

Active Radio: Pacificas Brash Experiment (Commerce and Mass Culture)

Jeffrey Land

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#4032313 in Books Univ Of Minnesota Press 1999-04-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x .50 x 5.50l, .54 #File Name: 0816631573200 pages Great product! | File size: 42.Mb

Jeffrey Land : Active Radio: Pacificas Brash Experiment (Commerce and Mass Culture) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Active Radio: Pacificas Brash Experiment (Commerce and Mass Culture):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Quick, Illuminating Read for Public Radio Fans By Peter

RichardsonIt's easy to take public radio for granted, but the story of the first listener-sponsored public radio station (and network) shows that challenges to its survival were formidable. Established in 1949 by pacifists with seed money from wealthy Bay Area Quakers, KPFA in Berkeley began airing progressive public affairs and arts programs and soon faced stiff resistance from the FCC, FBI, and Congress. This short (179 page) book, written for general audiences, focuses on the first three decades of this "brash experiment," including the expansion of Pacifica radio to include stations in Los Angeles, New York, Washington D.C., and Houston. In passing, we also hear about Margaret Mead, W.E.B. DuBois, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Pauline Kael, Seymour Hersh, Carey McWilliams, Alexander Meiklejohn, and other voices of dissent and criticism aired on Pacifica. Very worthwhile.

In April 1949, KPFA in Berkeley, California went on the air. From the beginning, the station broadcast an utterly new combination of political commentary and cultural discussion that reflected founder Lewis Hill's vision of a radio station dedicated to creative expression and dissent. In this fascinating account, Jeff Land tells the heroic story of the Pacifica radio network, exploring not only its role in the culture and politics of the postwar world, but also the practical model it pioneered for liberatory alternatives to commercial mass media. A network of five stations (in Berkeley, Los Angeles, Houston, New York City, and Washington, D.C.), Pacifica has been a participant in nearly every progressive political movement of the past fifty years. The network has risked the loss of its licenses, had its transmitters bombed, seen its personnel arrested and jailed, and made errors of judgment and taste. Yet it has pioneered a number of media innovations, listener sponsorship and call-in radio among them. It has also made history: on Pacifica stations, Seymour Hersh broke the My Lai story; the FBI's illegal internal surveillance program was first publicly revealed; the Firesign Theater gave its first performance; and Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind" made its public debut. Using tape archives of radio programs, interviews with participants, and unpublished material on Pacifica, Land chronicles the turmoils and triumphs of this radio network that served as a model for National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting System. Rich in anecdote, *Active Radio* is both an engaging account of Pacifica's past and an assessment of its significance to postwar culture in the United States.

From Publishers WeeklyTo commemorate the 50th anniversary of the independent Pacifica Radio Network, Land, a media critic and activist, recounts the network's history in a tight, accessible narrative. Land details how Lewis Hill and other pacifist conscientious objectors formed the Pacifica Foundation in 1946 to take their agenda beyond "ivory towerism" and to resist the "mediocrity and exploitation" that they believed defined commercial radio. After the FCC, in an era of intensified regulation, denied their idealistic AM application, Pacifica began to broadcast on FM via KPFA in the California Bay Area. Despite the network's populist intent, the station initially merited the sobriquet "Highbrow's Delight," offering classical music, intellectual roundtables and poetry alongside controversial politics. After its first decade, Pacifica expanded to New York and L.A., and as the countercultural movement gained momentum, the young network embraced the folk revival and became embroiled in a series of censorship trials over broadcasts of Ginsberg's *Howl* and George Carlin's "Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television." In 1962, the year longtime commentator Pauline Kael resigned in protest of Hill's domineering management of KPFA, Pacifica's New York outlet, WBAI, aired a former agent's then-shocking expose of illegal FBI activities, a story no other network would touch. WBAI was also a leader in Vietnam coverage, sending one of the first American correspondents to Hanoi and broadcasting Seymour Hersh breaking the My Lai incident. Land acknowledges that Pacifica, like most progressive organizations, endured passionate disagreements about everything from socialist theory to air time for classical music. But unlike Matthew Lasar's *Pacifica Radio: The Rise of an Alternative Network* (Forecasts, Nov. 23), Land is less concerned with such internal divisions than with Pacifica's larger role in American culture. For Land, Pacifica embodies the power of the First Amendment, exemplifying the salutary effects of the "disruption of convention encouraged by vigorous public dissent." Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library JournalRadio station KPEA began broadcasting from Berkeley, CA, in April 1949. By 1980 it had grown into the Pacifica Radio network, with stations in Los Angeles, New York, Washington, DC, and Houston and had earned a reputation for political activism, cultural discussion, and innovative programming, serving as the model for both public radio and television. Land, director of the -ISM (N.) media and diversity project in Durham, NC, covers Pacifica's history and the philosophical beliefs of its founder, Lewis Hill. Land is unflinching in his presentation of the network's financial problems, internal conflicts, and court battles and also highlights Pacifica's innovations, including reliance on listener financial support, talk radio programs, experimental formats, and aggressive news reporting. Land's work is not necessarily the final word. Matthew Lasar's *Pacifica Radio and the Rise of Alternative Radio* (Temple Univ., 1999) has just been published but it is engaging reading. Recommended for communications and media collections. Stephen L. Hupp, Swedenborg Memorial Lib., Urbana Univ., OH Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.