

Mr. Keen

Created by Robert Chambers, developed for radio by Frank and Anne Hummert

Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons was one of network radio's longest running detective shows, although listening to it now would hardly explain why. MR. KEEN was a kind, elderly (and rather boring) sleuth, and with the aid of his loyal but bumbling assistant, Mike Clancy, was on the airwaves from 1937 to 1955, logging nearly 20 years of crime solving. The series came out of the soap opera fiction factory of Frank and Anne Hummert and encompassed most of the trite dialogue and snail plotting of daytime serials.



Over the years it changed days, time slots, sponsors, and even networks (although it was usually on CBS) and it was a 30 minute weekly show for nearly all of it run, changing to the daily 15 minute show in 1952. Bennett Kilpack (pictured) was the voice of Mr. Keen and Jim Kelly played Clancy. Later in the run Keen was played by Arthur Hughes and finally, Phil Clarke.

Early in the series, the writers forgot about the title and Mr. Keen just solved murders. But the familiar title, and its theme song, "Someday I'll Find You", were simply too popular to change. The plots were so contrived the audience had usually figured out the solution before Mr. Keen tried to explain it to Clancy. Exactly who this duo worked for was never stated; they simply worked cases without the police. Keen was a cordial old gent and Clancy the genial but dull Irishman, and no one in the stories ever seemed to challenge their right to jump in on a case. Approximately 60 episodes, spanning most the 17 years on the air, still exist today, and the fond memories, among a certain demographic, remain.

Perhaps hoping to cash in on those memories, in the mid-eighties Aaron Spelling dusted off the original concept, and launched the vaguely similarly-titled Finder of Lost Loves television series.

But the most amazing twist of all came in 2003, when Moonstone Comics, as part of their Moonstone Noir line, reinvented kindly, elderly Mr. Keen as a big, mean-looking black dude. This was no some softie reuniting lost lovers, but a tireless manhunter.

I'm guessing they acquired the rights simply on the off-chance there'd still be a little vague, fuzzy name recognition -- over fifty years after the show went off the airwaves.

Noir? I say "Nah."

HMMM...

- There was a book, *The Tracer of Lost Persons*, published in 1906, by one Robert W. Chambers. It consisted of several short stories in the form of untitled chapters, was set in

New York City and Mr. Keen was more of a matchmaker-for-hire than a detective. Most sources, though, credit producers Frank and Anne Hummert as the creators, although most shows boasted that the show was "based on the novel Mr. Keen."

EVIDENCE

- "Saints preserve us, Mr. Keen!"

RADIO

- MR. KEEN, TRACER OF LOST PERSONS
(1937, NBC Blue; 1947, CBS)
30-minute episodes, weekly
15-minute episodes daily
Writers: Barbara Bates, Lawrence Klee, Robert J. Shaw, Charles J. Gussman, Stedman Coles, David Davidson
Director: Richard Leonard
Producers: Frank and Anne Hummert
Theme Song: "Someday I'll Find You"
Starring Bennett Kilpack as MR. KEEN
(later played by Arthur Hughes and Phil Clarke)
with Jim Kelly as Clancy
and Florence Malone as Miss Ellis
- "The Case of the Girl Who Flirted" (February 3, 1944)
- "Mr. Treavor's Secret" (February 17, 1944)
- "The Case of Murder in the Air" (February (February 24, 1944)
- "The Case of the Leaping Dog" (April 13, 1944)
- "The Nightmare Murder Case" (December 14, 1944)
- "The Case of the Absent-Minded Professor" (March 15, 1945)
- "The Glamorous Widow" (May 23, 1946)
- "The Case of Murder and the Star of Death" (May 9, 1949)
- "The Case of Murder and the Blood-Stained Necklace" (September 15, 1949)
- "The Yellow Talon Murder Case" (September 22, 1949)
- "The Silver Dagger Murder Case" (October 13, 1949)
- "The Case of the Ruthless Murderers" (October 27, 1949)
- "The Engaged Girl Murder Case" (November 10, 1949)
- "The Case of the Rushville Murder" (January 5, 1950)
- "The Case of Murder and the Jewel Thief" (February 9, 1950)
- "The Innocent Flirtation Murder Case" (March 13, 1950)
- "The Case of the Murdered Detective" (April 6, 1950)
- "The Country Club Murder Case" (April 20, 1950)
- "The Case of Murder and the Missing Car" (May 11, 1950)
- "The Skull and Crossbones Murder Case" (May 18, 1950)
- "The Broken Window Murder Case" (May 25, 1950)
- "The Quicksand Murder" (June 1, 1950)

- "The Photograph Album Murder" (July 27, 1951)
- "The Silver Candlestick Murder" (March 13, 1952)

COMICS

- MR. KEEN: TRACER OF LOST PERSONS
(2003, Moonstone)
3-issue mini-series
Story by Justin Gray
Art by Lee Ferguson

In 2003, Moonstone Comics, as part of their Moonstone Noir line, reinvented kindly, elderly Mr. Keen as a big, mean-looking black dude. And he who's not some softie reuniting lost lovers, but a tireless manhunter. Moonstone promises "Action, violence, love, loss, and psychosis." Noir? I say "Nah." Why didn't they just make up their own character? In fact, this Mr. Keen is such a departure from the original concept, that I'm giving him [his own entry](#)...

SHORT STORIES

- "Between Heaven and Hoboken" (2009; [Sex, Lies and Private Eyes](#), by Kevin VanHook & Jamie Sapp)

FURTHER REFERENCE

- Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons (2004, by Jim Cox)...[Buy this book](#)

Respectfully submitted by [Jack French](#). Additional info by [Kevin Burton Smith](#). Mr. Keen illustration by Lee Ferguson.