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# Radio & TV Covers

by  
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This is a category that has more personal meaning for those of us who are over 45. Talk to “youngsters” of the hobby about FDR’s “Fireside Chats,” “Gang Busters,” or “Amos and Andy,” and all you get is blank stares. Radio, today, is music, discussion, and news. You’d be hard put to find any of those wonderful dramas, mysteries, and comedies today. The Golden Age of Radio has long since disappeared *[doesn't it always seem that the “Golden Age” of everything is behind us?! Perhaps it just takes a retrospective look to recognize that there was a Golden Age]*.

TV programing has certainly changed, as well, but it’s more difficult to say that we’ve passed its Golden Era. How does one go about comparing the shows of Cid Caesar, Red Skelton and Charlie McCarthy with “American Idol,” “Queer As Folk”, and “America’s Ugliest Bathroom”? *[on second thought, maybe it wouldn't be so difficult after all!]*

In any event, Radio and TV covers evoke real memories for many of us. They take us back to yesteryear when we sat, enthralled by the thundering hooves of Silver and the aura of the Shadow. And, for those who weren’t around then, this category boasts a wealth of other attractions.

Although Radio and TV covers could just as well be split into two separate categories, they have been traditionally treated as one within the hobby, and most collectors house them together because of the natural relationship between radio and TC. The radio portion, however, comprises the majority of the covers.

Housing them in some organized manner presents



several possibilities. Most of these covers have at least a city on them, so they could be sorted by location. They could also be arranged according to station number (i.e., “1480 on your dial” or “Ch. 13), or into AM, FM, VHF, UHF, and cable, and then by numbers.

Personally, I prefer to house my collection by call letters, alphabetically: CREM, KRTV, WZAL, etc. It’s easy, it’s logical, and it readily lends itself to simple want lists (you just list those call letters that you have no cover for).

As for the call letters, themselves, fortunately there is some logic in their assignment to their respective stations, as well. For example, call letters starting with “C” (i.e., “CREM”) indicate a Canadian station; call letters starting with “K” and “W” (i.e., “KRON,” “WGAL”) are reserved for U.S. stations; etc. Within the United States, itself, stations east of the Mississippi are assigned call letters with “W,” and those west of the Mississippi are given call letters starting with “K.”

There are thousands of radio stations in the U.S. alone, so, as you might assume, this is a fairly large category, and by all rights it should be a huge category. I currently have 1,068 in my collection; the largest collection I know of is Ray Vigeant’s, CT; he had 1,814 as of January, 1999. And what variety! All sizes, shapes, and types; rarities and oddities, old and new, singles, sets, and series.

Big Boy Restaurants put out several lengthy series of 20-strike radio covers. KFOX, in Long Beach, CA, put out a stock 20-strike series with different advertisers that numbers at least 93 [*see Jul/Aug and Sep/Oct 99 RMS Bulletins*]. A variety of stations in the past issued covers with lucky contest numbers on the inside so that each cover actually counts as a different variation. There must be thousands of these. Stations such as Florida’s WAME issued “Hidden Letter Matches,” where a random letter was printed behind the matches, on the inside of the cover. Some stations put out sets featuring their entire line up of on-the-air staff. And the list goes on...!

There are lots of conjunctives here, too. There are some wonderful Dated covers, such as those shown on the front page. Denver’s KVOD put out whole sets of monthly calendar covers for at least 1942 and 1943. Some stations put out the local team’s sports schedule on the inside, just as some stations later used the Sports Jewelite.

How about Personalities? Paging through a collection, one sees names such as Bing Crosby, Fred Allen, Arthur Godfrey, and many others. Santa Ana Savings (CA) put out a set featuring the Los Angeles Dodgers and advertising KMPC on the inside. Radio and TV shows? They’re here! “Passport to Danger,” “Highway Patrol,” “Death Valley Days,” “Queen For a Day,” “Mike Douglas Show,” “Battle Front,” “The Dick Van Dyke Show,” “The Jack Benny Show”...

Age-wise, there don’t seem to be a lot of oldies in this category. The first commercial radio station, Pittsburgh’s KDKA, wasn’t established until 1920. I can vouch for at least one DQ (Radio DKM), a King Midas (KHJ/KNX), and a few others, but the great bulk of the covers you’ll see are from the 1940s and 1950s...the high point of classic radio.

As usual, the influx of new covers in this category has dropped off almost 100%. But, radio and TV stations, especially, rely heavily on self-promotion, and you can still come across an occasional new cover here and there being put out by various stations...and there are still all those previous covers out there.