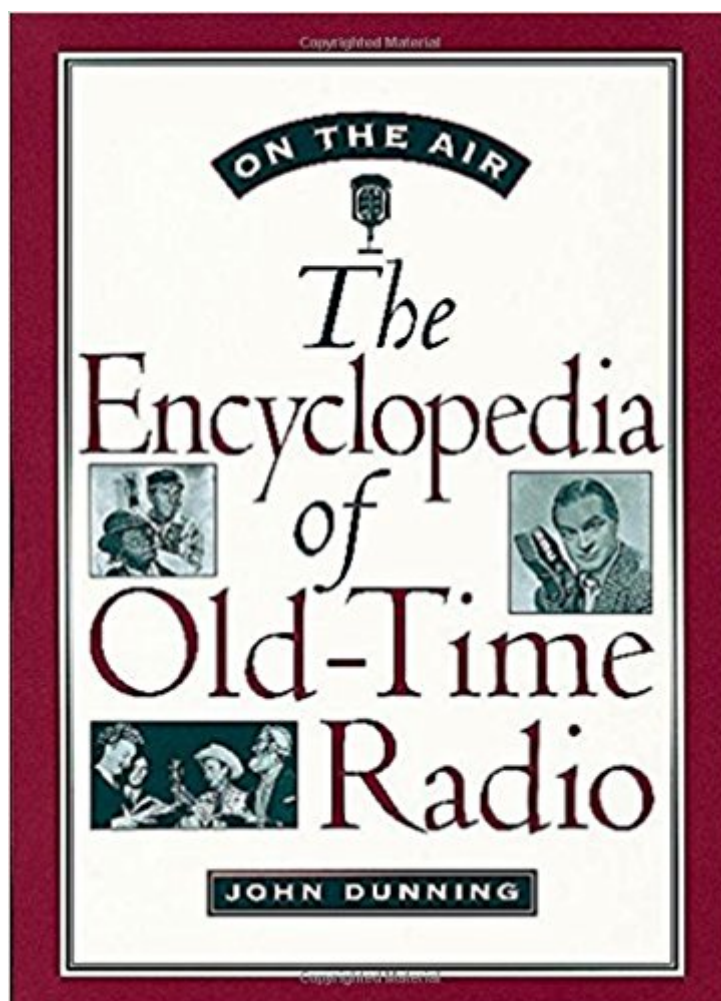


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On The Air: The Encyclopedia Of Old-Time Radio



Synopsis

Now long out of print, John Dunning's *Tune in Yesterday* was the definitive one-volume reference on old-time radio broadcasting. Now, in *On the Air*, Dunning has completely rethought this classic work, reorganizing the material and doubling its coverage, to provide a richer and more informative account of radio's golden age. Here are some 1,500 radio shows presented in alphabetical order. The great programs of the '30s, '40s, and '50s are all here--Amos 'n' Andy, Fibber McGee and Molly, *The Lone Ranger*, *Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour*, and *The March of Time*, to name only a few. For each, Dunning provides a complete broadcast history, with the timeslot, the network, and the name of the show's advertisers. He also lists major cast members, announcers, producers, directors, writers, and sound effects people--even the show's theme song. There are also umbrella entries, such as "News Broadcasts," which features an engaging essay on radio news, with capsule biographies of major broadcasters, such as Lowell Thomas and Edward R. Murrow. Equally important, Dunning provides a fascinating account of each program, taking us behind the scenes to capture the feel of the performance, such as the ghastly sounds of *Lights Out* (a horror drama where heads rolled and bones crunched), and providing engrossing biographies of the main people involved in the show. A wonderful read for everyone who loves old-time radio, *On the Air* is a must purchase for all radio hobbyists and anyone interested in 20th-century American history. It is an essential reference work for libraries and radio stations.

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Customer Reviews

Mystery writer and radio talk show host Dunning has expertly compiled and organized a massive

amount of research data on hundreds of radio shows aired from the 1920s through the 1960s. The entries, listed alphabetically by show title, each contain a treasure trove of information—broadcast dates, casts and personnel, anecdotes, special analyses, and a detailed overview of each show's background, format, and content. Entries range from popular series such as *Amos 'n' Andy* and *The Green Hornet* to the *Metropolitan Opera Auditions* and the *NBC University Theatre*—everything from soaps, Westerns, and comedy to sports, drama, and documentaries. An extensive bibliography and index enhance the book's appeal. For those who once gathered around the console, the more than 700 pages of entries should provide a wonderful stroll down memory lane. Historians and researchers will also find this a valuable reference tool, offering new discoveries and insights. For reference libraries with large media collections. ©Carol J. Binkowski, Bloomfield, NJ Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

As he did in *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio* (Prentice Hall, 1976), Dunning here provides a storehouse of information about the people and programs of radio's Golden Age (1930s, 1940s, 1950s). The storehouse, however, has been thoroughly remodeled and refurbished. The amount of material covered has been considerably expanded and its presentation carefully reorganized. Some 1,500 radio shows, listed in alphabetical order, are described in concise articles linked with an extensive system of cross-referencing. The cross-referencing is crucial, because someone looking for *Ozzie and Harriet* or *Sam Spade* will need to know that both programs are listed in the main part of the text under *The Adventures of...* The articles vary in length, from the briefest of paragraphs (*The Billie Burke Show* and *Linda's First Love*) to several pages (*The Lone Ranger* and *The Mercury Theater of the Air*). Each program entry consists of title and broadcast history (including exact starting and ending dates, day and timeslot, network, announcer, sponsor, etc.). This is followed by an essay that often imparts all manner of detail, or, in the case of those short entries, a capsule description of the program. Although the majority of the articles are about individual programs, there are also a number of survey articles, such as sports broadcasts, concert broadcasts, and news broadcasts. Here, too, the cross-referencing is essential in order to find information about a specific program that might fall under one of those categories and is not listed separately. There is an extensive bibliography, which will be of great help to those wishing to pursue the subject further. In the electronically connected world of today, it is hard to imagine a time (not so long ago) when there was but one medium of electronic information. The rich detail in this solid work helps convey the flavor of that earlier time. Devotees of classic television shows may be surprised to find out that such programs as *Father Knows Best*, *Our Miss Brooks*,

Queen for a Day, and Sky-King all started as radio programs. A worthy addition to most reference collections, this volume is an interesting portrait of a time when radio was more than background music or xenophobic talk shows. Another recent publication, the Historical Dictionary of American Radio [RBB Ag 98], covers a wider range of topics related to radio but has far less coverage of individual programs.

The Kindle version is over 34,000 locations. The amount of information is staggering, and very informative. The author is quite open that some is factual, but considering memories at this stage, some of the information is a bit more shaky. I appreciate that sort of honesty. The Abbott & Costello and Jack Benny sections are great. The Fibber McGee and Molly section is wonderful describing their trials and tribulations on the radio. It really was a different time with the media, when they explain why Molly went off the air for 18 months. That could never have been hidden now. Burns and Allen tells the story well of their love story. How Gracie got "discovered" is a strong read. Hopalong Cassidy - the actor cleaned up his live to match the character he played. I never knew that Gunsmoke was a radio show first. Or that there were so much more open about the relationship between Marshall Dillon and Kitty. Have Gun Will Travel is interesting that it went from TV to radio. Though the author is wrong about the relationship between Paladin and Hey Boy - at least on the TV show. If that is the way it was on the radio show, they certainly missed one of the charms of the TV show. I Love a Mystery - the show that led to a formal protest from the Nicaraguan government (!). Were they trying to protect the real Temple of Vampires? I'm not at all surprised that Gene Autry kept getting fired from jobs, because he couldn't stop singing. The Hour of Charm is really interesting to read about, as it had an all-girl orchestra. And the restrictions on them were remarkable - their contracts said they couldn't get married, weigh over 122 lbs. and if they wanted to date it had to be approved by a 5 woman committee. As a child who grew up with 30's and 40's cartoons, a lot of their dialogue makes more sense, as I read the book and the various catchphrases.

Though I'm a child of the TV age and was not alive when those classic radio comedy, drama and variety programs were the country's source of electronic entertainment, I enjoy hearing rebroadcasts of these programs on my daily commute via XM radio. A desire to learn more about these programs led me to this book, and it was just what I was looking for. Just about every series that aired on one of the four major radio networks, along with many syndicated programs and those on smaller regional networks, is listed with its first and final air dates, the times and days of the week it aired, its network and sponsor, and its primary actors. But what makes this book worth its

weight in gold is the descriptions provided by Mr. Dunning of each program. Some of these descriptions are only a sentence or two, but the more famous programs are looked at in length. The reader is treated to literally pages of history, background, and highlights of those series (The Jack Benny Program takes up over seven double-column pages!), and it's in these that the affection and warmth Mr. Dunning has for his subject shines through. I easily find myself just browsing through this book. If you love old-time radio or know somebody who is, get this book without delay!

We have borrowed this Encyclopedia of Old Time Radio numerous times through the years from our local library system and found that a reference book as great as this needs to be on our book shelf for immediate access compared to lengthy waits on availability of this volume using the public library. There is a wealth of information in this book that we were never aware of during the early years we listened to old time radio and it brings back fond memories of those wonderful old shows. Unfortunately our efforts of trying to recapture the golden radio days by subscribing to a service that supplies a small limited number of broadcasted shows each week, (that they constantly repeat all week long) does not reflect what it was like, back then. Old time radio is gone forever but this book helps us keep our memories! Thank You Carl & Larue Cleveland, Ohio

John Dunning's book is amazingly comprehensive, but so are many other such assemblages of old-time radio data. What sets this one above all of its competitors is the author's chatty, utterly readable writing style. Dip in anywhere, and you will be captured by concise factoids that add up to great storytelling. Buy this book! For an appreciation of and resource to OTR, it is all you will ever need. My only complaint would be that the Kindle version is a little difficult to navigate. That is not the publication's fault, of course, but the electronic medium. The book version is much more user friendly in that respect. Still, the e-portability is a definite plus.

I discovered this book while evaluating encyclopedic resources for my MLIS class; I could not put it down and bought it for my home library and as a gift for an avid radio enthusiast I knew would enjoy it!

The Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio is just that. For most of us today, it's hard to realize just how much good radio programming was available in the 1930s and 1940s, some of which has been preserved, and is available in places like archive.org because a small percentage of the old program records have survived. This book will give you information about what does still exist, and

alert you to many things you may never hear now, but still would like to know about. It places a great deal of information about the subject in one handy location.

Really interesting info on radio shows I listened to as a child. Interesting to find out that child voices were played by adults and black characters were played by whites. Amos and Andy, and the show Beula. Even more Beula was played by a white man actor! I just remember how disappointed when the radio shows just disappeared off the air. When I first saw the Lone Ranger on TV it did not hold up to radio.

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