

Wars of the Worlds-the century old Halloween treat that never grows old

On Halloween 1975, ABC aired a made for TV movie special called "The Night That Panicked America" (<https://to123movies.com/movie/the-night-that-panicked-america-1975/>)

which was a re-enactment of Orson Welles's October 30th, 1938 CBS radio drama "The Wars of the Worlds".

Based on H.G. Wells 1898 classic novel, the movie illustrated that over 32,000,000 million people were tuned into Welles' play on that night only to believe it was real. At the time, the US population was about 150,000,000 so that was over 20% listeners which is astonishing, equivalent to about 70,000,000 today.

The citizens had just gone through the great depression and now an alien invasion? Talk about terrible timing!

Welles plays an astronomy professor Richard Pearson who warns the world they are under a Martian invasion which started as innocent fireball observations on Mars. As the alien's wages war on man, they seem to be in a hopeless battle as the Earthlings flee for wherever they can. Just as all seemed lost, Professor Pearson is walking one morning in New York City and notices all the Martians are dead while being devoured by black birds. After analysis, turns out the aliens were not immune like humans.

As Professor Pearson explained "it was found that they were killed by the putrefactive and disease bacteria against which their systems were unprepared. . . slain, after all man's defenses had failed, by the humblest thing that God in His wisdom put upon this earth".

It's interesting both Welles/Wells were secularists and yet chose to give God the glory for saving man which is consistent in Christian theology.

The idea has been redone several times including the Spielberg's 2005 movie starring Tom Cruise (<https://www.123movies.gdn/war-of-the-worlds-watch-free/>) but check out the original radio play for yourself at <https://www.mercurytheatre.info> while handing out treats on the 31st and try to imagine the



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days before social media, TV, etc. Let me end this the same way Welles closed Wars of the Worlds play 81 years ago. "That grinning, glowing, globular invader of your living room is an inhabitant of the pumpkin patch, and if your doorbell rings and nobody's there, that was no Martian. . . it's Hallowe'en!"

Sky watch for the next month:

1. Mercury, Venus & Moon twilight set- Tuesday October 29th look SW after sunset until 19:45 to see the 3 sinks into the night sky.

2. Zodiacal Light- Did you catch this last month? It's a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the

sun along the ecliptic or zodiac. Best time is from Saturday, October 26th for 2 weeks in the East before dawn.

3. Orionids Meteor Shower Peaks- Sunday, October 22nd 1-2 hours before dawn just to the north of constellation Orion's bright star Betelgeuse. With the second-fastest entry velocity of the annual showers at 10-20 per hour, meteors from the Orionids produce yellow and green colors and have been known to produce an odd fireball.

4. Draconid Meteor Shower Peaks- Tuesday, October 08th best seen after twilight facing NNW high up. While not as dramatic as other showers it can occasionally spew hundreds an hour. The opposing waxing gibbous Moon maybe a deterrent.

Public Events for the next month:

Monthly Open House at Calgary's Rothney Observatory near Priddis- Mark down Saturday, October 19th from 20:00 to 23:00 for Sounds of Space Science Fiction. There will be an array of scopes operated by University of Calgary astronomers and members of the RASC Calgary. Saturn found in the western sky in the constellation Sagittarius will be followed by Mars. Cygnus the Swan will be flying straight over head with its thousands of exoplanets. The entrance fee \$30 per car. For further information, contact Jennifer Howse at jhowse@phas.ucalgary.ca, (403) 931-2366. Their website <https://www.ucalgary.ca/rao/> is updated regularly.



Photo contributed

Picture is a sculpture by Michael Condron of a Martian tripod from H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds, in Woking, Surrey.

Happy Fall and cooler days!

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada-the nation's leading astronomy club founded in 1868 with over 5,000 members and 29 centers across Canada. Neel welcomes your questions and comments at (403)560-6574, www.ptccanada.com. The members meet once a month on weekends at Calgary's Rothney Observatory near Priddis and you can check out times at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/rao/calendar>. Like them at Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/272037680377/>. Twitter <https://twitter.com/CalgaryRASC> & YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/RASCCalgary>.