

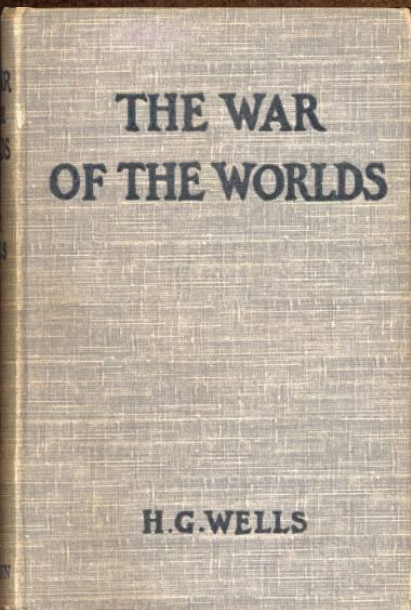


How the radio drama

The War of the Worlds

Caused a panic in 20th century America

Original book by Herbert George Wells – 1898



Later turned into a radio drama – adapted by Howard Koch, and produced and directed by Orson Welles as part of the American radio drama anthology The Mercury Theatre on the Air

Orson wanted to make the play in a way that made it seem like the events were actually happening, but did not anticipate that people would really believe it.

GB names → US names



The radio drama in a nutshell

Theme music, announcement of the show

Prologue

Regular show with brief news bulletins

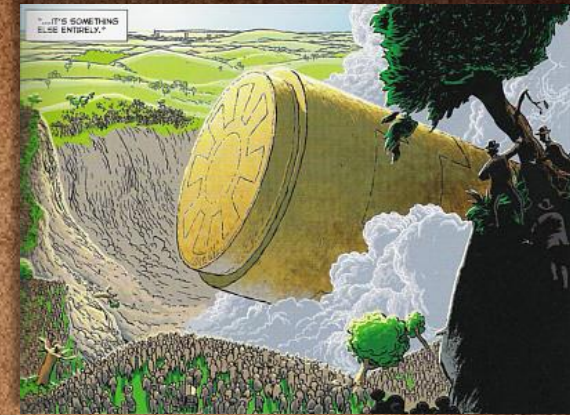
explosions on Mars



odd object landed in Grover's Mill

Live reports from Grover's Mill

Marsians emerge and attack



Evermore alarming news from around the world – aliens are invading and the military can't stop it

Live report from above New York about Martian war machines and the black fog

Break



The radio drama in a nutshell

The rest of the show is told in a style closer to other radio dramas, and follows Professor Pierson scavenging through the remainders of humanity and writing it all down when the martians were gone.



In the end, the martians were found to have been exterminated by Earth's microbes, against which they had not adapted

Influence of media

The radio drama

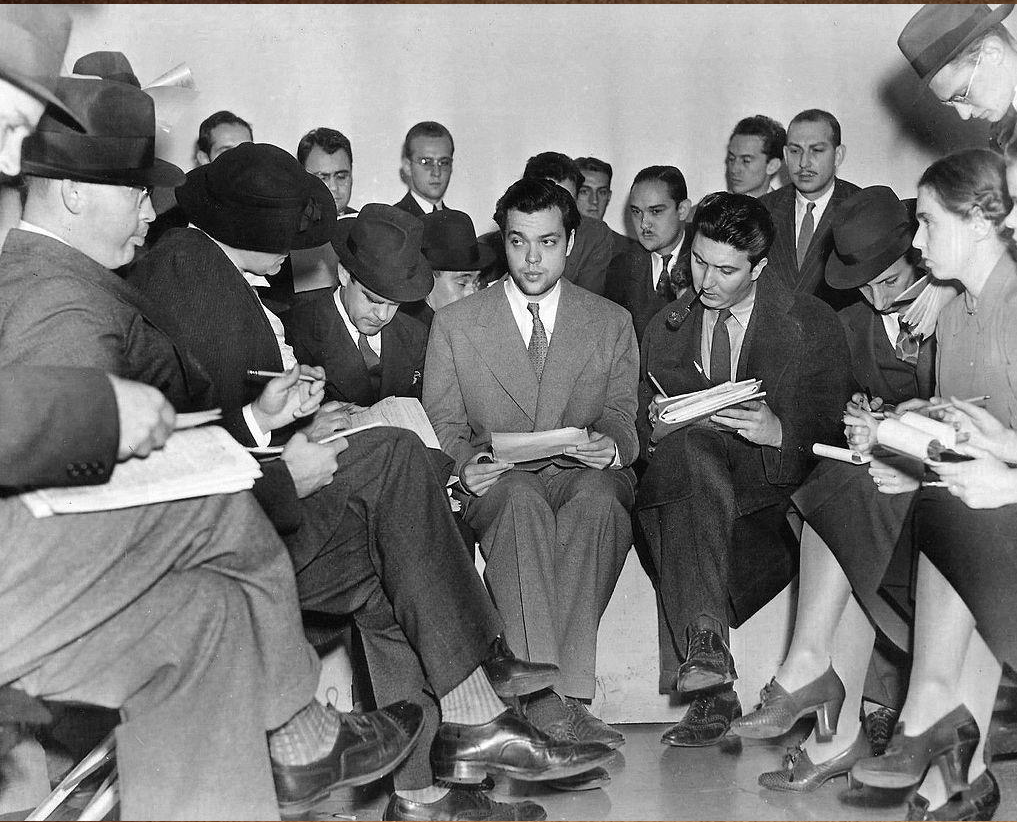
- solo piano for tension
- convincing voice acting
- SFX
- current world events;



Despite being said four times during the show and a few more after it that it was completely fictitious, some still believed it was real.

Influence of media

The newspaper



Newspapers had reported that mass hysteria and panicked mobs were acting nationwide

The newspaper had completely overblown the scale of the panic, and exaggerated the play's influence on the public.



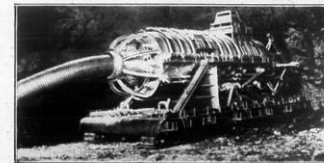
FAKE RADIO 'WAR' STIRS TERROR THROUGH U.S.



"War" Victim
Caroline Cantini, WPA actress, listening to his radio in West 47th St., heard announcement of "smoke in Times Square." Running to street, she fell, broke her arm.



"I Didn't Know" Orson Welles, after amazement at public reaction. He adapted H. G. Wells' "War of the Worlds" for radio and played principal role. Left: a machine conceived for another H. G. Wells story. Dramatic description of landing of weird "machine from Mars" started last night's panic.



Influence of media

The newspaper

In a phone survey taken that same night, only 2% out of 5 thousand households said they were even listening to the play, and other sources confirm that there was in fact no mass panic and that the number of people who did believe the play was real quickly declined.



TORONTO DAILY STAR
 47TH YEAR
 TORONTO, MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1939—38 PAGES
 3c PER COPY, 12c PER WEEK

OTTAWA SEEKS WAY TO BAN RADIO 'HORRORS'
SLAVS TO SWALLOW UP BRITISHERS, GERMANS IS 100-YEAR PREDICTION

HOME AND SPORT EDITION

ILLNESS PLUS POVERTY COULD END IN TRAGEDY BUT FOR FEDERATION

ANGER FLARES AS U.S. GETS OVER RADIO PANIC 'THRILLER' CURB LIKELY

DR. DAFOE BLUSHES AT EINSTEIN'S PRAISE

POLICE BULLETS FAIL TO HALT AN 'EX-CONVICT'

'DUCHESS', IN PEN AS THIEF FACES BIGAMY CHARGE, TOO

ROBBERS LISTEN TO SERVICE TRY TO CRACK CHURCH SAFE

CHANG'S EX-CAPTOR IS REPORTED CAPTIVE

The New York Times.
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 NEW YORK, MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1939 77

MEAD STANDS PAT AS A NEW DEALER IN BID FOR SENATE
 Democratic Candidate Opposes Any Except Minor Changes In Labor and Security Laws
 UPHOLDS THEORY OF EYE

Radio Listeners in Panic, Taking War Drama as Fact
 Many Flee Homes to Escape 'Gas Raid From Mars'—Phone Calls Swamp Police at Broadcast of Wells Fantasy

OUSTED JEWS FIND REFUGE IN POLAND AFTER BORDER STAY
 Exile Go to Relatives' Homes or to Camps Maintained by Distribution Committee
 REVEAL CRUELTY OF TRIP



Thank you for listening