

## RADIO HIGHLIGHTS: 1957-'61

**I**N the last five years of the Fabulous Fifties, radio behaved like a middle-aged matron losing youth and vitality to a newer, more glamorous coquette.

But in the five years since 1956, the 41-year-old lady has gathered style and confidence after a good look in the mirror of self-appraisal and soul-searching.

What radio contemplated from the looking glass she accepted and turned to her advantage. The mark of her maturity was her ability to change and develop a more modern identity and purpose.

How has radio's uplifting been reflected in the industry and in the country in the past five years?

The answer can be taken from the pages of U. S. RADIO since its first issue in October 1957—four years ago. With its birth U. S. RADIO became the first all-radio book since the entrance of television to the broadcast triangle. Each monthly issue of the past four years followed radio's performance and closely examined her conscience. Qualities that were uniquely her own were revealed for the industry at large.

Radio has, more than anything else, grown more independent and more responsible in the past four years than at any time in her history. The last vestiges of network respectability and potency were no longer great needs for the support of great stations. Radio learned to be her own boss of the way she spent her time. With the heyday of radio network entertainment behind her, she changed her ways to accommodate her community, for that was where she lived and worked.

### Days of daring

Her changes were experimental and perhaps a little daring, but so far have contributed to the health and economy of both independents and network affiliates.

This is apparent in the growth of radio's sales. In 1957, radio grossed \$57,600,000. By 1959, sales jumped to \$69,114,000. FCC figures for 1960 will be available in November, 1961. The 1961 figures are expected to show a further increase.

ous year. Sales remained steady and advanced slightly during recession-fraught 1958. But in 1959, radio registered an even greater growth: sales went from \$541,665,000 to \$609,114,000—a \$67.5 million gain.

Behind the steady increase in billings have been the steady growth of both local radio and national spot radio, pushed by the determination of radio men across the country.

The three areas of greatest change have been programing, sales and sales promotion. Spot billing centralization is a recent fourth, but it awaits a dry run.

Important areas where some broadcasters and agencies contend there has been a lag, however, have been audience research, market analysis and rate structure.

Formula radio programing, vertical programing and news information reached solid ground in 1957.

### To each his own

Harbinger of industry mood was the move in 1956-57 by Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. to program its radio stations independently. It withdrew the network contracts of its five radio stations.

WBC was neither alone nor first in its sudden change that so arrested the attention of broadcasting. A pioneer in successful independent programing in the early '50s was WNEW New York. As did other large market stations, WNEW proved that network affiliation was not needed to reach the gold at the end of the radio rainbow. Other important stations to adapt to the new sound were those of Storer Broadcasting Co., Plough Inc., MacLendon Co., Storz Broadcasting Co., and others. They threw the weight of their group holdings behind new ventures in radio programing. They reported their own national and international news; they began a constant, responsible policy of editorializing on issues vital to the community and to the country; and they felt the pulse of their markets to learn what people wanted to hear. And, most important, they learned that these approaches to modern programing were exciting, challenging and rewarding.

Networks, too, by 1957 had made some changes of their own. Programing followed the music-news-entertainment cycle that indies had found so popular. NBC led the way with the introduction of *Monitor* and *News on the Hour*. CBS later followed with *Dimension*, and ABC offered *Flair*—news and entertainment features sprinkled between waves of music.

Networks have been responsible, too, for many of the innovations in sales since 1957. NBC again became the instigator when it introduced the magazine concept—participation by several advertisers in sponsorship of a single program. The network reduced the number of option time hours accorded its affiliates.

Stations responded with studied approval, but the eventual success of the system led the other networks to follow suit. CBS presented its new Program Consolidation Plan (PCP), Mutual eliminated most of its option time but network news, and ABC offered modified program plans to its stations.

Fm made its greatest strides since the end of World War II. Fm stations have gone on the air faster than am stations, now number around 1,000 or nearly doubled since 1957. As recently as 1958, several major rep firms considered fm a medium ripe for national sales. And a dozen new rep firms sprang up for fm representation. Coupling their national sales strength with program promotion, many reps instituted quasi-network operations among their stations.

### Forecast: Boom

Radio away from the home has developed more muscle in the past five years. The greatest strength has been felt in production and sales of transistors and portables, according to the EIA. 1960 was the biggest year for production since 1947-48.

As radio continues to grow in the Sixties, she is accompanied by the forecast of a national economic boom. She will ride the crest of increasing sales with a new attitude. Gone is the old threat of her younger tv sister. Radio has achieved her own personality and style. She has more individuality, more mobility, more flexibility than in her youth.