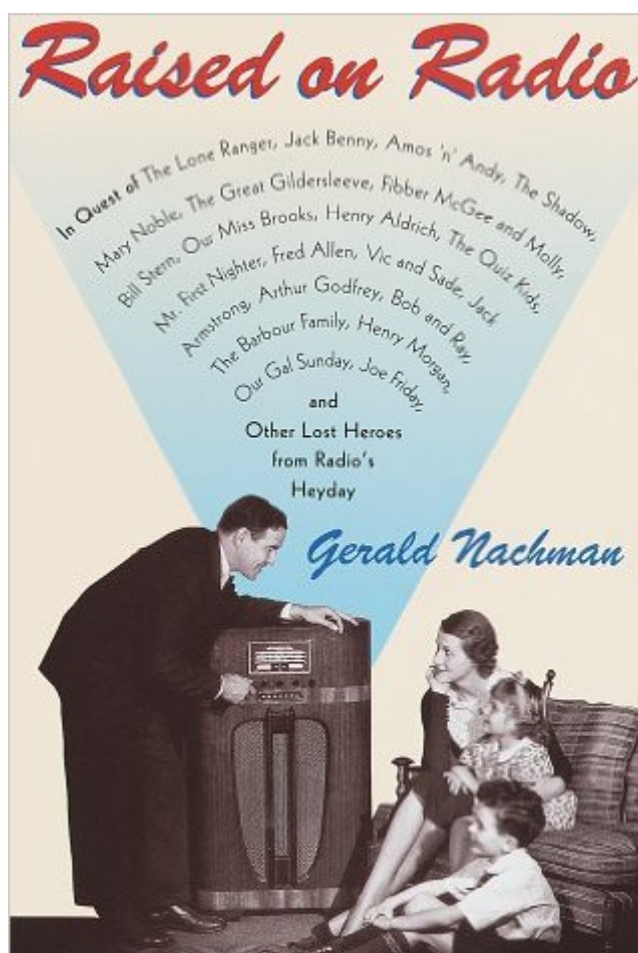


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# Raised On Radio



## Synopsis

For everybody "raised on radio" -- and that's everybody brought up in the thirties, forties, and early fifties -- this is the ultimate book, combining nostalgia, history, judgment, and fun, as it reminds us of just how wonderful (and sometimes just how silly) this vanished medium was. Of course, radio still exists -- but not the radio of The Lone Ranger and One Man's Family, of Our Gal Sunday and Life Can Be Beautiful, of The Goldbergs and Amos 'n' Andy, of Easy Aces, Vic and Sade, and Bob and Ray, of The Shadow and The Green Hornet, of Bing Crosby, Kate Smith, and Baby Snooks, of the great comics, announcers, sound-effects men, sponsors, and tycoons. In the late 1920s radio exploded almost overnight into being America's dominant entertainment, just as television would do twenty-five years later. Gerald Nachman, himself a product of the radio years -- as a boy he did his homework to the sound of Jack Benny and Our Miss Brooks -- takes us back to the heyday of radio, bringing to life the great performers and shows, as well as the not-so-great and not-great-at-all. Nachman analyzes the many genres that radio deployed or invented, from the soap opera to the sitcom to the quiz show, zooming in to study closely key performers like Benny, Bob Hope, and Fred Allen, while pulling back to an overview that manages to be both comprehensive and seductively specific. Here is a book that is generous, instructive, and sinfully readable -- and that brings an era alive as it salutes an extraordinary American phenomenon.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This highly entertaining book differs from others in the genre in that it is not a fawning fan book. It is lots of fun and very well written. Some OTR fans have slammed it for its numerous errors (and it's

true; it could have used a fact checker), but Nachman is after more important game than radio trivia, and he succeeds. But I do have to register one strong objection. It's his assessment of Eddie Cantor. Now, Cantor may indeed have been a lousy rat in his personal life, as Nachman's informants report --that I don't know about -- but the book is one hundred per cent wrong about Cantor's show (at least his show from the mid-forties on). Nachman dismisses Cantor as an essentially talentless hack, and his show as depressingly unfunny. A few years ago, back when I first read this book, I accepted Nachman's criticism as probably factual (though I did remember enjoying Cantor's movies on the late, late show many years ago). The fact is that at the time I had never heard any of Cantor's radio shows so I had nothing to compare his comments with. Then about a year ago I ran across a partial episode of one Cantor's shows. It was hilarious and made me hungry for more. A few months ago I was able to obtain six or seven dozen shows dating from WW II and later. Now, it's possible that Nachman was going by Cantor's shows from the thirties, when radio was much different than the situation comedy oriented 1940s. Whatever the case all I can say is that going by the fifty or so shows I've heard so far, Nachman is wrong, wrong, wrong. Cantor's show is hilarious and every bit as good as Burns and Allen, Jack Benny, Phil Harris, or any other top shows of the period. The writing is first rate.

I come at this book from an oblique angle. Yes, I was definitely raised on radio shows like "The Great Gildersleeve" and "Fibber McGee and Molly," but I was born in 1971, twenty years after the demise of the medium! Thanks to a nostalgia program called "The Big Broadcast" on the Washington DC public radio station WAMU, however, every Sunday night for years I was drawn out of my 1980s media world (of *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Dukes of Hazzard*) and into the wonderfully different, off-beat universe of vintage radio. Like my father, forty years before me, I was a kid with a radio hang-up, who's head spun around with the adventures of "The Shadow" (in reality, wealthy man-about-town Lamont Cranston) and who thrilled to stories of "Suspense!" None of my friends...not one...had any idea that this world recaptured from the past existed. That had its advantages: I could use any routine from Jack Benny or Fred Allen and claim it as my own. But it had its disadvantages as well. Radio was filled with loveable characters and great shows...you want to talk about them! Being one of the tiny minority of my generation who knew who Sheriff Matt Dillon was, I was all alone. Until now! Gerald Nachman's book *RAISED ON RADIO* is like having a great conversation with the world's biggest old-time radio authority...and enthusiast! I haven't listened to some of these shows in ten years, and yet it's amazing how well I remember the VOICES when Mr. Nachman quotes an old gag or piece of dialogue. That's the magic of radio: the voices approach

you intimately, and your imagination takes flight.

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