

# Shortwave Center

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## Book Review

*Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today*  
(ISBN 978-0-7864-3996-6)

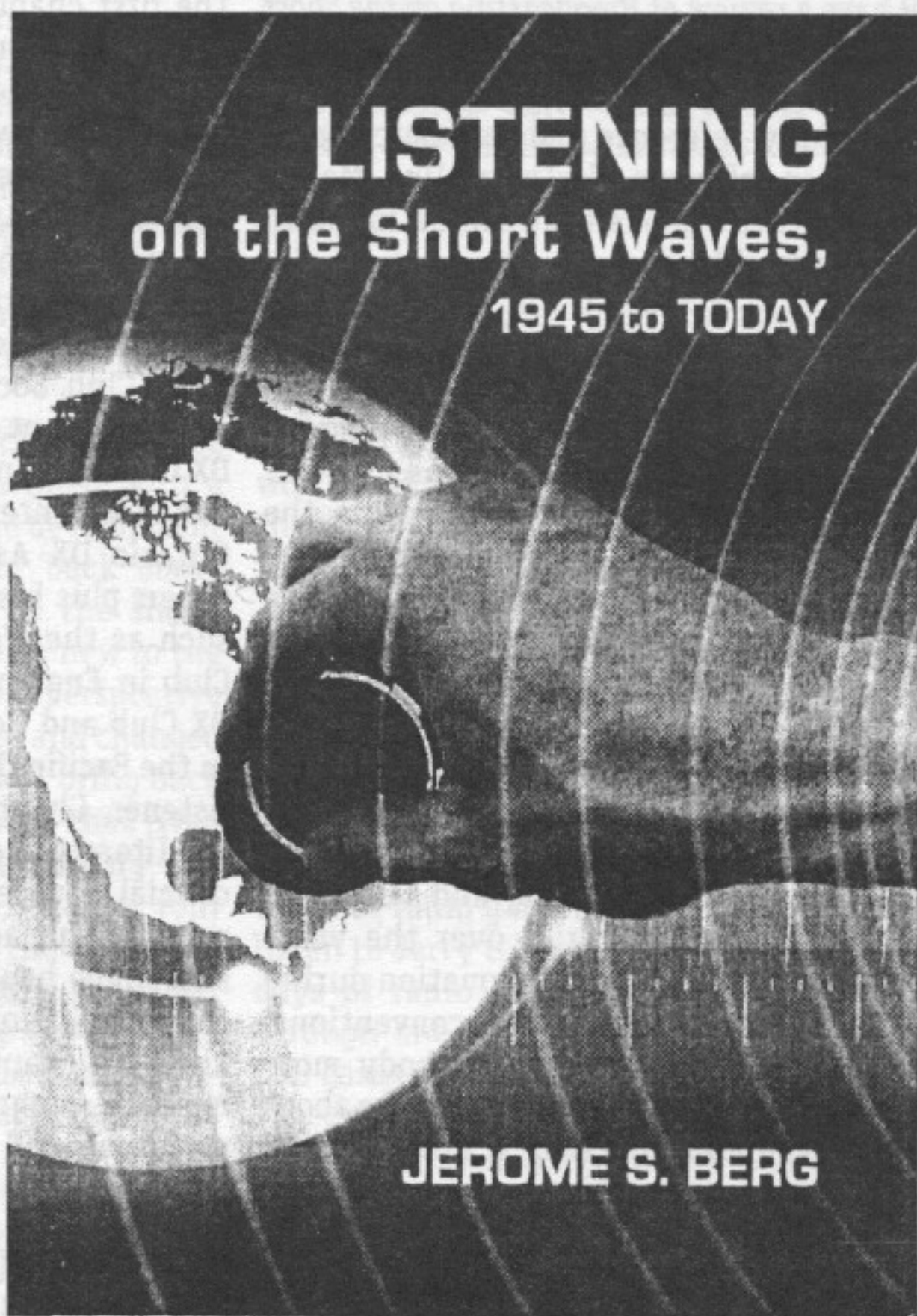
Written by Jerome S. Berg  
Published by McFarland & Company

Reviewed by Richard A. D'Angelo

I can save you some time; if you have any interest in the history of the shortwave radio hobby from a listener's perspective go out and purchase this book and skip reading the rest of this review. This is really quite simple, *Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today* is a marvelous story of the development of the organized shortwave listening hobby told by one of the great veterans of the era. Another historical masterpiece following upon the success of the author's first book a decade ago.

Back in 1999, Jerome ("Jerry") S. Berg's ground breaking masterpiece *On The Shortwaves, 1923-1945: Broadcast Listening in the Pioneer Days of Radio* was released to critical acclaim. *On The Short Waves* was a book that captured the thrill and excitement of the early days of radio broadcasting, radio listening and DXing. It quickly became a "must have" in every shortwave listener's library reflecting the extensive scholarly research into the history of medium wave and shortwave radio broadcasting and listening and the events surrounding the period 1923-1945. For the first time the com-

plete history of the pioneer days of shortwave broadcast, from the early concepts of Marconi & Armstrong, through the Golden Era of the 1930s and finally through World War II were captured in a fully illustrated hardcover reference for every shortwave listener. If you have never read it, this would be a good time to pick it up while embarking on the next two books in the series, *Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today* and *Broadcasting on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today* (ISBN 978-0-7864-3674-3). The three books are essential readings for the shortwave radio listener, hobbyist and



historian. If you are looking to learn more about the history of shortwave radio, the role of the listener and the broadcasting organization that used the medium, the *On The Short Waves* trilogy is required reading and quite enjoyable reading too.

Since 1999, Jerry Berg has continued his research into shortwave listening with McFarland & Company releasing two new titles about its history that I am sure members will want to get their hands on for some good reading during the DX season. Jerry has done it again and again with two superb volumes; one from the listening perspective and one from the broadcasting perspective. There was so much material covered in Berg's research that writing one massive tome on shortwave history wasn't enough of a project so he expanded it to two separate books. This review will focus on *Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today*; I'll have a review of *Broadcasting on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today* next month. By the way, McFarland is a leading U.S. publisher of scholarly, reference and academic books. Located in Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland publishes books that can be found in libraries worldwide.

As many of you know, Jerry Berg has been an active shortwave listener for several decades. He has been a long time member of many clubs worldwide as well as a regular contributor. He has been involved in the affairs of the North American Shortwave Association for a very long time as an active member, contributor, former editor, current Executive Council member, a member of the club's Country List Committee and Chair of the Committee to Preserve Radio Verifications. Also, Jerry is a shortwave radio historian doing general research into the early days of radio broadcasting and listening, collecting much material over the years and disseminating this information during lectures at radio gatherings, conventions, etc. Consequently, there is nobody more accomplished than Jerry Berg to write about shortwave radio from both a listening and broadcasting perspective.

*Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today* (ISBN 978-0-7864-3996-6) is written from

the standpoint of the serious shortwave enthusiast the book is sure to please the reader with the broad perspective and detailed history it offers. The book begins with an examination of the broad shortwave audience. It then presents in detail the histories of the major North American shortwave clubs, and reviews the professional and listener-generated shortwave literature of the era. It also covers the DX programs and other listening fare to which shortwave listeners were most attracted, and the QSL-cards sought as confirmation of their reception. The book presents a chronology of the shortwave receivers available to listeners, and discusses how changes in receiver technology impacted the listening experience. It also addresses the important role that computers have played in the shortwave listening of recent decades. The book covers numerous topics in its nine chapters.

The first chapter provides a general introduction to shortwave broadcasting through WWII. The second chapter describes the listeners and why they tune the shortwave bands. The meat of the book is the third and fourth chapters. Chapter three covers the clubs with detailed histories of North American Shortwave Association, American Shortwave Listeners Club, Newark News Radio Club, Society to Preserve the Engrossing Enjoyment of DXing, the Universal Radio DX Club, the International Shortwave Club, Canadian International DX Club, and the Ontario DX Association as well as many others plus histories of many foreign clubs such as the World DX Club and British DX Club in England and the Australian Radio DX Club and New Zealand Radio DX League in the Pacific that had an impact on the U.S. listener. Chapter four provides a review of the literature of the shortwave world from official sources to electronic magazines, monitoring magazines and other references, shortwave books, surveys, DX newsletters, club publications, recordings and DX humor. The fifth chapter provides a history of the main DX programs, plus a review of other programs and station-run DX clubs. Can the world of shortwave radio be complete without a serious discussion of the equipment available to listen with? Chapter six is a detailed historical review of the

development of shortwave receivers since World War II; communications receivers, tabletops, portables, and kits. This includes communications receivers by Hallicrafters, Hammarlund, National, and other manufacturers past and present, with special attention to receivers that were intended for SWBC listening. The seventh chapter covers verifications, station QSL policies, reporting techniques, QSL literature, DX statistics, awards and contests, country lists, SWL-card swapping, and WPE calls. Finally, the modern era of shortwave radio gets into computers and the Internet which is covered in the eighth chapter. The ninth and final chapter enables Jerry to draw some interesting conclusions and offers his thoughts about the future of shortwave broadcasting and shortwave listening.

So what does *Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today* say about NASWA? Plenty! In covering shortwave clubs, our organization plays a major role in *Listening*. NASWA plays a significant role in the post-war period as the shortwave listening hobby developed. Significant contributions from key members of our organization were recognized. People such as Bill Eddings, Bill Oliver, Don Jensen, Gerry Dexter, Bob Brown, Harold Cones and many others tell the clubs story.

I found myself fascinated by chapters three and four. Chapter three is a filled with a detailed history describing the development of many radio clubs brought back many memories of my early days in the shortwave hobby. If you are relatively new to the hobby, this will give you some perspective about how the hobby developed and changed over the years. This chapter will bring back a lot of fond memories for those that lived through these years while tuning the shortwave bands. In a sense, chapter four is much of the same but on the literature side of the shortwave radio hobby. A number of long gone publications are covered and illustrated once again providing the newcomer to the hobby some perspective while rekindling warm memories for long time radio hobbyists. I subscribed to many of the magazines and publications covered in

this chapter. The collection of illustrations featured in the book is outstanding. The old expression about a picture being worth a thousand words is often true as I found myself staring at many of the illustrations while recalling my encounters with many of these great vintage publications. Naturally, many of the active names that dominated the club scene and also the publication scene are brought back to life once again; many of the names are still major players in today's listening environment.

The many DX programs and receivers described in detail in chapters five and six continue the flood of vintage great memories. The Happy Station with Eddie Startz, DX Juke Box morphing into Media Network all from Radio Nederland's are but a sampling of the history on the program side. The receivers covered are basically anything you can dream up and more. My first purchased receiver, a National NC-190 with its shortwave bandspread, is one of many covered. Early tubes all the way to modern marvels is the best way to describe what awaits.

Another important positive aspect of this book is the Chapter Notes. I diligently read them flipping from chapter text to the notes for additional details. There is almost another book buried in the Chapter Notes which are worth reading. If you follow them along with the text of each chapter, they add considerable additional texture to the adventure.

Over the years, numerous DXers and shortwave listeners, myself included, have gotten to know Jerry Berg. As Chair of the CPRV and an avid fan of radio history, Jerry has accumulated a wealth of radio broadcasting history, both medium wave and shortwave. Often at radio gatherings, hobbyists get to listen to Jerry telling stories from the early days of radio broadcasting while leafing through one of the many CPRV albums of QSL cards and letters from the early days. These discussions usually perk one's interest in the subject matter. Thankfully, he took the time to put together this terrific book which captures so much of the flavor of that

time period from a listener's perspective. What sets this book apart from any other books written about the early days of radio broadcasting is that a radio hobbyist, with the insight of a true radio hobbyist, has written this one.

*Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today*  
By Jerome S. Berg is a 423 page, hardbound (7 x 10 inch) book, which includes 120 photographs and a detailed index. For the benefit of those wishing to do additional reading or research, comprehensive end-notes and a selected bibliography contain extensive references to both popular and academic resources. The book is available direct from the publisher, McFarland & Co., Inc., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640 for US\$65.00 plus US\$4.00 shipping and handling in the United States and US\$6.00 elsewhere. Also, orders may be placed by telephone (1-800-253-2187) or FAX (1-336-246-5018) or through the publishers' website

<<http://www.mcfarlandpub.com>>. Orders can be charged to VISA, MasterCard, AMEX, or Discover cards. The books are also available from Universal Radio in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, and from major Internet booksellers such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Waterstone's.

*Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today* is a radio book that needs to be in every radio listener's library whether for general shortwave radio hobby interest, academic or historic purposes. It is a remarkable journey from the shortwave listener perspective on how the shortwave hobby developed and grew post World War II. It is a historical masterpiece of hobby nostalgia that charts a path from tube gear to computers. What better time than today to dig into some terrific hobby reading. Definitely, *Listening on the Short Waves, 1945 to Today* is a "must read" for every radio enthusiast.