



Rebels on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America

Jesse Walker

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Boring DJs who never shut up, and who don't even pick their own records. The same hits, over and over. A constant stream of annoying commercials. How did radio get so dull?

Not by accident, contends journalist and historian Jesse Walker. For decades, government and big business have colluded to monopolize the airwaves, stamping out competition, reducing variety, and silencing dissident voices. And yet, in the face of such pressure, an alternative radio tradition has tenaciously survived.

Rebels on the Air explores these overlooked chapters in American radio, revealing the legal barriers established broadcasters have erected to ensure their dominance. Using lively anecdotes drawn from firsthand interviews, Walker chronicles the story of the unsung heroes of American radio who, despite those barriers, carved out spaces for themselves in the spectrum, sometimes legally and sometimes not. Walker's engaging, meticulous account is the first comprehensive history of alternative radio in the United States.

From the unlicensed amateurs who invented broadcasting to the community radio movement of the 1960s and 1970s, from the early days of FM to today's micro radio movement, Walker lays bare the hidden history of broadcasting. Above all, Rebels on the Air is the story of the pirate broadcasters who shook up radio in the 1990s and of the new sorts of radio we can expect in the next century, as the microbroadcasters crossbreed with the even newer field of Internet broadcasting.

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