

U.S. record label. And recently deceased musicians, such as pianist Don Pullen, who led the most exciting group in the '90s, or the marvelous composer John Carter, are utterly forgotten, their recordings out of print and the music unstudied by all but their former band members.

Is it heresy to think that Ellington himself might bristle at the closing of the jazz mind? I like to think that, were he alive, Ellington would show the same generosity of spirit he showed his own musicians. He would cede some of the

limelight so others could prosper. And with them, all of jazz would prosper. That is what makes jazz different from classical music or the Great Books. For in a world besieged by history, choking on it, jazz keeps the past at bay, at the middle distance, not out of sight but not in your face either.

And that is hipness. ■

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Bitter Air

By Elizabeth Millard

These days, those who believe that numbers possess deep significance are readying themselves for the big calendar page flip. Images of nervous computer programmers stockpiling Evian and stories on how to tell one doomsday cult from another are becoming so standard that they get wedged into pre-weather TV news slots, right after reports on pets who look like their owners. Even those who find digits questionable as a source of mystical meaning (and barely have time to shop for the week much less years underground) have a sense of foreboding, though not of Armageddon. Rather, the caution is fueled by the seeming increase of extremist groups who are ready to start next year with a literal bang.

Waves of Rancor: Tuning in the Radical Right

By Robert L. Hilliard and
Michael C. Keith
M.E. Sharpe
288 pages, \$32.95

With the media play given to militias and religious extremists since the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, it appears that membership in these organizations has grown at an exponential rate. The threat these groups pose is both real and perceived: Although membership is growing at a steady rate, media attention has made the groups seem more pervasive and larger than they really are. It's no longer shocking to see skinheads posturing and saluting, or a well-armed militia member cleaning a gun while giving an interview.

While the timing of this rise comes none too coincidentally, the roots of these groups were planted long before people started flipping out about whether ATMs will work come Jan. 1, 2000.

Robert Hilliard and Michael Keith, who teach communications at Emerson College and Boston College, opine in their book *Waves of Rancor* that the rise of the extremist right can be traced to the power of radio, which is still strongly pumping out the right's message to eager and loyal listeners. Video may have killed the radio star, but it hasn't even wounded the extremist radio talk show host.

The first regularly scheduled radio station went on the air in 1920, and regulation of the airwaves came seven years later when Congress established the Federal Radio Commission, which later became the FCC. In this early period of a new medium, the FCC attempted to discourage and even suppress the presentation of only one side of an issue with legislation, the Equal Time provision of the Communications Act of 1934. This was later supplanted by the more stringent FCC ruling, the Mayflower Decision, which, as the authors write, "clearly prevented free speech on the air in the interest of preventing only one side of free speech from being heard." A more democratic solution came in 1949, with passage of the Fairness Doctrine, which held "that radio be maintained as a medium of free speech for the general public as a whole rather than as an outlet for the purely personal or private interests of the licensee."

But even with the FCC's vigilance about promoting two sides to every issue, right-wing preachers and purveyors sidestepped the legalities of the Equal Time provision and the Mayflower Decision by purchasing time on radio stations. Because they didn't own the stations, they couldn't be threatened with loss of broadcasting licenses. The most successful of these political philosophers was Father



From *The Corrosive Landscape*, photographs by Joe Llewellyn Davis examining the American pastoral environment, now on exhibit at the Jacqueline Ross Gallery in Chicago.

Charles E. Coughlin, who railed against Jews, labor unions, immigrants and racial minorities. For his hate-mongering diatribes, the Catholic priest garnered millions of dollars in donations for the like-minded groups he supported. He established the format and approach that right-wing media personalities still follow today. "Coughlin enticed his listeners with half-truths and suspense, sometimes with outright falsehoods," the authors write. "He was like a gossip columnist, playing up what was titillating and even outrageous; however, he did it with biting political comment, appealing to the fears and dissatisfactions of his listeners."

Almost 70 years later, that description could be applied to the plethora of hosts currently screeching across the airwaves. However, as Hilliard and Keith are careful to point out, "The so-called right wing (and its use of radio, television, and cyberspace) does not consist of one homogenous group of advocates with one identifiable common purpose." Although many share the same agenda, such as the elimination of Jews and homosexuals, each group is a different shade of gray, with its own approach to remaking the world. Timothy McVeigh's favorite radio program, *Hour of the Time*, features host William Cooper repeatedly warning his listeners to arm themselves in defense against the coming takeover by the New World Order. By contrast, Colorado Springs-based Chuck Baker urges a simpler approach: Just march on Washington and shoot members of Congress.

Those aching to tune in have three main choices: AM radio, shortwave radio (a McVeigh favorite) and, the fastest growing medium by far, the Internet. AM radio tends to have greater coverage after dusk (due to atmospheric changes that allow for a better signal), so many rural right-wing listeners settle in for the night with selections from, for example, the American Freedom Network on KHNC in Johnstown, Colo. Shortwave, on the other hand, operates on "private" frequencies that can't be accessed by regular AM and FM receivers. (Though to run a station, an individual must still receive a license from the FCC.) With low costs to run or buy time on a station, shortwave is the darling of the

extreme right, offering Holocaust revisionism, survivalist tips and militia recruitment speeches to the 17 million shortwave radio owners in America.

But despite the popularity of standard and shortwave radio, the Internet is gaining fast: The Simon Weisenthal Center has determined that now there are more than 1,400 "hate oriented" sites. "The Internet is being used increasingly not only for persuasion, but also for recruitment," Hilliard and Keith write. "Fringe groups that were barely heard before are now able to make their views known nationally and internationally through the Internet."

The authors list a dizzying number of Web sites, from local KKK chapters to Christian Identity groups. Although it's unsurprising that groups such as these would use whatever medium is available to spread their message, the authors show that the problem of hate on the Internet is larger than most people believe. With their comprehensive research and a battery of facts, the authors underscore their point well that the Internet is a potent recruiting tool and should not be ignored.

Some countries, Germany and Britain in particular, have passed legislation

thwarting access to certain far-right Web sites. Considering the uproar encountered by the Clipper Chip or the protest over the Communications Decency Act of 1996, the United States would have difficulty passing similar legislation, and in the view of Hilliard and Keith, as well as this reviewer, that is as it should be.

The authors end their book with a Samuel Johnson quote: "Every man has a right to utter what he thinks truth, and every other man has a right to knock him down for it." To start knocking, however, one must know as much as possible about the opponent, and this is precisely what the authors are trying to do: "Exposure and countereducation, not censorship, are the best solutions to the increasing right-wing rancor on the airwaves."

With today's communications, no thought is too paranoid and no hate too strong that you can't find a sympathetic individual who will nurture and strengthen your feelings. *Waves of Rancor*, with its balanced approach to the complex workings of the extreme right, helps confront the emotions and politics that produce hate speech in the first place. ■

Elizabeth Millard often reviews books for *Publishers Weekly* and *In These Times*.

Setting the Standard

By Pat Aufderheide

It's a cliché that the media are all Them, never Us. The litany of problems is rote: sensationalism, sound-bite, ad costs, persuasion techniques. This year's season of the public TV series *P.O.V.* gives us a far more complicated picture, revealed in timely, well-crafted and often moving documentary essays.

P.O.V.
Tuesday nights on PBS
Check local listings

In *The Legacy*, which opens the season on June 1, veteran documentarian Michael J. Moore—not the *Roger and Me* guy, but the writer of *Freedom on My Mind* and *George Seldes*—takes us inside a troubling episode of mass mediated politics. He follows the path that led to the Three Strikes Law in

California, which sentences three-time felons to decades-long and even life prison sentences.

In this intense human drama, the originating impulse is a commendable one: to keep known and inveterate evil away from children. It is grassroots organizers, not political hacks, who turn to mass media to push an agenda that politicians reject. And they win. But the law is a bad one; besides losing most of its judicial discretion, California has seen a massive increase in incarceration and prison construction—all without any greater crime decrease than in other states.

The lead actors in this tale of misapplied activism are two fathers who share any parent's worst nightmare: the murder of a child. Seventeen-year-old Kimber Reynolds was shot in the head during a