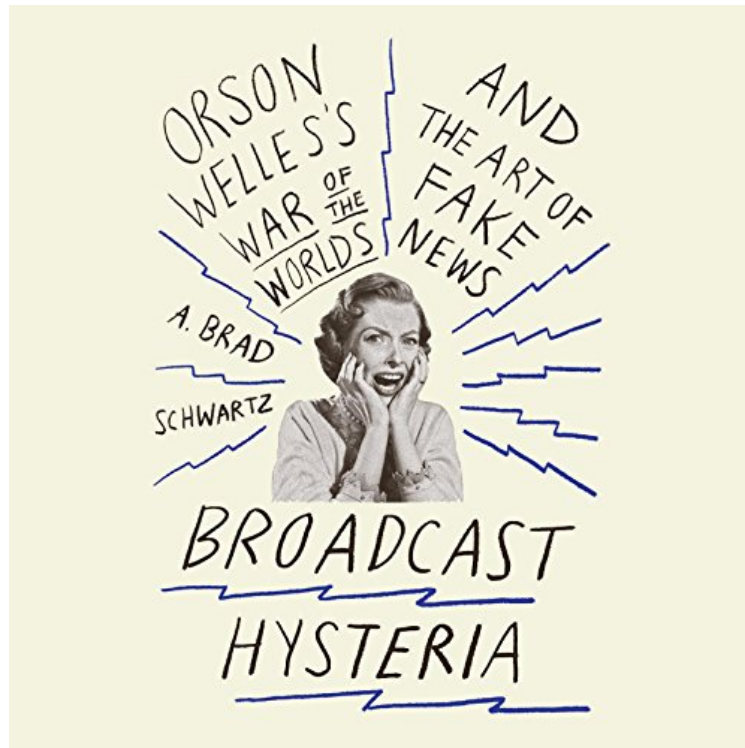


# Broadcast Hysteria: Orson Welles's War of the World's and the Art of Fake News

A. Brad Schwartz

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**A. Brad Schwartz : Broadcast Hysteria: Orson Welles's War of the World's and the Art of Fake News** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Broadcast Hysteria: Orson Welles's War of the World's and the Art of Fake News:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Excellent BookBy Kindle CustomerExcellent book for anyone interested in this broadcast, broadcasting history or 1930's radio. The book gives excellent, in depth coverage of the subject. Some of the issues involved in the War of the Worlds broadcast are with us today, such as the power of the media, what should be the role of government with regards to the media and efforts of the media to police itself which can be worse than government regulation. A good point the book makes is that the hysteria was blown way out of proportion by the news media and much of the hysteria can be blamed on an ignorant, poorly informed public who ignored reports of a Martian invasion and thought the Germans had invaded or a natural disaster had occurred. Public ignorance is a problem today.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating analysis of probably the most famous radio broadcastBy MarkFascinating analysis of probably the most famous radio broadcast, exploring both the actual story behind the perceived mass hysteria in the US (a misinterpretation sadly still widely taught) and the importance of fake news for modern media consumption. Also simply a well-written book that's enjoyable to read.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is by far one of the best. In the top 2 for sureBy NAI have

read many books and articles on the subject of War of the Worlds. This is by far one of the best. In the top 2 for sure. It is very well researched and written, and a wealth of knowledge on the subject. In particular, I enjoyed the chapters on the subsequent and little known broadcasts of War of the Worlds theme in Santiago, Chile - Quito, Ecuador - and Buffalo, New York Highly Recommended.

On October 30, 1938, families across the country were gathered around their radios when their regular programming was interrupted by an announcer delivering news of a meteor strike in New Jersey. With increasing intensity, the announcer read bulletins describing terrifying war machines moving toward New York City. As the invading force approached, some listeners sat transfixed before their radios, while others ran to alert neighbors or call the police. Some even fled their homes in panic. But the broadcast was not breaking news—it was Orson Welles' adaptation of the H. G. Wells classic, *The War of the Worlds*. In *Broadcast Hysteria*, A. Brad Schwartz examines the history behind the infamous radio play. Did it really spawn a wave of mass hysteria? Schwartz is the first to examine the hundreds of letters sent directly to Orson Welles after the broadcast. He draws upon them, hundreds more sent to the FCC, to recapture the roiling emotions of a bygone era, and his findings challenge conventional wisdom. Relatively few listeners believed an actual attack was underway. But even so, Schwartz shows that Welle's broadcast prompted a different kind of "mass panic" as Americans debated the bewitching power of the radio and the country's vulnerabilities in a time of crisis. Schwartz's original research gifted storytelling, and thoughtful analysis make *Broadcast Hysteria* a groundbreaking work of media history. A. Brad Schwartz is the author of *Broadcast Hysteria: Orson Welles's War of the Worlds and the Art of Fake News* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015). The book is based on his groundbreaking research into the infamous 1938 "panic broadcast," conducted as part of his senior thesis in history at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Brad also co-wrote a 2013 episode of the PBS series *American Experience* about the War of the Worlds broadcast, based in part on his thesis research. Brad received his BA in History and Screen Arts Cultures from the University of Michigan in 2012. As part of the University selective screenwriting program, he wrote *Open House*, a murder-mystery/comedy short film that premiered at the Traverse City Film Festival in 2013. It has since screened as official selection of NewFilmmakers Los Angeles and the 2014 Maryland International Film Festival.

Intelligent and informative . . . Schwartz has access to materials . . . that no one has thoroughly studied before, and they allow him a carefully nuanced view. Michael Wood, *The New York Times* The night before Halloween, 1938, Welles and his staff perpetrated the most notorious hour of radio in the history of the medium . . . As A. Brad Schwartz shows . . . the audience was duped largely by the pacing . . . At the Welles archive at the University of Michigan, Schwartz studied more than a thousand letters related to *The War of the Worlds* . . . [He] concludes that rumors of all-out panic were fanned by print commentators who wished to ponder the gullibility of the masses and the unreliability of the radio medium much as pundits fret over the Internet today. Alex Ross, *The New Yorker* A winning mixture of history, biography, media criticism, and statistical analysis . . . [*Broadcast Hysteria*] is rich with context and often dryly humorous detail. Jason Heller, NPR [A. Brad Schwartz's] well researched first book, which grew out of his honors thesis, challenges conventional wisdom. He also deftly places Welles's caper in the perspective of the time, when a real world war was looming, and the new medium of radio was enjoying a fleeting "Golden Age" as it simultaneously was experimenting with other dubious forms of journalism. David Holahan, *The Christian Science Monitor* [*Broadcast Hysteria*] offers up many fresh details and, along the way, shows the many ways in which the whole [*War of the Worlds*] episode reverberates in our own time. Richard J. Toffel, *The Wall Street Journal* An impeccable account of the most famous radio show in history, a fascinating biography of Orson Welles, and a vital lesson about the responsibility of the media. Publishers Weekly (starred review) Groundbreaking . . . Fascinating as an analysis of both pop-culture and the media. Booklist (starred review) Whether you're a cinephile or not, this is a book you'll be glad you read. James Crossley, *Bookriot* An entertaining assessment of a watershed moment in American life and its lasting effect on popular culture. Kirkus A gripping and informative look at the War of the World broadcast, as well as contemporary issues in the early 20th-century industry of radio. Robin Chin Roemer, *Library Journal* Schwartz is a talented writer, and *Broadcast Hysteria* does an effective job of reminding readers that radio's intimate power in the 1930s is almost unimaginable in today's multiplatform media environment . . . the most robust account yet of audience reaction both to the broadcast and to the ensuing newspaper reports of panic . . . Schwartz's research is impressive and his findings are important. Reason magazine This carefully researched new book reveals that the press, pundits, and academics got the story [of the broadcast] colossally wrong . . . A. Brad Schwartz has evaluated more than a thousand letters written by Martian broadcast listeners to CBS, to the Federal Communications Commission, and to Welles himself. Schwartz is the first scholar to have read some of these letters . . . [and] he comes to a startling conclusion: The hysteria was produced not by the audience, but by the press . . . Schwartz is a graceful writer and a diligent historian. *The Weekly Standard* If you think you know the story of Orson Welles and his Martian-invasion radio show, you're wrong—and A. Brad Schwartz is the perfect writer to set you straight, in this thoroughly engaging, superbly researched work. Max Allan Collins, author of *Road to Perdition* and *The War of the Worlds Murder* Though

the War of the Worlds broadcast has long been regarded as a singular event, it has lacked a historical study scaled to explore its many dimensions. A. Brad Schwartz has at last provided one. With a professional hand and an engaging style, Schwartz marshals unexplored archival evidence and synthesizes contentious debates to offer a fresh account of how the broadcast was conceived, experienced, aggrandized, and debunked, giving us fascinating portraits of everyone from Welles and his troupe to federal regulators, media researchers, and ordinary listeners. Capturing the sheer scope of the radio play and the thrill of its audience in an accessible way, this book will be an essential text for a long time to come. Neil Verma, author of *Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama* Beautifully mirroring the ideals that guided Orson Welles's Mercury Theatre, A. Brad Schwartz has taken a well-known story from the past and told it with stunning originality. He excavates a crucial element missing from most previous accounts: the real people who listened in on October 30, 1938, to the news of a Martian invasion. Long derided as naive and gullible, or dismissed as insignificant in number, they emerge here as self-effacing, fearful, outraged, funny, and courageous—in other words, a lot like people today. Welles would be proud. Mark Samels, executive producer, *American Experience*, PBS There was no mass panic on the night of October 30, 1938. Yet many still believe a radio drama featuring Martian invaders incited mobs of Americans to flee their homes. In *Broadcast Hysteria*, A. Brad Schwartz clarifies misconceptions and sets the record straight. In this well-written and meticulously researched work, Schwartz explains how a brilliant radio artist, an irresponsible press, and an overly ambitious social scientist combined to conjure one of the twentieth century's most enduring fables. The real story told here proves far more interesting than the myth. Michael Socolow, associate professor of communication and journalism, University of Maine In this analytic tour de force, A. Brad Schwartz has assessed upward of two thousand letters—most available to researchers only recently—expressing every manner of opinion regarding Orson Welles's 'panic broadcast.' The result surpasses in comprehensiveness and insight all previous studies of this notorious media event. Paul Heyer, author of *The Medium and the Magician: Orson Welles, the Radio Years, 1934-1952* A revealing and important reassessment of the most myth-encrusted radio program in American history. W. Joseph Campbell, author of *Getting It Wrong: Ten of the Greatest Misreported Stories in American Journalism* About the Author Sean Runnette, a multiple AudioFile Earphones Award winner, has also produced several Audie Award-winning audiobooks. His film and television appearances include *Two If by Sea*, *Copland*, *Sex and the City*, *Law Order*, *Third Watch*, and lots and lots of commercials.