

Listening On The Short Waves, 1945 To Today, and Broadcasting On The Short Waves, 1945 To Today, By Jerome S. Berg

reviewed by Gerry Dexter

In the interest of full disclosure—and by way of an explanation for the admittedly unusual format—the author of these books, Jerome “Jerry” Berg, is a friend of many years...well, decades, truth be told. As I was sitting down to pen my congratulations to him, I realized I was pretty much writing the review of these unusual, even extraordinary, books I’d been assigned by *Pop’Comm*. Now, sharing my thoughts with our readers this way just kind of feels right somehow, so here you have my musings on must-reads...

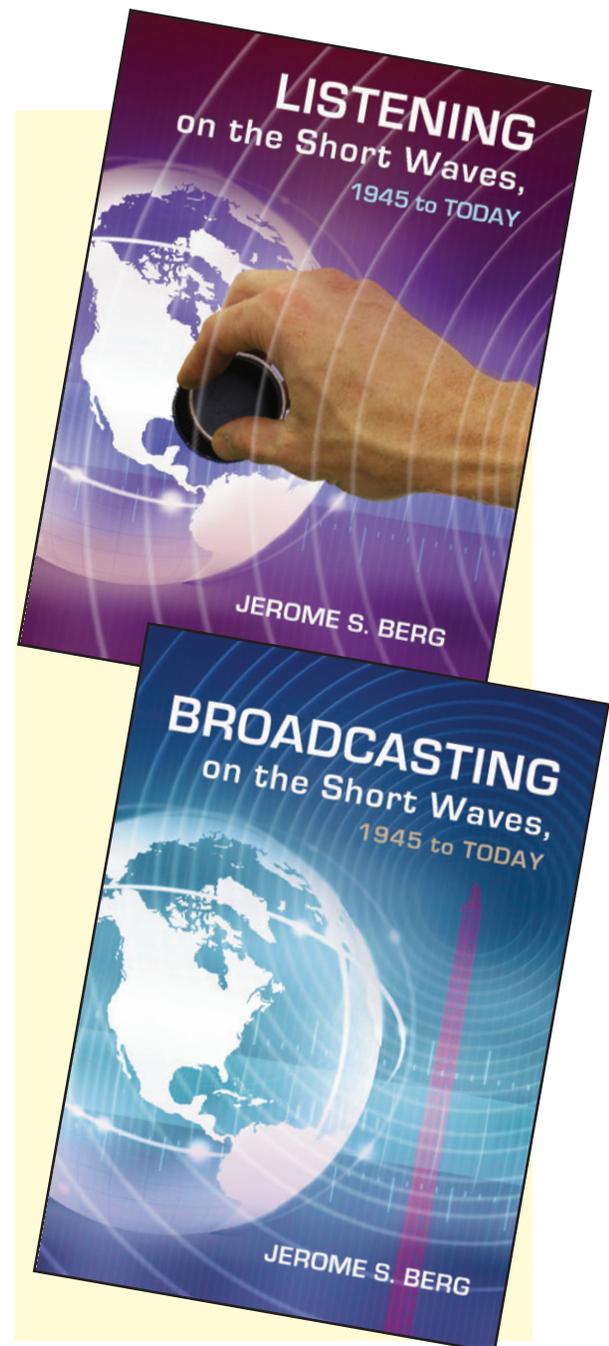
Dear Jerry,

As longtime friends I was eager to do a review of your two new books, so I was happy to get the go-ahead from Edith. I did not realize there would be problems attached, namely having to deal with one of my pet peeves: superlatives, such as “awesome,” “amazing,” “incredible,” “unbelievable.” These words have been overused, abused, and otherwise done to death. Words once used to describe the universe are now commonly applied to slam dunks, shoe sales, and everything in between. They’ve been made cheap and nearly meaningless and I refuse to use them, especially applied to your books. So I’m left with the problem of how to describe them when they are so deserving of the highest praise!

For all the history you put into the books, you must have been waist deep in musty old maga-

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Listening On The Short Waves, 1945 To Today, and Broadcasting On The Short Waves, 1945 To Today, by Jerome S. Berg may carry a hefty price tag, but the wealth of information and nostalgia they contain make them invaluable.



“If the Listening book brought on waves of nostalgia the Broadcasting book created a tsunami!”

zines and club bulletins. I was astounded to find a mention of my old neighborhood club from the early 1950s in the “Clubs” chapter of the *Listening* book. (Good grief! We only had a dozen or so members!) And not just American-based clubs, but others from all over the planet!

The extensive chapter on clubs is just one of nine: you also focus on the shortwave audience, listener programs, shortwave literature, receivers, QSLing, computers, a conclusion and a Prelude to 1945. And they’re all illustrated with pages from old bulletins, long-gone covers from long-gone magazines, QSLs, club membership certificates, receivers, award certificates, pennants, and still more “stuff.” Probably everyone who had any active role in the shortwave hobby from 1945 onwards has his or her contribution(s) cited.

For us old timers it’s going to shorten a lot of DX discussions about when the “Pinewood DX Club” folded or who edited this or that column back in 1962 (assuming we can remember the year!). For others it will put the history of this great hobby into perspective, give it some meaning beyond looking forward to the next log. (And I liked that you dedicated the *Listening* volume to Ken Boord, my shortwave hero then—and still.)

If the *Listening* book brought on waves of nostalgia the *Broadcasting* book created a tsunami! It starts with a thorough Overview and ends with comments on “The Changing Shortwave Environment,” which considers shortwave’s uncertain future and helps us face up to a reality none of us welcomes. You devote the rest of the book to the active broadcasters in pretty much 10-year segments, accompanied by half a zillion QSL and other illustrations (well, nearly 200 of them, anyway). The broadcasters are not only cited but the frequencies they used and sometimes even the hour(s) at which they were best heard. It was great fun to read about all the catches made—some that were easy, some that nearly siphoned off your spirit, and some (too many!) that remained achingly out of reach and were never bagged.

Out of a 496-page total for the *Broadcasting* book, I figured it’s just over 400 pages of information about the active stations during those years! (The *Listening* book is “only” 423 pages.) I’m really tempted to use one of those abused superlatives here!

While I have that superlative problem going on, readers contemplating purchasing these books may have a problem as well. The barcode reader will give you sticker shock after it feeds the register: they cost \$65. Each! Potential readers may have to visit their local First National and negotiate a loan. But it would be worth it!

Highest congrats, OM! “Fantabulistic!” (There... I created my own superlative!)

73,
Gerry

Listening On The Short Waves, 1945 To Today, and *Broadcasting On The Short Waves, 1945 To Today*, by Jerome S. Berg, McFarland & Company Publishers, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640.