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# *The War of the Worlds* (1938 radio drama)

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*For the 1968 radio remake, see [The War of the Worlds \(1968 radio drama\)](#).*

*For other uses, see [The War of the Worlds \(disambiguation\)](#).*

"**The War of the Worlds**" is an episode of the American radio drama anthology series *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* directed and narrated by actor and future filmmaker [Orson Welles](#) as an adaptation of [H. G. Wells](#)'s novel *The War of the Worlds* (1898). It was performed and broadcast live as a Halloween episode at 8 p.m. on Sunday, October 30, 1938, over the [Columbia Broadcasting System](#) radio network. The episode became famous for allegedly causing panic among its listening audience, though the scale of that panic is disputed, as the program had relatively few listeners.<sup>[2]</sup>

The one-hour program began with the theme music for the *Mercury Theatre on the Air* and an announcement that the evening's show was an adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*. Orson Welles then read a prologue which was closely based on the opening of H.G. Wells' novel but modified to place the story's setting in 1939. The next half hour of the broadcast was presented as a typical evening of radio programming being interrupted by a series of news bulletins. The first few bulletins cut into a program of dance music and describe a series of odd explosions observed on Mars. This is followed by a seemingly unrelated report of an unusual object falling on a farm in [Grover's Mill, New Jersey](#). Another brief musical interlude

## *The War of the Worlds*



Orson Welles tells reporters that no one connected with the broadcast had any idea that it would cause panic (October 31, 1938).


<b>Genre</b>	Radio drama, science fiction
<b>Running time</b>	60 minutes
<b>Home station</b>	<a href="#">CBS Radio</a>
<b>Hosted by</b>	<i>The Mercury Theatre on the Air</i>
<b>Starring</b>	<a href="#">Orson Welles</a> <a href="#">Frank Readick</a> <a href="#">Kenny Delmar</a> <a href="#">Ray Collins</a>
<b>Announcer</b>	<a href="#">Dan Seymour</a>
<b>Written by</b>	<a href="#">H.G. Wells</a> (novel) <a href="#">Howard Koch</a> (adaptation)
<b>Directed by</b>	<a href="#">Orson Welles</a>
<b>Produced by</b>	<a href="#">John Houseman</a> <a href="#">Orson Welles</a> <a href="#">Paul Stewart</a> (associate producer) <sup>[1]:390</sup>
<b>Executive producer(s)</b>	<a href="#">Davidson Taylor</a> (for CBS)
<b>Narrated by</b>	<a href="#">Orson Welles</a>
<b>Recording studio</b>	<a href="#">Columbia</a>

is interrupted by a live report from Grover's Mill, where police officials and a crowd of curious onlookers have surrounded the strange cylindrical object which has fallen from the sky. The situation quickly escalates when Martians emerge from the cylinder and attack using a heat-ray, abruptly cutting off the shouting of the panicked reporter at the scene. This is followed by a rapid series of increasingly alarming news updates detailing a devastating alien invasion taking place around the world and the futile efforts of the U.S. military to stop it. The first portion of the show climaxes with another live report describing giant Martian war machines releasing clouds of poisonous smoke across New York City, after which the program took its first break. During the second half of the show, the style shifts to a more conventional [radio drama](#) format and follows a survivor dealing with the aftermath of the invasion and the ongoing Martian occupation of Earth. As in the original novel, the story ends with the discovery that the Martians have been defeated by microbes rather than by humans.

The program has become famous for supposedly tricking some of its listeners into believing that a Martian invasion was actually taking place. The illusion of realism was furthered because the *Mercury Theatre on the Air* was a sustaining show without commercial interruptions, and the first break in the program came almost 30 minutes after the introduction. Popular legend holds that some of the radio audience may have been listening to [The Chase and Sanborn Hour](#) with [Edgar Bergen](#) and tuned in to "The War of the Worlds" during a musical interlude, thereby missing the clear introduction that the show was a drama; however, contemporary research suggests that this happened only in rare instances.<sup>[3]:67–69</sup>

In the days after the adaptation, widespread outrage was expressed in the media. The program's news-bulletin format was described as deceptive by some newspapers and public figures, leading to an outcry against the broadcasters and calls for regulation by the [Federal Communications Commission](#).<sup>[2]</sup> Nevertheless, the episode secured Welles's fame as a dramatist.

	Broadcasting Building, 485 Madison Avenue, New York
<b>Original release</b>	October 30, 1938, 8 – 9 pm ET
<b>Opening theme</b>	<a href="#">Piano Concerto No. 1</a> by <a href="#">Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky</a>


[The War of the Worlds](#)

▶ 0:00 CC ◀ MENU

The complete radio play

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Welles discussed his fake newscast idea with producer [John Houseman](#) and associate producer [Paul Stewart](#); together, they decided to adapt a work of science fiction. They considered adapting [M. P. Shiel's \*The Purple Cloud\*](#) and [Arthur Conan Doyle's \*The Lost World\*](#) before purchasing the radio rights to *The War of the Worlds*. Houseman later wrote that he suspected Welles had never read it.<sup>[1]:392[3]:45[4][b]</sup>

Howard Koch had written the first drafts for the Mercury Theatre broadcasts "Hell on Ice" (October 9), "Seventeen" (October 16),<sup>[9]:164</sup> and "Around the World in 80 Days" (October 23).<sup>[10]:92</sup> Monday, October 24, he was assigned to adapt *The War of the Worlds* for broadcast the following Sunday night.<sup>[9]:164</sup>

Tuesday night, 36 hours before rehearsals were to begin, Koch telephoned Houseman in what the producer characterized as "deep distress". Koch said he could not make *The War of the Worlds* interesting or credible as a radio play, a conviction echoed by his secretary [Anne Froelick](#), a typist and aspiring writer whom Houseman had hired to assist him. With only his own abandoned script for *Lorna Doone* to fall back on, Houseman told Koch to continue adapting the Wells fantasy. He joined Koch and Froelick and they worked on the script throughout the night. On Wednesday night, the first draft was finished on schedule.<sup>[1]:392–393</sup>

On Thursday, associate producer Paul Stewart held a cast reading of the script, with Koch and Houseman making necessary changes. That afternoon, Stewart made an acetate recording, with no music or sound effects. Welles, immersed in rehearsing the Mercury stage production of *Danton's Death* scheduled to open the following week, played the record at an editorial meeting that night in his suite at [the St. Regis Hotel](#). After hearing "Air Raid" on the *Columbia Workshop* earlier that same evening, Welles viewed the script as dull. He stressed the importance of inserting news flashes and eyewitness accounts into the script to create a sense of urgency and excitement.<sup>[9]:166</sup>

Houseman, Koch, and Stewart reworked the script that night,<sup>[1]:393</sup> increasing the number of news bulletins and using the names of real places and people whenever possible. Friday afternoon, the script was sent to Davidson Taylor, executive producer for CBS, and the network legal department. Their response was that the script was 'too' credible and its realism had to be toned down. As using the names of actual institutions could be [actionable](#), CBS insisted upon some 28 changes in phrasing.<sup>[9]:167</sup>

"Under protest and with a deep sense of grievance we changed the [Hotel Biltmore](#) to a nonexistent [Park Plaza](#), [Transamerica Radio News](#)<sup>[16]</sup> to [Inter-Continental Radio News](#), the [Columbia Broadcasting Building](#) to [Broadcasting Building](#)," Houseman wrote.<sup>[1]:393</sup> "The [United States Weather Bureau](#) in Washington, D.C." was changed to "The Government Weather Bureau," "[Princeton University](#) Observatory" to "Princeton Observatory," "[McGill University](#)" in Montreal to "Macmillan University" in Toronto, "[New Jersey National Guard](#)" to "State Militia," "[United States Signal Corps](#)" to "Signal Corps," "[Langley Field](#)" to "Langham Field," and "[St. Patrick's Cathedral](#)" to "the cathedral."<sup>[9]:167</sup>

On Saturday, Stewart rehearsed the show with the sound effects team, giving special attention to crowd scenes, the echo of cannon fire, and the sound of the boat horns in New York Harbor.<sup>[1]:393–394</sup>

Early Sunday afternoon, [Bernard Herrmann](#) and his orchestra arrived in the studio, where Welles had taken over production of that evening's program.<sup>[1]:391, 398</sup>

To create the role of reporter Carl Phillips, actor Frank Readick went to the record library and played the recording of [Herbert Morrison's](#) radio report of the [Hindenburg disaster](#) over and over.<sup>[1]:398</sup> Working with Bernard Herrmann and the orchestra that had to sound like a dance band fell to Paul Stewart,<sup>[17]</sup> the person Welles would later credit as being largely responsible for the quality of "The War of the Worlds" broadcast.<sup>[18]:195</sup>

Welles wanted the music to play for unbearably long stretches of time.<sup>[19]:159</sup> The studio's emergency fill-in, a solo piano playing [Debussy](#) and [Chopin](#), was heard several times. "As it played on and on," Houseman wrote, "its effect became increasingly sinister—a thin band of suspense stretched almost beyond endurance. That piano was the neatest trick of the show."<sup>[1]:400</sup>

Dress rehearsal was scheduled for 6 pm.<sup>[1]:391</sup>

"Our actual broadcasting time, from the first mention of the meteorites to the fall of New York City, was less than forty minutes," wrote Houseman. "During that time, men travelled long distances, large bodies of troops were mobilized, cabinet meetings were held, savage battles fought on land and in the air. And millions of people accepted it—emotionally if not logically."<sup>[1]:401</sup>

## Cast [\[ edit \]](#)

The cast of characters of "The War of the Worlds" appears in order as first heard in the broadcast.<sup>[20][21]</sup>

- Announcer ... [Dan Seymour](#)<sup>[22]</sup>
- Narrator ... [Orson Welles](#)
- First studio announcer ... [Paul Stewart](#)
- Meridian Room announcer ... [William Alland](#)
- Reporter Carl Phillips ... [Frank Readick](#)
- Professor Richard Pierson ... [Orson Welles](#)
- Second studio announcer ... [Carl Frank](#)
- Mr. Wilmuth ... [Ray Collins](#)
- Policeman at Wilmuth farm ... [Kenny Delmar](#)
- Brigadier General Montgomery Smith ... [Richard Wilson](#)
- Mr. Harry McDonald, vice president in charge of radio operations ... [Ray Collins](#)
- Captain Lansing of the Signal Corps ... [Kenny Delmar](#)
- Third studio announcer ... [Paul Stewart](#)
- Secretary of the Interior ... [Kenny Delmar](#)
- 22nd Field Artillery Officer ... [Richard Wilson](#)
- Field artillery gunner ... [William Alland](#)
- Field artillery observer ... [Stefan Schnabel](#)
- Lieutenant Voght, bombing commander ... [Howard Smith](#)
- Bayonne radio operator ... [Kenny Delmar](#)
- Langham Field radio operator ... [Richard Wilson](#)
- Newark radio operator ... [William Herz](#)

- 2X2L radio operator ... Frank Readick
- 8X3R radio operator ... William Herz
- Fourth studio announcer, from roof of Broadcasting Building ... Ray Collins
- Fascist stranger ... Carl Frank
- Himself ... Orson Welles

## Broadcast [ edit ]

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### Plot summary [ edit ]

"The War of the Worlds" begins with a paraphrase of [the beginning of the novel](#), updated to contemporary times. The announcer introduces Orson Welles:

We know now that in the early years of the 20th century, this world was being watched closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own. We know now that as human beings busied themselves about their various concerns, they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency, people went to and fro over the earth about their little affairs, serene in the assurance of their dominion over this small spinning fragment of solar driftwood which by chance or design man has inherited out of the dark mystery of Time and Space. Yet across an immense ethereal gulf, minds that are to our minds as ours are to the beasts in the jungle, intellects vast, cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. In the 39th year of the 20th century came the great disillusionment. It was near the end of October. Business was better. The [war scare](#) was over. More men were back at work. Sales were picking up. On this particular evening, October 30th, the [Crossley service](#) estimated that 32 million people were listening in on radios...<sup>[1]:394–395</sup><sup>[21]</sup>

The radio program begins as a simulation of a normal evening radio broadcast featuring a weather report and music by "Ramon Raquello and His Orchestra" live from a local hotel ballroom. After a few minutes, the music begins to be interrupted by several [news flashes](#) about strange gas explosions on [Mars](#). An interview is arranged with reporter Carl Phillips and [Princeton](#)-based Professor of [Astronomy](#) Richard Pierson, who dismisses speculation about life on Mars. The musical program returns temporarily but is interrupted again by news of a strange meteorite landing in [Grover's Mill, New Jersey](#). Phillips and Pierson are dispatched to the site, where a large crowd has gathered. Phillips describes the chaotic atmosphere around the strange cylindrical object, and Pierson admits that he does not know exactly what it is, but that it seems to be made of an extraterrestrial metal. The cylinder unscrews, and Phillips describes the tentacled, horrific "monster" that emerges from inside. Police officers approach the [Martian](#) waving a [flag of truce](#), but the invaders respond by firing a [heat ray](#), which incinerates the delegation and ignites the nearby woods and cars as the crowd screams. Phillips's shouts about incoming flames are cut off

mid-sentence, and after a moment of [dead air](#), an announcer explains that the remote broadcast was interrupted due to "some difficulty with our field transmission."

After a brief "piano interlude", regular programming breaks down as the studio struggles with casualty and fire-fighting updates. A shaken Pierson speculates about Martian technology. The New Jersey [state militia](#) declares [martial law](#) and attacks the cylinder; a captain from their field headquarters lectures about the overwhelming force of properly-equipped infantry and the helplessness of the Martians, until a [tripod](#) rises from the pit. The tripod obliterates the militia, and the studio returns, now describing the Martians as an invading army. Emergency response bulletins give way to damage and evacuation reports as thousands of refugees clog the highways. Three Martian tripods from the cylinder destroy power stations and uproot bridges and railroads, reinforced by three others from a second cylinder that landed in the [Great Swamp](#) near [Morristown](#), as gas explosions continue. The [Secretary of the Interior](#) addresses the nation.

A live connection is established to a [field artillery](#) battery in the [Watchung Mountains](#). Its gun crew damages a machine, resulting in a release of poisonous [black smoke](#), before fading into the sound of coughing. The lead plane of a wing of bombers from [Langham Field](#) broadcasts its approach and remains on the air as their engines are burned by the heat ray and the plane dives on the invaders. Radio operators go active and fall silent. Although the bombers manage to destroy one machine, the remaining five are spreading black smoke across the [Jersey Marshes](#) into [Newark](#).

Eventually, a news reporter, broadcasting from atop the [Broadcasting Building](#), describes the Martian invasion of New York City – "five great machines" wading the [Hudson](#) "like [men] wading through a brook", black smoke drifting over the city, people diving into the [East River](#) "like rats", others in [Times Square](#) "falling like flies". He reads a final bulletin stating that Martian cylinders have fallen all over the country, then describes the smoke approaching down the street until he has a coughing fit and falls silent, leaving only the sounds of the city under attack in the background. Finally, a [ham radio](#) operator is heard calling, "2X2L calling CQ, New York. Isn't there anyone on the air? Isn't there anyone on the air? Isn't there... anyone?"

After a period of silence comes the voice of announcer Dan Seymour:

You are listening to a CBS presentation of Orson Welles and the *Mercury Theatre of the Air*, in an original dramatization of *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells. The performance will continue after a brief intermission.

The last third of the program is a monologue and dialogue. Professor Pierson, having survived the attack on Grover's Mill, attempts to make contact with other humans. In Newark, he encounters an opportunistic militiaman who holds fascist ideals in regards to man's relationship with the Martians, and intends to use Martian weaponry to take control of both species. Declaring that he wants no part of "his world", Pierson leaves the stranger with his delusions. His journey takes him to the ruins of New York, where he discovers that the Martians have died – as with the novel, they fell victim to earthly [pathogenic germs](#), to which they had no [immunity](#). Life eventually returns to normal, and Pierson finishes writing his recollections of the invasion and its aftermath.

After the conclusion of the play, Welles reassumed his role as host and told listeners that the broadcast was a Halloween concoction: the equivalent, he says, "of dressing up in a sheet, jumping out of a bush and saying, 'Boo!'"<sup>[23]</sup> Popular mythology holds the disclaimer was hastily added to the broadcast at the insistence of CBS executives, as they became aware of panic inspired by the program. In fact, at the station break, network executive Davidson Taylor had attempted to prevent Welles, who had added the speech at the last minute, from reading it on air for fear of exposing the network to legal liability, but Welles delivered it anyway.<sup>[3]:95–96</sup>

## Announcements [ edit ]

Radio programming charts in Sunday newspapers listed the CBS drama, "The War of the Worlds". *The New York Times* for October 30, 1938, also included the show in its "Leading Events of the Week" ("Tonight – Play: H. G. Wells' 'War of the Worlds'") and published a photograph of Welles with some of the Mercury players, captioned, "Tonight's show is H. G. Wells' 'War of the Worlds'".<sup>[9]:169</sup>

Announcements that "The War of the Worlds" is a dramatization of a work of fiction were made on the full CBS network at four points during the broadcast October 30, 1938: at the beginning, before the middle break, after the middle break, and at the end.<sup>[24]:43</sup> The middle break was delayed 10 minutes to accommodate the dramatic content.<sup>[10]:94</sup>

Another announcement was repeated on the full CBS network that same evening at 10:30 pm, 11:30 pm, and midnight: "For those listeners who tuned in to Orson Welles's *Mercury Theatre on the Air* broadcast from 8 to 9 pm Eastern Standard Time tonight and did not realize that the program was merely a modernized adaptation of H. G. Wells' famous novel *War of the Worlds*, we are repeating the fact which was made clear four times on the program, that, while the names of some American cities were used, as in all novels and dramatizations, the entire story and all of its incidents were fictitious."<sup>[24]:43–44</sup><sup>[25]</sup>

## Competition [ edit ]

"In the first place, most people didn't hear the show."<sup>[26][2][27]</sup>

- **Frank Stanton**, research director, **CBS Radio Network**<sup>[28]</sup> and **Radio Research Project**

- **NBC Red Network**, carried **The Chase and Sanborn Hour** with **Edgar Bergen** and **Charlie McCarthy**.
  - according to **Hooper Ratings**, **the most popular national program of 1938**.<sup>[2][29][30][31][32]</sup>
- **NBC Blue Network**, carried "Out of the West," with **Ernest Gill** and his Orchestra, from San Francisco.<sup>[33]</sup>
- **Mutual Broadcasting System**, carried **WOR Symphony**, **Alfred Wallenstein**, conductor.
- Colonial Network, in New England, carried **Father Coughlin's** paid program.<sup>[33]</sup>

## Public reaction [ edit ]

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Producer John Houseman noticed that at about 8:32 pm ET, CBS supervisor Davidson Taylor received a telephone call in the control room. Creasing his lips, Taylor left the studio and returned four minutes later, "pale as death", as he had been ordered to interrupt "The War of the Worlds" broadcast



The New York Times headline from October 31, 1938

immediately with an announcement of the program's fictional content. However, by the time the order was given, the program was already less than a minute away from its first scheduled break, and the fictional news reporter played by actor [Ray Collins](#) was choking on poison gas as the Martians overwhelmed New York.<sup>[1]:404</sup>

Actor [Stefan Schnabel](#) recalled sitting in the anteroom after finishing his on-air performance. "A few policemen trickled in, then a few more. Soon, the room was full of policemen and a massive struggle was going on between the police, page boys, and CBS executives, who were trying to prevent the cops from busting in and stopping the show. It was a show to witness."<sup>[34]</sup>

During the signoff theme, the phone began ringing. Houseman picked it up and the furious caller announced he was mayor of a Midwestern town, where mobs were in the streets. Houseman hung up quickly: "For we were off the air now and the studio door had burst open."<sup>[1]:404</sup>

The following hours were a nightmare. The building was suddenly full of people and dark-blue uniforms. Hustled out of the studio, we were locked into a small back office on another floor. Here we sat incommunicado while network employees were busily collecting, destroying, or locking up all scripts and records of the broadcast. Finally, the Press was let loose upon us, ravening for horror. How many deaths had we heard of? (Implying they knew of thousands.) What did we know of the fatal stampede in a Jersey hall? (Implying it was one of many.) What traffic deaths? (The ditches must be choked with corpses.) The suicides? (Haven't you heard about the one on Riverside Drive?) It is all quite vague in my memory and quite terrible.<sup>[1]:404</sup>

[Paul White](#), head of [CBS News](#), was quickly summoned to the office, "and there bedlam reigned", he wrote:

The telephone switchboard, a vast sea of light, could handle only a fraction of incoming calls. The haggard Welles sat alone and despondent. "I'm through," he lamented, "washed up." I didn't bother to reply to this highly inaccurate self-appraisal. I was too busy writing explanations to put on the air, reassuring the audience that it was safe. I also answered my share of incessant telephone calls, many of them from as far away as the Pacific Coast.<sup>[35]:47-48</sup>

Because of the crowd of newspaper reporters, photographers, and police, the cast left the CBS building by the rear entrance. Aware of the sensation the broadcast had made, but not its extent, Welles went to the Mercury Theatre where an all-night rehearsal of *Danton's Death* was in progress. Shortly after midnight, one of the cast, a late arrival, told Welles that news about "The War of the Worlds" was being flashed in [Times Square](#). They immediately left the theatre, and standing on the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street, they read the lighted bulletin that circled the *New York Times* building: ORSON WELLES CAUSES PANIC.<sup>[9]:172–173</sup>

Some listeners heard only a portion of the broadcast and, in the tension and anxiety prior to [World War II](#), mistook it for a genuine news broadcast.<sup>[36]</sup> Thousands of those people rushed to share the false reports with others or called CBS, newspapers, or the police to ask if the broadcast was real. Many newspapers assumed that the large number of phone calls and the scattered reports of listeners rushing about or even fleeing their homes proved the existence of a mass panic, but such behavior was never widespread.<sup>[3]:82–90, 98–103[37][38][39]</sup>

Future *Tonight Show* host [Jack Paar](#) had announcing duties that night for [Cleveland](#) CBS affiliate [WGAR](#). As panicked listeners called the studio, Paar attempted to calm them on the phone and on air by saying: "The world is not coming to an end. Trust me. When have I ever lied to you?" When the listeners started charging Paar with "covering up the truth", he called WGAR's station manager for help. Oblivious to the situation, the manager advised Paar to calm down and said that it was "all a [tempest in a teapot](#)".<sup>[40]</sup>

In a 1975 interview with radio historian [Chuck Schaden](#), radio actor [Alan Reed](#) recalled being one of several actors recruited to answer phone calls at CBS's New York headquarters.<sup>[41]</sup>

In [Concrete, Washington](#), phone lines and electricity suffered a short circuit at the Superior Portland Cement Company's [substation](#). Residents were unable to call neighbors, family, or friends to calm their fears. Reporters who heard of the coincidental blackout sent the story over the [newswire](#), and soon, Concrete was known worldwide.<sup>[42]</sup>

Welles continued with the rehearsal of *Danton's Death* (scheduled to open November 2), leaving shortly after dawn October 31. He was operating on three hours of sleep when CBS called him to a press conference. He read a statement that was later printed in newspapers nationwide and took questions from reporters:<sup>[9]:173, 176</sup>

Question: Were you aware of the terror such a broadcast would stir up?

Welles: Definitely not. The technique I used was not original with me. It was not even new. I anticipated nothing unusual.



After "The War of the Worlds" broadcast, photographers lay in wait for Welles at the all-night rehearsal for *Danton's Death* at the [Mercury Theatre](#) (October 31, 1938)

Question: Should you have toned down the language of the drama?

Welles: No, you don't play murder in soft words.

Question: Why was the story changed to put in names of American cities and government officers?

Welles: H. G. Wells used real cities in Europe, and to make the play more acceptable to American listeners we used real cities in America. Of course, I'm terribly sorry now.<sup>[9]:174</sup><sup>[43]</sup>



Welles takes questions from reporters at a press conference the day after the broadcast, on October 31, 1938 ✎

In its editions of October 31, 1938, the *Tucson Citizen* reported that three Arizona affiliates of CBS (*KOY* in *Phoenix*, *KTUC* in *Tucson* and *KSUN* in *Bisbee*) had originally scheduled a delayed broadcast of "The War of the Worlds" that night; CBS had shifted *The Mercury Theater on the Air* from Monday nights to Sunday nights on September 11, but the three affiliates preferred to keep the series in its original Monday slot so that it would not compete with NBC's top-rated *Chase and Sanborn Hour*. However, late on that Sunday night, CBS contacted *KOY* and *KTUC* owner Burrige Butler and instructed him not to air the program the following night.<sup>[44]</sup>

Within three weeks, newspapers had published at least 12,500 articles about the broadcast and its impact,<sup>[24]:61</sup><sup>[45]</sup> but the story dropped from the front pages after a few days.<sup>[2]</sup> *Adolf Hitler* referenced the broadcast in a speech in Munich on November 8, 1938.<sup>[3]:161</sup> Welles later remarked that Hitler cited the effect of the broadcast on the American public as evidence of "the corrupt condition and decadent state of affairs in democracy".<sup>[46]</sup><sup>[47]</sup>

Bob Sanders recalled looking outside the window and seeing a traffic jam in the normally quiet *Grover's Mill, New Jersey*, a crossroads of Cranbury and Clarksville Roads.<sup>[48]</sup><sup>[49]</sup><sup>[50]</sup>

## Causes [ edit ]

Later studies indicate that many missed the repeated notices about the broadcast being fictional, partly because *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, an unsponsored CBS cultural program with a relatively small audience, ran at the same time as the NBC *Red Network*'s popular *Chase and Sanborn Hour* featuring ventriloquist *Edgar Bergen*. At the time, many Americans assumed that a significant number of *Chase and Sanborn* listeners changed stations when the first comic sketch ended and a musical number by *Nelson Eddy* began and then tuned in "The War of the Worlds" after the opening announcements, but historian A. Brad Schwartz, after studying hundreds of letters from people who heard "The War of the Worlds", as well as contemporary audience surveys, concluded that very few people frightened by Welles's broadcast had tuned out Bergen's program. "All the hard evidence suggests that *The Chase & Sanborn Hour* was only a minor contributing factor to the Martian hysteria," he wrote. "... in truth, there was no mass exodus from *Charlie McCarthy* to Orson Welles that night."<sup>[3]:67–69</sup> Because the broadcast was unsponsored, Welles

and company could schedule breaks at will, rather than arranging them around advertisements. As a result, the only notices that the broadcast was fictional came at the start of the broadcast and about 40 and 55 minutes into it.

A study by the [Radio Project](#) discovered that fewer than one third of frightened listeners understood the invaders to be aliens; most thought that they were listening to reports of a German invasion or of a natural catastrophe.<sup>[3]:180, 191</sup><sup>[39]</sup>

"People were on edge", wrote Welles biographer [Frank Brady](#).

"For the entire month prior to 'The War of the Worlds', radio had kept the American public alert to the ominous happenings throughout the world. The [Munich crisis](#) was at its height....

For the first time in history, the public could tune into their

radios every night and hear, boot by boot, accusation by accusation, threat by threat, the rumblings that seemed inevitably leading to a world war."<sup>[9]:164–165</sup>

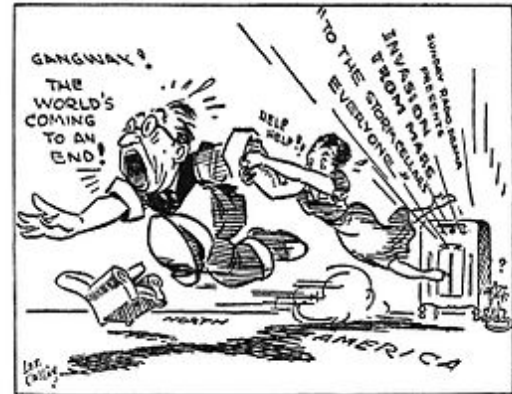
CBS News chief Paul White wrote that he was convinced that the panic induced by the broadcast was a result of the public suspense generated before the Munich Pact. "Radio listeners had had their emotions played upon for days.... Thus they believed the Welles production even though it was specifically stated that the whole thing was fiction".<sup>[35]:47</sup>

"The supposed panic was so tiny as to be practically immeasurable on the night of the broadcast. ... Radio had siphoned off advertising revenue from print during the Depression, badly damaging the newspaper industry. So the papers seized the opportunity presented by Welles' program to discredit radio as a source of news. The newspaper industry sensationalized the panic to prove to advertisers, and regulators, that radio management was irresponsible and not to be trusted."<sup>[2]</sup>

## Extent [ edit ]

Historical research suggests the panic was far less widespread than newspapers had indicated at the time.<sup>[51]</sup> "[T]he panic and mass hysteria so readily associated with

“HELP! MEN FROM MARS!”



FROM TIME TO TIME some quirk of fate, some state of mind, or some brilliance of thought makes a broadcast memorable. As such it deserves to be preserved, for after it passes from the news it becomes part of the color and woof of our history. As history and as a commentary on the nervous state of our nation after the Pact of Munich, we present this recent but none-the-less celebrated broadcast.

Reprinted from the Toronto Star.

*Radio Digest* reprinted the script of "The War of the Worlds" "as a commentary on the nervous state of our nation after the [Pact of Munich](#)" – prefaced by an editorial cartoon by Les Callan of *The Toronto Star* (February 1939)

'The War of the Worlds' did not occur on anything approaching a nationwide dimension", [American University](#) media historian W. Joseph Campbell wrote in 2003. He quotes Robert E. Bartholomew, an authority on mass panic outbreaks, as having said that "there is a growing consensus among sociologists that the extent of the panic... was greatly exaggerated".<sup>[39]</sup>

That position is supported by contemporary accounts. "In the first place, most people didn't hear [the show]," said [Frank Stanton](#), later president of CBS.<sup>[2]</sup> Of the nearly 2,000 letters mailed to Welles and the [Federal Communications Commission](#) after "The War of the Worlds," currently held by the [University of Michigan](#) and the [National Archives and Records Administration](#), roughly 27% came from frightened listeners or people who witnessed any panic. After analyzing those letters, A. Brad Schwartz concluded that although the broadcast briefly misled a significant portion of its audience, very few of those listeners fled their homes or otherwise panicked. The total number of protest letters sent to Welles and the FCC is also low in comparison with other controversial radio broadcasts of the period, further suggesting the audience was small and the fright severely limited.<sup>[3]:82–93</sup><sup>[37]</sup>

Five thousand households were telephoned that night in a survey conducted by the [C. E. Hooper](#) company, the main radio ratings service at the time. Only 2% of the respondents said they were listening to the radio play, and no one stated they were listening to a news broadcast. About 98% of respondents said they were listening to other radio programming (*The Chase and Sanborn Hour* was by far the most popular program in that timeslot) or not listening to the radio at all. Further shrinking the potential audience, some CBS network affiliates, including some in large markets such as [Boston's WEEI](#), had pre-empted *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*, in favor of local commercial programming.<sup>[2]</sup>

Ben Gross, radio editor for the [New York Daily News](#), wrote in his 1954 memoir that the streets were nearly deserted as he made his way to the studio for the end of the program.<sup>[2]</sup> Producer John Houseman reported that the Mercury Theatre staff was surprised when they were finally released from the CBS studios to find life going on as usual in the streets of New York.<sup>[1]:404</sup> The writer of a letter that [The Washington Post](#) published later likewise recalled no panicked mobs in the capital's downtown streets at the time. "The supposed panic was so tiny as to be practically immeasurable on the night of the broadcast", media historians Jefferson Pooley and Michael Socolow wrote in [Slate](#) on its 75th anniversary in 2013; "Almost nobody was fooled".<sup>[2]</sup>

According to Campbell, the most common response said to indicate a panic was calling the local newspaper or police to confirm the story or seek additional information. That, he writes, is an indicator that people were *not* generally panicking or hysterical. "The call volume perhaps is best understood as an altogether *rational* response..."<sup>[39]</sup> Some New Jersey media and law enforcement agencies received up to 40% more telephone calls than normal during the broadcast.<sup>[52]</sup>

## **Newspaper coverage and response** [\[ edit \]](#)

What a night. After the broadcast, as I tried to get back to the St. Regis where

we were living, I was blocked by an impassioned crowd of news people looking for blood, and the disappointment when they found I wasn't hemorrhaging. It wasn't long after the initial shock that whatever public panic and outrage there was vanished. But, the newspapers for days continued to feign fury.

— Orson Welles to friend and mentor Roger Hill, February 22, 1983<sup>[53]</sup>

As it was late on a Sunday night in the [Eastern Time Zone](#), where the broadcast originated, few reporters and other staff were present in newsrooms. Most newspaper coverage thus took the form of [Associated Press](#) stories, which were largely anecdotal aggregates of reporting from its various bureaus, giving the impression that panic had indeed been widespread. Many newspapers led with the Associated Press's story the next day.<sup>[39]</sup>

The [Twin City Sentinel](#) of [Winston-Salem, North Carolina](#) pointed out that the situation could have been even worse if most people had not been listening to Edgar Bergen's show: "Charlie McCarthy last night saved the United States from a sudden and panicky death by hysteria."<sup>[54]</sup>

On November 2, 1938, the Australian newspaper [The Age](#) characterized the incident as "mass hysteria" and stated that "never in the history of the United States had such a wave of terror and panic swept the continent". Unnamed observers quoted by [The Age](#) commented that "the panic could have only happened in America."<sup>[55]</sup>

Editorialists chastised the radio industry for allowing that to happen. The response may have reflected newspaper publishers' fears that radio, to which they had lost some of the advertising revenue that was scarce enough during the [Great Depression](#), would render them obsolete. In "The War of the Worlds," they saw an opportunity to cast aspersions on the newer medium: "The nation as a whole continues to face the danger of incomplete, misunderstood news over a medium which has yet to prove that it is competent to perform the news job," wrote [Editor & Publisher](#), the newspaper industry's trade journal.<sup>[2][56]</sup>

[William Randolph Hearst](#)'s papers called on broadcasters to police themselves, lest the government step in, as Iowa Senator [Clyde L. Herring](#) proposed a bill that would have required all programming to be reviewed by the FCC prior to broadcast (he never actually introduced it). Others blamed the radio audience for its credulity. Noting that any intelligent listener would have realized the broadcast was fictional, the [Chicago Tribune](#) opined, "it would be more tactful to say that some members of the radio audience are a trifle retarded mentally, and that many a program is prepared for their consumption." Other newspapers took pains to note that anxious listeners had called *their* offices to learn whether Martians were really attacking.<sup>[39]</sup>



Publicity photo of Welles distributed after the radio scare (1938)

Few contemporary accounts exist outside newspaper coverage of the mass panic and hysteria supposedly induced by the broadcast. Justin Levine, a producer at [KFI-AM](#) in Los Angeles, wrote in a 2000 history of the FCC's response to hoax broadcasts that "the anecdotal nature of such reporting makes it difficult to objectively assess the true extent and intensity of the panic."<sup>[57]</sup> Bartholomew sees this as yet more evidence that the panic was predominantly a creation of the newspaper industry.<sup>[58]</sup>

## Research [[edit](#)]

In a study published in book form as *The Invasion from Mars* (1940), Princeton professor [Hadley Cantril](#) calculated that some six million people heard "The War of the Worlds" broadcast.<sup>[24]:56</sup> He estimated that 1.7 million listeners believed the broadcast was an actual news bulletin and, of those, 1.2 million people were frightened or disturbed.<sup>[24]:58</sup> Media historians Jefferson Pooley and Michael Socolow have since concluded, however, that Cantril's study has serious flaws. Its estimate of the program's audience is more than twice as high as any other at the time. Cantril himself conceded that, but argued that unlike [Hooper](#), his estimate had attempted to capture the significant portion of the audience that did not have home telephones at that time. Since those respondents were contacted only after the media frenzy, Cantril allowed that their recollections could have been influenced by what they read in the newspapers. Claims that *Chase and Sanborn* listeners, who missed the disclaimer at the beginning when they turned to CBS during a commercial break or musical performance on that show and thus mistook "The War of the Worlds" for a real broadcast inflated the show's audience and the ensuing alleged panic, are impossible to substantiate.<sup>[2]</sup>

Apart from his admittedly-imperfect methods of estimating the audience and assessing the authenticity of their response, Pooley and Socolow found, Cantril made another error in typing audience reaction. Respondents had indicated a variety of reactions to the program, among them "excited", "disturbed", and "frightened". However, he included all of them with "panicked", failing to account for the possibility that despite their reaction, they were still aware the broadcast was staged. "[T]hose who did hear it, looked at it as a prank and accepted it that way," recalled researcher Frank Stanton.<sup>[2]</sup>

Bartholomew grants that hundreds of thousands were frightened, but calls evidence of people taking action based on their fear "scant" and "anecdotal".<sup>[59]</sup> Indeed, contemporary news articles indicate that police were swamped with hundreds of calls in numerous locations, but stories of people doing anything more than calling authorities involved mostly only small groups. Such stories were often reported by people who were panicking themselves.<sup>[39]</sup>

Later investigations found much of the alleged panicked responses to have been exaggerated or mistaken. Cantril's researchers found that contrary to what had been claimed, no admissions for shock were made at a Newark hospital during the broadcast; hospitals in New York City similarly reported no spike in admissions that night. A few suicide attempts seem to have been prevented when friends or family intervened, but no record of a successful one exists. A *Washington Post* claim that a man died of a heart attack brought on by listening to the program could not be verified. One woman filed a lawsuit against CBS, but it was soon dismissed.<sup>[2]</sup>

The FCC also received letters from the public that advised against taking reprisals.<sup>[60]</sup> Singer [Eddie Cantor](#) urged the commission not to overreact, as "censorship would retard radio immeasurably."<sup>[61]</sup> The FCC not only chose not to punish Welles or CBS but also barred complaints about "The War of the Worlds" from being brought up during license renewals. "[Janet Jackson's 2004 'wardrobe malfunction'](#) remains far more significant in the history of broadcast regulation than Orson Welles' trickery," wrote media historians Jefferson Pooley and Michael Socolow.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Meeting of Welles and Wells [ edit ]

[H. G. Wells](#) and Orson Welles met for the first and only time in late October 1940, shortly before the second anniversary of the *Mercury Theatre* broadcast, when they both happened to be lecturing in [San Antonio](#), Texas. On October 28, 1940, the two men visited the studios of [KTSA](#) radio for an interview by Charles C. Shaw,<sup>[12]:361</sup> who introduced them by characterizing the panic generated by "The War of the Worlds": "The country at large was frightened almost out of its wits".<sup>[46]</sup>

H.G. Wells expressed good-natured skepticism about the actual extent of the panic caused by "this sensational Halloween spree," saying: "Are you sure there was such a panic in America or wasn't it your Halloween fun?"<sup>[46]</sup> Orson Welles appreciated the comment: "I think that's the nicest thing that a man from England could say about the men from Mars. Mr. Hitler made a good deal of sport of it, you know.... It's supposed to show the corrupt condition and decadent state of affairs in democracy, that 'The War of the Worlds' went over as well as it did. I think it's very nice of Mr. Wells to say that not only I didn't mean it, but the American people didn't mean it."<sup>[46]</sup>

When Shaw interjected that there was "some excitement" that he did not wish to belittle, Welles asked him, "What *kind* of excitement? Mr. H. G. Wells wants to know if the excitement wasn't the same kind of excitement that we extract from a practical joke in which somebody puts a sheet over his head and says 'Boo!' I don't think anybody believes that that individual is a ghost, but we do scream and yell and rush down the hall. And that's just about what happened."<sup>[46]</sup>

"That's a very excellent description," Shaw said.<sup>[46]</sup>

"You aren't quite serious in America, yet," said Wells. "You haven't got the war right under your chins. And the consequence is you can still play with ideas of terror and conflict.... It's a natural thing to do until you're right up against it."<sup>[46]</sup>

"Until it ceases to be a game," Welles said, a phrase that Wells repeated in agreement.<sup>[46][47]</sup>

[Britain and France had then been at war](#) with Nazi Germany for more than a year.

## Authorship [ edit ]

As the *Mercury's* second theatre season began in 1938, Orson Welles and John Houseman were unable to write the *Mercury Theatre on the Air* broadcasts on their own. They hired [Howard Koch](#), whose experience in having a play performed by the [Federal Theatre Project](#) in Chicago led him to leave his law practice and move to New York to become a writer. Koch was put to work at \$50 a week, raised to \$60 after he proved himself.<sup>[1]:390</sup> *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* was a sustaining show, so in



lieu of a more substantial salary, Houseman gave Koch the rights to any script he worked on.<sup>[62]:175–176</sup>

A condensed version of the script for "The War of the Worlds" appeared in the debut issue of *Radio Digest* magazine (February 1939), in an article on the broadcast that credited "Orson Welles and his Mercury Theatre players".<sup>[63]</sup> The complete script appeared in *The Invasion from Mars: A Study in the Psychology of Panic* (1940), the book publication of a [Princeton University](#) study directed by psychologist [Hadley Cantril](#). Welles strongly protested Koch being listed as sole author since many others contributed to the script, but by the time the book was published, he had decided to end the dispute.<sup>[9]:176–179</sup>

Welles did seek legal redress after the CBS TV series *Studio One* presented its top-rated broadcast, "[The Night America Trembled](#)", on September 9, 1957. Hosted by [Edward R. Murrow](#), the live presentation of [Nelson S. Bond](#)'s documentary play recreated the 1938 performance of "The War of the Worlds" in the CBS studio, using the script as a framework for a series of factual narratives about a cross-section of radio listeners. No member of the *Mercury Theatre* is named.<sup>[64][65]</sup> The courts ruled against Welles, who was found to have abandoned any rights to the script after it was published in Cantril's book. Koch had granted CBS the right to use the script in its program.<sup>[66][67]</sup>

"As it developed over the years, Koch took some cash and some credit," wrote biographer Frank Brady. "He wrote the story of how he created the adaptation, with a copy of his script being made into a paperback book enjoying large printings and an album of the broadcast selling over 500,000 copies, part of the income also going to him as copyright owner."<sup>[9]:179</sup> Since his death in 1995, Koch's family has received [royalties](#) from adaptations or broadcasts.<sup>[67]</sup>

The book, *The Panic Broadcast*, was first published in 1970.<sup>[68]</sup> The best-selling album was a sound recording of the broadcast titled *Orson Welles' War of the Worlds*, "released by arrangement with Manheim Fox Enterprises, Inc."<sup>[69][70]</sup> The source discs for the recording are unknown.<sup>[33]</sup> Welles told Peter Bogdanovich that it was a poor-quality recording taken off the air at the time of broadcast – "a pirated record which people have made fortunes of money and have no right to play." Welles received no compensation.<sup>[71]</sup>

## Legacy [\[ edit \]](#)

Initially apologetic about the supposed panic his broadcast had caused (and privately fuming that newspaper reports of lawsuits were either greatly exaggerated or totally fabricated<sup>[57]</sup>), Welles later embraced the story as part of his personal myth. "Houses were emptying, churches were filling up; from [Nashville](#) to [Minneapolis](#) there was wailing in the streets and the rending of garments," he told [Peter Bogdanovich](#) years later.<sup>[12]:18</sup>



Plaque commemorating the radio broadcast in [Township of West Windsor](#) [\[ edit \]](#)

CBS, too, found reports ultimately useful in promoting the strength of its influence. It presented a fictionalized account of the panic in "[The Night America Trembled](#)", a 1957 episode of the television series *Studio One*, and included it prominently in its 2003 celebrations of CBS's 75th anniversary as a television broadcaster. "The legend of the panic," according to Jefferson and Socolow, "grew exponentially over the following years ... [It] persists because it so perfectly captures our unease with the media's power over our lives."<sup>[2]</sup>

In 1975, [ABC](#) aired the television movie *The Night That Panicked America*, depicting the effect the radio drama had on the public using fictional, but typical American families of the time.

The New Jersey [Township of West Windsor](#), where [Grover's Mill](#) is located, commemorated the 50th anniversary of the broadcast in 1988 with four days of festivities including art and planetarium shows, a panel discussion, a parade, burial of a time capsule, a dinner dance, film festivals devoted to H. G. Wells and Orson Welles, and the dedication of a bronze monument to the fictional Martian landings. Howard Koch, an author of the original radio script, attended the 49th anniversary celebration as an honored guest.<sup>[74]</sup>

The 75th anniversary of "The War of the Worlds" was marked by an international rebroadcast with an introduction by [George Takei](#),<sup>[75]</sup> and an episode of the [PBS](#) documentary series *American Experience*.<sup>[76][77]</sup>

Additionally, and perhaps accidentally, this also qualifies as an early alternate reality project, as, aside from the introduction, was played as a real event, with little self awareness and asking the audience to accept what it was presenting as a form of reality.

## Awards [ edit ]

On January 27, 2003, the Mercury Theatre broadcast of "The War of the Worlds" was one of the first 50 recordings made part of the [National Recording Registry](#) of the [Library of Congress](#).<sup>[78]</sup>

## Notable re-airings and adaptations [ edit ]

*See also: [List of works based on The War of the Worlds](#)*

Since the original *Mercury Theatre on the Air* broadcast of "The War of the Worlds", many re-airings, remakes, re-enactments, parodies, and new dramatizations have occurred.<sup>[79]</sup> Many American radio stations, particularly those that regularly air [old-time radio](#) programs, re-air the original program as a Halloween tradition. Some notable examples include:

- A [Spanish-language](#) version produced in February 1949 by Leonardo Paez and Eduardo Alcaraz for Radio Quito in [Quito, Ecuador](#), reportedly set off panic in the



Welles often invokes "The War of the Worlds" as host of *Who's Out There?* (1975), an [award-winning NASA](#) documentary short film by [Robert Drew](#) about the likelihood of life on other planets.<sup>[72][73]</sup>

city. Police and fire brigades rushed out of town to engage the supposed alien invasion force. After it was revealed that the broadcast was fiction, the panic transformed into a riot. Hundreds attacked Radio Quito and *El Comercio*, a local newspaper that had participated in the hoax by publishing false reports of unidentified objects in the skies above Ecuador in the days preceding the broadcast. The riot resulted in at least seven deaths, including those of Paez's girlfriend and nephew. Paez moved to [Venezuela](#) after the incident.<sup>[59][80][81][82][83]</sup>

- An [updated version of the radio drama](#) aired several times between 1968 and 1975 on [WKBW](#) radio in Buffalo, New York.<sup>[84][85]</sup>
- On the 50th anniversary of the radio play, on October 30, 1988, a remake was aired, originated by [WGBH](#),<sup>[86]</sup> picked up by 150 [National Public Radio](#) stations, produced by Judith Walcutt of *Otherworld Media*, recorded outdoors at *Skywalker Ranch*, directed by [David Ossman](#), who updated Howard Koch's original script, to make it sound like modern public radio,<sup>[87]</sup> with Koch's approval and starring [Jason Robards](#), [Steve Allen](#), [Hector Elizondo](#), [René Auberjonois](#), [Philip Proctor](#), [Douglas Edwards](#), [Scott Simon](#), and [Terry Gross](#).<sup>[88]</sup> It was nominated for a [Grammy Award](#) for Best Spoken Word or Nonmusical Recording.<sup>[89][90]</sup>
- In 1994, [L.A. Theatre Works](#) and [Pasadena, California public radio](#) station [KPCC](#)<sup>[91][92][93]</sup> broadcast the original play before a live audience.<sup>[94]</sup> Most of the cast for this production had appeared in one of more incarnation of *Star Trek*, including [Leonard Nimoy](#), [John de Lancie](#), [Dwight Schultz](#), [Wil Wheaton](#), [Gates McFadden](#), [Brent Spiner](#), [Armin Shimerman](#), [Jerry Hardin](#), and [Tom Virtue](#). De Lancie directed. It was accompanied by an original sequel called "When Welles Collide" co-written by de Lancie and Nat Segaloff featuring the same cast as themselves.<sup>[95][96]</sup>
- On October 30, 2002, [XM Satellite Radio](#) collaborated with conservative talk-show host [Glenn Beck](#) for a live recreation of the broadcast, using Koch's original script and airing on the [Buzz XM](#) channel, as well as on Beck's 100 AM/FM affiliates. In 2003, the parties were sued for [copyright infringement](#) by Koch's widow, but settled under undisclosed terms.<sup>[97][98][67]</sup>
- On October 30, 2013, [KPCC](#) re-aired the show, introduced by [George Takei](#)<sup>[99]</sup> with a documentary on the 1938 radio show's production.<sup>[100][101]</sup>
- On November 12, 2017, a new opera based on "War of the Worlds" premiered at [Walt Disney Concert Hall](#) and outdoors in [Los Angeles](#). The music was composed by [Annie Gosfield](#), commissioned by the [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#), directed by [Yuval Sharon](#), and narrated by [Sigourney Weaver](#).<sup>[102]</sup>

### **Parodies**  [ [edit](#) ]

- In 1982 "Warp of the Worlds" by SHOCKWAVE, out of KFAI in Minneapolis. Written by Kate Worley and Jerry Stearns. Performed live at Minicon.<sup>[87][103]</sup>
- "They Came for The Candy", by The Radio Pirates out of Madison, WI. A half-hour produced by Scott Dickers and written by Jay Rath.<sup>[87]</sup>
- [The Simpsons](#), [Treehouse of Horror XVII](#) episode "*The Day the Earth Looked Stupid*", released in 2006, takes the idea of the mass panic, despite it being fake, but in the end, once everyone realizes it was a hoax, and they'll not fall for it again, it turns out Aliens (Specifically [Kang and Kodos](#)), have invaded earth, the

episode ends with the two aliens confused as to why they weren't hailed as the liberators of earth, after destroying [Springfield](#).

### Alternate versions [ edit ]

- The movie *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*, set many years later, assumes the invasion was real and that Welles and the others were forced to claim the invasion was fiction.

### See also [ edit ]


- [Jafr alien invasion](#)
- [Jovian–Plutonian gravitational effect](#)

### Notes [ edit ]











- <sup>^</sup> Welles said, "I got the idea from a BBC show that had gone on the year before [sic] when a Catholic priest told how some Communists had seized London and a lot of people in London believed it. And I thought that'd be fun to do on a big scale, let's have it from outer space—that's how I got the idea."<sup>[7]</sup>
- <sup>^</sup> Biographer Frank Brady claims that Welles had read the story in 1936 in *The Witch's Tales*, a [pulp magazine](#) of "weird-dramatic and supernatural stories" that reprinted it from *Pearson's Magazine*.<sup>[9]:162</sup> However, there is no evidence that *The Witch's Tales*, which only ran for two issues, or its accompanying radio series ever featured *The War of the Worlds*.<sup>[13][14][15]:33</sup>


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- [The Martian Invasion](#)<sup>↗</sup> at the [Wayback Machine](#) (archived July 21, 2011) describes instances of panic, outcry over the panic and the responses by the FCC and CBS
- [BBC report on the 1926 Knox riot hoax](#)<sup>↗</sup>

## External links [[edit](#)]

- ["The War of the Worlds"](#)<sup>↗</sup> (October 30, 1938) on *The Mercury Theatre on the Air* (Indiana University Bloomington)
- [Mp3 download](#)<sup>↗</sup> from the [Internet Archive](#)
- [War of the Worlds Invasion: The Complete War of the Worlds Website](#)<sup>↗</sup> (John Gosling)





Wikiquote has quotations related to: *[The War of the Worlds \(1938 radio drama\)](#)*



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- [mp3 of King Daavid MacKenzie's \*Echoes of a Century\*](#) 2005 program which contains sections of the *Chase & Sanborn* and *Mercury Theatre* broadcasts of October 30, 1938, edited together in a manner approximating the sequence believed to have generated the reported panic
- [The War of the Worlds – A Radio Program and A Film Score](#)
- [Who's Out There?](#) NASA film with commentary on the 1938 broadcast and extraterrestrial life (1975)

<span>V</span> · <span>T</span> · <span>E</span>	<b>Orson Welles</b>	<span>[show]</span>
<span>V</span> · <span>T</span> · <span>E</span>	<b>H. G. Wells's <i>The War of the Worlds</i> (1897)</b>	<span>[show]</span>
<b>Authority control</b> <span></span>	MusicBrainz release group: <a href="#">408491d8-4116-3be0-9781-9cafe47427eb</a> <span></span>	

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