


TELEVISION MAGAZINE

RADIO



STUDY

THE STORZ BOMBSHELL

Few events of recent years have generated such excitement and discussion in the field of radio as has the sensational rise of the Todd Storz stations. Here is a detailed analysis of the Storz operation. It describes his provocative program "formula", reveals the thinking behind the controversial promotions, and reviews the competitive struggle in the various Storz markets.

NOW

NUMBER

IN

OMAHA*

**All Day—32.5 average
Dominant**

***Morning—34.7**

Afternoon—30.6

**Feb.-Mar. 1957
HOOPER**

24 HOURS

**AVERY-KNODEL
REP.**

5000 WATTS

KOIL

young Todd Storz, some see merely a reward give-away specialist, others a vital and powerful new force in radio. His influence on the medium, already considerable, continues to grow

THE STORZ BOMBSHELL

Here are the facts on today's most controversial station operation

By HERMAN LAND, Executive Editor

Violent passions are aroused in otherwise gentlemanly broadcasters when the name "Storz" is mentioned. To many, R. (for Robert) Todd Storz is cynicism incarnate, a cold-blooded exploiter of gullible listeners, a betrayer of the medium. To others, he is a bright, fresh new force on the radio scene who has brought originality, vitality and excitement to a medium that has slumbered too long in defeatist nostalgia.

On one thing both sides agree: this man Storz is a catastrophically successful operator. Beginning with KOWH, Omaha, in 1949, young Storz by last year was a five-station owner, the other stations being WDGY, Minneapolis-St. Paul; WTX, New Orleans; WHB, Kansas City; and WQAM, Miami. In March, he sold the Omaha station for \$822,000; he had purchased it for \$75,000.

There are, of course, numerous successful group operations in radio. But the Storz venture has more than the usual significance, for it has exerted an extraordinary influence on station operation around the country.

Each of the Storz stations is not only a rating and commercial success, but has achieved its eminence in the market with breath-taking rapidity. Broadcasters have flocked to the Storz markets to listen and discuss. The approach he has developed for independent music-and-news operation has been widely adopted, and the list of imitators continues to grow.

In recent years, advertisers and agencies have been noticing sudden rating changes in market after market were, overnight it seems, the relative standing of the stations is drastically altered, with long-time rating king-pins toppled and relative unknown independents surging to the top. They are sensing a new volatility in

the medium, strikingly different from the pre-TV days, when the rating relationships tended toward stability rather than abrupt and frequent change.

Storz did not invent the music-and-news approach, of course, and stations like WNEW in New York and WIND in Chicago, along with many others, have shown what can be accomplished with that format. But Storz has departed from the standard approach and has attacked his markets so aggressively as to stir up the competition as nobody has in years.

From those ill-disposed toward this young competitor, you hear that he buys the audience with give-aways, uses phony promotions and fraudulent advertising, deviously influences the rating services, even that he is remiss in his obligations to the public.

Time magazine last June called him "the fastest-rising figure in U. S. radio . . . whose low estimate of listeners' intelligence is tempered only by his high regard for their cupidity . . . he has found that give-aways work even better for stations than they do for individual programs."

Some say that his real genius consists of an ability to "pick markets with weak competition . . . they were sitting like clay pigeons. He'd get killed in New York."

To all of which, the Storz camp retorts: nonsense. These criticisms are only the outcries of frantic competitors who neither understand what has happened to them nor how to adapt to the new radio era. The charges, they say, are based on plain misrepresentation or distortion of fact.

What has really happened, according to this view, is that a programming service has been developing which

"If the public showed a preference for Chinese music, we'd play it"

is in tune with the times, which is more appealing to the listener than the older content. Promotion merely serves to call attention to it. From this point of view, the numerous cases of swift rises to the top by music-and-news operations are sad commentaries on how badly out of date much American radio is today.

A sharp rejoinder to the critics comes from another young broadcaster who has built a three-station empire in his state through an aggressive operation that resembles that of Storz. Says outspoken Gordon McLendon:

"I'm sick to death of hearing the network stations complain of what is nothing more than their own inefficiency. They do not do a local public interest job, by and large. The people who are complaining the loudest are just plain lazy. Their trouble is that they've been pushing down the network lever so long, they've lost the spirit to do anything!"

McLendon tosses out this challenging statement: "The fact is, there is better radio in the hinterland than in New York, Chicago or Los Angeles."

To those who have been accustomed to looking down on Storz, it is like waking to find the world turned upside down to hear that his programming is among the best that radio has to offer today. His adherents maintain that the Storz "sound" represents an advance over even the great music-and-news model itself, WNEW. New York radio is acidly described as "tired radio," although still ahead of that of most of the country.

A Storz manager and v.p., Steve Labunski of WJG, Minneapolis, says: "We have been a party to improving the quality of radio operation and increasing its value as an advertising medium."

Can all of these people be talking about the same thing? It would hardly seem so.

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE STORZ OPERATION

What really is the Storz "formula"? How much of its success depends on give-aways, high-pitched promotions? Is a Storz station nothing but a juke box, or is the programming the true key to its strength, as Storz claims? And, of particular importance to the advertiser, are the Storz-type rating successes produced primarily by promotions and therefore temporary? Or are they good for the long pull?

An outstanding characteristic of the Storz-type operator is youth (Todd Storz and Gordon McLendon are in their early thirties). He has had little or no TV experience. More important, unlike the veteran he competes with, he has no real roots in radio's past. To him, radio is not an also-ran medium to be sold defensively as a minor adjunct of TV. He tackles it as though it were a new medium, almost as though television did not exist.

A second important characteristic is objectivity. Storz is a foremost proponent of the "give the public what they want" school. He takes the position that his own tastes or those of his managers or talent are immaterial and not even to be considered when it comes to programming.

Management's chief task is to keep abreast of public taste; it must always be in a state of readiness to adapt to the listener's changing desires. The station itself should remain impersonal, detached.

Todd Storz puts it thus: "We follow the trend, we

do not try to lead it. If that is what is meant by 'cold blooded', then I suppose the charge is true. If we tried to educate the public to our taste, we might have no listeners."

This implies that the station must control the programming, and not leave it to the caprice or personal taste of individual programmers or personalities. For this reason, centralized program control is a marked feature of the music-and-news group operations. The degree of control, however, varies with the company.

It is important that whatever is done be done consistently. To Todd Storz, "a more consistent sound" is one of the reasons for his advantage over many other superficially similar stations.

The words that crop up most often when Storz or others attempt to describe that sound are "aliveness," "sharpness," "vitality," "pace," and "flow," and the sense that "something is happening" all the time.

In daily operation, what is involved is painstaking attention to details. Steve Labunski, describing how a Storz manager works, estimates that most of his time is spent on programming, rather than on sales. It is interesting that in the Storz setup the program director, rather than the sales manager, is really the assistant manager.

To those who have not studied the music-and-news approach, it may seem strange that so much effort should be involved, since efficient operation of some turntables and a little sensible choice of records ought to do the trick. Those experienced in the ways of successful music-and-news operation, however, argue that the appearance of ease is deceptive.

Says the program director of a major broadcasting group: "There is a misconception about the music-and-news station. It is not a juke-box. The amateur imitator of WNEW thinks he hears something. The problem is that he doesn't really hear what he thinks he hears. He tries to duplicate it in his own market on a superficial basis, and fails."

Broken down into its component parts, here is the Storz music-and-news formula.

MUSIC

The foundation of Storz programming is the simple premise that what the public wants is popular music. The proof is what it has always been: it is the type of music for which people pay out the most money in records, sheet-music, juke boxes.

Todd Storz states: "The programming of music is out of our hands. It is controlled entirely by the choice of the public. If the public suddenly showed a preference for Chinese music, we would play it. We don't, for example, assume that some people like hillbilly music and therefore put on a program of that type."

The allegation that he is guilty of cultural betrayal leaves Storz unmoved. "I do not believe there is anything such as better or inferior music. I do not think that the listener to either classical or to popular music derives greater satisfaction.

"The hit tune is the common meeting ground. Specific types of music, like hillbilly, may be popular with specific audience groups, but they may also be disliked b



Robert Todd Storz entered broadcasting at the age of eight, when he built his first crystal set. He got his ham license at sixteen, took over his first commercial station at 25.

Todd went to Omaha public schools, then to Choate School, Wallingford, Conn. He spent a year at the University of Nebraska, and three years in the Army Signal Corps as a cryptographic officer.

After his discharge in 1945, Storz attended a 12-week summer radio institute sponsored by NBC and Northwestern University. His first radio job was with KWBW, Hutchinson, Kansas, where "I did everything—engineering, announcing, selling, typing, copy, sweeping the floor."

In 1947, he moved to Mutual's Omaha outlet, KBON, where for a year he was a disk jockey with the *1490 Swing Club*, which ran from 11:00 p.m.-1:00 a.m. Storz then switched to KFAB, Omaha, for a sales job.

When KOWH went up for sale, Todd and his father, Robert H. Storz, v.p. of the Storz Brewing Co., saw their opportunity to get into broadcasting. Descended from Omaha's pioneer station, WAAW, it had been operated for 10 years by the World Publishing Company, publisher of the *World Herald*.

Asking price was \$75,000, which included an FM affiliate, KOAD.

The senior Storz put up \$30,000. Todd mortgaged a farm he owned in Iowa's Webster County, got \$20,000. A bank lent father and son \$25,000. Todd became v.p. and general manager of the new Mid-Continent Broadcasting Co., his father, president.

By 1950, says Storz, "the general character" of KOWH had been pretty well established. It was the music-and-news formula described elsewhere in this study. At the end of its first year—the station went under Storz ownership in 1949—KOWH showed a profit of \$84. It took two years to achieve rating leadership.

As ratings climbed and finances improved, Todd began to look for other stations. In August, 1953, Mid-Continent bought WTIX, New Orleans, for \$25,000. WHB, Kansas City, was purchased in May of the following year for \$400,000. In January, 1956, Storz bought WDGY, Minneapolis-St. Paul, for \$334,000, and in May of the same year WQAM, Miami, for \$850,000. In March, 1957, he sold KOWH to William Buckley for a reported \$822,000.

First year billings for Mid-Continent were \$125,000; for the fiscal year ending June, 1956, they were about \$3,500,000.

Todd Storz is five-eight, 135 lbs., and has dark brown hair and eyes. He is married and has one child, a daughter.

Even in his spare time, the young broadcaster is never really away from radio. In his Omaha office he keeps a short-wave transmitter-receiver, with which he keeps in touch with fellow hams the world over.

Todd does enjoy one hobby—fishing. He likes the English River system of Ontario for fresh water angling and Florida and Cuban waters for deep-sea fishing. But even in these quiet places, radio is his companion, in the form of a transistor portable.

oters. Just about everyone, however, likes popular music. Another way of putting it—the classical music lover may not be enthusiastic about popular music but he will not usually take violent objection to it."

The basis, therefore, of the Storz program structure is the Top 40 tunes. Some stations go in for Top 50, Top 100, etc.

In addition, hit tunes of the past are played, along with songs which are likely candidates for the hit category. The credo of a Storz disk jockey is: "I won't play anything that isn't a hit, can't be a hit, or wasn't a hit."

To determine popularity, Storz depends on local juke box plays, sheet-music and record sales, and listings in *Variety* and *Billboard*. The trade paper listings provide prospects for "future hits" that may not yet have shown up as such in the market.

Fundamental to Storz's thinking is the concept of repetition. The top songs are played throughout the week. There is a late afternoon Top 40 show, for ex-

ample, which runs three hours and plays the same records, for the most part, at approximately the same time, every day. This is considered heinous in some quarters, which maintain that variety of musical diet is necessary. To Storz, however, daily repetition follows inevitably from the chain of logic he employs.

He insists that the listener *wants* to hear his favorite numbers again and again. "I became convinced that people demand their favorites over and over while in the army during the Second World War," he recalls. "I remember vividly what used to happen in restaurants here in the states. The customers would throw their nickels into the juke box and come up repeatedly with the same tune. Let's say it was 'The Music Goes Round and Round.'

"After they'd all gone, the waitress would put her own tip money into the juke box. After eight hours of listening to the same number, what number would she select? Something she hadn't heard all day? No—invariably

"About the time you can't stand it, mama's beginning to learn the words"

she'd pick 'The Music Goes Round and Round.' Why this should be, I don't know. But I saw waitresses do this time after time."

Some of the older music-and-news practitioners criticize Storz for poor program balance, holding that not enough attention is given to such matters as musical pace within the individual program, sequencing of vocals and instrumentals for maximum effect, and so forth. Storz's answer is that so long as the numbers are what the listener wants to hear, their sequence is immaterial!

"It may be that 'program balance' is a myth," says Storz. "It may be that there is really no such thing. We don't worry at all whether a vocal follows a vocal. Nor do we program to fit the 'mood' of a day part."

It is left to the disk jockey to arrange the sequencing of records. If he wishes to observe principles of "balance," it is fine with Todd Storz, so long as he does not impose his own selections on the audience.

The disk jockey, in Storz's view, is not representative of the public. Because he is usually above the audience mentally and financially, and lives with popular music, his own preferences are a dangerous guide. Bud Armstrong, manager of the Storz Kansas City station, WHB, issues the following warning to his disk jockeys:

"About the time you don't like a record, mama's just beginning to learn to hum it. About the time you can't stand it, mama's beginning to learn the words. About the time you're ready to shoot yourself if you hear it one more time, it's hitting the top ten."

The acceptance of this over-all philosophy by so many broadcasters today, and the apparent success which many are finding it possible to achieve with it, suggests that while there may be regional differences in cultural taste, they are not as important as in the past—although they must, of course, be considered in any local program structure.

For almost two decades, the country has been undergoing dramatic changes. Population shifts have been stimulated by two wars. Moving pictures, network radio and then television have provided the same program content in Salt Lake City as in New York. As a consequence, it is no longer the case—if it ever was—that all sophistication resides in one or two great cities connected by a great untutored hinterland.

Until his experience in New Orleans, the question troubled Storz. "I had grave doubts about New Orleans," he says. "That city is at least 50% Negro, and there are large French and hillbilly populations. Yet the pattern is working there on our WTIX. We are operating successfully in the most diverse markets."

It is the growing universality of musical taste that appears to make possible group application of a single programming standard to many individual markets. Those who take this position argue that the only important differences that do exist are those of time-lags, that it takes longer for a song to reach popularity in one market than in another. Therefore, a major part of the job is to know the individual market thoroughly.

Some critics hold that the Storz Top 40 thinking is in tune primarily with the teenager, an audience minority. Storz argues that for the biggest part of the day the teenager is not available as a listener, that therefore

the music-news formula must meet the needs of the housewife, the most important part of the audience.

PERSONALITIES

If the logic of the Storz station is its Top 40 tunes, its heart is the disk jockey, or personality. He provides the station's warmth, its sparkle and much of its basic appeal. Storz looks for the best he can afford, is always listening to tapes of disk jockeys in other areas. It is a company boast that his disk jockeys earn more than the disk men on other stations in the market.

"We occasionally lose men to the bigger markets," says Steve Labunski. Recently, a Storz disk man was hired by a Chicago station; there is one in New York.

Storz on disk jockeys: "We want our men to talk enough to become personalities, to achieve individual identities. Otherwise, the station's sound is apt to become only 'background', and we want the listener to listen actively. We encourage the disk jockey to use his own talent. If he sings, let him sing. He is left completely free to talk as he feels best."

But aimless chatter is discouraged. "If you don't have anything to say, don't say it," is a Storz station rule. Another: "It doesn't hurt just to introduce a record."

Close listening reveals that, for all the air of excitement the air-men seek to create, there really is little talk between records—perhaps a short comment or gag. The focus is on the music. In the early morning period there seems to be a more relaxed manner, and more talk. The disk men will, however, spend considerable time on the station's various promotions and in calling attention to other disk jockey programs to come.

COMMERCIALS

The Storz stations are described by *Time* as "well-larded with commercials." Storz maintains that:

1. Strict limits must be observed on the number of commercials aired—eight in any half-hour period, seven in any 25-minute period.

2. No commercial can be over a minute long.

3. The client list is kept clean, the disreputable advertiser is not allowed in.

As a result of carefully observing the rules, say Storz adherents, the listener is never conscious of over-commercialization, as he is on some stations.

The commercial is actually considered a programming item in itself, that people enjoy listening to when well done; in Storz's hands it becomes another means of achieving the brightness and pace he is always after.

NEWS

The charge is frequently heard that a Storz newscast consists of little more than excited beep sounds plus a few items of a sex scandal or a Hollywood divorce. "Sensationalism" is the term that is said to best describe the approach.

An examination of the transcripts of five newscasts carried by KOWH, Omaha, the morning of April 11, 1957, shows a uniform emphasis on local and regional events. Here is an enumeration of the items, in the order aired, contained in the 8:55 a.m. broadcast:

Winner of Mrs. Nebraska contest, mid-western fug

COOPER RECORD OF THE STORZ STATIONS

Share of Audience — C. E. Hooper, Inc.

Hooper share-of-audience percentages listed below show how station rankings have been affected wherever a Storz station has been in operation—other rating services may show different percentages or

rankings for the periods indicated. Only the first three stations in the market are listed unless otherwise indicated. The Omaha and Minneapolis battles are described in detail in the accompanying article.

Omaha, Nebraska — KOWH — Purchased in 1949

	Oct. '49-Feb. '50	Oct. '50-Feb. '51	Dec. '51-Jan. '52*	Oct.-Nov. '56*	Feb.-Mar. '57*
7 a.m.-noon	KOIL 37.4 %	KOIL 40.5 %	KOWH 29.8%	KOWH 39.0%	KOIL 34.7 %
Mon.-Fri.	Station B 19.3	Station B 16.9	KOIL 25.7	KOIL 23.1	KOWH 30.9
	KOWH 4.2**	KOWH 7.9**	Station A 15.7	Station B 17.1	Station B 15.0
noon-6 p.m.	Station B 38.4	Station B 37.1	KOWH 45.2	KOWH 39.0	KOWH 34.2
Mon.-Fri.	KOIL 23.2	KOWH 20.8**	Station B 25.7	KOIL 30.2	KOIL 30.6
	KOWH 4.4**	KOIL 19.3	Station A 11.3	Station B 17.2	Station B 18.9

*Monday through Saturday
 **Information on ranking not available

Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota — WDGY — Purchased in January, 1956

	Oct.-Dec. '55	Feb.-May '56	June-Sept. '56	Oct. '56-Jan. '57
7 a.m.-noon	WCCO 42.1 %	WCCO 37.9 %	WCCO 34.8 %	WCCO 29.4 %
Mon.-Fri.	Station A 17.4	WDGY 14.8	WDGY 26.9	WDGY 22.8
	WDGY 4.2	Station B 11.6	Station B 9.4	Station A 12.7
	(sixth place)			
noon-6 p.m.	WCCO 35.7	WCCO 31.5	WCCO 31.1	WCCO 28.2
Mon.-Fri.	Station B 16.7	WDGY 17.3	WDGY 27.8	WDGY 23.2
	WDGY 3.7	Station B 14.3	Station B 9.6	Station B 11.0
	(seventh place)			

Miami, Florida — WQAM — Purchased in May, 1956

	Oct.-Nov. '54	Oct.-Nov. '55	Oct. '56-Jan. '57	Feb.-Mar. '57
7 a.m.-noon	WQAM 28.5%	Station A 31.7 %	WQAM 25.8%	WQAM 30.6%
Mon.-Fri.	Station B 27.5	WQAM 20.5	Station A 19.5	Station A 14.1
	Station A 21.9	Station B 16.9	Station B 18.0	Station B 13.5
noon-6 p.m.	Station B 32.9	Station B 29.9	WQAM 31.0	WQAM 29.1
Mon.-Fri.	Station A 26.4	Station A 28.6	Station B 17.2	Station B 16.0
	WQAM 18.3	WQAM 10.4	Station A 16.0	Station C 12.6
		(fourth place)		

Kansas City, Missouri — WHB — Purchased in May, 1954

	Feb.-Apr. '54	Oct. '54-Jan. '55	Oct. '55-Jan. '56	Oct. '56-Jan. '57
7 a.m.-noon	Station A 28.5 %	WHB 35.2%	WHB 47.0%	WHB 38.8%
Mon.-Fri.	Station B 14.8	Station A 19.7	Station A 15.5	Station A 18.8
	WHB 14.7	Station B 14.7	Station B 12.1	Station B 11.1
noon-6 p.m.	Station A 24.6	WHB 44.0	WHB 47.3	WHB 35.0
Mon.-Fri.	Station C 17.8	Station A 15.7	Station A 15.6	Station A 20.8
	WHB 14.5	Station C 12.1	Station C 11.2	Station D 11.1

New Orleans, Louisiana — WTIx — Purchased in August, 1953

	July-Sept. '53	Oct.-Dec. '53	July-Sept. '54	Oct.-Dec. '54	Oct. '56-Jan. '57
7 a.m.-noon	Station A 20.3 %	Station A 21.6%	WTIX 17.9%	WTIX 18.0%	WTIX 21.4%
Mon.-Fri.	Station B 13.0	Station F 11.0	Station A 16.3	Station A 17.2	Station A 13.7
	WTIX 2.0	WTIX 10.3	Station C 13.3	Station F 13.1	Station C 10.5
	(ninth place)	(fifth place)			
noon-6 p.m.	Station A 18.6	Station B 24.0	Station B 17.2	Station A 20.6	WTIX 21.7
Mon.-Fri.	Station B 18.4	Station A 22.6	Station A 16.8	Station B 17.9	Station A 13.7
	WTIX 1.9	WTIX 7.4	WTIX 16.3	WTIX 14.4	Station E 12.3
	(tenth place)	(sixth place)			

"The news-tip is probably our most effective gimmick"

tive returned to Tennessee for prison term, reform school escapees held for stealing automobiles, Iowa murder arraignment, Davenport barmaid cleared of jail break connection, Kansas State Prison warden refuses to resign, evacuation of Pennsylvania families in face of spreading chlorine gas fumes, Eisenhower budget director on post office financial crisis, hearing of newsmen's protest of State Department's ban on travel to Red China, Senator Sparkman on foreign aid, Izvestia on U.S.-Israel plan to construct new Mediterranean port, Saudi Arabian warning to Israel on Gulf of Aqaba, Israeli report on Jordan crisis.

Here is how Todd Storz describes his news policy:

"We try to lead off with a local item. Our view is that the average person is more concerned with the auto accident that happens around the corner than with the United Nations. I came to this view from newspaper readership studies which show that interest in local news is higher than in national or international events.

"However, we definitely do cover national and international news, though we usually give it headline rather than detailed treatment.

"We don't emphasize sensation as much as we did at the beginning. But we still go in for what would be more correctly described as human interest, as well as Hollywood material. As with music, our policy is guided by what the audience wants to hear."

A disk jockey recalls that when an irate listener would call in complaining of a sex story that the station had carried, he would reply: "We are the only station in town that does not censor the news."

A highly valued part of the local news operation is the news-tip. The station pays from \$10.00 to \$25.00 to any listener whose news-tip has been used. Every employee whose phone report is used on the air gets an extra ten dollars in his pay envelope.

"The news-tip is probably our most effective gimmick," says Storz. "We began it in 1949. In our smallest market, Omaha, it will produce five to eight stories on a quiet day. It can produce up to fifty and sixty a day."

The news-style is staccato, "telegraphic," with an air of the exciting and up-to-the-minute.

The newscast is introduced—always five minutes before the hour—and signed-off with sound effects, beeps, news machines, typewriters, and so forth, in keeping with the tone of excitement. It is preceded by a musical theme with lyrics calling attention to the news show.

An important trio of news items are time, weather, temperature. These are given seven or eight times an hour, always at station breaks. Accompanying them are frequently brief reports on driving conditions.

SOUND EFFECTS

"We are not running an austere operation," says Todd Storz. "We try to showcase it, we try to put 'color' in our sound, just as 'color' is being used to showcase television."

Sound effects are used for newscasts, promotions, commercials, and a great deal of time, money and effort go into their preparation. The straight local live commercial is now a rarity; it is more often dramatized, or otherwise dressed up for sound.

To achieve a sense of the ever-new and fresh, Storz reports, "we try to do something new with sound each month. One month we'll start the news with news machines ticking away, the next month we'll go in for gongs or bells. The point is, it will sound different from the week before.

"In the same way, we try to change frequently the sounds we use in our commercials." The musical theme is employed throughout the schedule as a basic aspect of the over-all station sound. Singing station breaks, introductions, and sign-offs are used for each disk jockey and newscast. Long used in radio, the singing introduction is by now almost universal.

PROMOTION

The most controversial part of the Storz formula, and the one that has received the widest publicity, is the bag of attention-getting tricks he calls "promotions." It is often claimed that the give-away is the true reason for the Storz success—that without it, his station would be nowhere.

Before discussing Storz's own views on the subject let us look at the record. After the Storz station reaches the top or near it, does it stay there or come down when the first great promotion wave is over? Are there any instances of swift success when the major promotion was not used?

An examination of the Hooper rating charts on page 89 will clearly show the following:

1. The Storz stations seem to have staying power. WHB has been the Kansas City leader for over two years; WTIK has led in New Orleans for two years; KOWH has held the top spot in Omaha for over five years, is only now being challenged; WDGY has been a strong second in Minneapolis-St. Paul for a year.

While other rating services may show different audience shares, there can be little question that these stations have made strong impressions in their markets.

2. WQAM, Miami, within 90 days, rose from second place in the morning and fourth place in the afternoon to first place in both periods—despite the fact that no give-aways were used, under the pledge Storz made to the FCC when applying for the Miami license.

Imitators have tried Storz stunts, often with success, but all too frequently these successes have been short lived.

What really aroused broadcasters' ire was the notorious \$105,000 buried treasure hunt that Storz conducted in Omaha and Minneapolis-St. Paul. Clues were given daily on the air, for ten days—in which time the cities went mad.

Such stunts have created traffic tie-ups, sent motoring tearing into staid libraries in feverish search for hidden treasure, and caused other types of mayhem not always foreseen by the perpetrators. Whether this type of promotion is evil, harmless, or helpful, has been subject of heated dispute for years. Here is how Todd Storz looks at it:

"Promotion is a very legitimate advertising method. It is of service and interest to the listener, and has proven successful in television and in building newspaper circulation.

"The promotions are based on the station's own problems. If your station is already well established, naturally you do not need promotion so badly. If you take over a station that is near the bottom, then promotion is terribly important to let people know about you."

In Minneapolis, for example, Storz took over WDGY in January of 1956. In order to sign up fall business in time, it was necessary to show results by spring, when buying is at its height. This called for the spectacular approach.

Not all Storz promotions are spectacular. Most, in fact, are little more than variations of minor give-away contests that have been around for years.

One day's monitoring in Minneapolis turned up the following promotions:

1. *The Auto Cash Contest*: In this the listener writes for a registration card which he sticks on the rear window of his car; a station spotter on the road phones a license number of a car bearing a sticker—if the listener then calls the station, he wins the money.

2. *Lucky House*: The station broadcasts a street address; if the occupant calls within a minute he gets the jackpot, which continues to mount at the rate of \$10 a day until won. Copyrighted by Storz, this idea has earned him over \$600 a week from other stations he has licensed to use it.

3. *Dinner with the Disk Jockey*: The listener is asked to write a letter, limited to 25 words, telling what he likes best about the "new WDGY"; four winners get a music album and are invited to have dinner on Saturday with the disk jockey.

4. *Mystery Voice*: A guess-who routine.

5. *The Parakeet Contest*: If the listener can train a parakeet to say "This is WDGY, Minneapolis-St. Paul," he wins cash. On the day monitored, the winner was interviewed and the parakeet was heard giving the call all day. The interview was repeated throughout the day.

6. *A Breakfast Menu Contest*.

There is a continuous parade of such gimmicks on the Storz stations, which are always trying to think up new ones. They are considered an integral part of station operation in today's TV-dominated scene, where radio must fight hard to call attention to itself and to generate excitement.

Promotion is not the whole answer

But promotion has its limits, a realization which few credit Storz with. Yet here is what he says on this point:

"Fast results are easy to get. It's easy to get a rating. If the promotion is good enough, people will be willing to try your product. After that, it's up to the product to keep them coming back."

Perhaps the most significant recent development which sheds light on the degree to which the give-away affects a station's position is the rise of the Plough Inc. stations. This concern, which now runs four stations, is proud that it permits no gimmicks. It has patterned itself after Storz, but has developed one facet of his approach to its logical extreme. Although it is still too soon to know with certainty, Plough appears to be making considerable headway in most of its markets.

A Plough station is the nearest thing to a "juke-box operation" in radio today. It revolves around the Top 40,

plus extras. Programming is rigorously controlled. Announcers are required to stick to standard formats, allowed no deviation. The theory is that the audience wants to hear the hit tunes, the weather, time signals and get a fast news wrap-up; it does not want to hear disk jockey "dribble."

The programming is viewed as a service of music and useful information available to the listener at any time of day. Information proceeds at a fixed sequence. The announcer also tells the listener what he is going to hear: "In just sixty seconds you will hear so-and-so sing—" Newscasts are staccato and crowded beyond anything that Storz does. There are the usual musical themes, sound effects intros and sign-offs.

The organization believes its stations have a smooth, pleasant, likable sound. Since it is the music, rather than the personalities, the listener tunes in to hear, the announcer is discouraged from becoming a personality, though the show is called by his name. This allows the station to change disk jockeys at will, without the public's being aware that a change has occurred.

This working out of his own logic causes Storz to shudder. The fact is, however, that the Plough station in Memphis has been first in Hooper ratings since last fall; that its Baltimore station, WCAO, holds the lead in the afternoon; that in Boston, against strong independent competition, its WCOP has moved from sixth to fourth place—and for a period was ahead of the field in the afternoon.

And all this, the company claims, with no gimmicks!

McLendon on influence of give-aways

One of the most interesting denials that ratings depend on give-aways comes from Storz's staunch supporter, Gordon McLendon, himself proud of the intensity and originality of his own promotions. Here is what he told an RTES luncheon discussion session recently.

Referring to a \$50,000 give-away contest he conducted in Dallas—and he had actually given the money away to a plasterer who found the buried treasure—he declared:

"I point out to you that in the midst of the biggest single station give-away in the history of radio, our station dropped .8 of one percentage point in the morning. We think we can prove without any question that give-aways no longer have any appreciable short-run effect on local station ratings.

"Let me say that promotions, in our estimation, are not short-run hypos of ratings, but are instead, if anything, long-run jobs. Contests and give-aways are but one part of them.

"Over-all sound programming is the one thing that will hypo a station's audience. We further submit that stations should not be cast into disgrace by anyone in television simply because they are alert and sound producers. To do so would be a reactionary and unfortunate trend of thinking in the radio industry, because promotion is one of the things which has made show business."

McLendon adheres to a Top 40 music philosophy, which he developed quite independently of Storz, as have other stations managements, but has expended most of his efforts on developing an outstanding local news operation. His Dallas station, criticized as has been Storz's, employs eight full-time newsmen and has three mobile units. ▶

Storz: "The days of 50% to 60% share of audience are limited"

To McLendon, this "newspaper of the air" approach to radio is the greatest of all of his many promotions. "The best promotions are the occasional big local news stories that come our way. We promote 52 weeks of the year, not just during a rating period."

THE COMPETITION

When a brash young upstart invades an old and fairly quiet domain, the veterans at first tend to refuse to recognize his existence. When it becomes clear that the old order is being destroyed, the veteran may move to defend himself, sometimes too late. This has been happening fairly often during the past few years.

But not in Minneapolis. Knowing that Storz was heading for a twin-city operation, the undisputed leader for many years, WCCO, studied his operations and decided to fight back. Other stations in town joined the fray. WPGY manager Labunski tells what happened.

"In Minneapolis, they were waiting for us. In Kansas City, we had used the \$25 news-tip successfully. WTCN started it just before we came in, so we didn't use it. WCCO began a Saturday Top 40. WLOL went into a Top 40. We went ahead with ours on the grounds that you can't imitate the name of the show—ours features the name of the disk jockey. WLOL also used the Lucky House contest. The first result was an increase in the total amount of popular music being aired.

"In the same 10 days during which our \$105,000 buried treasure contest ran, WCCO ran a \$250,000 secret word contest. We announced we would run the secret word, so that listeners wouldn't have to listen to WCCO. WCCO ran long phrases, like 'WCCO is the best station in Minneapolis.' We carried them. WCCO vaulted us into the big-station category. They invited us into the club."

The gulf that separates the newcomer's thinking from that of the older, solidly established broadcaster is evident from this statement of F. Van Konynenburg, v.p. of WCCO, in connection with the battle between the stations.

"This was one case in which we were familiar with the pattern they were going to establish. We asked ourselves: are we making full use of radio? Have we missed any bets in terms of the audience? We did not make any radical changes in order to compete.

"Is radio really as different today as people say? We studied the independent operations pretty sharply—you always do this when you are top dog. We are necessarily concerned that our approach might be old-fashioned or archaic. The figures show that the fare we offer is not unpalatable.

"The tendency for all the stations was to devote time to contests. We had the Big Bill Cash contest, and we ran our own promotions. But we have a strong sense of responsibility to the community. We have enjoyed acceptance for many years; few can boast our share of audience. We respect our audience, and they respect us in turn. We have always emphasized a really conscientious treatment of news and public affairs. Anything we do has impact, because of the size of the audience. The purpose of our promotion is to keep people aware that we aren't in a rut."

"WCCO," comments Labunski, "has long understood the local approach."

Starting from a base of unusually strong acceptance in its area, and a brace of top-notch personalities like Cedric Adams, WCCO has been able to maintain first place in the Hooper race against a fast-climbing WDGY, now a strong second after having risen from sixth place.

One of the most intriguing of the competitive battles has been waged in Todd Storz's home town of Omaha, the scene of his first radio triumph. After leading the field since the end of 1951, KOWH had just been nosed out of first place in the morning by KOIL and was losing ground to it in the afternoon, according to the latest Hooper report available. Todd Storz claims that other rating services show him still ahead—an ironic turnabout, since competitors have frequently challenged his own Hooper claims in exactly the same manner.

KOIL co-owner Don Burden openly declares: "We fought fire with fire." Not only did KOIL take on the KOWH program pattern—though it uses a somewhat broader base of musical selection—it also jumped headlong into the promotional war.

"Last May we gave away a \$30,000 dream home completely furnished. Storz started the \$105,000 deal in answer. We used the Mystery Santa Claus, with clues given for six weeks before Christmas."

KOIL programs news every half hour, but follows the Storz logic in supplying "what the people want." Burden claims that "between the two stations, we wrap up 70% of the audience. The basic reason is the top personalities."

Other managers study techniques

As a result of KOIL's successful combat, says Burden, the station is getting two to three personal and telephone calls per week from managers in other markets curious to know what it is doing.

It should be noted that KOIL has a natural advantage in facilities in that it is a full-time station, while KOWH is a daytimer only.

In Milwaukee powerful competition prevented the McLendon station, WRIT, from rising above fourth place, except briefly, in the Hooper listings during the period of his ownership between March, '55 and Dec., '56.

As becomes a realist, Storz recognizes that imitation and aggressive competition were inevitable. "I think it is pretty clear that the days of 50% to 60% share of audience are limited, as stations come to resemble each other in the sound they put on the air. The competition is bound to get keener."

Storz is now looking toward the bigger markets for his future station efforts, and there may soon be an answer to the question of whether he can make the grade in the big city. He is willing to concede that the major markets' polyglot population and different levels of culture and taste may make it theoretically impossible for him to apply his pattern there as he has in the past. But deep within, he refuses to acknowledge the possibility. "After all," he explains, "you must have faith in what you're doing." END

Reprints of this study are available at 25c each. Bulk rates on request.