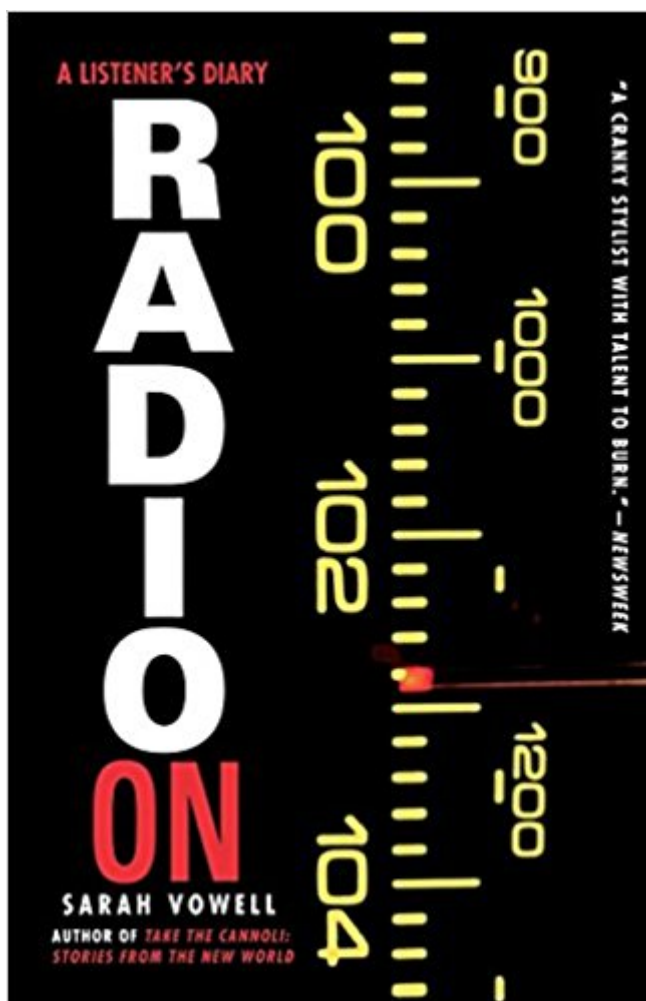


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Radio On: A Listener's Diary



Synopsis

There are approximately 502 million radios in America. For this savvy, far-reaching diary, celebrated journalist and author Sarah Vowell turned hers on and listened--closely, critically, creatively--for an entire year. As a series of impressions and reflections regarding contemporary American culture, and as an extended meditation on both our media and our society, this keenly focused book is as insightful as it is refreshing. Throughout *Radio On*, "Vowell's touch is about as delicate as Teddy Kennedy's after a pitcher of martinis" (Richard Roeper, *Chicago Sun-Times*).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Vowell's survey of the current state of American AM and FM radio concentrates on the Chicago-area airwaves and Montana State University's KGLT in Bozeman. Aside from Nirvana, Hole, and KGLT, Vowell doesn't find much to like. NPR is too stodgy, Garrison Keillor too sappy, Republicans and Rush Limbaugh simply too much. She likes Chicago's quirky, low-powered WZRD, though, especially its airing of the Church of the SubGenius' Hour of Slack, and also establishment rock critics Greil Marcus and Jim DeRogatis. Vowell expresses her opinions strongly and forthrightly. Her criticisms of NPR and Keillor, for that matter, are hard for even their fans to disagree with, but panning Keillor while praising smarmy NPR elder newswoman Susan Stamberg seems odd, and getting the call letters of Chicago's all-sports station wrong casts doubt on her objectivity and thoroughness. Oh well, if you worship at the altar of the media god Alternative and take radio really, really seriously, Vowell's rant is just the thing. If you don't, it is still stimulating reading. Mike Tribby --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Be ready to hit the scan button repeatedly with this wildly uneven, day-by-day-by-day diary of a year--1995--spent listening to the radio. Like strip malls and superhighways, radio has become such an integral part of the American landscape that we rarely notice its sheer ubiquity. Between our houses, our cars, our offices, even our elevators, there are more than 500,000,000 radios in this country, all spewing a 24-hour-a-day hodgepodge of everything from rock to religion to right-wing ranting. Any account of this vast cacophony is necessarily subjective, but Vowell, a music columnist for *San Francisco Weekly*, spices her impressionistic stew with unhealthy dollops of narcissism and jejune banality: "I only conceived this diary as a means to say that I'm just as confused and overwhelmed as my elders, just as ill-informed and worried and perplexed and lacking in answers (but willing to look) as people twice my age." In these limited terms, the book is a roaring success. As Vowell spins her way around the country, tuning in to the local radio stations, she reacts like the perfect poster girl for Generation X: I mean, don't you just hate Rush Limbaugh and Newt Gingrich and all those mean Republicans? And how about National Public Radio, isn't it, totally nonadventurous and establishment? And doesn't Top-Forty completely bite? What little wisdom there is to be found in this landscape apparently comes mainly from grungy Seattle rockers like Nirvana and Pearl Jam (those who believe that truth resides in rock lyrics will be particularly taken with this book). By the end, Vowell is justly sick and tired of radio, of the noise and chatter, the hate and spew and "all the stupidity." Unfortunately, one of those rare books in which subject and author are in near-perfect harmony. -- Copyright ©1996, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Two problems with this book:1. 's stock of it is poorly printed. I received one copy on time, started reading it, and found that many pages were printed too lightly. The printing was so bad on some pages that it was not at all readable. exchanged it (free) for another copy, but that too was unreadable. I spoke to an representative, explaining that I'd be happy to exchange it if they could check the one they send to make sure it's printed correctly, but I was told that was impossible: a human person would not look at the item before it was packaged and shipped. So I took my chances a third time, but that copy was badly printed too.2. In between returns, I read parts of the book. I've enjoyed much of Sarah Vowell's writings, but this one was not for me. It was written in a diary style, and I expected a lot about radio, especially public radio, in the United States. The description even calls it "keenly focused." But I disagree; the book was more about her personal preferences for grunge music, her angst, her... self. Radio is just a backdrop, a vehicle for her

introspection, praises of Nirvana and Hole, and echoes of the "everything sucks" attitude of 90s teenagers.

Not enjoyable reading in any way shape or form. The topic of the book is what drew me to it, but the handling of the topic and the authors slanted view on the world was a real turn off. Could not ever recommend this to anyone.

The problem is not with the author but with the publisher and/or printer. The paperback edition is missing the first page of each chapter. I ordered one copy and discovered the problem, returned it for credit and ordered another copy, which had the same problem. I sent a note to the publisher but never heard back. I am now waiting to receive a used copy of the hardcover edition, and will keep my fingers crossed.

this book is like holding 1995 in my sweaty little palms. I'm a little younger than Sara, so this book brought back many memories for me, some I'd rather live without, but most I'll happily reclaim. Even if I actually like Garrison Keillor. We do have many other things in common, so even across the years and the miles, it feels good to know, it's not just me.

I liked some of Vowell's earlier works. Not so much on this. Perhaps I am too old, 60 years old, to enjoy the angst of her generation. However, I got on well with co-workers of her age. For some reason the book didn't click with me. But, Vowell is nonetheless an excellent writer.

First great Novel from America's humor historian. Like all the following great novels, this one sits on the same pedestal. Tough to put down once you start.

I love the book. Ive always enjoyed Sarah Vowell and this was no different

Sarah Vowell is an incredible American treasure. She is an essayist that should be on more academic reading lists. I am surprised that she is not referenced more as an essayist. In a short period of time, radio listening comes off as dated. Extremely interesting to read.

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