

# Chapter 5

## Popular Radio and the Origins of Broadcasting



- As a medium for mass communication, radio broadcasts offered the possibility of sending voice and music to thousands of people.
- **broadcasting:** the transmission of radio waves or TV signals to a broad public audience.



- In 1921, the U.S. Commerce Department officially licensed five radio stations for operation; by early 1923, more than six hundred commercial and noncommercial stations were operating.
- By the end of 1923, as many as 550,000 radio receivers, most manufactured by GE and Westinghouse, had been sold for about \$55 each.
- By 1925, 5.5 million radio sets were in use across America, and radio was a mass medium.

## Excerpt from Radio History A Vision of Radio



- In 1923, when AT&T aired a program simultaneously on its flagship WEAF station and on WNAC in Boston, the phone company created the first **network**
- **network:** a broadcast process that links, through special phone lines or satellite transmissions, groups of radio or TV stations that share programming produced at a central location.
- **By the end of 1924, AT&T had interconnected twenty-two stations in order to air a talk by President Calvin Coolidge. Some of these stations were owned by AT&T, but most simply consented to become AT&T “affiliates,” agreeing to air the phone company’s programs.**
  - **These network stations informally became known as the *telephone group* and later as the Broadcasting Corporation of America (BCA).**

- By the 1930s, studio-audience *quiz shows* — *Professor Quiz* and the *Old Time Spelling Bee*—had emerged.
- **Dramatic programs**, mostly radio plays that were broadcast live from theaters, developed as early as 1922. Historians mark the appearance of *Clara, Lu, and Em* on WGN in 1931 as the first *soap opera*.
- The *situation comedy*, a major staple of TV programming today, also began on radio in the mid-1920s. By the early 1930s, the most popular comedy was *Amos 'n' Andy*, which started on Chicago radio in 1925 before moving to NBC-Blue in 1929.

# Excerpt from Radio History The Power of Radio



# The Golden Age of Radio

- Roosevelt was the first president to effectively use broadcasting to communicate with citizens; he also gave nearly a thousand press conferences during his twelve-plus years as president, revealing a strong commitment to use media and news to speak early and often with the American people.
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt managed to project such an intimate and reassuring tone in his famous fireside chats.
  - Conceived originally to promote FDR's New Deal policies amid the Great Depression, these chats were delivered between 1933 and 1944 and touched on national topics.





# Excerpt from Radio History A Commercial Medium



- While *Amos 'n' Andy* was the most popular series, the most famous single broadcast featured an adaptation of H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* on the radio series *Mercury Theater of the Air*.
- Orson Welles produced, hosted, and acted in this popular series, which adapted science fiction, mystery, and historical adventure dramas for radio.
- On Halloween eve in 1938, the twenty-three-year-old Welles aired the 1898 Martian invasion novel in the style of a radio news program.
- For people who missed the opening disclaimer, the program sounded like a real news report, with eyewitness accounts of pitched battles between Martian invaders and the U.S. Army.



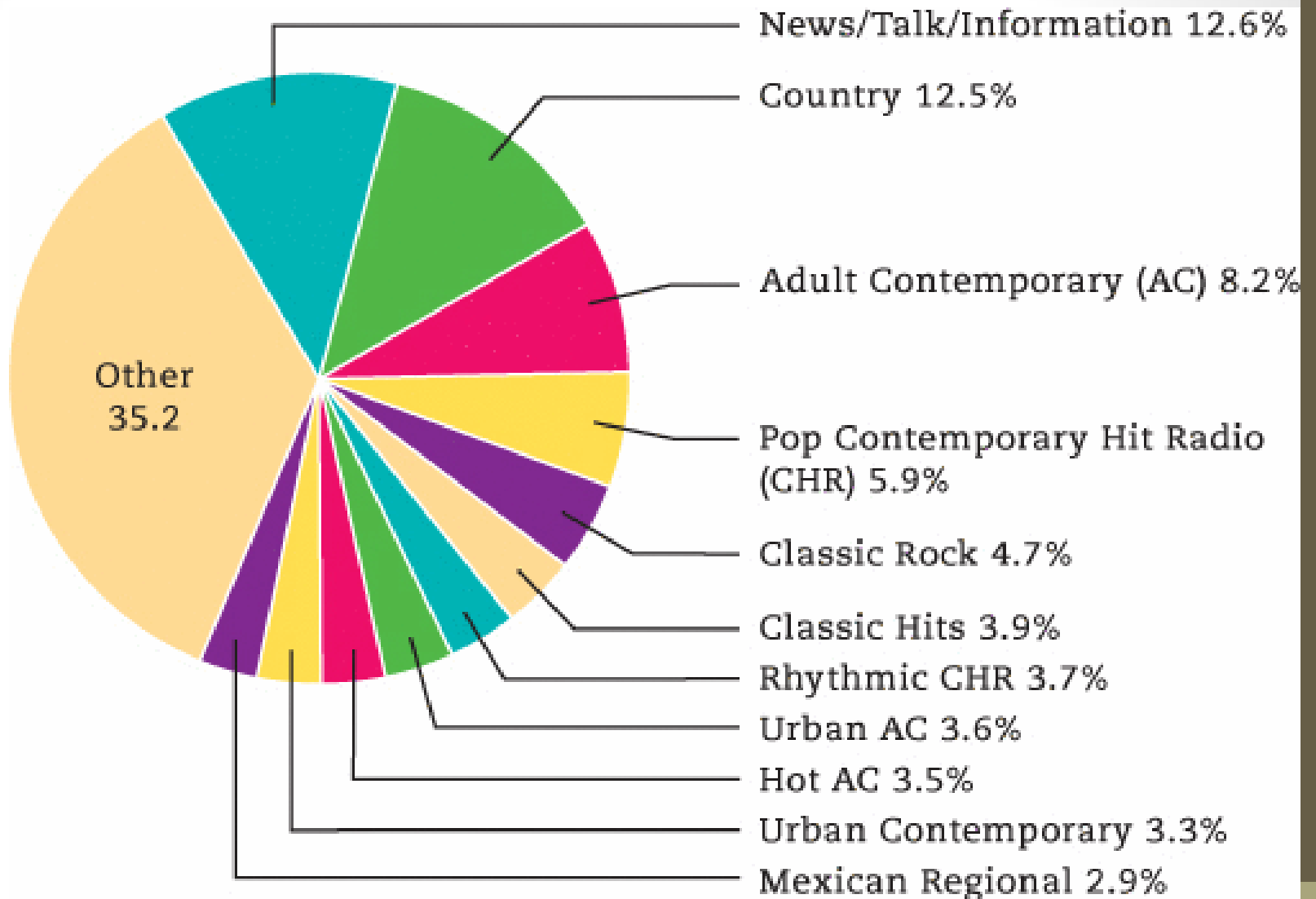
# War of The Worlds



# Radio and the Democracy of the Airwaves

- In the 1990s, radio in the United States changed dramatically as government deregulation permitted unprecedented consolidation in ownership, with just a few corporations wielding great influence over the sound of radio.
- **With a few large broadcast companies now permitted to dominate radio ownership nationwide, will this consolidation of power restrict the number and kinds of voices permitted to speak over public airwaves?**
- To ensure that mass media industries continue to serve democracy and local communities, the public needs to play a role in developing the answer to this question.

| Rank | Company  | Radio Net Revenue* |
|------|--|--------------------|
| 1    | Clear Channel Communications (Top Property: WLTW-FM, New York) | \$2,358            |
| 2    | CBS Corp. (KROQ-FM, Los Angeles)                               | 1,270              |
| 3    | Citadel Broadcasting Corp. (WPLJ-FM, New York)                 | 595                |
| 4    | Cumulus Media (KNBR-AM, San Francisco)                         | 412                |
| 5    | Entercom Communications Corp. (WEEI-AM, Boston)                | 384                |
| 6    | Cox Enterprises (WSB-AM, Atlanta)                              | 362                |
| 7    | Univision Communications (KLVE-FM, Los Angeles)                | 324                |
| 8    | Radio One (WKYS-FM, Washington, D.C.)                          | 226                |
| 9    | Bonneville International (KIRO-AM, Seattle)                    | 216                |
| 10   | Emmis Communications (WKQX, Chicago)                           | 182                |



# Welcome To The Podcast Era

