THE YEAR IN AUDIOBOOKS
2010

In this issue, *AudioFile* celebrates the best audiobooks and best voices of the past year. These are the stories that kept us riveted to our headphones and speakers, that urged us to take the long way home, to stay up past our bedtimes, to keep listening for five more minutes. On the following pages, you'll find some truly great listens—in history and fiction, mystery and young adult, biography and contemporary culture, and multi-voice productions that span genres—and profiles of the narrators who transform words on a page into art for the ear.

Visit www.audiofilemagazine.com for additional narrator profiles and complete audiographies.
L.A. Theatre Works’ audio theater collection spans everything from modern dramas to classic plays such as Molière’s School for Wives. With an all-star stable of Hollywood actors, including Mark Ruffalo, Edward Asner, Mary Stuart Masterson, Steven Weber, Richard Dreyfuss, and many, many more, LATW’s unique repertoire and performances are unequalled. “The entire cast brings an easy charm and decidedly American accent to Molière’s comedy,” AudioFile’s review said about School for Wives. “They excel at clearly communicating the meaning of Richard Wilbur’s rhymed-verse translation of the original French. A classic delight.” And just one of many delights that await listeners looking for outstanding theater performances on audio.

Who could have guessed that pulp fiction would make a comeback, finding new life in the form of delightfully over-the-top audio theater performances? Someone at Galaxy Audio obviously knew, because 150 stories later, the “Golden Age Stories” have been made enduring all over again. Jim Meskimen, who directed the audio dramas as well as acted in them, characterizes the appeal for everyone involved: “I know for a fact that all the actors who get a chance to perform the pulp stories by L. Ron Hubbard in front of a live audience think it’s a special and fun experience; there’s nothing like it. The audience response is always strong— they’re creating it along with you, and the stories are colorful and exciting. It’s a forgotten art form, but in its simplicity and immediacy it has a lot of power to entertain.”
THE WAY OF SHADOWS: The Night Angel Trilogy, Part 1
R.A. Salvatore
Read by Richard Rohan and a Full Cast

The first part of The Night Angel Trilogy introduces listeners to the dirty, crime-ridden warrens of Cenaria City. Azoth, who is only 11, finds daily survival a battle as he scraps up copper to pay dues. The only way out of the slums is to apprentice with the city's most accomplished assassin—a task that will nearly kill him as he is introduced to a world of intrigue and murder. This imaginative fantasy benefits from GraphicAudio's full-service treatment, which renders the slums in all their noisy, gritty glory with a heart-pumping musical score. Great performances round out this edge-of-your-seat fantasy thriller. F.G.

GraphicAudio 8 hrs. Audio Program
Trade Ed. CD ISBN 9781592122417 $9.95 (also DD)

THE DEMON APOSTLE, Part 1
R.A. Salvatore
Read by Dylan Lynch and a Full Cast

This is the first book in Salvatore's third trilogy about the complex world of elves, demons, and humans called Corona. Corona has seemed blissfully prosperous in the years since the first trilogy though old wounds still haunt the main characters. Jilseponie still mourns the loss of Ranger Elbryan even as we discover that her son, Aydrian, is not dead but instead has been raised by elves, who have their own aspirations for the boy. While he seems destined to be a greater warrior than his father, dark forces send Aydrian on a different course. This is high fantasy at its best, which the folks at GraphicAudio show they are adept at delivering, especially battle scenes, which have lots of dialogue and sound effects. To keep up with this complex series, listeners are advised to begin with the first trilogy, also available from GraphicAudio. F.G.

GraphicAudio 5 hrs. Audio Program
Trade Ed. CD ISBN 9781599506050 $19.99 (also DD)

TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SPY
John le Carré
Read by Simon Russell Beale, Anna Chancellor, Alex Jennings, Kenneth Cranham, Bill Paterson

This taut and subtle adaptation effectively presents le Carré's classic spy novel as a three-hour drama for voices—no mean feat of compression and interpretation. The acting, too, is superb, as are the production values. Simon Russell Beale gives us a stoic, admirable, and touching George Smiley, surely ironically named, who is underemployed, and lonely for his unfaithful wife. He is called out of retirement to investigate whether the Secret Service he had given his life to is corrupted by a Russian mole at the highest level of power. Smiley is spared nothing in the unreliving of this tale of multiple betrayals, but the listener is richly rewarded by a dazzling cast and so enjoyable a performance that this reviewer found two back-to-back listens were barely enough. B.G.

AudioGO 3 hrs. Audio Program
Library Ed. CD ISBN 9780792772620 $39.95 (also DD)

This taut and subtle adaptation effectively presents le Carré's classic spy novel.

VENGEANCE
A.J. Scudiere
Read by Kristoffer Tabori, Stephanie Zimbalist, Don Leslie, et al.

Vengeance is a story of just that—two characters will stop at nothing to settle the score after their families are slain by the Mob. Kristoffer Tabori's voice has the perfect abrasive gravel for Lee, the gunman, and Stephanie Zimbalist plays Cyn, a 19-year-old with an arsenal of knives and a fiery temper. As the two assassins tread on each other's turf, and the FBI closes in, they need to figure out how to work together. Gunshots, screeching tires, and other sound effects add to the action in this "audio movie," underscored with a heart-pumping cinematic score. As the subject matter suggests, this is a bloody story, with scenes of extreme violence. The acting, too, is superb, as are the production values. Simon Russell Beale gives us a stoic, admirable, and touching George Smiley, surely ironically named, who is underemployed, and lonely for his unfaithful wife. He is called out of retirement to investigate whether the Secret Service he had given his life to is corrupted by a Russian mole at the highest level of power. Smiley is spared nothing in the unreliving of this tale of multiple betrayals, but the listener is richly rewarded by a dazzling cast and so enjoyable a performance that this reviewer found two back-to-back listens were barely enough. B.G.

AudioGO 3 hrs. Audio Program
Library Ed. CD ISBN 9780792772620 $39.95 (also DD)

THE CROSSROADS
L. Ron Hubbard
Read by Corey Burton, Tamra Meskimen, Jim Meskimen, Tait Ruppert, R.F. Daley, Jennifer Darling, Kristin Proctor, Edoardo Ballerini, John Mariano, Michael Yurchak, Erin Reitel

When the government offers to pay farmer Eben Smith to bury his crops, Smith gets sick of Depression economics and sets off to the city to barter his goods. But instead of the city, he finds a crossroads of dimensions. The bartering seems good—he can trade apples for brandy, brandy for guns, and guns for gold—but the shifting and dealing soon gets out of Eben's control. This tale is among the most imaginative of Hubbard's Golden Age Stories, rendered with lush music and Hollywood sound design. (The battle scenes will have listeners hopping out of their seats.) Also included is "Borrowed Glory," a cross between "Cinderella" and Dr. Faustus, and "The Devil's Rescue," about a mariner rescued by a dark master. F.G.

Galaxy Press 2 hrs. Unabridged
Trade Ed. CD ISBN 9781592122417 $9.95 (also DD)