



**Madonna:
Clear Channel poster girl.**

De-Reg Demons

Clear Channel builds conservative airwave monopoly.

by Aria Seligmann

Microsoft, move over. Clear Channel now leads as the mass communication industry's favorite bad guy. From accusations of using its media power to strongarm musicians into live concert performances to promote its radio stations in return for playing their songs, to promoting pro-war rallies and to its owners' substantial ties to the Bush administration, conservative-minded Clear Channel has become the target of suspicion, mistrust and outright hostility for activists, musicians and media watchdogs.

Clear Channel owns the most radio stations in the world: more than 1,240 across the U.S. alone. Cumulus Broadcasting is next, with stations totaling 248.

When you're that big, you're gonna take the heat.

A Business Success Story

Clear Channel's meteoric rise to ownership of more than 1,240 radio stations within just a few years has garnered the company 10 percent of the country's total stations, 20 percent of the country's radio advertising revenue and 25 percent of total listeners. Add to these impressive numbers nearly 40 TV stations, more than 770,000 billboards and a giant clamp on the music industry:

Clear Channel Entertainment owns more than 35 live entertainment venues in the U.S. In 2001, Clear Channel produced the tours of U2, Madonna, Janet Jackson and has since added other big names to the list. The company claims to have generated nearly 70 percent of concert ticket revenue that year.

Clear Channel also owns SFX Sports Group, which sponsors many events and manages a courtful of sports figures, like Michael Jordan and Andre Agassi.

Locally, Clear Channel owns KMTR TV, as well as radio stations KDUK, KPNW, KOOL (formerly KOLDZ) and KFLY. Clear Channel Entertainment and SFX bring road shows to the Hult, such as *Swing*, *Fosse* and the upcoming *Lord of the Dance*.

Second largest Cumulus owns KUIZ, KZEL, KUGN, KNRQ, and KSCR and KEHK.

Clear Channel made its leap into airwave domination after Congress deregulated the radio industry in 1996. Until then, there'd been a limit on how many radio stations a single company could own: one AM and one FM per area, and no more than seven nationwide.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 said a single company can own up to 35 percent of media outlets in any given area. With its current grasp on the local market, according to the most recently published Media Audit, in Eugene, over a seven-day period from April to May 2002, Clear Channel radio had, among adults 18 years and older, 35.4 percent of the market share, while its television share was 64.4 percent. Those numbers will show an increase considering Clear Channel's acquisition of other radio stations since that report's publication. Those numbers are great for attracting advertisers. Clear Channel megacorp's all about money, and media is a lucrative business.

Clear Channel owner Mark Mays and financial advisor and board member Thomas O. Hicks — a George W. Bush buddy — helped turn Clear Channel into an \$8.4 billion company last year. For the most recent fiscal year, profits were \$2.19 billion, with the radio portion bringing in \$1.6 billion of those profits.

Profits come from cross advertising: selling a package deal of radio, television and billboards. Profits also increase when programs are piped in from a centralized location. That means staff reductions, which helps the bottom line. It also means more conservative talk shows, such as Rush Limbaugh, Dr. Laura Schlessinger and Glenn Beck, because that's where the ratings are. It also means a homogenization of music and culture.

Local angles often get lost and many local performers don't get air play. Clear Channel often purchases minority-owned stations, resulting in a drastic decline in the number of minority-owned stations since 1996's de-regulation.

Now, the FCC is considering removing the last barrier to ownership, meaning one company can own everything — radio, television, newspapers and cable stations — in any given area.

A Brief History

Clear Channel's most recent round of criticisms relates to the pro-war rallies it has sponsored. What makes that so shocking is that by