

Right of the Dial: The Rise of Clear Channel and the Fall of Commercial Radio

Alec Foegen

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RIGHT OF THE DIAL THE RISE OF CLEAR CHANNEL AND THE FALL OF COMMERCIAL RADIO

ALEC FOEGE

"A uniquely American saga of
commerce and culture gone mad."
—ALAN LIGHT, former editor in chief
of *Vibe* and *Spin* magazines.



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Alec Foegen : **Right of the Dial: The Rise of Clear Channel and the Fall of Commercial Radio** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Right of the Dial: The Rise of Clear Channel and the Fall of Commercial Radio:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Great research. Excellent for former DJs and radio people. By Walter Knox
Clear Channel killed radio. Clear Channel caused concert ticket prices to sky rocket. The FCC killed local radio by allowing nearly unlimited ownership of stations. I am glad to have found this book. It was well researched and is an indictment of stockholder owned local media. Radio thrived for listeners when it was locally owned and programmed. Now it is nothing more than a national jukebox that does not serve the local community as was intended by the original rules.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A very frustrating read. By johnners
The book could have done with some serious editing, it's as if the author had so much great stuff to tell us he just splurged it all onto the page, almost in a kind of stream-of-consciousness style. This meant that rather than a chronological journey from the origins of the station to the present, interspersed with potted biographies of the key players, the narrative jumps around in time erratically, even within paragraphs. The writing style is also verbose and bloated, why use 3 words when 17 will do? This is a much harder read than it needs to be, and I found I didn't want to have to wade on into this coagulated mess, despite the very interesting subject.
4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Right of the dial: the rise of Clear Channel and the fall of commercial radio. By Fletch
This is an excellent look into how the signing of the "Telecommunication Act" in 1998 allowed a few company's to control the public air waves, concerts, artist and billboards. I have a first hand view of what is written in the book having been effected career and job wise by one company's ability to control a major portion of the stations and formats in major markets. This book is right on target and should be read by everyone in congress. The people have lost their local radio and the medium will never be the same. Alec Foege's book presents the nasty details and put's names behind Jacor and Clear Channels disgrace.

In *Right of the Dial*, Alec Foege explores how the mammoth media conglomerate Clear Channel Communications evolved from a local radio broadcasting operation, founded in 1972, into one of the biggest, most profitable, and most polarizing corporations in the country. During its heyday, critics accused Clear Channel, the fourth-largest media company in the United States and the nation's largest owner of radio stations, of ruining American pop culture and cited it as a symbol of the evils of media monopolization, while fans hailed it as a business dynamo, a beacon of unfettered capitalism. What's undeniable is that as the owner at one point of more than 1,200 radio stations, 130 major concert venues and promoters, 770,000 billboards, and 41 television stations, Clear Channel dominated the entertainment world in ways that MTV and Disney could only dream of. But in the fall of 2006, after years of public criticism and flattening stock prices, Goliath finally tumbled. Clear Channel Communications, Inc., spun off its entertainment division and plotted to sell off one-third of its radio stations and all of its television concerns, and to transfer ownership of the rest of its holdings to a consortium of private equity firms. The move signaled the end of an era in media consolidation, and in *Right of the Dial*, Foege takes stock of the company's successes and abuses, showing the manner in which Clear Channel reshaped America's cultural and corporate landscape along the way.

From *Publishers Weekly*
Journalist Foege (*Confusion Is Next*) brings objectivity and insight to this exploration of Clear Channel, one of the most reviled media conglomerates in the U.S. The author aims for an unbiased understanding of the corporation and its practices, how it came to be and what it says about our culture. The reader follows the Clear Channel operation from its inception as a family business in the 1990s through commercial expansion, megamergers, vertical integration, antitrust lawsuits and the eventual sale of a third of its holdings. Foege cobbles together an oral history of the company, painting Clear Channel executives as businessmen first and foremost. To them, payola (accepting financial gifts in exchange for airplay) and voice tracking (phoning in local broadcasts from a centralized location) just made sense for the bottom line. The result has been the homogenization of radio a phenomenon that has produced one, single, all-too-familiar classic rock station that Foege characterizes as a mild condition of being. Like a toothache or a strained knee. While many are quick to call this evil, media monopolies of this kind have been sanctioned by the government through deregulation. Foege's history is at its best while unpacking this confrontation of American values between art and commerce. (Apr.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
From *Booklist*
For Ronald Reagan, the Soviet Union was the evil empire, but for music mavens, Clear Channel, the biggest radio-station owner in history, is the real deal. Its mastermind, Lyle Mays, made himself and his closest associates rich by gutting news, local content, and musical variety and laying off thousands at the stations it devoured. Mays golden-goose idea was that radio is essentially for advertising; programming is just, as another company higher-up put it, the shit between commercials. Besides 1,200 radio stations, the company sucked up billboards, TV outlets, and pop-concert venues and promoters (ticket prices soared). Nobody of consequence, certainly not the Clinton-Bush II FCC, seemed to object. Clear Channel's glory days are gone because the Internet has made entertainment much more available and big advertising more avoidable, but its blighting effects on broadcasting continue. Mays and his two sons and successors wouldn't talk to Foege, and this fascinating, appalling business history suffers accordingly, for the question of how the Mayses getting rich served the public interest. radios mandate, after all goes begging. --Ray Olson
A uniquely American saga of commerce and culture gone mad. Alan Light, former editor in chief of *Vibe* and *Spin* magazines
Read this book and you will want to scream. Alec Foege tells a tale of rapacity and financial engineering that could drive one to socialism. Ken Auletta
To those

who care deeply about what has been lost, culturally, as Clear Channel has taken command of the public airwaves these last four decades, Foegen's effort is a noble one. And the story he tells is as important as it is unnerving.

JACQUES STEINBERG, *The New York Times Book Review* If you've ever overpaid for concert tickets or bemoaned the glut of advertising on the FM dial, [this book] will help you understand why . . . Worth [reading for its] juicy tales of good ol' boy' nepotism and the sharp insights into a profit-obsessed business nicknamed Cheap Channel.'

BIANCA BOSKER, *Fast Company*