

# The golden age of radio

Media



The paper "The Golden Age of Radio" is an excellent example of a research paper on media. I should that the Digital Deli site was extraordinary hard to use. Most of its MP3 files were behind a paid subscription service; those that were not tended to be unhelpful items such as audition tapes and outtakes. This site (and many others) used 'free' as a Google keyword but in fact offered little or nothing except after a 'donation'. Abbot and Costello's show began with the conversation between Abbot and Costello on topical and political issues that must have been drawn from newspapers and radio news shows of the time. This banter continued with short random jokes, often utilizing puns and paradox to achieve humor. The show seems to be the source of the famous 'Hey Abbot!' cry from Costello well known enough to be satirized in contemporary cartoons and films, but which did not, as I recall, feature as prominently in the Abbot and Costello films (by the same token, at one point Costello got some mileage out of imitating Woody Woodpecker). There were also brief drama sections with company actors, but the disconnected nature of the jokes did not change much. The middle of the show had a musical guest, in this case, the jazz singer Hal Wilson. The nature of the show seemed to have more in common with the opening monologue and sketch elements of modern talk shows than with sit-coms. The Black Museum with Orson Welles show was notable for Welles' incredible overacting, far different from what one is used to from him in a film. Welles essentially read a narration which occasionally integrated into brief dramatized sections. The music (including a Theremin) and dramaturgy were incredibly melodramatic by the standards of modern television series (Law and Order might provide a comparandum). The rather baroque touch of the actors describing actions and props that would be seen in film or television

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seemed stilted, but one might get used to it. Mail Call with Grouch Marx show based its programming on requests from American military personnel serving overseas. In this case, it featured a variety show MCed by Grouch Marx presenting performances by actors who had recently won academy awards. Marx bantered with the performers, but his wit was not up to the level of his best work on You bet Your Life. The main section of the show was a satire of Double Indemnity featuring Marx in the McMurray role. His ad-libs during the live performance were far more entertaining than the scripted material. The show was far more forthright in cursing (“ you know you can’t say ‘ damn’ on the air”) and in presenting sexual material than contemporary film.