

WDAF Kansas City, Mo. WHB Kansas City, Mo. KSD St. Louis WEW St. Louis WIL
 St. Louis KEIN Billings, Mont. WJAG Norfolk, Neb. KOWH Omaha WLNH Laconia,
 N.H. KOB Albuquerque, N.M. WGR Buffalo, N.Y. WHCU Ithaca, N.Y. WABC New
 York WHN New York WNBC New York WOR New York WHAM Rochester, N.Y.
 WGY Schenectady, N.Y. WFBL Syracuse, N.Y. WSYR Syracuse, N.Y. WHAZ Troy, N.Y.
 WBT Charlotte, N.C. WDAY Fargo, N.D. WLW Cincinnati WHK Cleveland WKYC
 Cleveland WCOL Columbus, Ohio *WOSU Columbus, Ohio WING Dayton, Ohio

pedia. The family in its cozy parlor. (It is always wintertime in these photographs.) Father in his business clothes, Sis in wools, Mother with a bit of knitting in her lap, the floor lamp behind her right shoulder, the shade slanting the light forthrightly where her book would be if she were reading. The son is stretched out on the floor, belly to carpet, doing his homework. The gothic radio, like a wooden bell, on a table in the corner. They smile or are concerned or absorbed or wistful, as though they hear a song common to each—an anthem perhaps of some country where they had all once lived. The caption explains that this American family, like so many millions of others, is enjoying the jokes of a popular network comedian, or engrossed in the news that will be tomorrow's headlines, or engaged by one of the many fine dramas that may be heard on the radio. And you know that it's no fake, no mere posturing for the photographer, and indeed if you look close you can see that the dial in the radio glows. . . . Dick Gibson knew, knew then, blessed by nostalgia as some are blessed with prescience, this steady hindsight that was contemporaneous to him and as involuntary as digestion, that all this was the truth, that those pictures had it right: Americans were in their living rooms, before their floor lamps, on their sofas, in their chairs, along their rugs, together in time, united, serene."

Shortly after World War II, a crucial change began to take shape. The handwriting was on the wall in 1947, when local radio revenues eclipsed network figures for the first time—the beginning of a trend that has never been reversed.

There were other signs. A postwar boom in radio stations hiked the total from 1,000 in 1945 to 2,600 in 1949, but with no appreciable gain in network affiliations, which stood at about 800. At the same time, television came along to upstage radio, particularly network radio, which scaled down and restructured its programming accordingly. All these events combined to place far greater programming demands on the local station.

At this point the radio "program" began to die and the "formula" began to be born. Local stations sought listener loyalty that transcended individual time slots or even personalities. It started in a variety of ways, in a variety of places, and there is no single originator.

One kind of formula, however, became more successful and ultimately more influential than any other. It was top 40, the all-day-long hit parade of the air. And it did have a generally recognized creator: the late Todd Storz.

Mr. Storz started the idea at KOWH (AM) Omaha and broke it loose at WTIX (AM) New Orleans. One story has it that he saw evidence, in restaurants, that Americans had a firm compulsion to keep the jukebox playing, and transferred the idea to his radio stations.

When Storz Broadcasting took over WTIX it was a classical-music station, in a market where the leader, WDSU (AM), was playing the "top 20." The new Storz station responded with a "top 40" from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., with spectacular results. Soon WTIX was playing the hits around the clock.

The idea of relying on "the hits" was nothing new; *Your Hit Parade* had been a staple for years, and plenty of radio stations played popular music. But the way the Storz group put it together was new. The sound was fast-paced, tightly knit, carefully packaged with jingles and selected songs and no dead air. And the entire sound was very firmly management-controlled. Selections were based on popularity indicators, but the final choice rested with management, not with the disk jockey or anyone else. At about the same time, a similar approach was started at KLIF (AM) Dallas, owned by Gordon McLendon.

The format was a bold innovation, but the element of management control introduced an element of caution that was most evident when something called rock 'n' roll came along. There was an initial reluctance to get involved with the new, raucous sound. But nothing of such popular appeal could be kept down for very long; and when Elvis Presley came along shortly thereafter, the marriage of top 40 and the new sound was complete.

The basic format could be extended to other kinds of music, and was. Anything that could be measured by a music-popularity chart could be tied to the basic top-40 format. With varying pace, playlist and decibel level, the format found its way into country-and-western, middle-of-the-road, and black radio.

It became a national phenomenon. The oldest axiom about radio—that it is the uniquely "local" medium—is true up to a point; that was the basic change in radio after television arrived. But the decline of radio networking and the new emphasis on local programming should not obscure the fact that radio became national in a new way. Everyone has seen the 14-year-old girl, visiting a strange town, who hunts the radio dial not so much for a particular record as for a *sound*; the chances are she'll find something that closely resembles a station in her own town. Not to hang the entire phenomenon on the shoulders of a 14-year-old girl, let

it be added that all ages do much the same thing. The new "national" influences in radio became the creators and refiners of formats, the jingle factories, the record companies. They were finding receptive audiences in diverse communities across the country.

It was then that another practice developed to cast a cloud over the relationship of the suppliers and selectors of all those phonograph records that had become the staple of radio programming.

Between 1958 and 1959, record distributors paid \$263,244 in payola to have their records plugged in 23 cities. That was the finding of the House Legislative Oversight Subcommittee. Today, distributors and DJ's who engage in the practice face a fine of up to \$10,000 as a result of legislation enacted in the wake of the subcommittee's findings.

That traumatic period made the management-controlled stations look good, and led to even greater caution. That, coupled with the lull in music during the early sixties, made the period a time of relative quiet in radio. Then the Beatles came along and the air was alive; the music not only pumped life into rock radio, it influenced the music every other kind of station was playing.

But the real change in radio was yet to come. It began about five years ago, reached a peak in the past two years, and is now the cardinal fact about radio. It was two things at once: specialization, and a spiraling growth in the number of radio stations. More and more broadcasters on the air, finding more and more distinct audiences, were suddenly what radio was all about.

Or so it was said. Actually, the only admissible general statement about modern radio is that nothing is "what it's all about." The moment there is talk of specialization there must also be talk of such phenomena as WCCO (AM) Minneapolis, WSB (AM) Atlanta or WGN (AM) Chicago. All are straight, mainstream, middle-of-the-middle-of-the-road radio. All cut across demographic lines. All are institutions in their communities, popular beyond belief. All are about as specialized as hamburger and as widely bought.

In modern radio there has also been a blurring of format lines. Middle-of-the-road radio is no longer a sound, it's a place—midway between extremes of whatever everybody else is doing. Modern country radio begins to sound like uptown; MOR and rock stations play more and more country music. Black radio develops a smooth, professional sound, identifiably black but a far cry from the days of "ethnic" radio.

The emphasis on specialization must