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Broadcasting on the Short Waves 1945 to today

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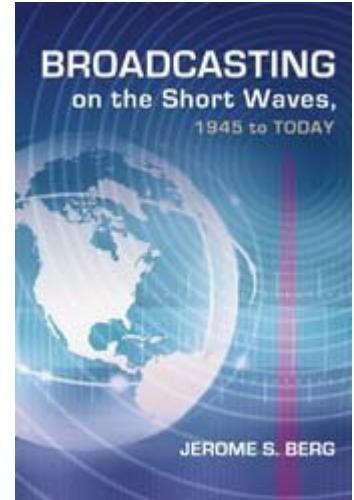
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Publisher's description: The heart of the book is a detailed, year-by-year account of the shortwave bands in each year from 1945 to the present. It reviews what American listeners were hearing on the international and domestic shortwave bands, describes the arrivals and departures of stations, and recounts important shortwave events. The book also introduces readers to the several categories of broadcasters-international, domestic, religious, clandestine and pirate-and to private shortwave broadcasting in the United States. It explains the impact of relay stations, frequency management, and jamming, and describes promising shortwave technologies. It also addresses the considerable changes in, and challenges to, shortwave broadcasting since the end of the cold war. The book is richly illustrated and indexed, and features a bibliography and extensive notes to facilitate further reading or research.

Review by Andy Sennitt

Jerry Berg, now retired, is a well-known and highly respected shortwave listener. Ten years ago his first book, *On the Short Waves 1923-1945*, was published to great acclaim, including from Media Network. That book, which is still available, tells the story of shortwave broadcasting from the earliest days up to the end of World War II. At the end of 2008, the story was brought up to date with the publication of two more titles dealing with the same subject from 1945 right up to the time of printing. Because there was a lot more information available on post-war shortwave broadcasting, it was decided to split the material across two titles, this one dealing with the stations themselves, and the other (review follows shortly) dealing with specialised subjects related to the hobby of shortwave listening.

Putting things in sequence

Before joining Radio Netherlands Worldwide, I spent almost two decades working for the World Radio TV Handbook (WRTH), first as assistant editor and then as editor. In the process, I had to amass a huge amount of information about the world's broadcasting stations. But over the years, dates and the exact sequence of events have sometimes become muddled in my head. The chronological treatment that Jerry Berg has given to the story brings it all back into sharp focus. Mr Berg's professional training as a lawyer ensures that everything is described with the utmost accuracy, but his writing style is lively and entertaining.

In the preface, Mr Berg makes the point that the content is based on his own experiences as a North American listener, and that the book does not claim to be a complete history of the subject. A small number of stations that were rarely heard in North America are not mentioned, but more than 95 percent of the content is relevant to readers worldwide.

Copiously illustrated

The book is copiously illustrated, mostly by photos of QSL cards from the collection of the Committee to Preserve Radio Verifications, of which the author is chairman. Since I was never an avid collector of QSL cards, mainly because I was too lazy to write reception reports, a lot of these were new to me. The only disappointing thing is that the entire book is printed in black and white, so the many bright colours that are used in most QSL cards cannot be adequately conveyed. That said, the quality of the monochrome printing is high, so every detail is easy to read.

I was pleased to see, at the end of the book, a chapter called "The Changing Shortwave Environment," which puts all the events of recent years into context, explaining how the end of the Cold War and the emergence of new technology have lessened the need for shortwave broadcasting to some regions. In my experience, too many shortwave listening hobbyists have put themselves inside a timewarp, in which these external factors are not recognised, and any reductions in shortwave usage by international broadcasters are given a hostile reception, with no regard for how the decision fits into the bigger picture. It was reassuring to see the situation so eloquently described by Jerry Berg, with a degree of sadness but not bitterness.

Excellent index

One of the benefits of Jerry Berg's legal training is that the book is accompanied by an excellent index, appendix, notes and bibliography that make it easy to do further research on stations and events mentioned in the text.

This book, along with its companion volumes, deserves to be on the bookshelf of anyone who has more than a casual interest in shortwave broadcasting. For the professional, it's a mine of information that can be used in preparing presentations and discussion papers. For the non-professional, it's an excellent way of substantially improving one's knowledge and understanding of the role shortwave broadcasting has played since the end of World War II. We described Mr Berg's earlier book as a 'masterpiece', and this one is of an equally high standard.

Disclaimer: This review was done independently of the author and publisher. Radio Netherlands Worldwide has no financial connection with either and provides the information above in good faith.

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