



Looking Back

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Looking Back is a nostalgic reflection on the shortwave scene of yesteryears, written from the personal experience of the author, who has been DXing the shortwave bands for over seven decades.

Martian Madness

Most radio enthusiasts will remember, or be aware of, the dramatic airing of Orson Welles version of the H.G. Wells science fiction story, "War of the Worlds". This ingenious tale was written in 1938, and, along with "The Time Machine", remains one of the classics of Sci-Fi to this day.

When Orson Welles presented his radio version, it was over the CBS network on the AM band (I'm not sure if it was the key station, WCBS, or not.) and from studios in New York. Local town names were used to make the story more believable, and there were several "news bulletins" in the format. All of which, despite warning denials of the reality of the program, produced a famous panic reaction in the listening public.

What is not so well known is that this program has been repeated several times since, in different locations and countries. Perhaps the most significant was in Ecuador, from the Quito station, Radio Quito, La Voz de la Capital, 760 and 4920 kHz. The SW outlet used the call of HCQRX in earlier days. The station is news-oriented and associated with the newspaper El Comercio. It used the slogan "Lo de hoy en radio", roughly translated to "Today's (news) on the radio".

In 1949, Radio Quito broadcast an adaptation of their own, using names of Ecuadorian towns and employing actors to represent local officials, to add authenticity to the program. Public reaction was again of panic degree, and the station broadcast a denial of the program as fact. However, the public took severe action against the Radio Quito building (which included the newspaper) by setting fire to it!

This incident was the subject of a special edition of DX Partyline over HCJB, in 1977. It featured an interview with well-known DXer Don Moore.

Since the original broadcast, repeats of various types have occurred in Chile, Portugal, and other U.S. cities. I do not have the details on these, but the



overall historical impression, in my opinion, suggests that today's society is at least partly conditioned by various science programs, and an interest in the possibility of encountering "new races" from outer space. Perhaps this explains our predilection for "Martian Madness".

Good listening.

Note: I would like to express my appreciation to DX friends Jerry Berg and Rich d'Angelo, for material, which has helped in this article.

Above Illustration: *The New York Times* from October 31, 1938