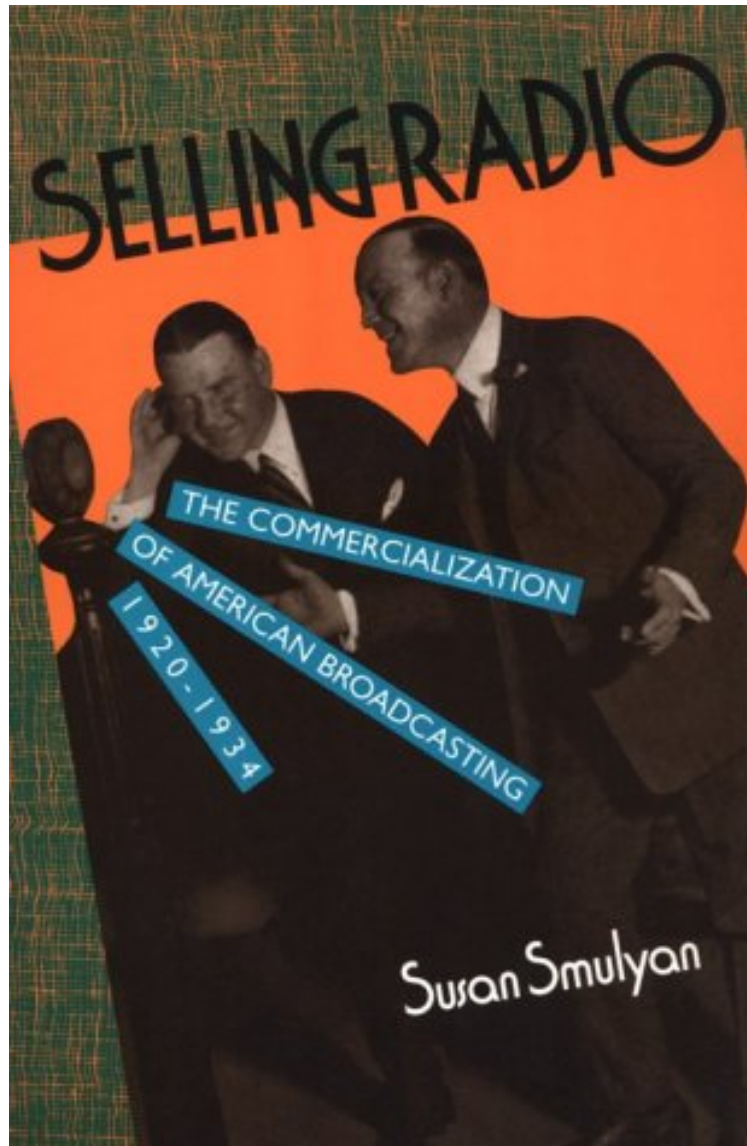


[Read free] Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting 1920-1934

## Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting 1920-1934

*Susan Smulyan*

*ePub | \*DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#1781478 in Books Smithsonian Institution Press 1996-09-17 Original language: English PDF # 1 .69 x 5.96 x 8.94l, #File Name: 1560986867224 pages | File size: 44.Mb

**Susan Smulyan : Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting 1920-1934** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Selling Radio: The Commercialization of American Broadcasting 1920-1934:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Classic Work on Early RadioBy J. ShepperdThe previous review

posted on this book should be taken with a grain of salt. This is one of the major scholarly works on the formation of American radio practices written in the last 20 years. Informed by the American Studies model of research, Smulyan argues that while radio began as a medium of experimentation, by the late 1920s thanks in multiple part to confusion about how to regulate the medium, RCA's successful political lobby, and considerable corporate investment, radio succumbed to the commercial model of broadcasting. Highly recommended for radio scholars and media historians, but I actually think that this work will also be of great interest to radio buffs. The book pays particular attention radio's influence on America's changing epistemology of spatiality in the early chapters. 4 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Wrong Audience! By Kenneth E. Wright Looking for a fun read that will give you a quick introduction into the chaotic early days of radio with lots of examples of early attempts at getting commercials right, as I was when I ordered this book? Then this is definitely NOT the book for you. Want an academic read loaded with footnotes about the philosophy of the commercialization of radio and its consequences, which I didn't? Maybe this is for you. That's because this book is aimed at the wrong market. The catchy title and front cover design imply the book is for readers like me. The text is definitely meant to be read by scholars already familiar with the period and topic. I had expected to be entertained with the story of the origins of such programs as "Amos 'n' Andy". Instead I got mentions of it on four pages and only one paragraph that deals with it in any way. Still, she did get me interested in the problem of how do you finance broadcasts that are necessary for the early radio manufacturers to continue selling their receivers when the listeners can listen for free (hence the two stars, not one). But although she goes into a long discussion about the advantages of 'indirect' advertising as opposed to 'direct' advertising, she doesn't give a single example of either, but merely gives references to academic books I'll never read! If this book had been properly packaged as the academic thesis that it is, I wouldn't have bought it. But maybe a lot of scholars in the field who didn't, would have.

Book by Susan Smulyan

From Publishers Weekly When radio began, it was the exclusive province of those interested in the advancement of technology; programming was of little concern and commercialization was not even thought of. But, as the medium's popularity grew and radio sets entered millions of homes, the concern with filling air time grew, even as programming became increasingly expensive. The result was to commercialize the air waves, resulting in the diminution of the hope that radio would be primarily a source of education and/or a force for national unity. As Smulyan, an assistant professor in the Department of American Civilization at Brown, so succinctly puts it, the attempt was "to reduce listeners to the lowest common denominator, that of consumer." How that goal was gradually accomplished in the period between the two world wars is the subject of this admirably researched volume, which is informative, but handicapped by the author's dry academic style. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sA drab, ax-grinding account of the broadcast industry's formative years in the US. Drawing on a variety of archival sources, including trade magazines, Smulyan (American Civilization/Brown) tracks the history of radio from the post-WW I period (when skilled hobbyists called hams began talking to each other over great distances) through passage of the Federal Communications Act of 1934. Along the way, she examines not only the factors that resulted in wired networks becoming the technology of choice to provide national service but also the corporations jockeying for monopoly position in the new field (ATT, GE, RCA, etc.) and the complaisant role government played in its development. The author goes on to offer a pejorative assessment of how the issue of what means would be used to pay for countrywide radio was resolved in favor of advertising. Disputing any notion that the fledgling medium's for-profit destiny was inevitable, Smulyan reviews the efforts of educational institutions and other interest groups to resist radio's commercialization (which, she concludes, set the stage for TV). Informed by at least a latent hostility toward capitalism, the author complains that sponsors obliged pioneering broadcasters to appeal to mass audiences and to air rigidly formatted programs that proved less responsive than possible alternatives to the presumptive desires of listeners. While she cites the BBC, Smulyan never comes to grips with what sort of enterprise or arrangement might have represented an improvement over the shape the radio business actually took. Nor does the author provide any perspectives on the domestic Depression-era population whose cultural as well as socioeconomic needs she implies were shortchanged by the original sins of money-grubbing broadcasters and venal legislators. Largely ignored as well is any indication of competition, healthy or otherwise, within the radio industry itself. A pedantic, one-dimensional exercise that in another day would have produced demands for equal time. (More than two-dozen illustrations--not seen.) -- Copyright 1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.