

RADIO COLLECTION: DRAGNET

(Broadcast: June 3, 1949 – February 26, 1957)

With its iconic opening theme music and its dedication to realism, *Dragnet* pushed the day-to-day professional lives of Los Angeles police officers to the fore of national popular culture in the United States. Jack Webb, the program's creator, star (as Detective Sergeant Joe Friday) and key director developed the idea for a serial radio program that would focus on the investigative procedures of the contemporary urban police department during his tenure as a performer in detective and crime films, where he found himself preoccupied with the culture of law enforcement rather than the narrative conventions of the crime genre of his time.

Webb's most significant collaborator on *Dragnet* was the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) who granted him access to case files and a technical advisor with the stipulation that he would not compromise confidentiality nor represent the department in "unflattering entanglements." The show foregrounded the participation of the LAPD, announcing in its prologue that *Dragnet* was being presented "in cooperation with" the police department, couching a sense of timely authenticity and urgency to the crimes and social subjects the program featured.



Jack Webb, lead performer and creator of *Dragnet*.

The success of *Dragnet* on commercial radio was followed by a television series that debuted in 1951 on NBC that quickly established itself amongst the top rated television programming of the early 1950s, a broadcast run that would last until 1959 in its original format. Warner Brothers produced a feature film version of the series in 1954, building on a franchise that had a presence in every major broadcast medium.

The UCLA Film and Television Archive holds

numerous titles of *Dragnet* in both its radio and television formats available for use on-site at the Archive Research and Study Center and the Instructional Media Lab located in the Powell library on the campus of UCLA. In addition to the media holdings found in the Archive, the Arts Library Special Collections unit of the UCLA Libraries Collection holds material related to Jack Webb in the *Jack Webb Collection of Scripts for Radio and Television, 1949-1975*.

AUDIO COLLECTION PROFILE

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RADIO

(Please contact the Archive Research and Study Center for additional titles)

Johnny Savage, Red Light Bandit (1949-07-14). Broadcast on NBC.
Audio Study Copy: AA 626

Jewel Thief (1949-08-18). Broadcast on NBC.
Audio Study Copy: AA 374

Disappearance of an Elderly Couple (1950-09-07). Broadcast on NBC.
Audio Study Copy: AA 496

Late Model GM Cars Are Stolen (1951-04-26). Broadcast on NBC.
Audio Study Copy: AA 361

The Big Juvenile Division (1952-01-17). Broadcast on NBC.
Audio Study Copy: AA 908

Friday Tries to Stop a Suicide (1953-09-29). Broadcast on NBC.
Audio Study Copy: AA 662

TELEVISION

(Please contact the Archive Research and Study Center for additional titles)

Dragnet. The Big Reminisce (1955-12-29). Study Copy: VA5649 T

Dragnet. The Big Bed (1958-06-05). NBC. Producer, Director, Jack Webb. Study Copy: VA18310 T

Dragnet. The Big Hammer (1967-03-02). NBC. Producer, Director, Jack Webb.
Study Copy: VA18308 T

Dragnet. The Big Problem (1968-03-28). NBC. Producer, Director, Jack Webb. Writer, Michael
Donovan. Study Copy: VA13399 T

PRINT RESOURCES

(For more information consult the UCLA Arts Library)

Alvarez, Eugene and Daniel Moyer. *Just the Facts, Ma'am: The Authorized Biography of Jack
Webb*. Santa Ana: Seven Locks Press, 2001.

Hayde, Michael. *My Name's Friday: The Unauthorized but True Story of Dragnet and the Films
of Jack Webb*. Nashville: Cumberland House, 2001.

RELATED RESOURCES

The Arts Library Special Collections unit of the UCLA Libraries Collection holds materials related to Jack Webb in the *Jack Webb Collection of Scripts for Radio and Television, 1949-1975*. For more information, please contact Arts Library Special Collections: 310-825-7253