixty But Feel Like Sweet Sixteen." Despite the low price of the original 78s (advertised as "Two Hits for Two Bits!"), the performances and recording quality is outstanding. The vocals are handled by Harold Van Emburgh (a silky baritone) and Dick Robertson (a cheery tenor, especially fun on "Crazy People"). The orchestra is made up of New York studio pros (Manny Klein on trumpet, Miff Mole on trombone); Carlson's bubbly, jolly piano style is very infectious.



Another barely-remembered pianist worthy of rediscovery is Ramona, whose records are an ingratiating blend of fun and sophistication. **Ramona & Her Grand Piano** (MB-116) features 24 waxings from 1933-36 which are witty and cultured, but thanks to her casual and slightly folksy vocals, never condescending. As a featured performer with Paul Whiteman's orchestra, Ramona was supplied with many above-average songs, most of them from Broadway or Hollywood musicals. "Anything Goes" is, of course, a classic combina-

tion of wit and elan, but just as fun are "You Excite Me!," "Annie Doesn't Live Here Anymore," "Broadway's Gone Hillbilly" and "Tony's Wife." On the latter, as well as "Never Had an Education," Ramona goes solo, showing us a bit more of her stylish piano playing; also great fun are the more jazz influenced small-combo sides by Ramona and Her Gang, whose members include Jack and Charlie Teagarden and guitarist Dick McDonough. The superb sound quality exemplifies the Victor company's early-'30s peak. If you enjoy cabaret music, here's an opportunity to hear the style at its source.

Bandleader-violinist-producer Ben Selvin was among the most prolific recording artists ever; *The Guinness Book of Recorded Sound* estimates his output at 9,000 sides. As the recording director for Columbia in the late '20s and early '30s, Selvin oversaw hundreds of sessions of all kinds, but he's best remembered for his dance-band discs. Some of the finest from 1929-31 are newly available on **Ben Selvin Volume Two** (MB117). Critics, collectors and probably Selvin himself would've considered these "commercial" dance records, but if they were product rather than art they were a fine product indeed. Bouncy and creatively arranged, these 23 charmers include more than a dollop of jazz, thanks to participants Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, the Dorsey Brothers and Adrian Rollini. Among the many highlights are "Smile, Darn Ya, Smile," "Mona," and "Thank Your Father," which sports a scat vocal from Big Tea. We get two takes of that number, as well as "The Free and Easy," "Do Ya Love Me?," and "The Whole Darned Thing's For You," some of them rarities made for foreign markets which have jazz soloists replacing the vocals. Even those are better than average, thanks to spirited contributions from Dick Robertson, Irving Kaufman and the sadly little-recorded Eddie Walters.

Finally, another installment in The Old Masters' Coon-Sanders series is soon due for arrival, and it should be cause for celebration for anyone who loves '20s music. **Coon-Sanders Volume 3** (MB-113) includes the four rare "Louisiana Rhythm Kings" sides which the band made while moonlighting from their usual label; it also has a rare alternate take of "Smilin' Skies." But the real gems are six tracks which make up a half-hour transcribed radio show, "The Maytag Frolic." These include several tunes which the band didn't otherwise record (including "Harold Teen" and "Sittin' and Whittlin'"). A highlight is a medley of college songs, punctuated by shouts, whoops and non-sequitur humor from the band members. Never before available, this wonderful show proves why the Nighthawks were so popular over the air. The familiar tracks, such as "What a Girl! What a Night!" are presented in much better audio quality than on any previous reissues. (Each disc retails for \$12.98; available from The Old Masters, P.O. Box 25358, San Mateo CA 94402.)

Edison Ladies, Laterally

The Edison company made records with a "vertical cut" process, meaning that the movement of the groove went in and out of the record's surface. Practically every other manufacturer employed the "lateral cut" process, with the groove moving from side to side. Since you needed a special phonograph to play Edison's vertical records, most consumers opted for the lateral machines, which gave them a wider variety of recordings from which to choose. In 1928, the Edison company finally decided to join the crowd, but they didn't actually issue any lateral records until July 1929—four months before the firm went out of the record business. As a result, Edison laterals are very scarce and command high prices from collectors.

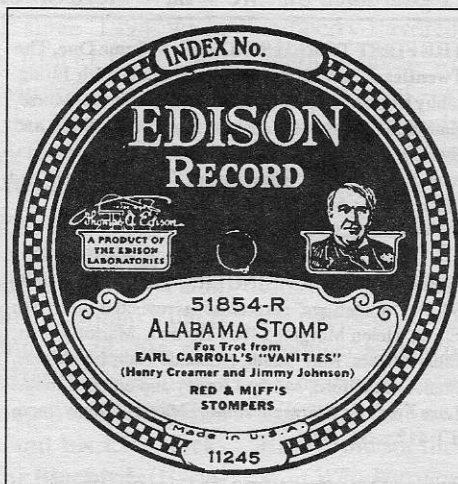
Even scarcer are the test pressings of unissued recordings, which lay neglected in the attic of Edison's laboratory in West Orange, New Jersey. In the past couple of years, the industrious Craig Maier and Rick Carlson have reclaimed many of these precious waxings, eliminating surface noise with their DCart software program and reissuing the results on CDs.

Two recent releases focus on female singers. **Vaughn DeLeath** (Diamond Cut DCP-304D) was known as "radio's first crooner," but her style owes nothing to that popularized by Gene Austin and Bing Crosby. Her pleasant, silky voice works well on a variety of material, and these 21 tracks range from "Honey, I'se a Waitin' Jes' Fo' Yo'" (!) to the torch song "Am I Blue?" to novelties like "I'm Ka-razy For You." The backing band (sometimes that of trumpeter B.A. Rolfe) is quite lively, and these unissued gems are still fun. Alas, the poor quality of the originals and resultant audio tweaking results in sound that's below Diamond Cut's usual standards.

The sound is better on **Eva Taylor With Clarence Williams** (DCP-303D). Miss Taylor was actually Mrs. Williams, and her real name was Irene Gibbons. By any name, she was a sensitive and soulful vocalist, as exemplified on "Moaning Low" and "West End Blues." Mr. Williams was a fine pianist, too. Eleven of the 17 tracks are from 1929; the balance are live performances which Miss Taylor made in 1976 and '77, and she surely shows she has more than "a little bit left." (Available from Diamond Cut, P.O. Box 305, Hibernia NJ 07842; <http://www.diamondcut.com>.)

Dorsey Bros., Nichols, Goodman

While the folks at Diamond Cut Productions are busy restoring Edison's lateral-cut recordings (see article at left), their brethren in Canada and England who run the Jazz Oracle label are engaged in bringing some of the Wizard of Menlo Park's vertical recordings back to life.



Mr. Edison was not the most forward-thinking Artists and Repertoire man in the history of recorded sound, but a fair amount of jazz was released on his label, much of it by the California Ramblers or small groups featuring cornetist Red Nichols. Enthusiasts of the hot '20s sound should be delighted with **Red Nichols on Edison 1924-27** (Jazz Oracle BDW 8007), which has 18 of the vertical discs restored to beautiful sound. Although recorded acoustically, these tracks have a presence and fullness that makes them a joy to hear. (One advantage of the vertical records is that it's more difficult to inflict wear on the groove; another is a longer playing time. As a result, several tracks here run for close to

four-and-one-half minutes, affording the musicians an opportunity to stretch out a bit more than usual.)

The performances are noteworthy, too. The first two tracks, credited to the "Charleston Seven" may not actually have Nichols in the line-up, but trombonist Miff Mole and saxophonist Jack Pettis are definitely in the ranks. It's good to have a period recording of Gershwin's "Nashville Nightingale," too. The next two tracks are from a California Ramblers date teaming Red with the Dorsey Brothers, Arnold Brilhart, bass saxophonist Adrian Rollini and other luminaries on "Look Who's Here" and "On the Oregon Trail," neither previously reissued.

Ten tracks from 1926 follow, all by "Red and Miff's Stompers"—a small combo also featuring Jimmy Dorsey, alto saxophonist Alfie Evans, pianist Arthur Schutt, Joe Tarto on tuba and Vic Berton on drums. The jazz completist will be happy, since there are three takes each of "Alabama Stomp," "Stampede" and "Hurricane" and two of "Black Bottom Stomp," all with major variations in solos. The set closes with three takes of "Pardon the Glove," played by Red and Miff with Don Voorhees' dance band.



The transfers by John R.T. Davies are lovely, capturing every last nuance. Ross Wilby's detailed liner notes are a bonus—as are the booklet illustrations of original labels and even a couple of Edison label checks made out to Red "Nicholls."

Those Dorsey boys recorded quite prolifically, too. In addition to playing anonymously on hundreds of dance band records, they made a series with an orchestra under their own names, long before they formed an actual touring band. **The Dorsey Brothers' Orchestra, Vol. 3** (BDW 8006) has 24 of these sides. Some of them, such as the notorious "I Can Make Most Anything, But I Can't Make a Man" (with a rather gay vocal by Wes Vaughan) have been reissued before. Most are seeing their first re-release, and some test pressings ("Three Moods," "Maybe") are probably receiving their first issue ever. The highlights include Jimmy's breakneck alto sax solo, "Oodles of Noodles"—part of which later became his big-band theme, "Contrasts." A couple of the performances are a little too commercial to be interesting, but generally each track is an example of well-played dance music. Studio pros such as Arnold Brilhart and drummer Stan King are here, as are up-and-coming stars such as trumpeter Bunny Berigan and tenor man Bud Freeman. (Available for \$17.00 each postpaid from Jazz Oracle, 25 Queensgrove Road, Scarborough, Ontario M1N 3A9, Canada; (416) 698-0336.)

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DCP301D.....\$15.98

HOT DANCE OF THE ROARING '20s Here's a brand new collection of unreleased Edison material from 1928 and '29, a 21-track marathon of beloved songs like *Let's Do It*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *I'll Get By* and *Makin' Whoopee*—along with wonderful obscurities such as *Sunny Skies* and *Wipin' the Pan*. The bands include the Piccadilly Players, the Seven Blue Babies, and the orchestras of Bernie Stevens, Al Friedman, B.A. Rolfe and Phil Spitalny. Fun!!
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MILTON BROWN AND THE MUSICAL BROWNS Here's the band that really started Western Swing. With fiddles, banjo and guitars in their line-up, you might mistake this for a hillbilly band, but uh uh—the fellows played jazz with a southwestern flavor. Brown was a terrific and personable singer, with a warm and versatile voice. This 5-CD set has everything the groover ever made, almost six hours' worth of great tracks such as *Sweet Jennie Lee*; *St. Louis Blues*; *Copenhagen*; *Some of These Days*; *Avalon*; and *Right or Wrong*. Also included are the 14 tracks with the band led by younger brother Derwood Brown after Milton's untimely death. The sound quality is stunning.
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Spike Jones' Early Outrages on Bluebird and V-Disc Now on CD

By Jordan R. Young



The young maestro, 1942

A less than abundant number of new Spike Jones compilations have been released since 1994 when Rhino, BMG Classics and Good Music Record Co. almost simultaneously gave us three of the best.

What, you may wonder, was left to reissue? Quite a bit, including many of Spike's earliest Victor recordings. Britain's Interstate Music Ltd. has now stepped into the breach with the long-awaited **Spike Jones and his City Slickers: The Bluebirds** (Harlequin HQ CD 100).

The enterprising novelty band—then a makeshift ensemble of studio musicians—was in its infancy and virtually unknown when it made these records for Victor's low-budget Bluebird label in 1941-42. But it was clearly evident they had something worth a listen.

"I was in the sales department in Camden, New Jersey, at the time we got the test pressings of the first date Spike did. And I fell off my chair, I thought they were funny as hell. We all cracked up," recalled Walt Heebner, who supervised many of Jones' later RCA sessions.

The first commercial recordings by the group featured a pastiche of musical styles—washboard band, honky tonk, ragtime, traditional jazz. "Behind Those Swinging Doors"—the A-side of the first release—was a typical saloon song done in old-fashioned music hall style. "The Covered Wagon Rolled Right Along" had a Dixieland favor.

The City Slickers have a primitive sound on these early sides; they sound more like Freddie Fisher and his Schnickelfritz Band than anything else. (While the 1942 selections are zanier and more full-bodied, the group really began to evolve toward the sophisticated sound they are remembered for when Spike hired Fisher's trumpet player, George Rock, in 1944).

Among the genuine pleasures on this collection are the lively arrangements by clarinetist Del Porter and trombonist King Jackson; "Pack Up Your Troubles," which features a delightful ocarina solo by band co-founder Porter; and Jackson's downhome Texas drawl on a boogie woogie update of "Come, Josephine, In My Flying Machine"—in which he takes his girl for a whirl in a B-19. Both these numbers are first-time reissues.

The unquestionable highlight of the album is the first-ever release of "Beautiful Eggs," a sly song about a farmer's daughter sung by Porter. Though tame by today's standards, the number was too risqué for Victor's sales department.

Mel Blanc, then toiling anonymously at Warner Bros. as the voice of Bugs Bunny, slurs and hiccups his way through "Clink,

Clink, Another Drink." Violinist Carl Grayson's melodious voice is heard on "Siam" (which features his throat plug for the first time) and Jones' breakthrough hit, "Der Fuehrer's Face." Both the raspberry-flavored rendition which caused all the furor, and the alternate take—which saluted Hitler with only a mildly sarcastic trombone fonk—are included here.

Harlequin has packed nearly 69 minutes of music onto this CD, including four Standard Transcriptions from the same period. Country-Western songstress Cindy Walker is backed by the band on two of her compositions, including "Gonna Stomp Those City Slickers Down" from which they apparently took their name. The hilariously bad reject of "Hawaiian War Chant"—which pre-dates the released version by five months—rounds out the disc.

Producer John Wood's anonymous liner notes are a droll read, but his hearing is not nearly as sharp as his sense of humor. The sound is a little dull compared to the bright, sparkling transfers Mike Kieffer did for the CD of rarities I produced for Good Music (*The Man Who Murdered Music* is available from *Past Times*; see page 30 for information.)

Audiophiles will be none too pleased at the erratic sound quality on **Spike Jones: V-Disc** (Collector's Choice, \$14.95) either, but the madcap maestro fares better than some artists on this new series of war-time recordings; fellow bandleader and novelty meister Louis Prima has been manhandled in a collection of his V-Discs that snap, crackle and pop. Despite "the producer's conviction that historical reissues must strive to duplicate the sound of the original recordings," it's a poor excuse for poor transfers of this material.

Make no mistake, these renditions—which were distributed to far-flung military bases on plastic, due to the shortage of shellac—are of great historic value. All the more reason, one would think, to take care in reissuing them properly. But E.P. DiGiannantonio, a Navy lieutenant who co-produced the originals and safeguarded copies of them for half a century, has done a slipshod job of reviving them for Collector's Choice if the Jones album is any indication.

"Chloe" and "Cocktails for Two" are dubbed not from the V-Disc acetates but from RCA Victor 78s, an especially lamentable choice for the former, robbing us of the chance to hear a rare five-minute version with extra jokes and instrumental bridges made two years before the commercial release.

While most of the tunes recorded for V-Disc were also preserved for posterity by Victor, there are some surprises here. These versions are not quite as polished, but they provide a closer approximation of what the band sounded like in live performance. It's also nice to hear Spike introducing some of the sides.

If you haven't heard the Slickers render "As Time Goes By"—and chances are you haven't, since they never recorded it commercially and the one previous reissue of the V-Disc was on a hard-to-find LP—you are in for a special treat.

"You Can't Say No to a Soldier" is strangely missing, but it is included on *The Bluebirds*. (The latter is also distributed by Collector's Choice, which has an exclusive on the V-Disc releases; 800-923-1122.)



Arnold Brilhart's Life in Music



A busy man in the studios, mid-1920s.

Collectors of 1920s and '30s dance-band records are well acquainted with the name of Arnold Brilhart; he played alto saxophone (and other reed instruments) on thousands of those waxings. Although he never became a household name, Arnold has packed so much into his life that, as he frequently says, "I can hardly believe I did all that!" Even a brief outline of his career will confirm that he excelled in many fields.

Born on September 30, 1904 in Southington, Connecticut, Arnold Ross Brilhart seemed destined for a career in music. His father, Charles W. Brilhart, had left home at 16 to play the flute with Buffalo Bill's traveling wild-west show, and was subsequently in demand at many New York theaters. As a child, Arnold also exhibited an interest in music; when he tried to reach for one of his father's wooden flutes and accidentally broke it, the elder Brilhart bought his son a sturdier instrument—a saxophone. The alto sax would become Arnold's primary instrument, although he also became proficient on flute, clarinet, oboe and bassoon. His interest in the saxophone was helped along by his admiration for Rudy Wiedoeft, composer and performer of many saxophone novelties which became popular on Brunswick recordings.

By May 1921, Arnold was making recordings himself, as a member of Harry Yerkes' S.S. Flotilla Orchestra. At 16 he had embarked upon a recording career that would continue through the late 1930s, and which would result in literally thousands of issued discs for dozens of labels. Although he never considered himself a true jazzman, Arnold found it very easy to play with a jazz feeling—and this, combined with his remarkable ability to read and play even the most difficult scores at first glance, made him a highly regarded and frequently sought musician in New York recording studios.

Over the years, Arnold would record with such groups as the California Ramblers, Roger Wolfe Kahn and his Orchestra, the Varsity Eight, the A. & P. Gypsies, the Cliquot Club Eskimos, and many other colorful dance bands of the Jazz Age. He worked frequently with the finest jazzmen of the era, including cornetists Bix Beiderbecke and Red Nichols, trombonists Jack Teagarden, Miff Mole and Tommy Dorsey, reedmen Jimmy Dorsey, Bud Freeman and Benny Goodman, the great violin-guitar duo of Joe Venuti and Eddie Lang, drummer Gene Krupa and composer-pianist-singer Hoagy Carmichael.

Recordings were not the only thing keeping Arnold busy; he played at venues such as New York's famous Roseland ballroom (where, as a member of Sam Lanin's orchestra, he would frequently talk with young Louis Armstrong, just coming to prominence as a member of Fletcher Henderson's band).

He also played in the orchestras for Broadway shows including "Rain or Shine," as a member of the Don Voorhees band. Even when the stock market crash of 1929 put a damper on Broadway shows and virtually killed the recording industry, Arnold was steadily employed on top radio programs, including musical variety shows such as *The Ipana Troubadours*, *The Ceco Court*, *The Silvertown Cord Orchestra*, *The Lucky Strike Orchestra*, *Astor Coffee Dance Orchestra*, *The A&P Gypsies*, *The La Paroisse Hour*, *The Fleischmann Hour*, *The Firestone Hour* and *The Eveready Hour*.

Radio shows continued to keep Brilhart busy in the 1930s when he performed on the *Maxwell House Show Boat* program and on comedian Ed Wynn's popular *Fire Chief* program for Texaco (where his section mates included young Artie Shaw, with whom Arnold would later write a clarinet instruction book).

Later programs included *The Bell Telephone Hour*, broadcasts by the Richard Himber orchestra, and shows starring comedians like Fred Allen. Arnold played on Jack Benny shows when Benny's troupe came to New York, and also performed on Bob Hope's first broadcast (for the record, it was on January 4, 1935, on an episode of *The Intimate Revue* for NBC-Blue). At one point, Arnold was performing on 28 network radio shows each week, and had enough work to keep himself and eight substitutes constantly employed.

Another kind of radio—the amateur or "ham" variety—has been an interest of Arnold's for years; in December 1921, while attending Yonkers High School, the 17-year-old Brilhart was selected by the Associated Press for transmitting a signal to Glasgow, Scotland. Since transatlantic wireless communication was still in its infancy, this feat earned Arnold a front-page article on his hometown paper, the *Yonkers Statesman*.

In 1939, frustrated with the quality of available saxophone and clarinet mouthpieces, Arnold began designing and manufacturing his own, with machinery that he had also designed and built. This sideline venture became his primary activity before long, because Brilhart products soon became an industry standard. Saxophone and clarinet players such as Benny Carter, Woody Herman, Les Brown and Tony Pastor all gave enthusiastic endorsements to his mouthpieces, as did the entire Glenn Miller saxophone section, who achieved their trademark blend of three altos and a clarinet with the considerable help of Brilhart's products.

Arnold has been a lifelong enthusiast of ham radio, an interest he shares with fellow saxophonist Tex Beneke.



Brilhart continued to improve his mouthpieces, experimenting with many new kinds of plastics. The ivory "Tonalin" mouthpiece and the black "Ebolin" counterpart became standard equipment with saxophonists. Brilhart's factory in Great Neck, Long Island, continued to expand until he had hundreds of employees; the firm made other products unrelated to musical instruments, including a line of Art Deco-style plastic lamps.

As swing music gave way to bebop, Arnold continued to be a part of it; he enjoyed a friendship with alto saxophone legend Charlie Parker, a frequent customer. On Brilhart's recommendation, Parker for a time played two special white plastic Grafton alto saxes, one of which Arnold has kept for many years.

In May 1954, Arnold moved the company and his family to the Carlsbad, California area, and formed the Fibercane Corporation to make clarinet and saxophone reeds. In 1966, he sold the "Brilhart" trademark to the Selmer company, and began manufacturing drumsticks through his Fiberwood Corporation (Fiberwood, a Brilhart invention, is a combination of fibers and resins that feels and plays like wood, but is more durable. Arnold has held 28 patents and trademarks related to musical products, and holds many other patents relating to the technology of manufacturing musical instruments.) Fiberwood also manufactured a line of graphite golf club shafts, reflecting another of Brilhart's interests.

In 1977, he started the ARB Musical Instrument Co., based in Reseda, California, then began working as a research engineer and product designer for the Roy J. Maier Corporation in 1982. A few years later, he became a consultant for Rico, a manufacturer of reeds and other products for saxophonists and clarinetists. He holds this position to the present day.

His busy career would seem to have left little time for any outside activities, but in fact, Arnold enjoyed racing sports cars, flying his own airplane (another member of his flying club was Charles Lindbergh, still forming his plans for the New York to Paris flight) and golfing (with partners such as Babe Ruth, Bob Hope and Bing Crosby). For several years, Arnold would leave the music business behind for two months and golf on the pro-am circuit.

Arnold's second wife, Virginia, passed away in December 1995, but he keeps busy, working for the Rico company and attending many music-industry conventions. (He is an honorary life member of the American Federation of Musicians and Musicians Union Local 47, as well as being a member of the Shriners and the Rotary Club.) He sees every new movie that is released, keeps in touch with his three sons and his grandchildren, and is gratified to hear from young collectors of vintage recordings who eagerly listen to his many anecdotes about the great musicians of the past. And, yes, a book is in the works about the fascinating career of this remarkable man.



Arnold at 90, with one of two white plastic altos played by Charlie Parker

Violinist Ben Selvin fronting his studio band of the mid-1920s, with Arnold Brilhart in the saxophone section (standing, to left of Selvin).



What's Old On Audio: Vintage Music on New and Forthcoming CDs

Here's our semi-annual roundup of new CDs of music from the 78-rpm era. Prices shown are those of Worlds Records, which we find is the single best source for vintage music on CD. (P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94948; (800) 742-6663; <http://www.worldsrecords.com>.)

- Andrews Sisters:** 60th Anniversary (1938-1947) MCA 11727 (\$12.00)
Andrews Sisters: Mister Five By Five Empress 869 (\$15.00)
Arlen, Harold: Over the Rainbow (Various Artists perform Arlen's classic compositions) [1931-1945] Flapper 7095 (\$19.00)
Armstrong, Louis: More Greatest Hits [1933-1970] RCA 63114 (\$12.00)
Arnaz, Desi: [1937-1947] Harlequin 106 (\$17.00)
Astaire, Fred and Ginger Rogers: At RKO - Lullaby Of Broadway [1933-1943] Rhino 72957 (2-CD Set- \$31.00)
Astaire, Fred: Crazy Feet Empress 856 (\$15.00)
Bailey, Buster: The Buster Bailey Story with Don Redman, Coleman Hawkins, more [1926-1945] Jazz Archives 15902 (\$14.00)
Banks, Billy-Jack Bland: 1932 with Henry 'Red' Allen, Pee Wee Russell, Joe Sullivan, Eddie Condon, Gene Krupa, Tommy Dorsey, Chick Bullock, more [1932] Classics 969 (\$16.00)
Barnet, Charlie and His Orchestra: Make Believe Ballroom [1935-1939] Giants of Jazz 53274 (\$13.00)
Basie, Count: Volume 9 [1939] Masters of Jazz 115 (\$17.00)
Bothwell, Johnny and His Orchestra: Street Of Dreams [1946] Hep 54 (\$15.00)
Bowly, Al: The Very Thought Of You Empress 837 (\$15.00)
Brown, Charles Three Blazers: 1946 with Johnny Moore, Eddie Williams Classics 971 (\$16.00)
Carless, Dorothy: That Lovely Weekend Empress 849 (\$15.00)
Carlson, Russ and The High Steppers: The Crown House Bands, Volume 1 [1930-1932] The Old Masters 115 (\$14.00)
Carter, Benny: Jazz Profile with Coleman Hawkins, Red Norvo, more [1943-1958] Capitol 33146 (\$13.00)
Carter, Benny: Volume 9 [1938-1939] Masters of Jazz 124 (\$17.00)
Catlett, Sid: 1944-1946 with Barney Bigard, Art Tatum, Al Casey, Ben Webster, more. Classics 974 (\$16.00)
Chisholm, George: Early Days (British jazz with Danny Polo, Lew Stone, more) [1935-1944] Timeless 1044 (\$17.00)
Clayton, Buck: 1945-1947 with Teddy Wilson, Flip Phillips, Trummy Young, more [1945-1947] Classics 968 (\$16.00)
Coon-Sanders Original Nighthawk Orchestra: Volume 2 [1925-1928] The Old Masters 112 (\$14.00)
Crosby, Bing, Bob Hope, Dorothy Lamour: On The Road [1940-1947] Soundtrack selections from road trips to *Singapore, Zanzibar, Morocco, Utopia, Rio* [1940-47] Vintage Jazz Band 1949 (\$17.00)
Crosby, Bob Orchestra: From Another World, Volume 13 [1940] Halcyon 133 (\$16.00)
Crosby, Bob: His Orchestra & Bob Cats [1937-1939] Jazz Archives 15766 (\$14.00)
Daniels, Billy: The Touch Of Your Lips Pickwick 1190 (\$8.00)
Daniels, Joe: Swing Is The Thing Empress 853 (\$15.00)
DeLeath, Vaughn: The Original Radio Girl- Edison Laterals 5 [1929] Diamond Cut 304 (\$18.00)
Dodds, Johnny: Wild Man Blues (Featuring Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, others) [1925-1940] ASV/Living Era 5252 (\$13.00)
Dorsey Brothers: Volume 3 with Bunny Berigan, Glenn Miller, Scrappy Lambert, more [1930-1933] Jazz Oracle 8006 (\$16.50)
Dorsey, Jimmy: I Remember You (Vocals: Bob Eberly, Helen O'Connell and Kitty Kallen) Empress 852 (\$15.00)
Down Home Jazz Band: Dancing The Jelly Roll [1997] Stomp Off 1316 (\$17.00)
Durante, Jimmy: Jimmy Durante's Way Of Life with Gordon Jenkins Orchestra And Chorus [1965] Warner Bros. 1577 (\$13.00)
Eldridge, Roy: 1945-1947 Classics 983 (\$16.00)
Eldridge, Roy: Roy Eldridge with Billie Holiday, Benny Carter, Anita O'Day, more [1935-1946] Best of Jazz 4051 (\$16.00)
Ellington, Duke: Volume 9 [1929-1930] Masters of Jazz 123 (\$17.00)
Fields, Gracie: Our Gracie [1928-1947] ASV/Living Era 5259 (\$13.00)
Fields, Shep: Thanks For The Memory Empress 889 (\$15.00)
Fitzgerald, Ella: On The Air (Two complete broadcasts.) [1940] Masters of Jazz 137 (2-CD Set- \$30.00)
Formby, George: It Has Turned Out Nice Again Empress 878 (\$15.00)
Freeman, Bud: 1946 with Charlie Shavers, Edmond Hall, Joe Sullivan, more Classics 975 (\$16.00)
Freeman, Bud: Bud Freeman [1928-1939] Giants of Jazz 53272 (\$13.00)
Froman, Jane: My Heart Speaks [1934-1940] Jasmine 107 (\$16.00)
Garland, Judy: Zing Went The Strings Of My Heart Empress 873 (\$15.00)
Gibbons, Carroll Savoy Hotel Orpheans: Time Was... Empress 823 (\$15.00)
Gibbons, Carroll: Calls The Tunes Empress 863 (\$15.00)
Gillespie, Dizzy: Volume 6 [1945-1946] Masters of Jazz 119 (\$17.00)
Gillespie, Dizzy: Volume 7 & 8 [1946] Masters of Jazz 129 (2-CD Set- \$30.00)
Gonella, Nat: Jazz Side Of Nat Empress 882 (\$15.00)
Goodman, Benny: A Jazz Holiday: (Early tracks with Ben Pollack, Red Nichols, Ted Lewis, others.) [1926-1931] ASV/Living Era 5263 (\$13.00)
Goodman, Benny: Plays Mel Powell with Helen Forrest, Peggy Lee, Buddy Rich, More [1941-1946] Hep 1055 (\$15.00)
Gordon, Dexter: Volume 2 [1944-1946] Masters of Jazz 128 (\$17.00)
Grosz, Marty-Keith Ingham and Their Hot Cosmopolites: Going Hollywood [1997 recordings of '20s and early '30s tunes in authentic style] Stomp Off 1323 (\$17.00)
Hawkins, Coleman: 1946-1947 Classics 984 (\$16.00)
Haymes, Dick: The Best Of, Vol. 1 [1943-1945] Taragon 1033 (\$18.00)
Haymes, Dick: The Best Of, Vol. 2 [1945-1950] Taragon 1034 (\$18.00)
Heath, Ted and His Music: Listen To My Music, Volume 2 [1946-1947] Hep 57 (\$15.00)
Heath, Ted: Come With Me My Honey [1935-1945] Empress 868 (\$15.00)
Herman, Woody: Woodshedding With Woody Empress 838 (\$15.00)
Hill, Alex: Ain't It Nice with Jimmie Noone, Eddie Condon, others [1928-1934] Timeless 1050 (\$17.00)
Hodges, Johnny: The Johnny Hodges Story with Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Teddy Wilson, Jonah Jones, John Kirby, Jess Stacy, more [1929-1946] Jazz Archives 15898 (\$14.00)
Holiday, Billie: Night and Day Empress 857 (\$15.00)
Inglez, Roberto: [1945-1947] Harlequin 108 (\$17.00)
Ink Spots, The: Classics Empress 886 (\$15.00)
Ink Spots, The: If I Didn't Care Pickwick 1191 (\$8.00)
Ink Spots, The: We Four- The Best Of The Ink Spots Featuring Ella Fitzgerald [1940s] Jasmine 2546 (\$13.00)
Jackson, Cliff: [1933-1945] (Includes rare solos and band sides.) Classics 979 (\$16.00)
James, Harry and His Orchestra: 1939-1940 Classics 970 (\$16.00)
Johnson, Bunk: Plays Popular Songs [1944-1946] American Music 15 (\$15.00)
Johnson, James P.: King Of The Stride Piano [1918-1944] Giants of Jazz 53201 (\$13.00)
Johnson, Lonnie: Blues In My Soul [1937-1946] Blues Archives 15903 (\$14.00)
Jolson, Al: Barry Gray Show [1946] (Jolson in rare form in an extended radio interview) On Stage 6001 (\$16.00)
Jones, Jonah: 1936-1945 Classics 972 (\$16.00)
Jones, Spike and His City Slickers: The Bluebirds [1942-44] Harlequin 100 (\$17.00)
Kunz, Charlie: Famous Piano Medleys Empress 855 (\$15.00)
Kyser, Kay: Music Maestro Please Empress 874 (\$15.00)
Ladnier, Tommy: The Tommy Ladnier Story with Bessie Smith, Fletcher Henderson, Clarence Williams [1923-1939] Jazz Archives 15901 (\$14.00)
Ladnier, Tommy: Tommy Ladnier [1923-1939] Giants of Jazz 53271 (\$13.00)
Lande, Michael Rhythm Club Orchestra: Black & Blue Rhythm (new recordings of late '20s-early '30s tunes in authentic style) [1997] Stomp Off 1327 (\$17.00)
Lewis, Meade Lux: Boogies & Blues with Albert Ammons, Port Of Harlem Seven, Edmond Hall Celeste Quartet [1936-1941] Topaz 1069 (\$19.00)
Lewis, Ted: The Jazzworthy (featuring Goodman, Spanier, Waller, Teschemacher, Teagarden, others) [1929-1933] Retrieval 79014 (\$17.00)
Lombardo, Guy: I'll See You In My Dreams Empress 851 (\$15.00)
Lynn, Vera: It's Like Old Times Empress 854 (\$15.00)

Martin, Dean: Memories Are Made Of This (Includes early rarities from Diamond, Apollo and Embassy labels, soundtracks and transcriptions.) [1946-1955] Bear Family 15781 (8-CD Set and hardcover book- \$190.00)

Marx, Groucho: Gregoriously Groucho with Ida Lupino, Robert Benchley, Harry Von Zell, many other stars [1930s-'40s] Raven 73 (\$15.00)

McShann, Jay: 1944-1946 Classics 966 (\$16.00)

Miller, Glenn: Fresh As A Daisy (With Dinah Shore) [1944] Empress 841 (\$15.00)

Mills Brothers, The: Classics Empress 883 (\$15.00)

Modernaires, The: Singin' And Swingin' (Accompaniment By Les Brown, Tex Beneke, others) [1951-1957] Varese Vintage 5866 (\$14.00)

Monroe, Vaughn: and his Orchestra with Norton Sisters, Jane Reid, Rosemary Calvin [1944-1945] Circle 165 (\$15.00)

New Orleans Rhythm Kings: [1922-1935] Best Of Jazz 4050 (\$16.00)

Nichols, Red: On Edison with Miff Mole, Jimmy Dorsey, Arthur Schutt, Joe Tarto, Arnold Brilhart, more [1924-1927] Jazz Oracle 8007 (\$16.50)

Original Memphis Five - Phil Napoleon - The Cotton Pickers: with Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Arthur Schutt, Scrappy Lambert, Joe Venuti, Glenn Miller [1928-1929] Timeless 1049 (\$17.00)

Page, Hot Lips; Rex Stewart, Tyree Glenn: Americans In Sweden [1947, 1951] Bear Records 2000 (\$16.00)

Palm Court Theatre Orchestra: The Picnic Party New recordings of tunes composed from 1905-1931 Flyback 2003 (\$17.00)

Piaf, Edith: The Great French Stars - Her Greatest Recordings [1935-1943] ASV/Living Era 5165 (\$13.00)

Preager, Lou and His Orchestra: Dancing At The Hammersmith Palais Empress 866 (\$15.00)

Rainey, Ma: Madam (with Louis Armstrong, Don Redman, Fletcher Henderson, Buster Bailey, Kid Ory, Tampa Red, others) [1923-1928] Giants of Jazz 53281 (\$13.00)

Ramona and Her Grand Piano [1933-1935] The Old Masters 116 (\$14.00)

Rich, Buddy: Legendary Orchestras, Volume 2 [1946-1948] Hep 56 (\$15.00)

Ros, Edmundo: Chiquita Banana, Vol. 4 [1946-1947] Harlequin 105 (\$17.00)

Selvin, Ben: Volume 2 with Jack Teagarden, Benny Goodman, The Dorsey Brothers, Adrian Rollini, more [1928-31] The Old Masters 117 (\$14.00)

Shaw, Artie and His Orchestra: In Hollywood, Volume 2 [1940-1941] Hep 55 (\$15.00)

Shaw, Artie: 1938 Classics 965 (\$16.00)

Shearing, George: The Collection (solos and sextets) Empress 881 (\$15.00)

Sinatra, Frank: Always-The Love Songs [1939-1947] Avid 628 (\$16.00)

Sinatra, Frank: Volume 8 with Axel Stordahl Orch., The Hoboken Four, Harry James Orch. [1942] (Includes rare airchecks from 1935 and 1939.) Masters of Jazz 125 (\$17.00)

Smeck, Roy: On With The Dance with vocals By Donald King Empress 891 (\$15.00)

Smith, Bessie: 1929-1933 with Jack Teagarden, James P. Johnson, more Classics 977 (\$16.00)

Smith, Kate: Sings Folk Songs Pickwick 1189 (\$8.00)

Spanier, Muggsy - Bud Freeman: Complete V-Disc Sessions [1944-1945] Jazz Unlimited 2049 (\$17.00)

Spanier, Muggsy: 1944-1946 with Eddie Condon, Bud Freeman, Pee Wee Russell, more [1944-1946] Classics 967 (\$16.00)

Spanier, Muggsy: Muggsy Spanier [1939-1944] Giants of Jazz 53222 (\$13.00)

Spivak, Charlie: Mostly 1941-1942 with The Stardusters, June Hutton, Garry Stevens Circle 16 (\$15.00)

Stafford, Jo: Too Marvelous For Words Memoir 522 (\$16.00)

Tatum, Art: 1945-1947 Classics 982 (All solos, including rarities from ARA, V-Disc, Victor And HMV) (\$16.00)

Teagarden, Jack and His Orchestra: Stars Fell On Alabama [1931-1940] Giants of Jazz 53287 (\$13.00)

Thompson, Butch: Performs The Work Of Scott Joplin Daring 3033 (\$17.00)

Thompson, Hank: Sound Of The Brazos Valley [1952] Country Routes 19 (\$17.00)

Three Suns, The: Twilight Memories RCA Germany 26050 (\$22.00)

Tolbert, Skeets: And His Gentlemen Of Swing [1931-1940] Classics 978 (\$16.00)

Tormé, Mel With The Dave Barbour Four: Mellow Moods Pickwick 1188 (\$8.00)

Turner, Big Joe: Turner's Blues Topaz 1070 (\$19.00)

Turner, Big Joe: Volume 1 (with Pete Johnson, Joe Sullivan, Benny Carter, more) [1938-1940] Masters of Jazz 134 (\$17.00)

Various Artists: Fabulous Big Band Collection W/Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, Lionel Hampton, more [1937-1976] RCA 63119 (\$12.00)

Various Artists: From Cake Walk To Ragtime with Sousa's Band, The Victor Minstrels, more [1899-1916] Fremeaux 2767 (2-CD Set- \$30.00)

Various Artists: Hits Of 1947 W/Frank Sinatra, Frankie Carle, Marjorie Hughes, Hoagy Carmichael, others) ASV/Living Era 5258 (\$13.00)

Various Artists: Hot Tunes By Rare Bands with Blue Steele, The Wanderers, High Hatters, Jean Goldkette, Six Jumping Jacks, Broadway Nitelites, Coon Sanders, Phil Baxter, more [1926-1935] Diamond Cut 203 (\$18.00)

Various Artists: Legendary Sidemen with Adrian Rollini, Buster Bailey, Lawrence Brown, Russell Procope, more Topaz 1034 (\$19.00)

Various Artists: Memorable Recordings with Jelly Roll Morton, Earl Hines, Bob Crosby, Benny Carter, Mel Powell, more Topaz 1035 (\$19.00)

Various Artists: Number 1 Hits with Freddy Martin, Sammy Kaye, Artie Shaw, Shep Fields, Benny Goodman, Ted Weems, Charlie Barnet, Larry Clinton, more. RCA 63116 (\$12.00)

Various Artists: Original Hawaiian Memories with Wayne King, Hilo Hawaiian Orch., Sol Hoopii Quartet, Dick McIntire's Harmony Hawaiians, Harry Owens, many more [1928-1934] Vintage Records 1002 (\$15.00)

Various Artists: Pure Vintage Blues: Mining Camp Blues W/Butterbeans & Susie, Nolan Welsh, Grant & Wilson, more Empress 880 (\$15.00)

Various Artists: Pure Vintage Blues: You Dirty Mistreater W/Hociel Thomas, Sippie Wallace, Bertha 'Chippie' Hill, more Empress 870 (\$15.00)

Various Artists: Ruckus Juice & Chitlins: The Great Jug Bands, Vol. 1 [1920s-30s] Yazoo 2032 (\$17.00)

Various Artists: Ruckus Juice & Chitlins: The Great Jug Bands, Vol. 2 [1920s-30s] Yazoo 2033 (\$17.00)

Various Artists: Swing Was Our Business W/Danny Polo, Tiny Winters, Nat Gonella, Harry Roy, more Empress 859 (\$15.00)

Various Artists: The Best Of Broadway - The Revue with Clifton Webb, Ruth Etting, Irving Berlin, Fanny Brice, others Flapper 7813 (\$19.00)

Various Artists: The Fabulous Swing Collection [1933-1940] RCA 68987 (\$12.00)

Various Artists: The Great Bands W/Jelly Roll Morton, McKinney's Cotton Pickers, Don Redman, Charlie Barnet, more Topaz 1031 (\$19.00)

Various Artists: The Great Vocalists with Bessie Smith, Fats Waller, Bing Crosby, Lee Wiley, Helen Humes, more Topaz 1033 (\$19.00)

Various Artists: The R&B Hits with T-Bone Walker, Sonny Boy Williamson, Dusty Fletcher, Bull Moose Jackson, others [1947] Indigo 2081 (\$14.00)

Various Artists: Titanic Songs with Vernon Dalhart, Dixon Brothers, Blind Willie Johnson, others [1912-1948] (Songs about the disaster.) Teagarden 22798 (\$16.00)

Various Artists: Top Soloists with Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, Red Norvo, Benny Carter, Art Tatum, more Topaz 1032 (\$19.00)

Various Artists: VE Day - The Dance Bands with Geraldo, Ted Heath, Ambrose, Nat Gonella, Billy Cotton, others Empress 844 (\$15.00)

Various Artists: VE Day - The Vocalists W/Vera Lynn, Issy Bonn, Adelaide Hall, Johnny Green, Anne Shelton, others Empress 845 (\$15.00)

Various Artists: Vintage Original Movie Memories Vintage 1003 (\$15.00)

Waller, Fats: 1939 Classics 973 (\$16.00)

Webster, Ben: Ben Webster [1931-1946] Best of Jazz 4052 (\$16.00)

Weill, Kurt: From Berlin To Broadway, Volume 2 with Lotte Lenya, Walter Huston, Frank Sinatra, Danny Kaye, Hildegard, Helen Hayes [1929-1946] Flapper 9294 (2-CD Set- \$35.00)

Whiting, Margaret: Love Songs / Sings For The Starry Eyed EMI 642 (\$19.00)

Wiley, Lee: Rarities / Thinking Of You with Bunny Berigan, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, others. [1933-1959] Jazz Classics 6013 (\$16.00)

Williams, Cootie and His Orchestra: 1945-1946 Classics 981 (\$16.00)

Williams, Mary Lou: The Mary Lou Williams Story with Andy Kirk & His 12 Clouds Of Joy [1930-1941] Jazz Archives 15900 (\$14.00)

Wilson, Gerald and His Orchestra: 1945-1946 Classics 976 (\$16.00)

Wilson, Teddy: Solo Piano Previously Unissued- The Keystone Transcriptions. [1939-1940] Storyville 8258 (\$17.00)

Wilson, Teddy: The Complete Associated Transcriptions [1944] Storyville 8236 (\$17.00)

Young, Lester: Volume 7 with Helen Humes, Jazz At The Philharmonic [1945-1946] Masters of Jazz 118 (\$17.00)

Lucy's Radio Role Recreated

Fans of *I Love Lucy*—and, for that matter, Miss Ball's earlier radio series, *My Favorite Husband*—will have much to rejoice about in July. A convention for devotees of all things Lucy will be held at the Burbank, California Airport Hilton on July 10, 11 and 12.



Full schedule information for *Loving Lucy* '98 was still being assembled at press time, but we can safely assume it will be at least as much fun as last year's conclave,

which included a large dealer's room (two of 'em, actually) filled to bursting with Lucy memorabilia for sale; a wonderful Q&A session with the comedienne's co-stars and writers, among them Shirley Mitchell, Doris Singleton, Bob Carroll and Madelyn Pugh; and screenings of rare and unusual Lucy footage.

One very special event for this year's convention that we *can* tell you about will take place on Sunday, July 12: the Hilton's ballroom stage will magically become a 1940s radio studio, and actress Suzanne LaRusch (a marvelous Lucy impersonator) will play Miss Ball's role in two episodes of *My Favorite Husband*. Her co-stars will include original radio greats such as Janet Waldo, Doris Singleton, Shirley Mitchell, Elliott Reid, Larry Dobkin and Sandra Gould. Having been fortunate enough to see these actors and actresses in previous radio dramas, we can assure you that they're still at the peak of their powers and will provide a very entertaining afternoon. The event, by the way, is a fundraiser for Pediatric AIDS Foundation, and is being produced by Gregg Oppenheimer—son of Lucy writer Jess Oppenheimer, and co-author of *Laughs, Luck and Lucy*.

For more information, you can contact Tom Watson at Lucyfan Enterprises, P.O. Box 56234, Sherman Oaks CA 91413-1234; (818) 981-0752. You can obtain more information at the official website, which you'll find at <http://www.lucyfan.com>, or e-mail at: convention@lucyfan.com.

An Exhaustive, Enriching History of Radio

Back in the early 1970s, a flurry of new books began educating this nascent Old-Time Radio fan about the lost art form. Jim Harmon's celebrations of radio comedians and heroes vividly described shows I hadn't heard; Frank Buxton and Bill Owen's *The Big Broadcast* was a fine early encyclopedia of the vintage shows.

The best book, though, arrived in 1976—John Dunning's *Tune In Yesterday*, a wonderfully well-written volume which captured the essence of each show in colorful and affectionate prose, and which improved upon the Buxton/Owen book in the amount of historical detail and background information. Since then, there have been a few books about specific shows, and Leonard Maltin's brisk but all-encompassing history *The Great American Broadcast*. However, Dunning's book remained one of the most readable and informative books about OTR—and since it went out of print soon after its initial appearance, copies were soon commanding \$200 from an anxious army of new collectors.

That situation has at last been rectified with the publication of Dunning's massive update, **On the Air: The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio** (Oxford; 822 pages, hard-cover; \$55.00). Mr. Dunning has been receiving a flood of new information over the past two decades from other radio-drama buffs and from practitioners of the art during its heyday. (The final manuscript, when placed on the floor, came up to Dunning's knees.) A few years ago, it was rumored that the updated edition would be published in *two* lengthy volumes. No doubt some editing has ensued to get the opus down to only 800-plus pages, but nothing seems to be lacking (except for photographs, of which there are none). This volume will likely stand as the ultimate guide to vintage American radio—unless Mr. Dunning produces another update twenty years from now.

More than 1,500 radio series are detailed—about 100 more than in the earlier book. Information about a show's airdates, network affiliations, sponsors, cast and production crew is given at the beginning of each entry, a significant improvement. (This data, in less detailed form, was buried somewhere in each essay of *Tune In Yesterday*.) Some obscure programs are represented only by these statistics (for example, *The Big Guy*, a 1950 detective drama, or *By Popular Demand*, a 1938 CBS book review series). Most programs, however, are profiled by an essay which can run from a single paragraph to several pages.

Some forms of non-dramatic programming are represented by all-encompassing entries, such as "Band Remotes" and "News Broadcasters." In each case, a lengthy essay is followed by a roll call of key participants, detailing the broadcast histories of their programs.

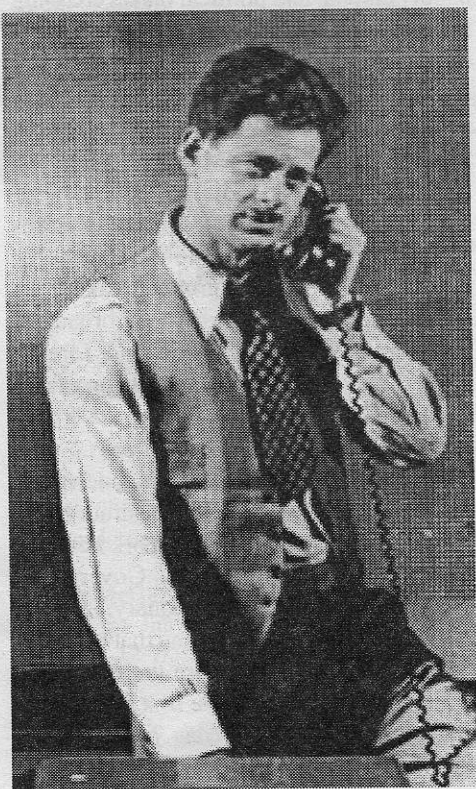
Dunning is primarily a mystery novelist, and his gift for colorful prose makes this book much more than a collection of facts and figures. He seeks to convey the unique quality of each show—something particularly valuable when he's detailing programs with no extant recordings, which live only in the memories of the surviving few who heard it. The essays have been completely rewritten and in many cases stress different aspects of a given show, thus ensuring that *Tune In Yesterday* will still command healthy prices on the collectors' market.

Along with the credits and the essence of each show, Dunning provides a wealth of interesting biographical information about radio's key actors, writers and directors. There are juicy stories galore about the dramas behind the mike, as producers, network vice presidents and sponsors variously battled over the control of different shows. The spirit of camaraderie between radio actors and the sense of creative freedom that many radio writers enjoyed is also vividly conveyed. Dunning generously credits his fellow OTR historians throughout the text, noting their work in contributing to the body of knowledge. Frequently, he'll note how well a given series has survived: *The Jack Benny Program* is represented by over 600 shows, *Lum and Abner* by 1,500 episodes; *Vic and Sade* exists in 200 shows, but over 3,000 transcriptions were destroyed in the late '40s by sponsor Procter & Gamble.

There may be a few errors lurking in the heart of this book, but we haven't found them yet. The overwhelming amount of meticulously researched information makes it an essential purchase for anyone interested in radio history, and Mr. Dunning's lively writing makes it a book that's hard to stop reading. (Available from bookstores and on-line from Amazon Books at <http://www.amazon.com>. Information: Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016.)

Radio's Most Imaginative Writer: A Cornucopia of Corwiniana

Norman Corwin's writing can range from lyrical poetry marking a solemn occasion to snappy patter in a high-spirited comedy script. All of it is marked by intelligence, wit, compassion and eloquence. He has written books, screenplays and poems; he's produced and directed plays, films and television shows. But certainly a high point of his career was the varied radio work he crafted, primarily for CBS, from 1938 through the '40s.



Corwin after a broadcast in the early '40s

He began with programs devoted to poetry—*Rhymes and Cadences* and *Poetic License* were early local shows, followed by *Words Without Music* on CBS. Simultaneously with the latter show, he was learning to direct radio drama with a series called *County Seat*. Corwin longed to write for CBS's experimental *Columbia Workshop*; by early 1941, his talent had blossomed to the point that the network gave him twenty-six weekly half-hours to fill however he wished.

Twenty-Six By Corwin was an astonishing series. Corwin wrote and directed an original half-hour play each week, without a continuing storyline or recurring characters to rely upon; all he had was a fertile imagination, boundless curiosity, and tremendous talent. The first week's offering was a satirical musical-comedy revue about the radio industry, called *Radio Primer*. Announcer Frank Gallop, actors Everett Sloane and Frank Lovejoy, brassy singer-comedienne Beatrice Kay, and conductor Lyn Murray assisted Corwin in this A to Z delineation of the medium's foibles.

Over the next weeks, listeners were treated to *Untitled*, with Fredric March in a somber remembrance of a soldier killed in combat; *Mary and the Fairy*, a fantasy-comedy with Elsa Lanchester and Ruth Gordon about a young lady who obtains five wishes by winning the "Crinkly-Crunkly Bread" contest; and *Descent of the Gods*, with Henry Morgan as an ancient Greek god who visits contemporary America.

These shows, along with nine others from Corwin's 1939-1949 work, were chosen by the author for rebroadcast in 1996 by National Public Radio, which has since provided a forum for new Corwin works. (He will mark his 88th birthday on May 3, and is currently "up to his ear lobes as usual" in work, including a piece about the millenium to be aired on December 31, 1999 and read by

Walter Cronkite.) The vintage shows are now available to the public in a superb collection, **Thirteen By Corwin** (LodesTone CORW013; \$44.95).

The other delights include *The Undecided Molecule*, with Vincent Price, Groucho Marx, Robert Benchley, Keenan Wynn, Norman Lloyd and Sylvia Sidney seeking to prevent the end of the universe in a comedy-fantasy trial of the perplexed element. A young boy visits Dog Heaven in search of his beloved pet in *The Odyssey of Runyon Jones*. Gale Sondergaard is our guide on *New York: A Tapestry For Radio*, in which pure sound conjures the many worlds of that city.

The terrors of world events were a theme to which Corwin frequently returned, represented here by *They Fly Through the Air* (a poem in protest of the bombing of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War), *Cromer* (depicting life in a small English town under siege during the war) and *The Long Name None Could Spell* (celebrating the courage of Czechoslovakia in facing the Nazi occupation). A more hopeful show is *Could Be*, a 1949 docu-drama which speculates upon what the world could be if its residents spent the same energy waging peace as they have making war.

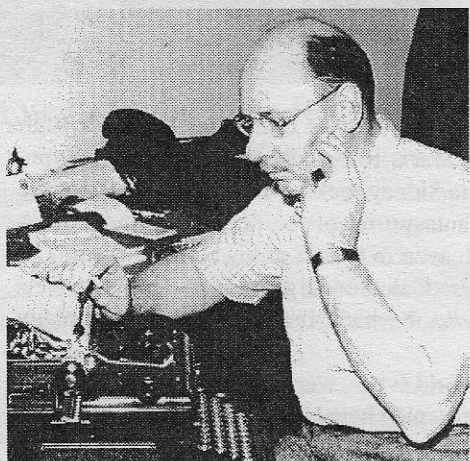
The sound quality is generally fine, although the original transcription discs used for *Radio Primer* vary a bit. Our only disappointment is that there's no accompanying booklet about these programs; credits and some background information would have been very useful. You can, however, obtain more information about them at the LodesTone website: <http://bluemarble.net/~lodeston/>. Information about Corwin can be found at <http://www.normancorwin.com>.

Containing seven hours of truly great radio on six audio-cassettes, this package is essential if you're buying only one representative Corwin set. However, we'd wager that after listening to these shows, you'll want to buy every Corwin show you can find. Fortunately, LodesTone has a treasure trove of Corwiniana. Other vintage shows available on audiocassette include *On a Note of Triumph*, a mesmerizing show which analyzes the causes for World War II and celebrates V-E Day, and *We Hold These Truths*, an all-star program about the Bill of Rights.

The latter show was updated in 1991 with a similarly impressive contemporary cast; that program is also available from LodesTone, along with other recent Corwin dramas: *No Love Lost* (a conversation between Jefferson, Hamilton and Aaron Burr starring William Shatner, Lloyd Bridges, Jack Lemmon and Martin Landau); *The Writer With the Lamé Left Hand*, a biography of Miguel De Cervantes starring Charles Durning with Shatner, Samantha Eggar, Edward Asner and Norman Lloyd; *The Curse of 589*, a fantasy in which scientist Shatner meets leprechaun Eggar (with Carl Reiner playing three supporting roles); and *The Secretariat*, a meditation about prayer with Shatner, Hume Cronyn and Tandy Cronyn.

Two audio documentaries about Corwin are also available, as are scripts for many of the productions. We hope to review more of Corwin's work—vintage and contemporary—in future issues, and we count ourselves blessed that this remarkable man is still giving the gifts of his talent. (Available from The LodesTone Catalog, 611 Empire Mill Road, Bloomington IN 47401; (812) 824-2400; <http://bluemarble.net/~lodeston/>.)

Recreating the Thrills of *I Love a Mystery*



Carlton E. Morse in the 1940s

Carlton E. Morse was one of radio's most prolific writers, and one of the most unusual. For 29 years, he wrote *One Man's Family*—the sprawling saga of the upper-class Barbours of Seacliff, near San Francisco. Morse beautifully captured all of the nuances of family conversations and conveyed the conflicts small and large between the generations. But Morse had another side—a wild imagination prone to stories about vampires, tropical jungles, stairways to the sun and snakes with diamond eyes.

This side of Morse emerged in *I Love a Mystery*, which originated from Hollywood in four different formats, on different networks, between 1939 and '44. It re-

emerged briefly as *I Love Adventure* in the spring of 1948, then came back with a new cast (but using old scripts) this time in a 15-minute transcribed series for Mutual from New York. *ILAM* was really the only show to fully capture the flavor of pulp adventure stories—the perils were truly fantastic, but leavened with liberal amounts of humor. The regular cast members were courageous, low-key Jack Packard; red-blooded and hot-tempered Texan Doc Long, and the upper-crust Englishman Reggie Yorke, who despite his gentility was always ready for a good brawl. They ran the A-1 Detective Agency just off Hollywood Boulevard, but usually they were in some far-flung locale in search of danger.

I Love a Mystery addicts are just as rabid in their devotion as hard-core Trekkies; all the more unfortunate that *ILAM* is one of the most poorly preserved vintage radio shows. The show generally ran in five-a-week 15-minute installments, with the average adventure taking three weeks or 15 episodes to unfurl. Three complete stories exist from the New York run (generally considered inferior to the Hollywood shows), along with a few other stray episodes. Of the Hollywood shows, only two half-hours exist, along with some stray episodes of *The Pirate Loot of the Island of Skulls*. Rumors of other surviving discs have persisted for decades, but nothing else has turned up.

Fortunately, Carlton E. Morse scrupulously kept copies of his writings. (Your editor had a memorable visit with him in 1991 at his home in Redwood City, California and saw the multitude of filing cabinets filled with scripts—so many that they were housed in a separate structure.) If the original recordings of *ILAM* are scarce, the scripts are plentiful. Thus, radio historian and number-one *I Love a Mystery* fan Jim Harmon has recreated a missing story—**The Fear That Creeps Like a Cat** (Metacom; three cassettes; \$19.95).

Does the recreation work? Generally, yes. The acting is splendid, with radio great Les Tremayne proving a worthy successor to Michael Raffetto and Russell Thorson in the role of Jack Packard. Fellow radio historian and actor Frank Bresee is charming as Reggie Yorke (played earlier by Walter Paterson and Tony Randall). The dominant character of the show was always Doc Long; happily, actor Tony Clay is perfect in the role, capturing all of the humor and exuberance earlier portrayed by Barton Yarborough and Jim Boles. One wishes that more care had been paid to the sound quality; sound effects come into play only when expressly called for, and adventures in exotic locales tend to sound as though they're taking place in a small radio studio.

The verdict on how well the writing holds up after almost sixty years will depend upon your affection for exotic adventure liberally laced with horror, humor and mystery. If plausibility is something you hold dear, this may not be the show for you. Morse wrote these adventures with no advance planning, preferring to discover for himself how the story would turn out as he was writing it—and sometimes it shows. A few episodes have long recaps of earlier action; others embark on unnecessary sidetrips or are consumed with lengthy pontifications. But *I Love a Mystery* was a one-of-a-kind show that exercised the listener's imagination like few others, and it's easy to see why it's so revered by so many. We hope that Harmon will bring more of these dormant adventures back to vivid life. (Available from Metacom, Inc., 5353 Nathan Lane, Plymouth MN 55442; 1-800-328-0108.)

News, Chats and Martians

During the turbulent 1930s, radio news came of age—and Americans realized that news and public affairs programming could be just as dramatic as any fictional show. Broadcasters began to realize the immense amount of power they wielded over the public, and began showing concern about personal and political biases creeping into what should have been objective newscasts.

All of this is documented in Robert J. Brown's book **Manipulating the Ether: The Power of Broadcast Radio in Thirties America** (McFarland; 310 pages, hardcover; \$49.00 postpaid). Brown explores the topic by dividing it into three sections: Franklin D. Roosevelt's groundbreaking use of the medium, the growth of broadcast news in covering domestic and foreign events, and the many repercussions from Orson Welles' 1938 *War of the Worlds* broadcast.

Roosevelt had a unique understanding of radio, and had used the medium for 75 talks to the citizens of New York between 1928 and 1932, when he was Governor of that state. Thus, his revolutionary, intimate "fireside chat" was something that he'd perfected for four years before the rest of the nation experienced it. The first proper fireside chat, broadcast on May 7, 1933 (three days after he took office) gave the public an understanding of the bank crisis—and endeared Roosevelt to millions.

The growth of radio news is marked by key events such as the Lindbergh baby kidnapping, the Hindenburg explosion, the 1936 and '40 presidential campaigns, and the crises which led to World War II.

Radio buffs might find the book most interesting, however, for its sixty-page detailing of Orson Welles' notorious Mercury Theatre broadcast of October 30, 1938. Author Brown describes some prior incidents wherein radio was used to "hoodwink the public," notably the phony baseball play-by-play perpetrated by young Red Barber.

Reaction to the Martian "invasion" by the public, broadcasters and the government is well detailed, as is the continuing legacy of the broadcast (notably the "credibility gap" which it introduced). This is an absorbing, well-documented history of the trust—and cynicism—engendered in the public by broadcasting as it came to maturity. (Available from McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; (910) 246-4460.)

When Radio Was Program Guide

May - July 1998

When Radio Was is a syndicated radio program broadcast on 300 affiliate radio stations from coast to coast. Up to five hours of *When Radio Was* can be heard in most parts of the country on these 300 affiliates. Some affiliates run the program Monday through Friday, some air the program on weekends and some do both. Check with your local *When Radio Was* affiliate for exact times of broadcast. To find out what radio station in your area carries *When Radio Was*, call 1-847-524-0200 extension 234, Monday through Friday between 9 AM and 5 PM Central Time.

MAY 1998

Broadcast Week One

Suspense 4-10-47 "Community Property" w/ Kirk Douglas / **The Adventures of Superman** 4-10-40 Episode #26 w/ Clayton Collyer

Have Gun, Will Travel 2-1-59 "Matter of Ethics" w/ John Dehner / **The Burns & Allen Show** 1-25-50 w/ guest, Ronald Reagan (Part 1)

The Burns & Allen Show 1-25-50 w/ guest, Ronald Reagan (Part 2) / **X Minus One** 12-12-56 "Hostess" w/ Terri Keane

The Green Hornet 5-16-44 "Paroled For Revenge" w/ Robert Hall / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 3-5-46 "McGee's Car is Stolen" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan (Part 1)

Fibber McGee & Molly 3-5-46 "McGee's Car is Stolen" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan (Part 2) / **Dragnet** 12-7-50 "The Big Picture" w/ Jack Webb

The Shadow 2-16-41 "The Phantom Voyage" w/ Bill Johnstone / **The Adventures of Superman** 4-12-40 Episode #27 w/ Clayton Collyer

Broadcast Week Two

The Whistler 6-10-46 "Quiet Sunday" w/ Bill Foreman / **The Jack Benny Program** 9-21-52 "In Scotland" w/ Jack and all the gang (Part 1)

The Jack Benny Program 9-21-52 "In Scotland" w/ Jack and all the gang (Part 2) / **Crime Classics** 1-6-54 "The Younger Brothers: Why Some of Them Grew No Older" w/ Lou Merrill

The Sealed Book 1950s "The Hands of Death" / **The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 4-4-48 w/ guests, Rudy Vallee and Ken Murray (Part 1)

The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show 4-4-48 w/ guests, Rudy Vallee and Ken Murray (Part 2) / **The Black Museum** 1950s "The Dictionary" w/ Orson Welles

Suspense 5-5-49 "Death Has a Shadow" w/ Bob Hope / **The Adventures of Superman** 4-15-40 Episode #28 w/ Clayton Collyer

Broadcast Week Three

Gunsmoke 12-6-52 "I Don't Know" w/ William Conrad / **The Great Gildersleeve** 1-4-45 "Leroy is a Problem" w/ Hal Peary (Part 1)

The Great Gildersleeve 1-4-45 "Leroy is a Problem" w/ Hal Peary (Part 2) / **Escape** 2-26-49 "Red Wine" w/ Jeff Chandler

Gangbusters 1940s "The Case of the High School Hot Shots" / **The Bickersons** 3-2-47 "New Suitcase" w/ Don Ameche and Frances Langford (Part 1)

The Bickersons 3-2-47 "New Suitcase" w/ Don Ameche and Frances Langford (Part 2) / **Tales of the Texas Rangers** 8-24-52 "Three Victims" w/ Joel McCrea

The Shadow 4-6-41 "Murder From the Grave" w/ Bill Johnstone / **The Adventures of Superman** 4-17-40 Episode #29 w/ Clayton Collyer

Broadcast Week Four

This Is Your FBI 1940s "Ghost Town" w/ Stacy Harris / **Duffy's Tavern** 1-12-51 "Visit From the Draft Board" w/ Ed "Archie" Gardner (Part 1)

Duffy's Tavern 1-12-51 "Visit From the Draft Board" w/ Ed "Archie" Gardner (Part 2) / **The Lone Ranger** 7-2-54 "The Colonel's Daughter" w/ Brace Beemer

The Third Man 1950s "The Emerald Locket" w/ Orson Welles / **The Fred Allen Show** 5-12-46 w/ guest, Sydney Greenstreet (Part 1)

The Fred Allen Show 5-12-46 w/ guest, Sydney Greenstreet (Part 2) / **You Bet Your Life** 10-5-49 "Secret Word is Chair" w/ Groucho Marx

Suspense 4-17-47 "The Green Eyed Monster" w/ Lloyd Nolan / **The Adventures of Superman** 4-19-40 Episode #30 w/ Clayton Collyer

JUNE 1998

Broadcast Week One

Have Gun, Will Travel 2-8-59 "Killer's Widow" w/ John Dehner / **The Burns & Allen Show** 4-12-50 "Recounting Palm Springs Trip" w/ George Burns & Gracie Allen Pt. 1

The Burns & Allen Show 4-12-50 "Recounting Palm Springs Trip" w/ George Burns & Gracie Allen Pt. 2 / **Dimension X** 6-17-51 "Pebble in the Sky" w/ Santos Ortega

The Green Hornet 2-5-46 "The Washington Story" w/ Robert Hall / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 3-12-46 "Kite Building Contest" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan Pt. 1

Fibber McGee & Molly 3-12-46 "Kite Building Contest" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan Pt. 2 / **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** 10-12-47 "The Adventures of the Red Headed League" w/ John Stanley and Alfred Shirley

The Shadow 10-31-37 "The White God" w/ Orson Welles / **The Adventures of Superman** 4-22-40 Episode #31 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Two

Dragnet 11-8-51 "The Big Hit and Run Killer" w/ Jack Webb / **The Jack Benny Program** 2-28-42 "Kit Carson Benny" w/ Jack Benny and all his gang Pt. 1

The Jack Benny Program 2-28-42 "Kit Carson Benny" w/ Jack Benny Pt. 2 / **Escape** 3-12-49 "He Who Rides the Tiger" w/ William Conrad

This Is Your FBI 1950s "The Corrupters" w/ Stacy Harris / **The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 12-26-48 "Last show for Chase & Sanborn" w/ Edgar Bergen Pt. 1

The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show 12-26-48 "Last show for Chase & Sanborn" w/ Edgar Bergen Pt. 2 / **The Black Museum** 1952 "The Little Blue 22" w/ Orson Welles

Suspense 9-16-42 "Kettler Method" w/ Roger DeKoven / **The Adventures of Superman** 4-22-40 Episode #31 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Three

Gunsmoke 12-13-52 "Post Mortem" w/ William Conrad / **The Great Gildersleeve** 2-17-46 "Leroy Gets the Flu" w/ Hal Peary Pt. 1

When Radio Was Program Guide

May - July 1998 Continued

The Great Gildersleeve 2-17-46 "Leroy Gets the Flu" w/ Hal Peary Pt. 2 / **The Mercury Summer Theatre On the Air** 9-6-46 "The Apple Tree" w/ Orson Welles

Gangbusters 1940s "The Case of the Bow-Wow Bowers" / **The Life of Riley** 11-9-46 "Jr. & Egbert go to Camp" w/ William Bendix Pt. 1

The Life of Riley 11-9-46 "Jr. & Egbert go to Camp" w/ William Bendix Pt. 2 / **Tales of the Texas Rangers** 1-13-52 "Clip Job" w/ Joel McCrea

The Shadow 11-28-37 "The Creeper" w/ Orson Welles / **The Adventures of Superman** 4-26-40 Episode #33 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Four

Lights Out! 12-1-42 "The Story of Mr. Maggs" w/ Arch Oboler / **My Favorite Husband** 4-15-49 "Horseback Riding" w/ Lucille Ball Pt. 1

My Favorite Husband 4-15-49 "Horseback Riding" w/ Lucille Ball Pt. 2 / **The Lone Ranger** 3-28-38 "Faked Bank Robbery" w/ Earle Grasser

The Third Man 1952 "Fast Buck" w/ Orson Welles / **That's Rich** 11-21-53 "Audition Show" w/ Stan Freberg Pt. 1

That's Rich 11-21-53 "Audition Show" w/ Stan Freberg Pt. 2 / **Boston Blackie** 7-23-46 "Deadly Grandfather Clock" w/ Dick Kollmar

Suspense 9-23-42 "A Passage to Benares" w/ Paul Stewart / **The Adventures of Superman** 4-29-40 Episodes #34 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Five

Rocky Fortune 2-16-54 "Too Many Husband" w/ Frank Sinatra / **Duffy's Tavern** 6-1-49 "Old School Teacher Agatha Pitz Visits" w/ Ed Gardner Pt. 1

Duffy's Tavern 6-1-49 "Old School Teacher Agatha Pitz Visits" w/ Ed Gardner Pt. 2 / **Frontier Gentleman** 4-6-58 "Powder River Kid" w/ John Dehner

JULY 1998

Broadcast Week One

The Whistler 9-10-47 "Bridge on Black Mountain" w/ Bill Forman / **Burns & Allen** 1-8-48 w/ guest, Jack Benny Pt. 1

Burns & Allen 1-8-48 w/ guest, Jack Benny Pt. 2 / **X Minus One** 3-21-56 "A Thousand Dollars a Plate" w/ Bob Hastings

The Shadow 12-12-37 "Murder On Approval" w/ Orson Welles / **The Adventures of Superman** 5-1-40 Episode #35 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Two

The Adventures of Philip Marlowe 7-21-51 "Life Can Be Murder" w/ Gerald Mohr / **Fibber McGee & Molly** 3-26-46 "Bullets Brannigan" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan Pt. 1

Fibber McGee & Molly 3-26-46 "Bullets Brannigan" w/ Jim and Marian Jordan Pt. 2 / **The Screen Director's Playhouse** 2-13-49 "Magnificent Obsession" w/ Irene Dunne

The Hermit's Cave 1930s "The Spirits of Vengeance" / **The Jack Benny Program** 5-2-43 w/ guest, Eddie Cantor Pt. 1

The Jack Benny Program 5-2-43 w/ guest, Eddie Cantor Pt. 2 / **The Green Hornet** 2-12-46 "Women in the Case" w/ Robert Hall

Suspense 11-10-42 "Will You Make a Bet With Death?" w/ Michael Fitzmaurice / **The Adventures of Superman** 5-3-40 Episode #36 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Three

Dragnet 10-26-50 "The Big Meet" w/ Jack Webb / **The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show** 11-30-47 w/ guest, Edward Everett Horton Pt. 1

The Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show 11-30-47 w/ guest, Edward Everett Horton Pt. 2 / **The Black Museum** 1952 "The Chain" w/ Orson Welles

Escape 3-19-49 "Finger of Doom" w/ Herbert Marshall / **The Great Gildersleeve** 2-24-46 "The Hobby" w/ Hal Peary Pt. 1

The Great Gildersleeve 2-24-46 "The Hobby" w/ Hal Peary Pt. 2 / **The Saint** 5-20-51 "Pin No Roses on My Corpse" w/ Vincent Price

The Shadow 11-19-39 "The Shadow Returns" w/ Bill Johnstone / **The Adventures of Superman** 5-6-40 Episode #37 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Four

Gunsmoke 1-31-53 "Cavalcade" w/ William Conrad / **The Life of Riley** 11-16-46 "Flashback: Music" w/ William Bendix Pt. 1

The Life of Riley 11-16-46 "Flashback: Music" w/ William Bendix Pt. 2 / **Gangbusters** 1940s "Case of the Death Mask Killer"

The Third Man 1952 "Coins" w/ Orson Welles / **My Favorite Husband** 4-22-49 "Time Budgeting" w/ Lucille Ball Pt. 1

My Favorite Husband 4-22-49 "Time Budgeting" w/ Lucille Ball Pt. 2 / **I Was A Communist for the FBI** 1950s "My Friend, the Enemy" w/ Dana Andrews

Suspense 11-17-42 "Menace in Wax" w/ Joseph Julian / **The Adventures of Superman** 5-8-40 Episode #38 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Broadcast Week Five

Boston Blackie 4-27-49 "Dynamite Thompson" w/ Dick Kollmar / **Father Knows Best** 2-26-53 "Banged Up Fender" w/ Robert Young Pt. 1

Father Knows Best 2-26-53 "Banged Up Fender" w/ Robert Young Pt. 2 / **Tales of the Texas Rangers** 6-15-52 "Travesty" w/ Joel McCrea

Broadway Is My Beat 6-23-50 "Case of Steve Courtney" w/ Larry Thor / **The Milton Berle Show** 8-5-47 "Salute to the Outdoors" w/ Milton Berle Pt. 1

The Milton Berle Show 8-5-47 "Salute to the Outdoors" w/ Milton Berle Pt. 2 / **Have Gun, Will Travel** 2-15-59 "Return of Dr. Thackeray" w/ John Dehner

The Shadow 2-4-40 "The Return of Carnation Charlie" w/ Bill Johnstone / **The Adventures of Superman** 5-10-40 Episode #39 w/ Clayton "Bud" Collyer

Radio's Greatest Gumshoes

A wide variety of gumshoes, shamuses and private eyes were pounding the pavement and riding the airwaves back in the '40s and '50s. Twenty of them are rounded up in a new collection from Radio Spirits: **Old Time Radio's Greatest Detectives** (20 audiocassettes, 90 minutes each; #4395; \$59.98).

Most of these shows are from 1946 through '53, which were the creative heydays for both radio drama and film noir. It's no coincidence that several actors played tough detectives in both media. Edmond O'Brien is one of the best of many actors to play *Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar*. Jeff Chandler (the name given by movie studios to radio actor Ira Grossel) stars as *Michael Shayne, Detective*. Alan Ladd takes the lead in *Box Thirteen*, a syndicated series from 1948. Vincent Price and Barry Sullivan both portray the suave, urbane Simon Templar, better known as *The Saint*.



Dick Powell

Dick Powell, having reincarnated himself as a tough gumshoe in films such as *Murder, My Sweet*, shows up as Richard Rogue in the 1945-46 series *Rogue's Gallery*—standard gumshoe fare, but still very entertaining. His best detective show is here, too: the later and funnier *Richard Diamond, Private Detective*, with fine, whimsical scripts written by Blake Edwards.

It's surprising to realize how much variety there is within the detective-show genre. While most of them take place in "the big city," usually Los Angeles or New York, there's also the western-whodunit adventure of *Tales of the Texas Rangers*, starring Joel McCrea. San Francisco's waterfront is the setting of *Pat Novak For Hire*, one of three series in this collection starring Jack Webb. (It's preceded by *Jeff Regan, Investigator* and followed by the classic and groundbreaking show *Dragnet*.) London of the late 1800s provides the atmosphere for *Sherlock Holmes*, portrayed here by John Stanley in three 1947 episodes.

There's a wide difference in approach, too. *The Adventures of Philip Marlowe* with Gerald Mohr in the lead is tough and gritty, while Chester Morris's

Continued on Page 26



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Investigating Radio Detectives

Continued from page 25

interpretation of *Boston Blackie* is light-hearted and always ready with a quip. *The Shadow* (played here by Bill Johnstone in three fine 1939 episodes) has elements of the supernatural, while *Gangbusters* and *Dragnet* are based on true cases.

Most of the 20 series represented here are pretty well known. Others are somewhat forgotten, such as *Barry Craig*, *Confidential Investigator* starring William Gargan, or *Broadway Is My Beat* with Larry Thor. All of them are generally entertaining, although the quality of the scripts, sound effects and music varies from series to series. (*Casey*, *Crime Photographer* with Staats Cottsworth has a full orchestra and a live audience, while *The Casebook of Gregory Hood* with Elliott Lewis has to make do with a lone studio organist.)

This collection provides three episodes of each series on a 90 minute cassette, which means that there's a side break in the middle of the second episode; fortunately, these breaks are well placed and don't interrupt the narrative. The sound quality is generally excellent; there's some disc surface noise on an episode of *Johnny Dollar*, but most others are pristine.

We've been spoiled by the elaborate booklets in Radio Spirits' other 20-cassette sets—there's no booklet in this collection, and we found ourselves hankering for information about these shows. (One also wonders which episodes are the rarities "unearthed from The Library of Congress which have never been in circulation.")

This genre is so rich that Radio Spirits could easily put together a 20-series second volume—our candidates would be *The Adventures of Sam Spade* (in its Howard Duff years, our all-time favorite detective show), *Nick Carter*, *Nero Wolfe*, *The Fat Man*, *The Thin Man*, *Mr. Keen*, *Calling All Cars*, *The Falcon*, *This Is Your FBI*, *Crime Doctor*, *Bulldog Drummond*, *Mr. Chameleon*, *Mr. & Mrs. North*, *Martin Kane*—*Private Eye*, *The Man Called X*, *Man Against Crime*, *The Line-Up*, *Johnny Modero*—*Pier 23*, *Ellery Queen* and *Charlie Chan*. Episodes from many of these series are in Radio Spirits' catalog. The present collection, however, is a wonderful assortment of detective drama and should prove satisfying whether you're a devotee of the genre or just starting to, uh, investigate it. (Available from Radio Spirits, Inc., P.O. Box 2141, Schiller Park IL 60176; 1-800-RADIO-48.)

Larry Gelbart and the Art of Making Fun • By Jordan R. Young

A funny thing happened to Larry Gelbart on his way to *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *M*A*S*H*, *Tootsie* and *Oh, God!* His father, a barber, was cutting a comedian's hair one day and told him about his clever young son, who had a gift for comedy. The customer, Danny Thomas, had a spot on a network radio show headlined by Fanny Brice; he hired the boy to write for him—and changed Gelbart's life at the ripe old age of 16.

When Gelbart was asked a few years ago by a publisher to collect his writings, he chose instead to produce a volume that was part rambling memoir, part primer and part sampler. The result is **Laughing Matters** (Random House; 304 pages, hardcover; \$24.00), described by its author as “a book with three acts and a couple of intermissions.”

Gelbart got his “higher education” on the staff of one of radio's most prestigious shows, *Duffy's Tavern*, where mercurial star-producer Ed Gardner hired and fired writers at lightning pace. He wasn't so much writing at this stage, he notes, as exercising a knack for coming up with funny lines, and learning how to produce a script every week on time—“wonderful training for what was to be a lifetime of deadlines.” He also learned how to play with language: Turn off the picture on his *M*A*S*H* episodes and, asserts Gelbart, “they would make pretty good radio shows.”

On TV's *Caesar's Hour*, he sat in a room with a group of writers who were “all young and largely unfamiliar with the word ‘can't.’” Among them were Carl Reiner, Mel Brooks and Neil Simon, who recently recreated the “gleeful organized chaos” of those days in the play, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*.

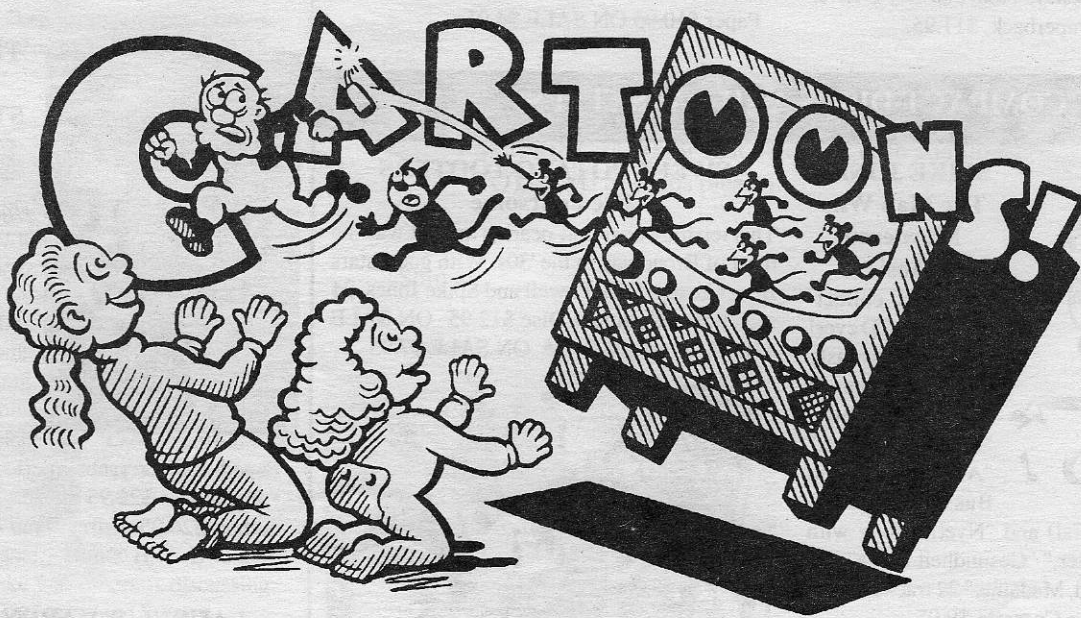
Gelbart indulges a “lifelong fondness for comedians” by writing at length about Jack Benny and Milton Berle and the influence they had, respectively, on radio and television; Bob Hope, for whom he

toiled in both mediums; and George Burns, who starred in the Gelbart-scripted *Oh, God!* The author takes time for a more personal tribute to the late Ruth Berle and the part she played behind the scenes; he also talks about the role of comedy in pop culture, addressing “the power of the punch line [and] its impact on the bottom line.”

There's a brilliant essay on Los Angeles that is more of a poisoned bon bon than a valentine, warning about the dangers of drinking water (“they don't call them taps for nothing”) and smog, finally deciding there's only way to survive in “the city of axles”—never inhale.

If the book is unusual in format it is a lively read, but it's also somewhat helter-skelter. While Gelbart accords a generous number of pages to *M*A*S*H*, one wishes he (and his publisher) had devoted more space to the golden age of radio and television. I know he has more to say because I have interviewed him at great length for my forthcoming book on the subject. I'll let him have the last word:

“Everybody was working without a net, the writers and the actors—the actors went out there and faced a live audience. The stuff had to succeed, through a combination of material and delivery. If something really was terrible—there wasn't a lot of time to fix it between say, five o'clock and eight o'clock, and that stuff would have been untested as well. That's the one thing I think I learned, that works in whatever medium you're in, and whatever business you're in. Just to do your job in the time and the limitations that come with the job. I think the discipline that comes from having to perform often in very difficult circumstances—I have to believe spills over into other parts of your life. I don't think we're one kind of worker and another kind of person. I don't feel that compartmentalized. So I think radio was good preparation—probably better preparation than formal schooling.”



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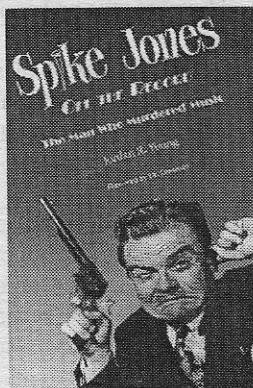
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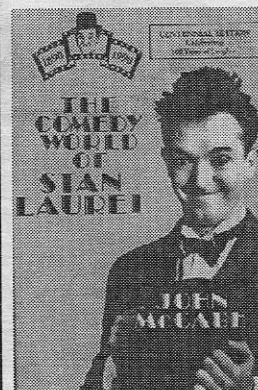
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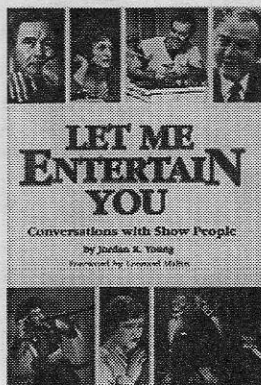
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Broadcaster-historian Frank Bresee is the longtime host of "The Golden Days of Radio."

Fibber and Molly's Show: 'Tis Funny, McGee!

By Frank Bresee

One of the most popular shows on the air for over twenty years was *Fibber McGee & Molly*, starring Jim and Marian Jordan. It ran on NBC in varied formats from April 16, 1935 through March 25, 1956, and the beloved characters continued on NBC's *Monitor* series from July 1957 through September 6, 1959.

Jim and Marian Jordan met at a church choir practice in their hometown of Peoria in 1915. They married on August 31, 1918—and Jim was drafted for service in the Great War five days later. Upon his return to civilian life, Jim tried his hand at a number of jobs, but yearned for a career in vaudeville, which he and Marian embarked upon in 1920. Marian played piano and sang harmony with her husband, an act ideal for radio. Their first series was broadcast in 1925 over WIBO-Chicago and was entitled *The Jordans, Marian and Jim*.

Jim once told me how he and Marian broke into radio. They were visiting Jim's brother in Chicago and, on a dare, they went down to the local radio station and auditioned. He went on to say, "In those days, radio stations had people on the street dragging anyone into the studio to be on the air."

"When we won the audition, we just did our singing act on radio. We never talked on the stage, just sang. I guess we never knew we could be funny until we got on the air. Marian and I didn't make much money at first, only ten dollars a show. We had to continue doing our vaudeville shows in order to make ends meet."

In 1927, the Jordans' radio career began to look up; by 1931 they teamed up with Don Quinn, the wonderful writer who created memorable dialogue with them until 1950 when he left to write the Ronald Colman comedy series *The Halls of Ivy*, which won a Peabody Award.

The Jordans' first important program was a series entitled *Smackout*, which was heard for fifteen minutes each weekday morning. It made its debut on March 2, 1931 over WMAQ-Chicago; when NBC acquired the station eight months later, *Smackout* was carried by the full network.

Jim played the part of Luke Grey, owner of a neighborhood store that was always just "smackout of everything." The Johnson Wax company bought *Smackout* and sponsored it for a time.

Later, the Johnson people were looking for the right night-time show and decided to give the Jordans a try. Said Jim, "We had done some special night-time shows and were certain we could do a half-hour weekly show. At first we were going to call it *Marian and Jim Jordan*, but Jack Lewis, the manager of the agency that handled Johnson's Wax, said he thought it would be nice if the main character could be kind of a Luke Grey type but had a different name, a name that sounded like a liar.

"The next day when we had our meeting, Don Quinn brought in a small strip of paper, and on it he had written two words: *Fibber McGee*."

That was the beginning of the *Fibber McGee & Molly*

show. When it first went on the air, Jim insisted that they have a 26-week contract instead of the usual thirteen weeks. He felt that it would take about six months to develop the characters and gather a loyal following.

During that first year, the *Fibber McGee & Molly* show was on the NBC network on Monday nights, opposite the *Lux Radio Theater*. Sometimes it worked out very well: if the radio audience didn't like the stars and stories on the *Lux* show, they would tune over to the McGees—and when they tuned in, they liked what they heard.

After the broadcast of January 24, 1939, most of the McGee troupe packed up and headed west from Chicago for Hollywood. Also in 1939, the program moved into its Tuesday night spot, where it remained for fourteen years. It was broadcast live from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m. Pacific time, from the NBC studios at Sunset and Vine.

Some of radio's best supporting actors were regulars on the program, including Gale Gordon as Mayor La Trivia, Bill Thompson as The Old Timer (and Wallace Wimple), Arthur Q. Bryan as Doc Gamble, Harold Peary as Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve, and Shirley Mitchell as Alice Darling. The program's announcer was one of radio's best, Harlow Wilcox.

The longtime musical conductor was Billy Mills, with the show from 1938 to 1953. Mills composed the show's best remembered theme, a lively instrumental called "Wing to Wing."

Continued on Page 31



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The Folks at 79 Wistful Vista

Continued from page 30

The McGee program was responsible for two of broadcasting's earliest "spinoff" shows. Hal Peary made such an impression as the McGees' pompous neighbor that he was given his own show; *The Great Gildersleeve*, of course, became a long-running favorite. In January 1944, the character of a lovable black maid named Beulah made her debut. Perhaps we should say "his," since the role was played by Marlin Hurt, a young white man. Hurt got his own spinoff in July 1945; sadly, before his show had been on for a year, Hurt died of a heart attack, aged only 40.

After Marion Jordan's death in April 1961, Jim remarried. Although officially retired, he continued to work quite frequently on radio and television, and provided the voice of "Captain Orville" in the Disney animated feature *The Rescuers*.

A couple of dozen years ago, Jim was on my worldwide *Golden Days of Radio* show. We recreated a couple of pages from an old Fibber script.

FIBBER: Let's talk about the time I was in the seesaw business back in Sioux City, for the —

FRANK: You? In the seesaw business?

FIBBER: You mean I never toldja about when I sold seesaws for the seesaw company, that old man Seymour had in Sioux City?

FRANK: You never did!

FIBBER: Well, Frank, I will. You see, I was a senior seesaw salesman for the Seymour Seesaw Company and I sold saws on the side. And when I'd start out with a sample seesaw and a sack full of saws, I'd sell the other saw salesman silly...because I was as saucy a seesaw salesman as the other saw salesman ever say. I could sell you a two-buck bucksaw that would out-saw any bucksaw you ever saw a young buck saw with, and for six bucks I'd sell you a sawbuck to saw with the bucksaw on. I sold so many saws and seesaws that I got saw-sick from saw-sellin' and seasick for see-saw sellin' and between the saw-sellin' and the seesaws and the seasick seesaw sales and the saw-sick saw salesman and the bucksaws and the sawbucks, and—(DOOR CHIME).

The days of *Fibber McGee & Molly* are long gone, but are fondly recalled by all of us who remember radio. Their comedy was bright and fun, and is just as timely today as it was a half-century ago.

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The Folks at 79 Wistful Vista

Continued from page 30

The McGee program was responsible for two of broadcasting's earliest "spinoff" shows. Hal Peary made such an impression as the McGees' pompous neighbor that he was given his own show; *The Great Gildersleeve*, of course, became a long-running favorite. In January 1944, the character of a lovable black maid named Beulah made her debut. Perhaps we should say "his," since the role was played by Marlin Hurt, a young white man. Hurt got his own spinoff in July 1945; sadly, before his show had been on for a year, Hurt died of a heart attack, aged only 40.

After Marion Jordan's death in April 1961, Jim remarried. Although officially retired, he continued to work quite frequently on radio and television, and provided the voice of "Captain Orville" in the Disney animated feature *The Rescuers*.

A couple of dozen years ago, Jim was on my worldwide *Golden Days of Radio* show. We recreated a couple of pages from an old Fibber script.

FIBBER: Let's talk about the time I was in the seesaw business back in Sioux City, for the —

FRANK: You? In the seesaw business?

FIBBER: You mean I never toldja about when I sold seesaws for the seesaw company, that old man Seymour had in Sioux City?

FRANK: You never did!

FIBBER: Well, Frank, I will. You see, I was a senior seesaw salesman for the Seymour Seesaw Company and I sold saws on the side. And when I'd start out with a sample seesaw and a sack full of saws, I'd sell the other saw salesman silly...because I was as saucy a seesaw salesman as the other saw salesman ever say. I could sell you a two-buck bucksaw that would out-saw any bucksaw you ever saw a young buck saw with, and for six bucks I'd sell you a sawbuck to saw with the bucksaw on. I sold so many saws and seesaws that I got saw-sick from saw-sellin' and seasick for see-saw sellin' and between the saw-sellin' and the seesaws and the seasick seesaw sales and the saw-sick saw salesman and the bucksaws and the sawbucks, and—(DOOR CHIME).

The days of *Fibber McGee & Molly* are long gone, but are fondly recalled by all of us who remember radio. Their comedy was bright and fun, and is just as timely today as it was a half-century ago.

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2. What was George Burns' real name?
3. Who had the longest-running network newscast?
4. Who was the lady behind the popular Saturday morning show *Let's Pretend*?
5. Who was the announcer who covered the explosion of the dirigible Hindenburg in 1937?
6. What Oscar nominee starred in the radio show *Dangerous Assignment*?
7. A famous radio personality began his career in 1934 on WJSV in Washington D.C. as "The Warbling Banjoist." Who was he?
8. Two famous disc jockeys, Martin Block in New York and Al Jarvis in Los Angeles, hosted what famous record show?
9. What radio detective often referred to a suspect's gun as "a rewolower"?
10. Who was George Washington Hill, and what was his relation to F.E. Boone?

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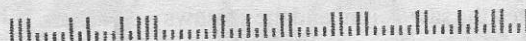
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