RADIO AND TELEVISION MAGAZINES

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The father of “wireless” was Gugliemo Marconi. An early radio magazine bearing his name, Marconigraph, started in Britain in 1911. An American edition began in 1912, changing its title to Wireless Age in 1913. Another key personality was Hugo Gernsback, who started the first radio magazine, Modern Electrics, in 1908 where he introduced his novel, “Ralph 124C 41+”, in twelve installments in 1911 and 1912. “Ralph” is not great literature by any means, nor is it the first story to deal with scientific fiction (a term coined by Gernsback). It is, though, an important indication of Gernsback’s incredible sense of what the future held in store.

The very rare first issues of Modern Electrics and Wireless Age. The two earliest magazines devoted to radio.

One of the twelve monthly installments of the original appearance of Hugo Gernsback’s futuristic classic “Ralph 124C 41+”. Each cover features an illustration from the story.
Most early radio literature focused on hobbyists called radio amateurs or “hams”. Amateur Radio’s pioneer organization was the The American Radio Relay League, founded by Hiram Percy Maxim, and its journal, QST, first issued in December 1915, is the first and still the foremost publication in its field.

The first issue of QST and other rare and early Amateur Radio Journals.
Commercial radio broadcasting was made practical by Lee de Forest’s Audion tube and initially backed by Westinghouse, a leading radio manufacturer, in an effort to increase sales. Dr. Frank Conrad, a Pittsburgh area radio amateur, made the first broadcast (a term he himself coined) on November 2, 1920, over Pittsburgh station KDKA, in conjunction with the national presidential election. KDKA was a huge hit and within four years there were more than 600 radio stations across the country.
Tuning in to commercial stations and short wave broadcasts around the world was a popular pastime and hobby. Magazines devoted to all aspects of Radio appeared to support the interest, some more technical than others, many of them published by Hugo Gernback.
The increased listenership created a demand for programming guides.

Radio Guide was the most prominent and long-standing. As with movies earlier and television later, the periodical press was a rich source of supplementary information, both reflecting and enhancing the value of the medium.
Radio did not escape the public’s insatiable appetite for gossipy information about the lives of the stars. Fan magazines began to appear.

Major Bowe’s Amateur Hour, the nineteen-thirties’ version of Starsearch, was so popular that it issued its own magazine.

Radio Stories came closest to a radio-themed pulp magazine.
Some radio magazines were designed to appeal to a more rural audience.

During World War II, radio was an important source of news. President Roosevelt made very effective use of it through “fireside chats” and frequent national addresses.
Dinah Shore made a successful transition to television, which, by the mid-fifties, had replaced radio as America’s number one household entertainment medium. As the popularity of radio diminished, the magazines disappeared.
Through the twenty-first century, Amateur Radio continues to be an area of avid hobby interest and public service. Aside from QST, CQ, 73 and Ham Radio are the most long-standing, well-established journals in the field. A commercial operator’s radio magazine, also entitled CQ (which is radio jargon means “I would like to make contact”) appeared in 1931. The radio amateur version started in 1945.
Well before Television became a practical reality, Hugo Gernsback, the imaginative futurist and popularizer of the terms “television” and “science fiction” wrote stories and published articles about it in his magazines Modern Electrics, in 1909, and Electrical Experimenter, in 1918. Magazines specifically devoted to television began with Gernsback’s All About Television in the summer of 1927. WRNY was Gernsback’s TV broadcast station.
Despite the claim on the cover, *Television* was not America's first TV magazine. It was published concurrently in Britain. *Radio News* featured a television issue in 1928. The omnipresent Gernsback began publishing *Television News* in 1931. In April 1931, the exquisitely rare *Weekly Television News* became the first weekly magazine principally devoted to television and included a list of all presently operating TV stations.
Many of Hugo Gernsback’s publications in the 1930’s continued to pique the public’s interest in this new and exciting visual medium.

After a marked improvement in technology, exhibitions at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York City created great excitement about the commercial possibilities of television. World War II derailed the momentum, but in the immediate post-war period it was regained.

The earliest programming schedules were sent by mail from broadcasting stations to the buyers of TV sets.

The first digest-sized programming guide, Chicago, 1948.

The first issue of a rare and early Los Angeles programming guide. Jackie Gleason played Riley before William Bendix.

An early issue of Walter Annenberg’s Local Televisor, the first issue of TV Digest after the name change and other collectible “pre-national” issues.
Local issues of New York TV Guide, especially early issues, were rarely saved. A complete file is not known to exist.

Among the most collectible programming guide issues are those with science fiction, sports and juvenile themed (Disney, Howdy Doody) covers. Fall preview and anniversary issues are also important for the wealth of important source material they contain.

The last “pre-national” issue prior to the merger
Journal’s like Televiser showed the technical state of the television art in the mid-forties. There were relatively few television trade journals.

Marilyn Monroe was never a major TV personality but her image on the cover definitely sold magazines! Here are some rare and highly collected appearances on pre-national issues.
A potpourri of local programming guides, weekly newspaper supplements and digest-sized fan magazines. All are rarely encountered.

Below: The first issues of two very scarce magazines targeted to young viewers. Does anyone remember Rootie Kazootie?
In the late forties and early fifties as the medium became more practical and affordable, programming increased and the stars were showcased on a wide variety of fan magazines, some of which combined TV with movies.

On her popular TV variety program, the vivacious Dinah Shore urged viewers to “see the USA in your Chevrolet”.

Singer Eddie Fisher’s relationships with Elizabeth Taylor and Debbie Reynolds made him a fan magazine favorite.
Many stars made the transition from radio and the movies. Others, like Arthur Godfrey, made their reputation solely as TV stars.

Lucille Ball was the undisputed queen of television in the 1950's. She still holds the record for the most TV Guide cover appearances.

The first national TV Guide and a few of the most collectible from the first year of publication. Individual issues of the amalgamated national publication are readily available.
As the market expanded some programs had their own magazines, including 77 Sunset Strip, Bonanza, Laugh-in and All in the Family.

Here are some first issues of more recent TV magazines. New ones are constantly appearing.

Soap Opera Digest continues to be a supermarket check-out aisle favorite.