

LISTENING on the Short Waves 1945 to Today  
BROADCASTING on the Short Waves 1945 to Today  
By Jerry Berg (McFarland, 2009 – [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com), 800-253-2187)

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Summer, for a radio guy, is the best time for antenna maintenance and enjoyable reading. For anyone contemplating antenna maintenance, Jerry Berg's new books are going to be enjoyable reading indeed. Jerry has now written the definite histories of short-wave radio. The great telecommunications revolution began with "What hath God Wrought?" in 1844 leading to "The Victorian Internet" as well as the modern Internet and World Wide Web. Telephones in the 1880s added tone of voice and individual connections. Wireless telegraphy freed communications of dependence on cables. Radio carrying sound and music exploded on the world scene in the 1920s, uniting local, regional and national areas by way of shared music from opera to folksingers, jokes, entertainment programs and news.

The development of short wave radio in the late 1920s, with its long distance ranges, opened the whole world to the music, news, entertainment and propaganda of an increasingly hostile international order, soon to degenerate into war. During that Second World War, radio also played a part. Jerry Berg documented these developments fifteen years ago in his first short wave history: *On The Short Waves 1923 -- 1945*. The domestic radio manias of the 1920s translated to the international short wave scene, with enthusiasts, a popular literature, distance-dedicated DXers, program listeners, colorful QSL-cards to verify hearing the distant signals, and radio stations designed to persuade as well as entertain.

After Jerry's history, the pressing questions for historians as well as enthusiasts was: will Jerry write again to cover post-war, cold-war and modern day short-wave radio? Well, he has, and it's a great work. It is as complete a survey of short-wave radio as can be imagined. In two volumes we now have: *LISTENING on the Short Waves 1945 to Today*, and *BROADCASTING on the Short Waves 1945 to Today*. (Jerry is in some sense an archivist as well as a historian, especially given his role in the leading listeners' newsletter *Numero Uno* since about 1970 and his founding of the QSL-card archive Committee to Preserve Radio Verifications (CPRV)).

*LISTENING* recreates the romance of hearing DX on radios that glowed in the dark (before transistors and chips); it reminds one of the pleasures of the radio magazines reporting new stations and receptions that might be achieved, and new radios to lust after. Jerry's analysis of the short wave audience is adept. Jerry has been active listener since 1958 and his record of the clubs and their roles is definitive. His chapter on the literature of short wave listening provokes nostalgia strong enough to drive one to eBay to buy some old magazines. The *LISTENING* book alone is a major contribution to the history and sociology of modern technology.

The companion BROADCASTING book is even better. Here one finds the stations of yesteryear, so often heard only in the dark of cold winter nights. From the BBC's empire, to radio ZQI - Jamaica, Jerry lays out just about all that can be known of these stations. His approach is year by year, so the arc of short wave radio appears from its post war renewal through its glory days to today's "just one of many media" role. For those of us who go back in radio now fifty years, Jerry's reprise is a technical triumph. It is also a pleasant reminder of the thrills of connecting to the voices, music and personalities of the worlds' cities and countries. This we did most often sitting in the dark with headphones. We were oblivious to the mundane "real world" because we were living in an even more real world, far more interesting and sometimes exciting. Short wave radio opened up a new dimension of experience. Yet one had to seek it, and train oneself in its arcane equipment, its seasonal and diurnal variations (not to mention sunspots and their effect), and learn to focus the mind on the aural not the visual.

It ain't what it used to be, of course, but then little is anymore. Still, any evening I can and do listen to the Sackville relays of the Asian stations, and the few Europeans left. Any morning the Asians fly over the Pacific until sunrise. North Korea still praises the work of the 99<sup>th</sup> People's Congress for the Advancement of Kim Ill Jung Thought; Christians still explain Salvation. The BBC still tells the truth. Even as an unreconstructed DX hound, I have come to enjoy the China Radio International programming (like the boy said, on radio the pictures are so much better). I can't wait for the sunspots to come back! 73 de Bart, WPE2DLT ##

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