

TARZAN OF THE APES

By the early 1930's radio programs held a place in American culture similar to television shows today. Families would gather nightly around the radio and listen to the continuing adventures of Little Orphan Annie, Chandu the Magician, or ~ Tarzan! Hot on the heels of Weissmuller's "Tarzan the Ape Man" the always-enterprising Joe Neebe broached the idea of a Tarzan radio show to Edgar Rice Burroughs. Burroughs was excited and the show quickly became a family affair: Daughter Joan Burroughs would play Jane and her husband - and former movie Tarzan - Jim Pierce would portray the Lord of the Jungle.

Tarzan made his radio debut on September 10, 1932, and the show was unique in a number of ways. Rather than being broadcast live like other radio programs, the Tarzan show was prerecorded onto phonograph records, which were then shipped off to radio stations. The show boasted state-of-the-art recording technology and elaborate sound effects. Burroughs wrote that "They have injected all the jungle noises, including the roaring of Numa the lion, the screaming of Sheeta the panther, the cries of the bull apes, the laughing of the hyaenas, the rustling of the leaves, the screams and shouts." Radio supplied the sound ~ your imagination provided the pictures!

The Tarzan radio show received a live premiere at the Fox Pantages Theatre in Hollywood. Three thousand people attended the festivities (even Johnny Weissmuller showed up) and listened as the first show was aired, certainly a unique "live" broadcast. The show was sponsored in part by the Signal Oil Company, and at their gas stations you were able to pick up Tarzan puzzles and other promotions, while dad filled the car up with Tarzan gas.

Tarzan was broadcast nightly in fifteen-minute episodes and lasted for two years.

For the Old Time Radio Researchers, I'm _____, your announcer. Now on with the show!

