

SPOTLIGHT ON HOPE SEARS • SUMMER SCIENCE FICTION • BEN ALEXANDER • VOICES OF BASEBALL



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A weathered wooden sign hangs from a gnarled branch by two metal chains. The sign is made of two horizontal planks. The top plank has the text "EVA LE GALLIENNE" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, followed by "WELCOMES YOU TO" in a smaller font. The bottom plank has the text "HORROR, INC." in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The background of the cover is a sepia-toned illustration of a graveyard at night. Several tombstones of various shapes and sizes are visible, some with crosses. A large, full moon hangs in the sky behind the sign. The overall atmosphere is dark and spooky.



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from the president

JELL-O EVERYBODY! It's hard to believe it's time for another update, and I'm happy to report some major developments at SPERDVAC.

From the moment we held our first board meeting, it was clear this new team was committed to revitalizing the organization. After a long period of stagnation, especially in preservation efforts, change is finally underway.

This September, several board members will head to our storage units to inventory and prioritize materials for digitization—a big step forward in restoring and safeguarding our archives.

SPERDVAC's primary mission—preservation and encouragement—is coming to life through several exciting initiatives. One of the most significant is the upcoming launch of our digital library. The first release will feature selections from our analog collection, with new archive recordings added monthly in lossless FLAC format from 192k/24bit masters.

Why FLAC? It preserves full audio quality while reducing file size, making it ideal for long-term preservation. While MP3 remains convenient and will continue to be supported, FLAC ensures our archives are future-proof and unaltered.

We've enlisted beta testers to help fine-tune the library's accessibility, with special thanks to John and Larry Gassman for ensuring the platform works well for both sighted and non-sighted users.

We're also unveiling a new website easier to navigate and loaded with content, including classic and new *Radiogram* articles. It will include accessibility features like embedded screen readers. Graphic designer James Scully has created a fresh-yet-classic logo, and, yes, Bobb Lynes' beloved artwork will continue to be showcased.

In parallel, we're rolling out new membership software. Membership chair Sean Dougherty and secretary Scott Mahan have been hard at work migrating data to the new system, which will launch with the website.

Board member Constance Campanella has led outreach and grant efforts including completing necessary legal filings in 43 states to expand SPERDVAC's nonprofit reach. She also made a \$5000 donation

to acquire specialized tech for preserving smaller-format media like LPs and 78s. More on that soon.

Additional thanks go to John White and Scott Mahan for their \$1000 donations each, helping us purchase restoration software and equipment.

These investments are setting the stage for even more member engagement including virtual conventions and luncheons planned for 2026. If you'd like to support our preserva-

tion work, donations are welcome via PayPal at spervac3@gmail.com or by check to: SPERDVAC, 2625 Middlefield Road #171, Palo Alto, CA 94306-2516.

Working on a variety of fronts to promote and support the preservation of our classic radio treasures is stretching the ability of our small corps of volunteers including our board of directors, and so to support this momentum the board has made a few important changes.

First, board terms have been extended from one year to two years to provide better continuity and allow for long-term planning—an approach common among nonprofits. Second, the board is expanding from seven to 11 members to bring in more leadership and distribute responsibilities more effectively.

Starting now, seven directors will be elected in odd-numbered years, and four directors will be elected in even-numbered years, with any vacancies filled by appointment.

If you're passionate about helping SPERDVAC grow, we encourage you to get involved. We welcome members ready to lead and contribute to our mission.

Thanks for being part of this exciting new chapter. Stay tuned, and I'll see you in the next issue of *Radiogram*. Reach me anytime at president.corey.harker@spervac.com. 📧

Corey Harker



Hope Sears

FOR SEVERAL DECADES the bulk of classic radio fans were people who lived through the golden age of radio. Now that time is approaching an end and when we wonder where the future of the hobby will come from we can look at people like this month's member spotlight, Hope Sears, a 31-year-old stand-up comedian who discovered Jack Benny—and classic radio—via her more modern comedy heroes, Bob Newhart and (left) Conan O'Brien. Hope is a prominent member of the International Jack Benny Fan Club, where she contributes to their virtual conventions with programs exploring what made Jack and his show so special. We talked to her about discovering classic radio, becoming a prominent part of the hobby and why Jack's comedy is just as relevant as ever.

Q. How did you discover Jack Benny?

I'm really into comedy and was exploring comedy history when I was around 15. Conan talks a lot about Jack Benny but I didn't hear that until much later. But I found other comics talking about Jack Benny a lot and I was into Johnny Carson watching a bunch of his shows.

Q. And of course, when you were 15, Carson had already been retired for many years.

Carson retired the year I was born. Conan took over *The Late Show* literally the day before I was born. But I just love comedy in general and once I found Jack, he just took over.

I watched a *Carson and Friends* DVD set—and that's how I found Jack, Burns and Allen, and Fred Allen. That's how I kind of really got started and then I joined the Facebook group for the fan club and started commenting on different topics.

Bob Newhart was also kind of responsible because I saw a book on a table, like at a hairdresser, and I started reading it and it mentioned Jack Benny, which made me more serious about finding out about him.

Q. Let's talk about the presentations you've done at the International Jack Benny Fan Club Virtual Conventions.

The first video I did is "Who is Jack Benny." It covered why Jack Benny is the father of modern comedy, arguing many others were inspired by him.

It discussed why Benny was so successful and how to be successful following his path. He didn't have to take all of the laugh lines or be the center of attention. If *The Jack Benny Show* was funny, that was all that mattered.

Robert, his grandchild, wrote a piece about that in *Fast Com-*

pany. And so that's kind of where that stemmed from.

After that, I looked at catch phrases and references.

Q. So you mentioned Jack, George Burns and Fred Allen as comedians you discovered - but Jack seems to be your main interest—was how Jack lived his life and who he was that informed that?

Yes. Being generous and helping people was a big part of his story. He may not have had the funniest lines but he definitely helped facilitate a lot of humor and helped grow a lot of young comedians like Johnny Carson. That influence was just crazy.

He gave money to people that were having a hard time and asked to keep it a secret. He was just very generous.

Jack Benny was just kind of omnipresent everywhere in America for a period of time. And so where does that really stem from? Because, like, it's not that I think Jack is the funniest comedian. I

am with Jack's way of thinking, in that George Burns can crack me up a lot, right?

Q. From all the history of comedy, one of the things that drew you to Jack was that he'd seemed to have lived such an exemplary life. In addition to being funny?

He was one of the few people who came out of that era that everyone seemed to like. Comedians' popularity can ebb and flow when their behind-the-scenes behavior comes clear.

Q. Tell me about your research process in terms of figuring out how to put the catchphrases and running gags video together. You obviously had to learn all this stuff for yourself.

I had about 13 years experience with watching and listening to Jack at that point, and so I kind of wrote down some basic ones. And then I asked the fan club for their favorites. The

The first video I did is "Who is Jack Benny." It covered why Jack Benny is the father of modern comedy, arguing many others were inspired by him.

running gags and the catchphrases. There were still many I had to leave out but it was enough to get you started.

But have you ever seen those Miss Mojo videos?

Q. No, what were they?

It's like a top 10 list video where they reveal the number one of the list at the end. I was inspired by that format.

Q. So much about that world was different then—tax day was in March, you had live telephone operators to place calls.

It's a weird thing that you see in old movies, and since I watched older movies when I was younger, I knew some of them. The "This day in Jack Benny" podcast explains a lot of things that you could miss because you weren't alive in the 30s, 40s and 50s.

Q. Your other presentation was on Mel Blanc, please tell us how that came together.

Mel was very prolific in his cartoon work and he wrote a biography. I started with that and a separate third-party biography. The internet also had many small documentaries about him that I used as research as well.

Q. How did you distill the information from these multiple sources?

The biographies did a very good job with how they presented. But I found many personal stories told about him after the fact that explained who he was as a person and that's what I focused on.

One story was about him going on vacation with Jack, who has a chicken wing under his dinner jacket, and he ruins it. He was saving the wings to eat later after going fishing (it was Andy Devine's chicken restaurant; back when he had that so they were taking them from a friend's restaurant).

So you're trying to pull out stories that explain the personality of the characters rather than just, here's a famous cartoon or a famous scene from the show. There was another interview Mel did with his wife present and that also gave more backstory.

Q. People like you are the future of the classic radio hobby. Where do you think more of you will come from?

I've interviewed a couple of people that you know were alive in that era or around that era and

just really loved it, and it's very interesting and really cool to see, but my dream is to interview Conan.

He has a lot of very eager young fans and I've learned from him—I hope his podcasts and videos would have a lot of people looking into classic radio, Jack Benny and all the other names who inspired him.

Q. What's next for you in terms of your presentations?

I would really like to do a presentation on modern comics talking about their influences through the years, which a lot of them do include Jack and other radio comedians—not away, but the influence is there.

Q. Let's talk a bit about your own career as a comedian and your influences.

I've tried to incorporate types of humor I've picked up from idols like Conan, Steve Martin and John Mulaney. One of the best pieces of advice I ever received was from [SPERDVAC's] Brad Zinn, who told me what George Burns told him that "the audience will let you know who you are."

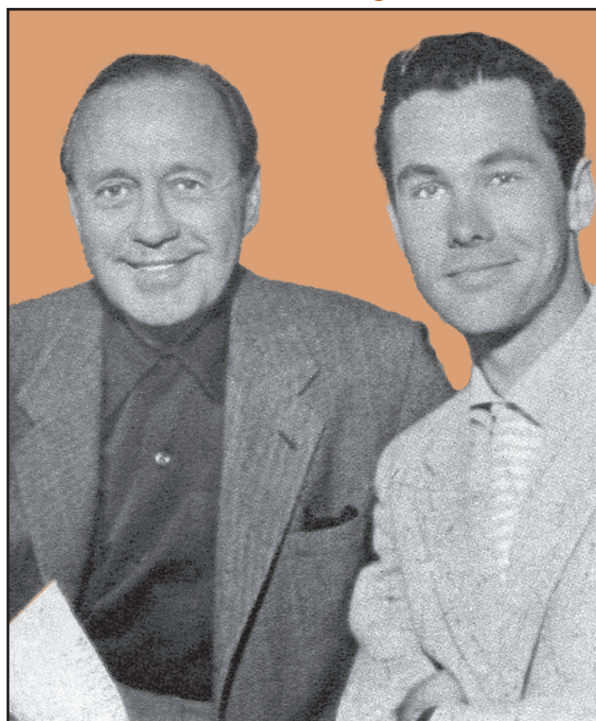
One of my favorite bits comes from life. My apartment was robbed and I walked in on the thief when coming back from a Jack Benny virtual convention. He was wearing my Conan O'Brien shirt, and so I talked about that and the weirdness of what he stole. I ended up meeting Conan backstage at an event because of an Instagram video I did on that. He signed my shirt and took a picture with me. That was really cool, and it was a SPERDVAC member, Dan Paster-nack, who had seen the video and got me backstage.

I helped Brad write an original script of a Jack Benny special for one of the re-creations, which was a lot of fun. I love to write original like old-time radio scripts for people, but there is not a huge market so that's more of a labor of love.

I have a bit about Dubuque, IA, where I live and vaudeville. We made headlines back then for throwing tomatoes and chairs at the worst act in vaudeville, the Cherry Sisters, which Fred Allen mentions.

Eventually, I want to get to a point where I'm telling a Carlin-esque joke or a Burn-esque joke—writing in the voices of different people and seeing how it fits me. 🍌

Who's Funny Now?



Jack Benny: "When I was asked to say a few words about a young comedian, I thought it would be a cute idea to discuss myself—but some people think a man 39 years old couldn't be considered a young comedian. Johnny Carson, a bright young comic, gets his laughs from ideas and situations, rather than rapid-fire jokes. This type of comedian, I feel, will outlive most of the others."

In its January 15, 1955 issue, *TV Guide* asked top comedians to name rising stars—Jack Benny singled out a "bright young comic" named Johnny Carson.

Out of This World

Radio's golden age brought science fiction to life through sound, blending hope and fear, from early pulp-inspired adventures to haunting, thoughtful tales that still resonate on starry summer nights.

THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT SUMMER that feels intrinsically suited to science fiction. Perhaps, as Ray Bradbury observed in his preface to a 1962 edition of *R is for Rocket*, the fascination stems from those formative nights of youth spent lying beneath the stars, gazing upward, and wondering what—if anything—might be looking back. That question has always haunted the imagination: Is there intelligence beyond our world, and if so, is it benevolent or malevolent? Our more idealistic impulses yearn for celestial beings—redeemers who might lift humanity from its moral and ecological decline. But our darker, more anxious selves imagine monstrous invaders: alien entities, whether grotesque or deceptively human, threatening to usurp our identities, our autonomy, even our souls.

Science fiction has always mirrored these opposing hopes and fears. On the one hand, we dream of benevolent alien saviors lifting humanity out of its self-inflicted ruin. On the other, we dread hostile invaders who threaten our bodies, minds, and very identities. Science fiction gave voice to both impulses—entertaining us while also probing the vast universe and our place in it.

Initially referred to as “scientific romances” to describe the works of Jules

Verne and H.G. Wells, the genre morphed into “scientifiction” in 1926 and finally “science fiction” by 1929, thanks to pulp pioneer Hugo Gernsback. The 1930s to the 1950s marked its golden age, fueled by pulp magazines and popular writers. During this same period, radio emerged as a mass medium, and while it never embraced science fiction as fully as the pulps did, it offered a surprising array of stories that fused wonder, fear, and imagination.

What follows is a broad and admittedly incomplete survey of radio's science fiction programming intended as a listening guide for those warm summer nights when the stars seem close enough to touch. This list draws on notes collected decades ago for a never-finished book on radio science fiction. While many of these programs are available online, listeners looking for restored, high-quality versions restored by our premier preservation team should consult SPERDVAC's updated website for availability.

Our journey begins in the 1930s with two series based on comic strips, *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* (1932-1947) and *Flash Gordon* (1935-1936), with the former considered the first radio science fiction program. These early series were aimed primarily at juvenile audiences but established radio's capacity to convey futuristic adventures.

Into the 1940s we find a mixed bag of science fiction and



horror. *The Strange Dr. Weir* (1944–1945), a short-form anthology and spin-off of *The Mysterious Traveler*, was mainly horror-focused but occasionally ventured into science fiction. In one episode, for example, “Journey into the Unknown” (Nov. 21, 1944), a scientist’s reckless experimentation with longevity leads to catastrophic results.

Dark Fantasy (1941–1942), though short-lived, brought eerie atmosphere and supernatural storytelling to NBC listeners. Some episodes touched on science fiction: “Men Call Me Mad” (December 9, 1941) features a scientist who shrinks himself to explore a subatomic world; “I Am Your Brother” (June 5, 1942) tells of a disembodied brain that gains superior intelligence. Additionally, “Debt from the Past” (January 16, 1942) and “Edge of the Shadow” (April 10, 1942) involve time travel.

Similarly, *Lights Out*, launched in 1934 by Wyllis Cooper and later helmed by Arch Oboler, was more famous for gruesome horror, but several episodes dabbled in science fiction. In “Chicken Heart” (March 10, 1937), a deadly accident of science allows a chicken heart to double in size each hour to grow into a monstrous pulsating mass to overtake the world; “Revolt of the Worms” (October 13, 1937) tells of a scientist who accidentally creates super-intelligent earthworms that turn on humanity; and “The Meteor Man” (June 16, 1937) tells of weird beings with strange and dangerous powers who emerge from a crashed meteor.

Finally, a notable work is Oboler’s treatise on unrestrained scientific ambition in “Oxychloride X” (January 26, 1938). This narrative follows a chemist who develops a powerful new compound—an acid so corrosive it can dissolve anything organic. Driven by ambition and disregard for warnings, he tests it only to have the chemical escape and destroy everyone in its path including himself. Oboler grounds his story in the inner psychology of the scientist. His descent into obsession, isolation, and doom is portrayed with psychological realism to the point that we identify with him even as he becomes ever the more monstrous, thereby superbly demonstrating Oboler’s belief in radio as the “theatre of the mind.”

Also of note is Oboler’s “Rocket to Manhattan,” featured on Oboler’s later series, *Arch Oboler’s Plays*. Aired September 20, 1945, just days after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, “Rocket to Manhattan” was written with a sense of urgency and mourning.

Three astronauts return to earth after a mission to Mars to confront the grim truth that while they were exploring space, Earth has suffered a devastating nuclear war, reducing much of civilization to ruin. The drama is less about space travel and more a philosophical and ethical warning, essentially reflecting Oboler’s reaction to the nuclear age.

Quiet, Please (1947–1949), created by Wyllis Cooper, is a horror anthology that sometimes delved into science fiction. The notable August 9, 1948, episode, “The Thing on the Fourble Board”—a platform used for handling drill pipe—features a petroleum engineer’s eerie encounter with an intelligent creature deep beneath an oil derrick. Known for its masterful use of sound, atmosphere, and Ernest Chappell’s narration, the episode builds slow tension that leads to a final revelation that is equal parts disturbing and tragic.

Other mainstream anthologies like *Suspense* (1942–1962) and *Escape* (1947–1954) occasionally featured science fiction tales. The experimental *CBS Radio Workshop* (1956–1957) adapted literary works including works by Ray Bradbury.

This brings us into the 1950s, a decade often referred to as the modern flying saucer era—so named because of the surge in UFO sightings that inspired more alien invasion films than all previous decades combined. Even if not defined solely by flying saucers, the 1950s can still be considered a golden age of science fiction, marked by an explosion of pulps, comic books, movies, and television series such as *Captain Video*, *Rocky Jones*, *Space Patrol*, and *Tom Corbett*—the latter two also appearing on radio. While shows like *Space Patrol* and *Tom Corbett* catered largely to juvenile audiences, radio nonetheless distinguished itself by dramatizing science fiction with often superior results thanks in large part to its frequent adaptation of serious literary works. Notable among these programs were *2000 Plus*, *Dimension X* (1950–1951) and its later revival *X Minus One* (1955–1958), as well as *Exploring Tomorrow* (1957–1958), hosted by *Astounding Science Fiction* editor John W. Campbell and known for its emphasis on thoughtful speculative themes.

The most prominent new wave science fiction radio series were *Dimension X* (1950–1951) and its successor, *X Minus One* (1955–1958), both inspired by public interest in rockets, atomic power, and space exploration, and each relying less on original material than on adaptations of stories by major science

fiction authors including Robert A. Heinlein, Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

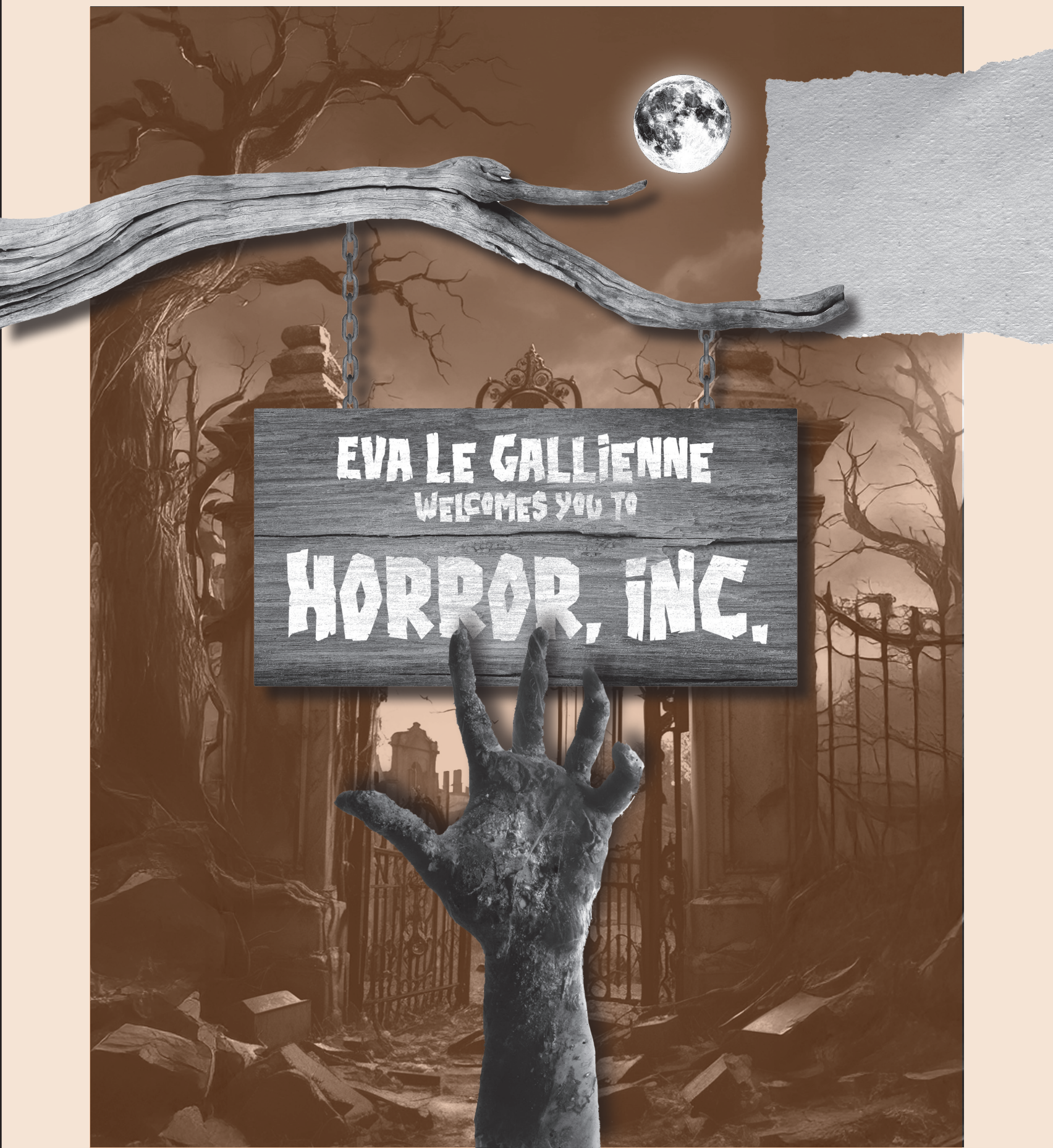
Ray Bradbury’s stories, in particular, were plentiful because his stories translate exceptionally well to radio adaptation. Ernest Kinoy, the principal writer for both programs, often retained much of Bradbury’s poetic prose in his adaptations, enhancing their emotional and dramatic impact. Among the standout episodes are an abridged version of Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles* (aired on *Dimension X* on August 8, 1950), and an adaptation of his short story “Mars Is Heaven!” (*Dimension X*, July 7, 1950; *X Minus One*, May 8, 1955). In this ubiquitous tale, a group of American astronauts lands on Mars only to find what appears to be a quaint mid-western town from the 1920s complete with white picket fences, old-fashioned homes, and their long-deceased relatives seemingly alive and waiting to greet them.

Other memorable adaptations include “The Veldt” (*Dimension X*, August 9, 1951; *X Minus One*, August 4, 1955), which centers on a high-tech nursery that eerily replicates an African veldt, complete with virtual lions that seem all too real. Another is a combo adaptation of “There Will Come Soft Rains/Zero Hour” (*Dimension X*, June 17, 1950; *X Minus One*, November 23, 1955). In the first, a fully automated house continues its daily routines after its human occupants have been obliterated by nuclear war. In the second, a seemingly harmless children’s game turns out to be part of an alien invasion strategy.

WHILE RADIO never embraced science fiction as thoroughly as pulp magazines, movies or television did, radio brought a unique intimacy to the science fiction genre. The power of the medium—the way a disembodied voice can conjure galaxies, monsters, or moral dilemmas—seems as fanciful as the stories themselves. And thanks to SPERDVAC and other online archives, and superior preservation efforts from SPERDVAC, these old broadcasts remain accessible to new generations.

So this summer, take your earbuds outside, lie back under the stars, and let the golden age of radio science fiction transport you. You might not get answers to the mysteries of the universe but you’ll find plenty to wonder about. 🎧

— Patrick Lucanio
Editor



O, the Horror, the Horror, the Horror!

by
Gary Coville

Eva Le Gallienne's *Horror, Inc.* was a short-lived 1943 radio series blending classic horror tales with her dramatic voicework, earning praise yet ending abruptly amid scheduling conflicts.

EVA LE GALLIENNE'S exploration of radio as a medium for emotional storytelling reached a crescendo when she took on one of her boldest ventures: a series centered entirely around the raw, visceral emotion of fear. This project would challenge her ability to captivate audiences through the sound waves, stripping away the visual elements of her stage performances and relying solely on voice and narrative. It was this daring step into the realm of psychological horror that brought her to the NBC-Blue Network's intriguing new series, *Horror, Inc.*

By early 1943, Eva Gallienne was indisputably one of Broadway's elite performers. At the time, she was appearing at the Hudson Theatre in *Uncle Harry* by Thomas Job alongside her co-star Joseph Schildkraut. Because of her popularity NBC came calling and Eva was enticed into appearing in a proposed series for the Blue Network called *Horror, Inc.* It would be a minimalist production with recognizable horror-themed plays. To sweeten the deal, the production was to be a collaboration between Mort Lewis, a script writer for the Blue Network who had conceived the series, and Le Gallienne herself. Additionally, the scheduling of an early timeslot to avoid conflicts with Le Gallienne's stage performances apparently sealed the deal.

With the exception of LeGallienne's *Civic Repertory Plays*,

which ran for a few months starting in the fall of 1929, Eva's radio appearances had mostly been one-offs so her decision to undertake another series in light of her busy stage career seemed out of character for the resolute actress. Or it might

have been the challenge of the task itself: selling horror. But Arch Oboler was doing just that with *Lights Out*; moreover, *Inner Sanctum* and *The Hermit's Cave* were also affirming that horror had a considerable market. The money too might have held some appeal. There is no record of how much Le Gallienne earned for each episode of *Horror, Inc.* but one of Le Gallienne's biographers, Helen Sheehy, does provide a glimpse of Eva's earning capacity for radio appearances during this general timeframe. According to Sheehy, Le Gallienne was earning \$1000 for eight to ten minutes of radio work, the equivalent of approximately \$18,500 today. Apparently, whenever cash flow became a concern, radio performances provided a



ready solution.

With La Gallienne cast in the leading role, writer Lewis, known for his creation and writing of the popular *Behind the Mike* series for the Blue Network, assumed leadership for *Horror, Inc.* Rosa Rio was designated to provide the emotive organ music. However, the identities of the remaining creative team members, including those responsible for sound effects and

In our March/April edition the Mysterious Traveler spotlighted the radio work of stage actress Eva Le Gallienne, an accomplished performer who found radio both fascinating and challenging for its unique ability to express a wide range of emotions. Conspicuously absent from the column was any mention of Le Gallienne's own series, *Horror, Inc.*—not due to oversight, but due to space limitations and the anticipation of a follow-up piece. At the time, it was not yet known that an article on *Horror, Inc.* was already in the works for *Radiogram*. As a result, the Traveler graciously deferred commentary on the series to frequent *Radiogram* contributor Gary Coville.



Stage actress Eva Le Gallienne launched a new weekly radio series January 17, 1943, on the Blue Network titled *Horror, Inc.*. The program featured 15-minute dramatizations of classic tales of terror, beginning with Wilkie Collins's "The Terribly Strange Bed"—a macabre story about a cunning killer who used a murderous mechanical bed to dispatch and rob his victims.

other engineering aspects, have remained anonymous over the years.

Horror, Inc. was slated to premiere on Sunday, January 17, 1943, at 5:15 pm Eastern War Time over the NBC Blue Network on a sustaining basis. Initially, it was limited to the East Coast. In the week leading up to airtime, Eastern newspapers obligingly printed the modest press release issued by the network announcing the upcoming series: "Eva Le Gallienne of the stage is to start a regular microphone series for the Blue on Sunday afternoon. The dramatic presentation *Horror, Inc.*, will consist of 15-minute adaptations of classic authors, starting with 'The Terribly Strange Bed.'"

Right on schedule, *Horror, Inc.*, debuted with the tale, which was an adaptation of the Wilkie Collins short story, "The Terribly Strange Bed," which is about a murder-minded fiend who plots to kill and rob his victim with the aid of a specially rigged bed. The contraption is designed to crush to death

anyone luckless enough to lay beneath its covers.

This first broadcast would establish the format for the presentations to follow. Le Gallienne would translate each scripted monologue into a series of emotions keyed to the intentions of the narrative. Eva was typically the only member of the weekly cast. Not only were the adaptations built around her, but as noted, she had an active hand in preparing the scripts. This arrangement clearly implied the actress would also have veto power over anything with which she disagreed.

Variety (January 20, 1943) was rather skeptical of the series, opining that

perhaps the only justification for *Horror, Inc.* was the fact that Le Gallienne was then starring in a popular play on Broadway. The reviewer granted that Le Gallienne's "brand of diction flows pleasantly on the ear" and later conceded that she had a "fine command of speech nuances and keen sense of narrative tempo." However, the publication found the



production failed to convince, lamenting that, "The primary intent was to convey menace and impending doom, but these qualities just didn't seem to radiate from the loudspeaker."

Variety aside, the overall judgment that followed was that *Horror, Inc.* had brilliantly succeeded at its assignment. *Radio Daily* (January 21, 1943) told readers that *Horror, Inc.* rated a sponsor and pronto. "The only voice for the entire show," the writer noted, "was that of Miss Le Gallienne yet she did such a topnotch job that it held the interest of any discriminating horror-mystery fan."

Horror, Inc. followed up with stories by Villiers de L'Isle-Adam and Bulwer Lytton during weeks two and three. The fourth week would prove interesting, however. On February 7, Poe's classic "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" had been planned for broadcast. The macabre tale blended mesmerism with, as Poe would agree, the grotesque in a story of a mesmerist who attempts to suspend death at the moment of death through a hypnotic trance. But when the narrator ends the trance, Valdemar's body instantly decays into a liquefied, putrid mass, confirming that he had, in fact, been dead the entire time.

Advance press notices were dispatched highlighting the terrifying narrative au-



Eva Le Gallienne's acclaimed performance alongside Joseph Schildkraut in Thomas Job's *Uncle Harry* at the Hudson Theatre caught the attention of NBC.

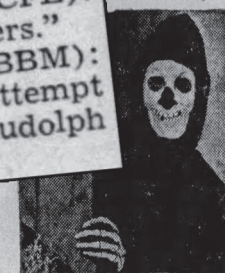
6:15 p. m. . . "THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH" by Eva Le Gallienne

The famous actress "gives out" with another of Edgar Allen Poe's most chilling tales as this evening's bed-time story from "HORROR, INCORPORATED," a BLUE NETWORK feature.

Drama

6:15 p. m.—*Horror, Inc.* (WCFL): "The Beast with Five Fingers."
7 p. m.—*Lights Out* (WBBM): "They Met at Dorset," the attempt of two Nazis to rescue Rudolph Hess.

**HORROR
ON THE SCREWAVES!**



INNER SANCTUM at 8:30 p. m.

Raymond opens the squeaking door upon a series of unusually dramatic stories, heralded by a ghostly voice, and expertly acted by a cast who know their way around haunted houses. Try INNER SANCTUM for a fresh slant on mystery stories!

WORKING FOR HORROR



Eva LaGallienne begins a series of four programs for Horror, Inc., on Sunday when she presents Willie Collin's story, *A Terribly Strange Bed*, at 5.15 p.m. over CFCF, Blue network.

A partial page from a fan's "scrapbook of 'scarewaves'" features newspaper clippings for *Horror, Incorporated*, *Lights Out* and *Inner Sanctum*.

thored by Poe. However, Le Gallienne ultimately vetoed the play at the last moment, explaining that the story was "too, too horrible" for broadcast. Clearly, Eva was prepared to exercise her veto power whenever necessary, and it should be emphasized that it was a different era.

Substituted was "The Valley of the Dead" by Ralph Adams Cram, an 1895 gothic tale about a traveler who enters a forbidden valley, witnesses ghostly reenactments of ancient tragedies, and then flees forever changed by what the story says was the traveler's glimpse into a world beyond the living. This story would be more to Eva's liking if adapted accurately since literary scholars have described Cram's style as more suggestive than explicit in the tradition of M.R. James.

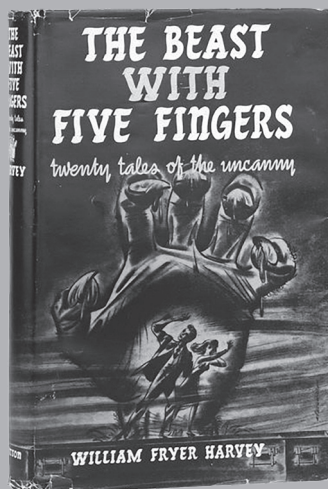
Two days later, *Horror, Inc.* expanded to the full NBC-Blue Network, now airing on Tuesdays at 7:15 pm and still running on a sustaining basis. Nonetheless, the general assumption seemed to be that the series was a good bet to attract a commercial sponsor. In that initial nationwide episode, Le Gallienne and Lewis selected a story by Ambrose Bierce called "The Man and the Snake," about a man who encounters a snake in his room, dies of fright only for others to discover that it

was a harmless toy. *Billboard* (February 20 1943) found Eva's performance faultless, as she and Lewis pursued "their gory task" of presenting the most horrific tales from literature.

Horror, Inc. and Eva were now being sized against some of the most notable entries in the horror and mystery genre including *Lights Out*, *The Hermit's Cave* and *Inner Sanctum*. The nascent series was seemingly holding its own in the

opinion of critics and listeners.

Lewis and Le Gallienne decided to give Poe one more chance with a presentation of "The Black Cat" on February 16, the story of a madman who abuses his wife and cat. This Poe story did air, but Eva found its execution challenging and remarked that after "The Black Cat" she could now endure anything. She reportedly prepared for each broadcast by pacing and smoking while studying the script



W. F. Harvey's chilling tale of a severed crawling hand was first heard on *Horror, Inc.*, and later adapted into a film starring Peter Lorre, who found himself on the wrong end of a most unsettling handshake.

and after expending such intense energy reportedly needed a few minutes to rest and recover after each performance.

The subsequent week featured the tale “The Beast with Five Fingers” by British writer W. F. Harvey, which is the



famed story of a severed hand possessed with evil intentions. It is the same story that was adapted by celebrated horror writer Curt Siodmak for a Warner Brothers film in 1946 with the same title. The film was directed by Robert Florey and starred Robert Alda, Andrea King and Peter Lorre, and would later be credited with helping to reinvigorate interest in

Harvey's work. It is worth pointing out, however, that radio played an earlier and pivotal role in Harvey's reemergence. First came the adaptation for *Horror, Inc.* of “The Beast with Five Fingers” and then the 1945 appearance of another Harvey short story, “August Heat,” for *Suspense* with Ronald Colman.

On March 2 it was another Poe story, “The Masque of the Red Death,” the celebrated story of Prince Prospero's masquerade inside his fortified abbey to escape a deadly plague only to have Death itself infiltrate and bring doom to all inside.

Eva must have been feeling more comfortable with Poe because the following week yet another Poe story, “The Tell-Tale Heart,” that illustrious story of the “beating of his hideous heart,” was scheduled for broadcast. But once again there was a last-minute change. Eva fell victim to the flu and her *Uncle Harry* co-star, Joseph Schildkraut, was persuaded to fill in at the last moment. According to the *New York Daily News* (March 10) Eva's replacement “turned in a hair-raising job.”

The next week signaled the abrupt end to *Horror, Inc.* Eva had recovered somewhat from her illness and was back at the microphone with Guy de Maupassant's “The Necklace,” which was clearly not a horror story but one with a twist and cruel ending. As such it was a curious choice to end a series devoted

Also appearing in ‘Horror, Inc.’ . . .



Joseph Schildkraut. When Eva came down with the flu, her *Uncle Harry* co-star Joseph Schildkraut was persuaded to step in at the last minute as the tormented narrator in an adaptation of Poe's “The Tell-Tale Heart.” According to the *New York Daily News* (March 10), Schildkraut “turned in a hair-raising job.”



Ara Gerald and Arnold Moss. The March 16 broadcast, Guy de Maupassant's “The Necklace,” a non-horror tale but with a twist ending, was also notable for being the only entry in the series to utilize supporting players, in this case Ara Gerald and Arnold Moss.

Horror, Inc. • Broadcast Log

Horror, Inc.—or *Horror Incorporated*, depending on the preferences of newspaper copy editors—was a short-lived radio series that has largely vanished from the historical record. No known recordings have survived, and no scripts have come to light. Most of what we know about the show comes from newspaper listings and brief press releases. Below is a reconstructed broadcast log of the 10 episodes drawn from those sources. Without audio, it's impossible to say whether the program was introduced on air as *Horror Incorporated* or abbreviated as *Horror Inc.*—pronounced “Ink,” as is more common today.

The Terribly Strange Bed • January 17, 1943

A new program, “Horror, Inc.” featuring 15-minute adaptations of the works of classic authors will be inaugurated tonight by Eva Le Gallienne, star of the British and American stage. The initial vehicle will be Wilkie Collins’ famous short story “The Terribly Strange Bed.” The weird tale will be narrated. (WJZ 5:15). — *Asbury Park Press* (Asbury Park, NJ) January 17, 1943.

The Torture of Hope • January 24, 1943

Her initial broadcast acclaimed by listeners and critics alike, Eva Le Gallienne brings to the microphone one of the world’s most famous horror classics, Villers de L’Isle-Adam “The Torture of Hope,” for the second installment of *Horror, Inc.*, this afternoon at 5:15 p.m. over the Blue Network, (WHL). — *Johnson City Press* (Johnson, City TN) January 24, 1943.

The Haunted and the Haunters • January 31, 1943

Bulwer Lytton’s “The Haunted and the Haunters” will be presented by Eva Le Gallienne for the third installment of *Horror, Inc.* heard over the Blue network at 5:15. — *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH) January 31, 1943.

The Valley of the Dead • February 7, 1943

“The Valley of the Dead” with Eva La Gallienne. Adapted from the 1895 story by Ralph Adams Cram about a traveler who enters a restricted valley and observes reenactments of historical events. — *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA) February 7, 1943.

The Man and the Snake • February 9, 1943

A new chiller series, which has been running on Sundays on the Blue network, will be heard on the same chain on Tuesday nights, including WSPR at 7:15 p.m. Title of the program is “Horror, Inc.” and its star, the well-known stage actress, Eva Le Gallienne. The play tonight is entitled “The Man and the Snake” and was written by Ambrose J. Bierce. — *The Springfield Daily Republican* (Springfield, MA) February 9, 1943.

The Black Cat • February 16, 1943

Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Black Cat” will be presented by Eva Le Gallienne on *Horror, Inc.*, Tuesday at 6:15 p.m. on the WJZ channels. The story concerns a man who murders his wife and then walls her body up in a deserted wing of their home to hide the evidence. However, the couple’s pet cat is walled up, too. — *The Grand Rapids Press* (Grand Rapids, MI) February 16, 1943.

The Beast with Five Fingers • February 23, 1943

Eva Le Gallienne, the Broadway luminary who’s been doing such a superb job on that shudder series, *Horror, Inc.*, is narrator and cast again at 4:15 today, KECA on the macabre masterpiece of W. F. Harvey, “The Beast with Five Fingers.” All about a man who dies leaving a great big hand alive to give people conniptions. — *Daily News* (Los Angeles, CA) February 23, 1943.

The Masque of the Red Death • March 2, 1943

Edgar Allan Poe is becoming a steady choice for “Horror, Inc.” as once again as Eva Le Gallienne will manage one of his early thrillers entitled, “The Masque of the Red Death,” the tale of a masquerade party and an uninvited guest. (WSPR, 7:15 p.m.). — *The Republican* (Springfield, MA) March 2, 1943.

The Tell-Tale Heart • March 9, 1943

Eva Le Gallienne joined radio’s swelling list of gripe casualties last night. Forced to withdraw from her “Horror, Inc.” session (WJZ—7:15), she was replaced by Joseph Schildkraut, who turned in a hair-raising job with Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart.” — *Daily News* (New York, NY) Mar. 10, 1943.

The Necklace • March 16, 1943

“The Necklace,” Guy de Maupassant’s world-famous short story will be offered by Eva Le Gallienne as her “Horror, Inc.” vehicle tonight. Assisted by Arnold Moss and Ara Gerald, the popular stage star will present a condensed version of the literary classic. The broadcast marks the last of the “Horror, Inc.” series (WJZ 7:15). — *Asbury Park Press* (Asbury Park, NJ) March 16, 1943.

solely to the horror genre. The March 16 broadcast was also notable for being the only entry in the series to utilize supporting players, in this case Arnold Moss and Ara Gerald. This final presentation was certainly lighter in presentation than the previous chill-laden episodes. More than one radio editor couldn’t help but point out the series’ off-theme final bow, all of which suggests that Eva’s recovery was incomplete, that she required a less emotionally charged script and one that relieved her of the burden of carrying the play on her shoulders alone.

THE RATIONALE for abandoning *Horror, Inc.* was never made clear although it seems probable that Eva made the decision. The Blue Network had only recently elevated *Horror, Inc.* to full network status. The possibility of attracting a commercial sponsor seemed real. Reviews were generally full of praise. Production costs were minimal aside from the star’s weekly salary. But appraising the situation, perhaps Eva was reluctant to tie herself down to a radio series with too much potential and demands on her time. Theatre always was and always would be the center of Eva Le Gallienne’s professional universe. Radio was interesting, and convenient to visit at times, but not a destination.

Uncle Harry closed on Broadway on May 9, 1943, after a year-long run and then went on the road, a pending event that would have likely played into Eva’s decision. The logistics of starring in a weekly radio series while performing on the road made the thought prohibitive.

A valediction of sorts for the series was offered by Don Broidy as part of a tribute to radio spook shows in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* (May 6, 1943). He found it unfortunate that Eva had discontinued the series.

“Here was a juicy little 15-minute show that ranked with any of the best ‘scare’ shows on the air,” Broidy wrote. “Miss Le Gallienne simply told her rather classic horror stories and let the soundman do the rest.”

Lamentably, no recordings of the short-lived *Horror, Inc.* are known to exist, nor have any scripts surfaced. The absence of such artifacts only seems to add to the mystique of *Horror, Inc.* 🍷



The Many Lives of Ben Alexander

CHARACTER ACTORS often fail to receive the recognition they deserve and when recognition comes it frequently hinges on a single role. Ben Alexander, who played Frank Smith opposite Jack Webb's Joe Friday on radio and television, has suffered much the same fate. For Alexander, however, *Dragnet* was just one stopover albeit an important one in a remarkable career that commingled acting and business.

Ben was five-years-old when he made his acting debut as cupid in the 1916 silent film, *Each Pearl a Tear*. Attached to an overhead wire he flew across the camera to make his entrance into the profession. That appearance launched a lengthy run as an actor in Hollywood. His roles were initially minor ones in a succession of movie shorts and full-length features, but his credits kept mounting. His given name, Nicholas Benton Alexander III, was pared down to the more manageable and less pretentious, Ben Alexander.

Between 1916 and 1941, Ben appeared in more than 80 films. By 1930, he had matured out of typical juvenile roles when he appeared in Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* as Franz Kemmerick, a young man who dies an agonizing death after having his leg blown away. It was a notable role, but it was almost a year before Ben was offered another film part.

Alexander always remained mindful of advice his parents had imparted, which he elaborated in a 1933 interview. "My mother and father, both of whom have always been in separate businesses, taught me that movies are just another business," he said, "and that I happened to be making money in them." Indeed, Ben reported, whenever his parents witnessed him displaying signs of self-importance he would be punished.

According to a 1933 article, Ben allocated a significant portion of each paycheck for investment purposes. By the age of 22, he had acquired a gas station and a dry-cleaning business as well as a substantial stake in a drug store.

Alexander enrolled at Stanford University in 1930 but left in 1933 before completing his degree. Hollywood still offered acting opportunities, and the growing medium of radio presented new possibilities. Thanks to his solid connections in the film industry, Alexander was welcomed into broadcasting where his early appearances drew heavily on his insider knowledge of Hollywood and its personalities.

His first radio series, *The Hollywood Boulevardier*, debuted in January 1935, originating regionally from NBC's Los Angeles affiliate, KFI. Each week, for 15 minutes, Alexander shared movie industry

gossip and conducted interviews with film figures. The *Los Angeles Times* (March 10, 1935) was unimpressed, criticizing him for "trying to out-Winchell Walter and missing by more than six miles." Despite this, the show gradually gained traction with both listeners and NBC executives.

Alexander's interviews—with stars such as Andy Devine, Paul Kelly, Cesar Romero, Boris Karloff, Monte Blue, and Mischa Auer—helped establish his credibility and popularity. This led to a national opportunity: the W.K. Kellogg Company agreed to sponsor a new show, *Hollywood Talent Parade*, a 30-minute Thursday night series built around Alexander's blend of gossip and interviews. The program aired from March 26 to September 24, 1936.

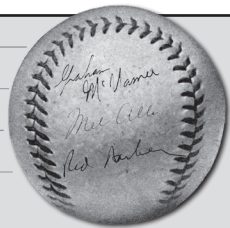
In January 1937, Alexander launched a third series, titled simply *Ben Alexander* (NBC publicity photo left). This show focused on male celebrities and their sporting interests. He followed this with *Little Ol' Hollywood*, which premiered on November 21, 1939, on NBC-Blue. Maintaining his signature format of celebrity gossip, interviews, music, and comedy sketches, the show continued until February 7, 1942.

Interspersed during and between his various Hollywood oriented programs, Alexander could be heard elsewhere over the air in several capacities—as emcee, host, announcer, actor and commercial spokesman. In his multitudinous roles he served as emcee for the *Signal Carnival* and host of *Heart's Desire*. He was announcer on *The Martin and Lewis Show* among others. There were one-offs on a wide range of programs including *Dark Venture*, *Lux Radio Theatre*, *Hollywood Star Time* and *Favorite Story*. He acted in the recurring role of Marjorie's boyfriend, Ben, on *The Great Gildersleeve*, a role that was temporarily interrupted by wartime service in the Navy. He resumed the part after discharge.

By 1952, Ben Alexander had all but stepped away from film and radio. Thanks to smart investments, he had grown impressively wealthy, with a portfolio that included mortuaries (he was a licensed embalmer), Ford dealerships, motels, and even a brewery. But just when it seemed he'd traded the spotlight for the boardroom, he returned in September of that year for a seven-year run as Officer (later Sergeant) Frank Smith on both the radio and television versions of *Dragnet*. Maybe the role struck too personal a chord to resist. After his death in July 1969, *The Los Angeles Times* quoted him as saying, "I feel like Frank Smith. We're both a little fat, take things easy and enjoy life."

It was the perfect parting line from a man who had learned how to play the long game—on screen, on the air, and in life.🐾





SEEING WITH OUR EARS

The Radio Voices that United a Nation

by Alan Irving

IT'S SUMMERTIME—sizzling heat, icy cold drinks, hot dogs and “play ball!”

Long before television cameras zoomed in on a batter’s squint or streaming apps served up ninth-inning drama on demand, there was only that glowing dial and crackling voice painting the action from faraway ballparks straight into America’s hearts.

Between the 1920s and the 1950s, as America tuned in from front porches, factory floors, and farmhouse kitchens, baseball evolved from a largely regional game into a unifying national passion. Much of that transformation can be credited to the rise of radio and the unforgettable voices that carried the game into American homes.

Radio broadcasting brought baseball to life in a way that print never could. Early pioneers like Graham McNamee, a sports novice with a gift for colorful narration, helped introduce millions to the drama of the diamond. “I just describe what I see and let the fans paint their own pictures,” McNamee once said. His voice—urgent, wide-eyed, theatrical—turned games into epics. For listeners who had never seen a big-league field, McNamee—and his successors—built entire ballparks in the mind’s eye.

By the 1930s and 1940s, baseball on the radio had become a fixture of daily life. Announcers like Red Barber and Mel Allen didn’t just report the game they became the game’s trusted narrators, guiding listeners pitch by pitch with insight, wit, and a gift for building suspense. Barber, with his calm Southern cadence and folksy expressions (“sittin’ in the catbird seat”), made even rain delays feel like worthwhile storytelling. “It wasn’t just about what was happening,” Barber said, “it was about how to make it matter to the man sitting at his kitchen table.”

Mel Allen, known for his exuberant “How about that!”, infused Yankee games with energy and authority. “You had to imagine that

every listener was sitting right beside you,” Allen recalled in a 1970 interview. “It was a game of voices, not pictures.”

What made these broadcasts so essential wasn’t just the information—they often worked with limited stats and scratchy phone lines—but the intimacy. Radio was personal. Unlike the future flash of television, radio required imagination. Listeners didn’t just hear the game they envisioned it. A boy in Nebraska could feel like he was sitting behind third base at Ebbets Field. A factory worker in Ohio could be transported to Fenway Park during his lunch break. As author Curt Smith put it in *Voices of the*



From the 1920s to the 1950s, radio transformed baseball into a national passion through vivid storytelling, unforgettable announcers, and the magic of imagination.

Game: The First Full-Scale Overview of Baseball Broadcasting, 1921 to the Present (1987), “Baseball on the radio wasn’t a broadcast—it was a companion.”

The reach was staggering. By the late 1930s, over 70 percent of baseball fans were following games primarily through radio. Teams that once feared radio would hurt attendance soon realized the opposite was true. As Red Barber noted, “The more people heard the game, the more they wanted to be part of it.”

This golden age of baseball broadcasting also coincided with moments of national crisis and unity. During the Great Depression and World War II, the familiar rhythms of a baseball broadcast offered comfort and continuity. Whether describing Joltin’ Joe DiMaggio’s hitting streak or Jackie Robinson’s first at-bat, these announcers didn’t just chronicle history they became a part of it.

By the time television began to take over in the 1950s, the legacy of radio was firmly etched into baseball’s identity. The cadence, the drama, the storytelling—it all began with the voices of the game. They taught a nation how to see with their ears and, in doing so, helped make baseball not just a sport, but surely America’s pastime. 🎧

In Memoriam Jim Cox

The world of old-time radio lost one of its most devoted champions this past July 4th with the passing at age 85 of James H. Cox—Jim, to all of us, a beloved husband, father, grandfather, teacher, and writer. For those of us at *Radiogram*, the loss is deeply personal. Jim wasn’t just a frequent contributor; he was a treasured friend and a guiding voice whose presence helped shape the very soul of our publication.



My journey with Jim began 26 years ago, shortly after I stepped into the role of editor. Out of the blue, I received a warm note of congratulations and a pitch for an article on vintage soap operas. *Say no more*, I thought—I was hooked. The piece, a nearly flawless meditation on four classic daytime dramas became the cover story of our March 1999 issue. Titled “Love in the Afternoon: Lorenzo Jones, When a Girl Marries, Front Page Farrell, Portia Faces Life,” it launched not only my editorial tenure but a two-and-a-half-decade correspondence and friendship that I will forever cherish.

In those early days of *Radiogram*, when we were printing in colors beyond magenta and cyan and mailing out 1500 copies each month, Jim’s writing stood out for its clarity, insight, and affection for his subject matter. Editing his work was the editorial equivalent of pressing the snooze button on a Monday morning—effortless and oddly comforting. But more than that, Jim quickly became a sounding board, a source of encouragement, and a quiet pillar of strength. As a seasoned journalist and a fellow editor he knew the terrain, and he never hesitated to offer thoughtful advice or, especially, a kind word during turbulent deadlines.

According to his obituary, Jim’s life was as rich and meaningful as the stories he told. Born on October 22, 1939, and raised in Florida, he graduated from Plant City High School and later earned a degree from George Peabody College (Vanderbilt), followed by two master’s degrees from Webster University. He dedicated many years to teaching marketing at Spalding University, Indiana Wesleyan University, and McKendree University—always with a passion for nurturing young minds.

But writing was his truest calling. Over the span of more than seven decades, Jim contributed articles, penned books, and shared countless memories drawn from his life and travels. He loved trains, storytelling, and tracing the arc of broadcasting history with reverence and wit.

Through it all, Jim remained grounded in what mattered most: faith, family, and friendship. His family was his pride and joy.

To those of us fortunate enough to work with Jim, his passing is more than the loss of a writer, it’s the loss of a rare spirit, a man whose kindness was as constant as his curiosity. His legacy—on the page and in our hearts—will continue to echo, like a well-loved radio drama fading into the twilight, never truly gone. Jim was a true gentleman and scholar.

Rest easy, Jim. You gave voice to the past and in doing so left an indelible mark on our present. 🎧

—pjl



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