

# The AUDIO

Everyone in the audiobook world has favorites—favorite titles, favorite voices, favorite earphones, favorite spots to listen. To arrive at this, our 100 favorite things, the *AudioFile* staff combed all 99 issues since 1992 to select the things about audiobooks that have endured. We were bowled over by the wealth of material! Just think about the creative energy involved in the 14,600 audiobooks covered by our reviews. Think about all the narrating talent, the production skills, the packaging and publishing and marketing! Think of all those hours of listening! Think about all the miles of cassette tape unwound, the miles of listening time traveled, even the miles driven out of the way to finish a chapter!

So we had a lot of fun looking back. And, we realized that while much has changed about spoken

word recordings in 12 years, little has changed in the one essential we celebrate in audiobooks—the power of the human voice. You know this, whether you are new to audiobooks or have logged many hours of listening. You also know that the wealth of entertainment, information, and enlightenment from audiobooks is vast. Too great, certainly, to be captured in any list! Nevertheless, we venture boldly to bring you the *AudioFile* 100 in the belief that our selections in 10 categories exemplify the people and ideas and technologies that still make audiobooks so fascinating. Your favorites may not be the same as ours—you'll have to check our Web site to log in your own—but we guarantee our choices will intrigue you.

## 10 x 10

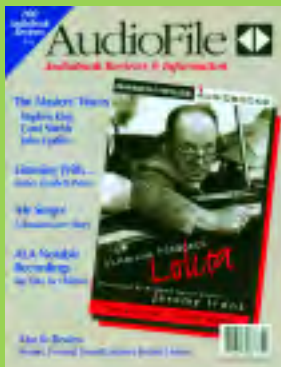
## 10 covers



June  
1995



June  
1996



June  
1997



October/November  
1998



June/July  
2000

# FILE 100

## 10 devices

Technology is essential for the enjoyment of audiobooks. Here are some of the key devices and Internet resources that make our listening experiences better.

- 2003 Soul® Player
- 2001 iPod®
- 1998 Audiofilemagazine.com
- 1997 Audible.com
- 1993 MP3 Technology
- 1986 CD Changer
- 1984 Bookcassette® Adapter
- 1984 Earbuds
- 1983 Tune Belt®
- 1979 Sony Walkman®



Apple's iPod Mini  
(shown actual size)



December/January  
2000/2001



February/March  
2002



June  
2002



December/January  
2002/2003



April/May  
2004

# 10 innovators & pioneers

**Tom Beeler** In 1983, the farsighted publisher of G.K. Hall brought British audiobooks to the U.S. as an extension of large print books for libraries.

**Craig Black, Duval Hecht & Henry Trentman** The founders of Blackstone Audiobooks, Books on Tape, and Recorded Books developed a model for unabridged audiobook publishing, pushed for audiobook collections in libraries, and fostered consumer direct rentals.

**Gary Challender** This early entrant into audio publishing founded Books in Motion in 1977 and was first to put audiobooks in truck stops and travel centers.

**Bruce Coville** The children's author turned narrator and audio producer has been an innovator in full-cast audio production and in casting children in children's stories.

**Tim Ditlow** The publisher of children's literature took

his company, Listening Library, from the era of vinyl records to Harry Potter.



Tim Ditlow

**Jenny Frost** A pioneer in audiobook trade publishing, she was hired in 1985 to start an audio division for Bantam Books and now champions audio as president and publisher of the Random House Audio Publishing Group.

**Don Katz** The audio listener and writer and mastermind of Audible.com made downloadable audiobooks a reality.

**Tom Lopez** Behind the pen name "Meatball Fulton" lurks this innovative audio theater dramatist.

**Marianne Roney Mantell & Barbara Cohen Holdridge** When these two were fresh from college, they founded Caedmon Audio and realized their dream of recording literature's great voices.

**Nicolas Soames** The British audio publisher makes brilliant use of music in his "scoring" of audiobooks.

**Robin Whitten** The founder of *AudioFile* has the passion and energy to publish 100 more issues of a magazine about audiobooks.

# 10 hit books

Do audio bestsellers stay with us? Check your library, your local bookstore, or your own bookshelf for these hits that dominated the attention of media and listeners alike . . . how many can you still find? Which ones would you pick up today?

## **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**

1989 (Simon & Schuster)

**A is for Alibi** 1990 (Random House)

**Truman** 1992 (Simon & Schuster)

**Star Wars: The Radio Drama** 1993 (Penguin-HighBridge)

**Undaunted Courage** 1996 (Simon & Schuster)

**Ambush at Fort Bragg** 1997 (Random House)

**Angela's Ashes** 1997 (Simon & Schuster)

**Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus**

1998 (Harper)

**The Lord of the Rings**

2003 (BBC Radio Drama, 1981; Recorded Books, 1990)

**Harry Potter** 1999, 2000, 2003 (Listening Library)



# 10 authors

You know them by their opinions and their initials. The *AudioFile* reviewers below offer "truly memorable" titles from their listening and reviewing experience.

**A.C.S.** *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Mark Haddon, read by Jeff Woodman—"perfectly unforgettable"

**B.G.** *Hamlet's Dresser*, Bob Smith, read by the author—"a gifted scholar and actor"



**B.H.C.** *The Short Stories of William Somerset Maugham*, William Somerset Maugham, read by Charlton Griffin—"a clockwork masterpiece"

**J.A.H.** *Scurvy*, Stephen R. Bown, read by Dan Cashman—"a storyteller's grasp"

**J.P.** *Crazy in Alabama*, Mark Childress, read by Tom Stechschulte—"monumental narration"

**M.B.K.** *Outlander*, Diana Gabaldon, read by Geraldine James—"the listener is mesmerized"

**S.E.S.** *Motherless Brooklyn*, by Jonathan Lethem, read by Steve Buscemi—"sometimes sad, often funny, and always human"



**S.J.H.** *Bel Canto*, by Ann Patchett, Read by Anna Fields—"agile, precise vocal technique"

**T.W.** *Universal Laws of Success and Achievement*, Brian Tracy, read by the author—"a motivational treasure"

**Y.R.** *Grendel*, John Gardner, read by George Guidall—"a perfect balance of crudity and poetry"

See page 71 for our list of indefatigable reviewers.

## 10 reviewer's picks

Some authors are very involved with the audiobooks of their works. Some insist on narrating their own work. Some admire the skill of the actors and are pleased and amazed by the result. Some insist their works must be recorded unabridged. We've spoken with more than 150 authors since 1992. Here are authors who recognize the contribution made by audiobooks and whose lively interviews we most enjoyed.

**Robert B. Parker**

**John Updike**

**Judy Blume**

**Bryce Courtenay**

**Jimmy Carter**

**Stephen King**

**David McCullough**

**Toni Morrison**

**Fannie Flagg**

**Frank McCourt**

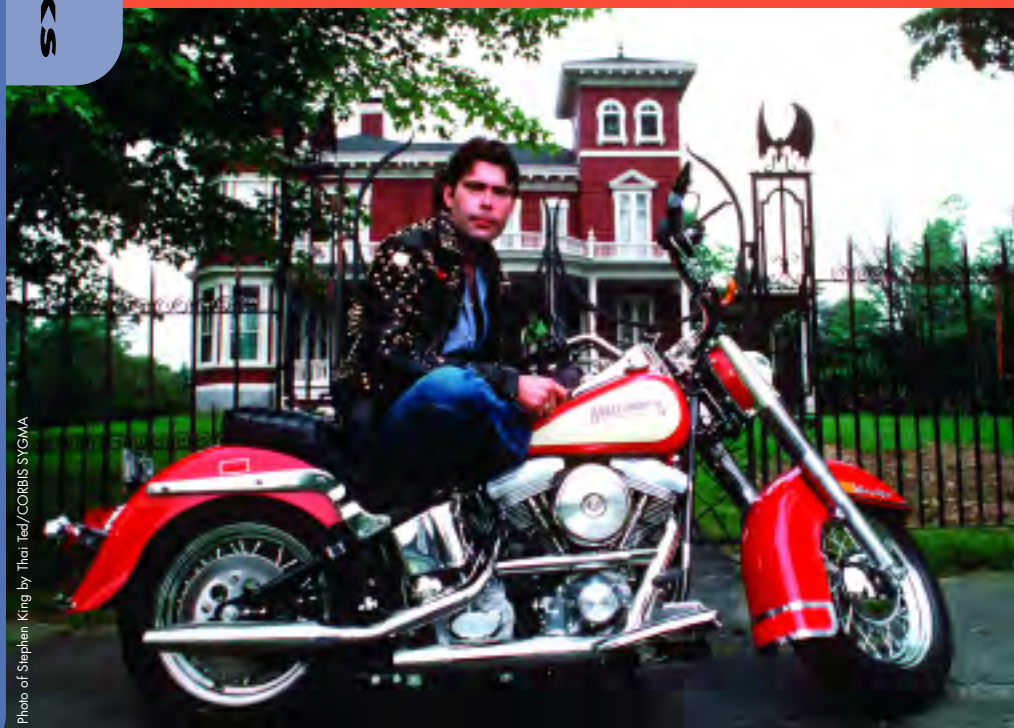
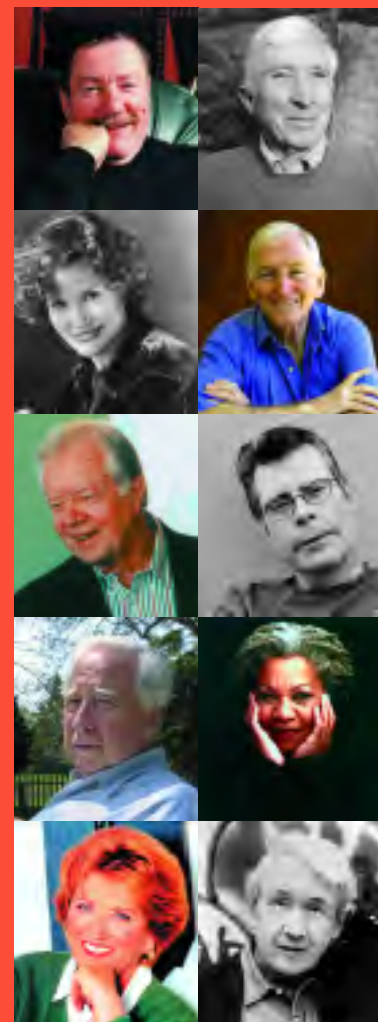


Photo of Stephen King by Thai Ted/CORBIS SYGMA

**Stephen King**



judge & artist



sales assistant



young listener



painter



ship captain

# 10 titles

Why do some voices and characters grab us and keep us? Were the voice and story just a perfect fit? Did you listen to it at a cherished point in time? Did the listening experience change your life?

**West With the Night**, Beryl Markham, read by Julie Harris

**The Golden Compass**, Philip Pullman, performed by a full cast

**Angela's Ashes**, Frank McCourt, read by Frank McCourt

**The Power of One**, Bryce Courtenay, read by Humphrey Bower

**Their Eyes Were Watching God**, Zora Neale Hurston, read by Ruby Dee

**The Prince of Tides**, Pat Conroy, read by Frank Muller

**Flight of Passage**, Rinker Buck, read by Rinker Buck

**A Dog's Life**, Peter Mayle, read by Simon Jones

**Beethoven Lives Upstairs**, Susan Hammond, performed by a full cast

**Peter Pan**, J.M. Barrie, read by Samuel West

## Jeremy Irons



Photo of Jeremy Irons by Elaine Denize/CORBIS SYGMA

Do you know these voices? We think all of these actors should be "known by ear."

- Sean Barrett**
- Ruby Dee**
- George Guidall**
- Dick Hill**
- Jeremy Irons**
- Judith Ivey**
- Martin Jarvis**
- Frank Muller**
- Barbara Rosenblat**
- Samuel West**

# 10 voices

# 10 listeners



boatbuilder & daughter



potter



shoemaker



candy maven



trucker

# 10 topics

## Abridged vs. Unabridged

Purists rant about one word being changed. Some listeners want only the short and sweet version. We like the continuing dialogue.

## Audio Publishing

The industry that creates the many forms of spoken word audio drives the development of new formats, packaging, marketing, and new ideas in programming.

## Audio Theater

In the theater of the mind, the radio drama art form supplies all the visuals through the dynamic use of sound and voices.

## Authors Reading

What do authors bring to the listener when they mix their considerable writing talents with the rigors of audio narration? Mixed results!

## Awards

The annual Audie Awards and our own bimonthly Earphones Awards highlight the best titles to listen up for.

## Family Listening

All ages respond to a great story well told, and audio families make listening a focal point, sharing ideas and adventures.

## In the Studio

It's not as easy as it looks: we uncover the demands and the intricacies of audio recording that allow skilled narrators to deliver a world of characters through the single instrument of the voice.

## Literacy, Learning & Audiobooks

Current research backs up the premise that listening improves comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary; teachers begin to embrace the literacy building blocks of audio.

## Narration As an Art Form

Audiobook narration is finally coming into the limelight—both as an artistic endeavor and as a source of paying work respected in acting circles.

## Technology

The form of the physical media that bring us audiobooks is changing. Formats and playback devices will stay in the limelight.



. . . the means by which we slip, involuntarily, often helplessly, into another's skin, another's voice, another's soul.

—Joyce Carol Oates

Agree? Disagree? Want to add to our lists or make your own? What audiobook changed your life?

Go to [www.audiofilemagazine.com](http://www.audiofilemagazine.com) and share your favorites.