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# Wheelin' on Beale: How Wdia-Memphis Became the Nation's First All-Black Radio Station and Created the Sound That Changed America

*Louis Cantor*

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**Louis Cantor : Wheelin' on Beale: How Wdia-Memphis Became the Nation's First All-Black Radio Station and Created the Sound That Changed America** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wheelin' on Beale: How Wdia-Memphis Became the Nation's First All-Black Radio Station and Created the Sound That Changed America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Richard C. AdamsA must have0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. GreatBy Christopher D. SotoGreat book2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Great Primer about an amazing stationBy Uncle MickeyThis is an excellent history of WDIA. I strongly advise this as ONE of the key books on the subject of Black Radio in America. My Father was one of the white guys that stayed on with the station during the format change. DIA is pivotal not because of the claim of being first (not exactly correct), but because of the importance of so many of the key players and their influence on Black Radio and RB.Nothing has been written that really expresses the role of the RB stations and the community. These places were gathering places for urban politics, black teens, religious leaders and so much more. We saw stations fire bombed, towers blown up, death threats and insanity beyond belief. We saw station move VERY slowly to some black ownership and the

eventual death of the format as corporate media acquired these outlets. It was amazing and sad. It was a very strange and wonderful time, and it is lost forever. Read all you can. It was an era that was better lived than described. Thanks! Mr. Cantor for the great research, I wish you could have conveyed the vibe.

Book by Cantor, Louis

From Library Journal In the late 1940s, Memphis radio station WDIA became the first to target its programming to a largely ignored black audience. "Cannonball" Cantor, one of the few white announcers on WDIA, tells how this decision resulted not only in business success, but mirrored America's nascent awareness of African American culture and social issues. While featuring shows with the now-quaint titles of "Tan Town Jamboree" and "Sepia Swing Club," WDIA influenced a generation of young white Southerners who would soon meld the blues they heard on the radio with country music to form rock 'n' roll. African American on-the-air personalities and community involvement led to a more positive self image for listeners and paved the way for the civil rights struggle of the 1960s. This firsthand look at one of the early victories in America's war against racism is recommended. - Dan Bogey, Clearfield Cty. P.L. Federation, Cur wensville, Pa. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sA light and lively history of WDIA, the country's first all- black radio station. Located in Memphis, WDIA is where blues greats B.B. King and Rufus Thomas got their starts. Cantor, who is white, worked on the control-board of WDIA during the 1950's; here, he records the shifts that took place at the station from 1948, the year in which it broke the color barrier, through the 70's and 80's, when it lost its unique voice in an increasingly integrated society. He writes of Nat D. Williams, the station's first disc jockey, an erudite high-school teacher and newspaper columnist who was also a natural comedian, and of Theo "Bless My Bones" Wade, a gospel deejay who got his name after accidentally spilling his coffee on the air. Cantor also describes B.B. King's arrival at WDIA (he came "in out of the rain one day with his guitar wrapped in a newspaper to protect it") and the Saturday night "Hallelujah Jubilee," a live show that attracted so many local gospel groups eager to perform that it was impossible to get into the station. WDIA was always white-owned and made few political waves, but, as Cantor persuasively argues, it played an important role in the black community not only by giving African-Americans airtime, but also by performing extensive public service. WDIA made thousands of announcements regarding everything from lost false teeth to missing persons, built low-income housing, and established the city's first black Little League. Also included here is background on the evolving racial climate of the South, and information on WDIA's influence on radio stations across the country. A welcome addition to the little-explored field of African- American radio. (Sixteen pages of photographs.) -- Copyright 1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.