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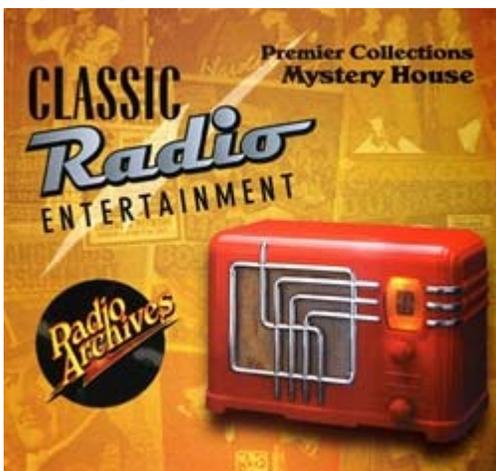
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### Mystery House - 10 hour set #RA085



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*"Okay, places everybody. Set the scene, will you, Tom?"*



*Stop by the offices of Mystery House, "that strange publishing firm owned by Dan and Barbara Glenn, where each new novel is acted out by the Mystery House staff before it is accepted for publication" in this set of rare and unique whodunits.*

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Most old-time radio buffs are familiar with the long-running series "Inner Sanctum Mysteries", a weekly half-hour horror/suspense anthology broadcast from January 7, 1941 to October 5, 1952 - and a show that introduced radio's best-known sound effect, "the

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creaking door." During its run, "Inner Sanctum" had a variety of sponsors — Colgate, Lipton Tea, Bromo Seltzer, Mars Candy — but its main responsibility was to promote Simon and Schuster's line of mystery novels that bore the same name, though the radio dramas themselves were for the most part original productions.

In "Mystery House", a little-known radio series on which information remains sketchy, the concept of promoting books remains intact -- with a slight twist, as heard on the show's standard opening:

*"Mystery House, that strange publishing firm owned by Dan and Barbara Glenn, where each new novel is acted out by the Mystery House staff before it is accepted for publication."*

At the risk of resorting to atrocious puns, this was a rather novel inspiration -- the old Mickey Rooney/Judy Garland "Hey-kids-let's-put-on-a-show" idea applied to the publishing world. "Mystery House" staffers would perform in each half-hour drama, while others would provide sound effects, rewrite scripts and so on. But could this really succeed as a business model? Would people buy a mystery book if they already knew the ending?

An interesting question, considering how little information there is available about the firm -- or if, in fact, it even existed. Research into this query turned up an address for "Mystery House" at 70 Park Avenue in New York City, where a hotel now stands, and that the publishing firm ceased operation sometime after 1964. As for the broadcast history behind the series, the "shroud of mystery" remains intact. Newspaper archives report a series with that name as having been broadcast in 1929 over WGN in Chicago and apparently still on the air as late as 1951. The show was broadcast in a variety of formats; sometimes as a weekly half-hour, sometimes as a five-day-a-week quarter-hour show. "Mystery House" has also been associated with appearances on WOR in New York; both WOR and WGN were flagship stations of the Mutual Network at that time.

Complicating matters further is the existence of an audition record (recorded at the NBC studios in July of 1944) for a program also called "Mystery House" (also referred to as "Bela Lugosi's Mystery House"), which features the movie's most famous vampire, who was slated to have been the host had it been picked up as a regular series, alongside another cinematic Dracula — John Carradine — with Lurene Tuttle and announcer Ken Carpenter in support. (This broadcast, as well as an extremely rare episode of "Mr. & Mrs. North", are included as bonuses in this collection.) Some radio buffs question whether there was any connection between the NBC audition and the regular series, but it certainly can be said that the presence of both does tend to confuse.

Because newspaper articles have reported that the "Mystery House" series was a popular program at WGN (stating that live audiences were encouraged to attend the broadcasts), one could assume that the bulk of the shows in this collection date from that time period, as a lively studio audience can clearly be heard during the middle intermissions of many of the shows. Furthermore, with the exception of the Lugosi audition and "Death Passed My Window," none of the remaining Mystery House programs in this collection appear to be in general circulation — which may very well mean that this is one of these programs' first appearances in old-time radio collectors' circles. The shows have been transferred from transcription discs originally syndicated by Harry S. Goodman Radio Productions and painstakingly restored by Radio Archives to preserve their superior audio fidelity.

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★★★★★ **Thanks for Finding These Intriguing Lost Shows!**

September 18, 2009

*Reviewer: Connie Haddeland*

I just bought "Mystery House". Thanks for finding these intriguing lost shows!

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