THE LIFE AND CAREER OF PETE “MAD DADDY” MYERS

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by

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Radio in the 1950s went through a rapid and dramatic change thanks to the rising popularity of television and a post-World War II generation with its own separate culture from its parents. Radio was forced to investigate new avenues in programming and personalities to maintain its consumer base, and much of that effort was directed to the youth market. It also led to the birth of the rock and roll “disc jockey.” Cleveland, Ohio, was home to a number of pioneers in early rock and roll radio, including Pierre “Pete” Myers on WJW-AM and WHK-AM, who did a straight air shift, took his nightly dinner break, and came back as the “Mad Daddy”, a high energy disc jockey who could best be likened to a “Gothic beatnik.”. Myers would be wildly popular in Northeast Ohio, but his national recognition would come many years after his suicide when he was “rediscovered” following release of a compact disc compilation of his radio work, and a number of articles in alternative newspapers and magazines. This thesis examines Myers’ role in that transition, and his continuing legacy.
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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my wife, Janice Olszewski, in thanks for her many years of continued encouragement and inspiration.

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CHAPTER I
THE LIFE AND CAREER OF PETE “MAD DADDY” MYERS

Introduction

Commercial radio was a medium that was in constant transition since its introduction in 1920. By the 1950s it was going through a rapid and dramatic change thanks to the rising popularity of television and a post-World War II generation with its own separate culture from its parents. By this time, commercial radio had been around for three decades, was a staple in practically every home and had been in a constant state of evolution, but television offered a distinct alternative with the novelty of video. Thus, radio was forced to investigate new avenues in programming and personalities to maintain its consumer base, and much of that effort was directed to the youth market. The introduction of rock and roll, along with changes in fashion and easy accessibility to cars, as well as expendable cash helped develop this separate youth culture, which was very attractive to advertisers.

Some independent stations chose to highlight the youth oriented music while also featuring a new type of personality, the “disc jockey,” to keep people listening between records (and commercials). Cleveland, Ohio, was home to a number of pioneers in early rock and roll radio who earner national acclaim, including Alan Freed at WJW-AM, and Bill Randle at WERE-AM. Another was Pierre “Pete” Myers on WJW-AM and WHK-AM, who did a straight air shift, took his nightly dinner break, and came back as the “Mad Daddy”, a high energy disc jockey who could best be likened to a “Gothic beatnik”. Myers would be wildly popular in Northeast Ohio, but his national recognition would come many years after his death when he was “rediscovered” following release of a compact disc compilation of his radio work, and a number of articles in alternative newspapers and magazines.
This thesis examined Pete Myers’ contributions to the radio industry, as well as possible reasons why Myers work was not appreciated in his lifetime. It also describes the changes in radio as it battled for its share of the entertainment dollar against its new rival, television.

Myers as “Mad Daddy,” like Freed, played original rhythm and blues and spoke in a jive, rhyming patter which appealed to a large segment of the teenage audience. Rock and roll’s early reputation, coupled with the seemingly nonsensical language spoken by Myers, yet understood by much of his audience, made him a source of concern for many parents. He eventually left for New York, yet was never able to reclaim the huge popularity he had in Cleveland, and after several failed attempts to revive the “Mad Daddy” for a new audience eventually took his own life in October, 1968 (Whiteside, 2003).

Purpose of the Study

In recent years, Pete "Mad Daddy" Myers' legend has been the focus of a number of media outlets, but no comprehensive biography had ever been done of this performer, his life and work and his impact on broadcasting. To understand Myers life and his impact on radio, the researcher focused on the rise of the medium and the way it was presented by its performers and personalities.

Organization

Newspaper, magazine and other published accounts were used to trace the timeline of Myers’ career. The researcher used an historical research method to study Myers’ influence on the medium as well as his life and career.

Chapter two includes the literature review and an overview of how the radio and its personalities continued to evolve from the industry’s earliest days to the rising popularity (i.e. competition) of television.
Chapter three discusses the methods used to examine “Mad Daddy” Myers career.

Chapters four and five report the results and conclusions.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to provide a comprehensive study of Pete Myers' life, career, and explore his influence on the industry during the years of his broadcast career in the 1950s and 1960s.

Radio

Radio in the 1920s generally offered a sporadic schedule of programs, often signing off the transmitter for hours at a time. The medium grew with additional stations in Northeast Ohio and across the country into the early to mid-twenties. By 1922 there were 30 stations across the country, jumping to 556 in 1923. Even small towns started filing for radio operating licenses, with Ohio ranking second in the nation with 54 stations, behind California with 69 and ahead of New York with 38. While only a few radio receivers were produced in 1921, the number skyrocketed to 400,000 in just two years (Lewis, 1995).

Northeast Ohio was one of the first cities to host a radio station in 1921 with WA8CS, later to be assigned the call letters WHK-AM. In December 1930, Cleveland’s WGAR-AM signed on with just 500 watts, though it would show considerable growth over the years (“More Power”, 1947). It would be followed by WCLE-AM.

Nineteen thirties Clevelanders were able to hear network shows along with local produced programming. As the United States slowly recovered from the Great Depression, radio became a window of the world, especially following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. RNot surprisingly, radio sponsors made their positions known with advertising agencies taking over a good deal of the programming on certain shows, particularly of network shows. This new
programming resulted in the birth of the radio disc jockey

However, disc jockeys were not a new concept. Early experiments at KDKA / Pittsburgh aired music from records but on a very limited basis. It is arguable that disc jockeys had been around in one form or another for some time. For example, in 1932 Al Jarvis at KFWB / Los Angeles presented a record show from “The World’s Largest Make Believe Ballroom” that proved to be very popular. Yet while record-based shows had been around for some time, they really took off in the fifties (Whetmore, 1979).

The 1950s saw the emergence of a separate (and very mobile) youth culture. Radio marketed to that generation. While many parents were content to stay at home and enjoy the new medium of television, the younger generation was eager to separate itself with its own music and entertainment. Plus, car radios and the recently introduced transistor radio made that form of entertainment highly accessible (Whetmore, 1979).

In the early 1950s, Alan Freed played rhythm and blues by the original artists on his ‘Moondog’ show which aired on Cleveland’s WJW-AM. At the time, they were known as ‘race records’ because they were done by African-American artists and originally marketed to a primarily black audience. Many came from smaller independent record promoters that catered to black radio stations. The new “rock and roll” movement gained instant infamy with the disturbance at the “Moondog Coronation Ball” at the city’s Arena on March 21, 1952. By 1955, Bill Haley’s “Rock Around the Clock” sold over a million copies, and Elvis Presley was becoming a recognizable icon (Keith, 2000). While Freed would move on to New York City, the allure of rock and roll to Cleveland audiences remained, as it did across the country.

Pete Myers

Pete Myers came to Cleveland in the year that Cold War tensions escalated with the
Soviet Union and its new premier Nikita Kruschev. Simultaneously, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the Little Rock, Arkansas, schools must integrate, and Elvis Presley put his musical career on hold to join the Army (Infoplease, 2007). During his time in Cleveland at WJW-AM, he would do a straight delivery for part of the broadcast day as Pete Myers, and would come back in his alter ego of Mad Daddy for an evening shift.

Myers also worked at Cleveland's WHK-AM after it went to a full Top 40 format in 1958 (“Cleveland’s Pioneer Station”, 1971) before taking the character to Metromedia Broadcasting’s WNEW-AM in New York City (Van Tassel, 1998; Holliday, 2002). “Daddy's” radio personae was so unique with his rapid fire rhyming and beatnik style lingo that few could even attempt to copy him. Another disc jockey on the staff at WHK in 1958 was Ernie Anderson, who many say was influenced by Myers’ “Mad Daddy” when he created his wildly successful “Ghoulardi” character for WJW-TV in 1963 (Feran, et al., 1997). Myers’ ‘Mad Daddy’ became so popular that when he left for New York’s WNEW-AM in 1959, WJW gave his shift to a promising young disc jockey named Casey Qasem (later changed to Kasem) hoping he could keep the audience Myers was leaving behind. Kasem would later move on to a nationally-recognized career in radio and television.

Pete Myers debuted his “Mad Daddy” character on New York’s WNEW-AM on July 4, 1959. The reaction was not favorable. More than 100 calls came into the station complaining about the character, and on July 5th he was told by station manager Jack Sullivan that he was hired to be Pete Myers on the air, and the “Mad Daddy” was immediately retired (Press, 1959).

Myers continued at WNEW-AM into the early 1960s, though in 1963 he won a spot at crosstown station WINS-AM where his former intern, and a “Mad Daddy” fan, Neil McIntyre was now program director. Music for young audiences was going through another transition that
year with the emergence of Motown out of Detroit, the surf sound from California, and the Beatles-led British Invasion on the horizon in 1964. McIntyre gave Myers an opportunity to revive the “Mad Daddy,” though it still didn’t seem to click with the New York audiences. Myers recognized the importance of the emerging British sound, and was even on hand to greet the Beatles on their arrival in America in 1964. WINS would change to an all-news format in 1965, and Myers returned to WNEW, which offered middle-of-the-road music and standards. ‘Mad Daddy’ would not be heard live on commercial radio again (Norton Records, 2003).

In 1968, disc jockey Norm N. Nite sponsored a fifties rock and roll show at the Cleveland Arena, and flew in Myers for what would be his last public appearance. The crowd wildly embraced him, and Myers returned to New York reminded of what he left in Cleveland (Norm N. Nite, personal communication, January 24, 2007).

That October, Myers was reassigned by WNEW management from his 1 to 4 p.m. show to a later time slot from 8 p.m. to midnight. Although he was reportedly enthusiastic about the change, on the morning of October 4, 1968, Myers put on his finest clothes, walked into the bathroom of his apartment and killed himself with a blast from a shotgun. He left a note nearby explaining the reasons for his suicide (DeLuca, 1984).

There’s an old saying in radio that many shows and personalities improve with age, because so many in the audience choose only to remember the positive things about the experience. Pete Myers’ character and career took on near mythical proportions, in part, because very little audio footage exists and word of mouth made him seem bigger than life. He also met a tragic end, taking his own life (DeLuca, 1984). Myers’ suicide may have added to his mystique. He granted few interviews, and was almost reclusive to everyone, including his coworkers Johnny Holliday at WHK and John Fitzgerald at WXEL-TV. Myers kept to himself, drew the
curtains in the studio when he worked so no one could watch him, and simply smiled and mumbled pleasantries when greeted by his colleagues. However, ‘Mad Daddy’s’ radio program and personal appearances were extremely popular, though Myers was careful to separate ‘Daddy’ from his other self (Whiteside, 2003). Some speculate that Myers’ alter-ego may have been his true personality, and he retreated back to Pete Myers when he needed a ‘shot of reality’.

It should also be noted that Myers’ may have been a product of his times. With TV making inroads into American homes, some stations were forced to change in order to attract younger listeners. Myers stands as an example of the changing style of radio performers and programming.

Research Questions

This thesis explored the reasons Myers’ work was not appreciated in his lifetime, and its possible effect on the radio personality himself. It also shows the changes in radio as it battled for its share of the entertainment dollar against its new rival, television.

This research was guided by the following questions:

RQ1 What was Pete Myers’ role in radio’s transition in the 1950s as the industry reacted to the threat of TV robbing it of audience and advertising dollars?

RQ2 Many radio air staffs were compelled to change to sell their personalities to connect with their target audiences. What compelled Pete Myers to develop the "Mad Daddy" character?
RQ3 What extremes did Pete Myers pursue to promote his bizarre alter-ego?

RQ4 Why was "Mad Daddy" a hit in Cleveland, but never caught on anywhere else, especially in the much larger and more sophisticated market of New York City?

RQ5 Did Myers’ have a continuing influence?

Chapter 3 looks at the methodology used in researching the life and career of Pete “Mad Daddy” Myers, and his influence in Northeast Ohio as compared to other radio markets.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Historical Methods

The researcher employed historical methods concentrating on Myers career and his lasting influence on other performers and the radio industry. This included collecting, verifying, analyzing and organizing relevant information about Pete Myers and his role in radio’s transition during the 1950s and 60s.

The researcher’s use of historical research methods followed the guidelines offered by Donald G. Godfrey (Godfrey, 2006). They include gaining a thorough knowledge of the available literature and comparing it to the time period it covers; finding and analyzing primary sources, such as notebooks, radio airchecks, press reports, and oral histories; weighing the authenticity and validity of the material available, and pursuing verification. The research also used data triangulation whenever possible, cross checking information from as many sources as are available, and closely examining contradictory material (Godfrey, 2006).

Data Collection

A key component to the success of the thesis was to locate and interview the few people still alive who knew Myers and could reflect on his motivation, personal life and legacy. The research employed qualitative interviewing, comparing my own experiences and understanding of radio history with the memories and stories offered by the interviewees regarding Pete Myers, his impact on radio, and the era that he lived (Rubin, 1995). Very little was written about Myers before his death in October, 1968, but the newspaper accounts available from that time were used to cross reference information from interviewees and other sources. The in depth, personal interview process itself involved asking for stories and anecdotes about Myers and the industry
to supplement the current historical record. Every effort was made to pursue candid, thoughtful answers to gain greater insight into Myers’ life and career (Godfrey, 2006).

Interviews were key to the success of the thesis, and were a priority because of the advanced age of many likely participants. An interview with Myers’ himself conducted shortly before his death also had been made available in its entirety. The combination of published material, interviews, and audio airchecks of shows were used to explain the conclusions presented in the results section of the thesis.

A few of Myers’ contemporaries are still with us, and they provided a vital link to this unique personality and his times. Myers was such a unique personality that only one performer can be undoubtedly linked to his influence, and that was his former radio co-worker Ernie Anderson, who would take the essence of the ‘Mad Daddy’ character to new heights when he created ‘Ghoulardi’ for WJW-TV. Fifty years since Myers’ move to New York, and forty years after his death, it was vital to speak with those who knew him to get this valuable information before it was lost to the passing of time.

Sources

This research included newspaper and magazine articles that feature Pete Myers, along with the available recordings of his work in Cleveland and New York City. It also focused on in-depth interviews with people who worked with Myers, and knew him on a personal as well as professional level. The thesis traces Myers’ life and influences from his early days as a drama student in London, his interest in Eastern philosophy and culture, and how they led to the development of his character and his untimely death by his own hand. The research also includes a unique radio interview with Pete Myers that was taped shortly before his suicide that was aired on a brokered late night show on an ethnic Cleveland FM station in 1967, and has not been
rebroadcast since that time.

Reliability and Validity

Memories fade with age, and some of Myers’ personal contacts are feeling the ravages of the years. Every effort was made to cross check information obtained from these individuals so the conclusions reached could be considered accurate.

Analysis

Data collected was analyzed and compared with the researcher’s own knowledge of the radio industry and its transition to gain a greater understanding of Myers’ impact on the media. The findings were a result of comparisons of interviews, print and audio material, and the current historical record to determine why Myers achieved success in the Northeast Ohio, region yet failed to make an impact on a much bigger and more diverse market like New York City. The research compared Myers career transition with the change in programming seen in the radio industry by many stations switching over to youth based music stations manned by “disc jockeys.” In addition, the study offers differing views of key events in Myers’ life and career and, based on confirmation, present an interpretation based on that review.

The researcher used all available literature and related material to accurately present and analyze a specific period within the historical record (Godfrey, 2006). A key part of this research centered on what happened to Myers and the transition of the radio industry, but also why it happened and what we can learn from it today.
CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

The Cleveland radio market was seen as one of the strongest in the country and an attractive city for radio professionals hoping for a major career in the medium, or at least a transition to a more prestigious career. That was the allure for Pierre “Pete” Myers.

Early Life

Pete Myers was born in San Francisco, California on DATE? According to his older brother Ernie had no hesitation in calling attention to himself. Ernie Myers (personal communication, October 4, 2006) claimed Pete had an I.Q. of 175, and was not afraid to take chances. He also claimed his brother Pete was:

Highly creative as a child, as well as a mischief maker. He wrote his own plays, one in which he played a WWII German submarine captain. He went to John Marshall High School (in Los Angeles), and two years later the Mark Ken School for professional kids. (Note: At the time, the Mark Ken School was located on Franklin Boulevard in Los Angeles.) Myers (personal communication, October 4, 2006) also recalled that at that time his brother, Pete, had a mischievous streak as well:

He once stole a street sweeper, rode it down Hollywood Boulevard near Vine in Los Angeles and was picked up by police. The principal told police, “I guess you didn’t have any problems spotting him!” The police let him go.

Pete Myers would eventually make his way to London, England, to pursue dreams of an acting career. He studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, and was able to find occasional work as an actor before joining the Army. Myers would tell the Cleveland Press:

I decided to attend the academy because I figured that when I went looking for a job it
might impress the producers. It didn’t even faze them. One thing I did while in London though was a command performance before Princess Margaret. I appeared as Orlando in “As You Like It” (“WJW’s Pete Myers” p. 47, 1958).

Ernie Myers (personal communication, October 4, 2006) noted that Pete loved eastern culture, and while stationed at Camp Drake in Japan in the early fifties often sent home kabuki souvenirs. Myers’ interest in eastern culture and philosophy is backed up by future colleague Neil McIntyre (personal communication, November 8, 2006), who said, “He collected artwork and artifacts. He used to have it around his apartment. He was very interested in Japanese culture.” As a corporal, Myers also did some work for Armed Forces radio and television in Japan, catching the attention of an American icon…with less than positive results.

Myers did a phony story about a sea monster coming out of a bay near Tokyo. During the broadcast, General Douglas MacArthur was visiting his son at a hospital, and was not amused. MacArthur did not hear the warning that it was only a radio skit, which had Myers claiming troops were being mobilized to save Tokyo from a sea monster. Failing to see the humor in that broadcast, Myers was transferred out of Tokyo on the general’s orders, and was placed in a unit studying psychological warfare (DeLuca, 1984). The military life didn’t suit Myers and following his discharge from the service he decided to aggressively pursue an acting career. Like most struggling actors, Myers took any job he could while pursuing auditions. McIntyre (personal communication, November 8, 2006) stated, “When he came to New York City the first time, before he traveled back to California, he demonstrated toys at Macy’s department store.”

Myers’ first stay in New York might have been described as frustrating at best. He had limited success in various stage productions and bit parts on Broadway, and later found work doing summer stock theater, in the Catskills and in St. Louis (“WJW’s Pete Myers” p. 47, 1958).
He was getting little attention from booking agents and producers. Still, he soldiered on with hopes that the next audition could open doors to a lasting career.

Myers was described as “a natural character actor with easy ethnic mimicry, broad face and fair hair” (“WJW’s Pete Myers” p. 47, 1958). He landed more bit parts in dramatic TV series such as *Project 90* and *You Are There*, sometimes as a heel-clicking Nazi soldier. Myers later recalled:

I was popular with the *You are There* and *Eyewitnesses* series because it seemed that when it came to making like a German general I excelled. Of course you can’t make a living any longer playing a German because Nazis are no longer in vogue. Now it’s the Russians (“WJW’s Pete Myers” p. 47, 1958).

But the acting gigs came few and far between, and Myers would find himself unemployed once again. In late 1956, frustrated by his lack of success, and dreading another winter at Macy's toy department, he headed to see his brother Ernie who was then a disc jockey in San Diego (“Wavy Gravy,” 2008).

Ernie Myers (personal communication, October 4, 2006) convinced Pete that media could be a perfect career fit, but there were some stumbles. Ernie recalled that Pete “Co-anchored the TV news on KFSD Channel 10 in San Diego for a while in his early twenties. He got fired from that job.” Ernie wasn’t exactly sure of the circumstances that led to his dismissal.

WHKK / Akron

Myers finally followed his brother Ernie’s lead by trying commercial radio (DeLuca, 1984). He briefly landed a job at KCBQ 1170 AM in San Diego, but it didn’t fit his musical style or personality. He saw it as a job with little challenge, no future and worst of all, boring. As he put it, “Disc jockeys and music aren’t as popular in that area as they are in the east so I looked
for a good market and picked Cleveland (“WJW’s Pete Myers” p. 47, 1958).” The radio market back east, especially in Cleveland, was thriving. In 1957, Myers made some inquiries, and soon after packed his belongings into his 1950 Packard and headed to WHKK / Akron. It wasn’t Cleveland, but Myers told his brother Ernie it was “Close enough for me! (“Wavy Gravy” par. 3, 2008).”

He was also interested in testing the waters of television in a bigger market than San Diego, and looked to comedian Ernie Kovacs as an example. Kovacs had gone from radio to television in Philadelphia, which at the time was a market similar in size to Cleveland (“Wavy Gravy” par. 3, 2008). Recalling those days, Ernie Myers said Akron would play a profound role in his brother’s development as a radio performer, saying, “He came up with the Mad Daddy character in Akron. Pete chose Akron because it was the first station to make him an offer, and it was a major step toward the much bigger market of Cleveland” (personal communication, October 4, 2006)

As Ernie Myers pointed out it was in 1957 at WHKK / Akron that Pete Myers was inspired to develop the Mad Daddy (personal communication, October 4, 2006), who was later described as “a frantic, neo-Beat disc jockey predisposed to speed-rapping in rhyme (“No Condition” par. 3, 2008).” He didn’t use the Daddy name at the time, but developed his on-air personae using various air names and played so-called ‘honker’ music. Those were records featuring wailing saxophones and other R & B styles that were familiar to black audiences, some white musicians, and certain groundbreaking disc jockeys like Alan Freed on WJW / Cleveland who presented it on his Moondog show and called it rock and roll. He also disregarded suggestions by record hawkers and opted to play b-sides of records like *Train from Nowhere* by The Champs, which was the flip side of the popular *Tequila.*
As with Freed in Cleveland, the Akron audience enthusiastically embraced the music and the person putting it on-the-air. Most of the music Myers played originated on all-black record labels that were not pitched to most white disc jockeys because they didn’t see an audience for that style of entertainment. There were also stations that offered programming to mostly urban African-American audiences, though Myers and Freed played many of these same records to a primarily young white audience. There was also the pioneering sound of southern white “rockabilly” which Myers also helped to popularize. Those artists included Paul Peek with *Olds-Mo-Williams*, *Switchin’ in the Kitchen* by Pretty Boy, Mickey Hawks and *Bip Bop Boom*, and Peanuts Wilson’s *Cast Iron Arm*. As one researcher pointed out, these were:

- low-budget records that were being cut in music-stores, basements, and the back rooms of diners. He followed his own tastes and eventually introduced a kind of humorous, off-beat rhythm 'n' blues that he called ‘wavy gravy’ (Moerer, 2007).

It would seem evident that Myers had learned to become part of the fabric of entertainment that would test the boundaries of radio to a young audience willingly to accept something new and far different than the music and radio embraced by their parents’ generation.

Myers had one sponsor at WHKK and that was a vitamin tonic called Black Draft Syrup. Sponsors in Akron were still leery of the new personality. It was equally frustrating for Myers who expected advertisers to embrace him as quickly as his young audiences. The “Mad Daddy” character may have been born the night he vented his desperation by grabbing the microphone and after an impromptu rhyme about his career plight stated, "A fella'd have to be mad, mad, mad…” to continue that way (“Wavy Gravy” par.8, 2008). His voice fading into echo, it may have been the first time Myers hinted at what would eventually be known as the Mad Daddy.

Pete Myers’ historian Jay Hunt speculated the Mad Daddy character may have also been
inspired by a number of sources, including Ernie Kovacs, who was a favorite of Myers with his characters Auntie Gruesome, Percy Dovetonsils and The Nairobi Trio (personal communication, January 25, 2009). The Abbott & Costello horror movies such as *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein* and *Abbott & Costello Meet Dracula* may also have showed Myers how to use the monster genre in a humorous way. The 1952-53 flying saucer scare captured the imaginations of a good segment of society and made its way into popular culture in pulp magazines, comic books, newspapers and movies. Plus, Myers also used the early “jargon of the day like Daddio (Daddy), “wavy gravy” and “mello Jello” to communicate with his young audience. There were other possible influences, including Basil Wolverton’s wise-cracking comic strip character *Powerhouse Pepper*, the cutting edge humor of *Mad* magazine and possibly even the boredom of being a highly creative individual alone at night in a radio station who was willing to take chances to draw an audience.

**WJW / Cleveland**

In January 1958, Pete Myers took the ‘Mad Daddy’ to WJW / Cleveland, the former home of Alan Freed and a solid ratings leader among the youth market that was so lucrative to advertisers. Pete Myers’ theme song on WJW-AM, and later on WHK-AM and FM, was *Night Train* by Buddy Morrow. It’s a bluesy saxophone driven song and is followed by a countdown similar to those in the televised Vanguard rocket launches. Myers also would insert sounds of screams, hot rods, whistling wind, his own echoey maniacal laugh and other effects into songs. In addition, Myers, like Freed, preferred to play original artists on obscure labels rather than mainstream labels (Jay Hunt, personal communication, January 25, 2009)

Jay Hunt called this the first of three important phases in Myers’ Mad Daddy character:
The (WJW) show was more relaxed and easy going. He did everything himself, the show, commercials and in his own voice, station, news and weather breaks. He chose all his own music. The playlists clearly show that few of his songs were popular hits. They tended to be R&B, early rock and roll by obscure artists or songs, unusual instrumentals or novelty records…Myers worked at relating to his teen audience on a personal level. A lot of air time went to dedications to fans who wrote or phoned in. Every weekend he appeared at high school dances or sock hops around town (personal communication, January 25, 2009).

Jim Jaworski was an early and avid fan of Pete Myers and said the distinctive character of the Mad Daddy, along with rarely heard race records marketed to the young generation, deeply concerned many parents. Jaworski noted:

If there was anybody in rock and roll for parents to be frightened about, it was Pete Myers, Mad Daddy’, and there was no question about it. When our generation came along, we were the first generation that didn’t have to go off to war. We were the first generation in the history of the world to get our own cars, even though they were junkers and we had to work on them and fix them up. We were the first generation, I believe, to develop our own personal culture. All the other generations had to share their culture with the previous generations. It’s what I call the ‘split culture.’ Rock and roll was uniquely ours, and we really knew that when the parents didn’t like it (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

Another long time Myers’ fan and researcher, Greg Miller remembered that era: You’ve got to think about what mainstream radio was playing in the 1950s. You had Doris Day and Percy Faith, and rock and roll stations were different. A guy like Pete
Myers was very cutting edge, even by today’s standards. I think the closest guy that I’ve heard that even came close was in the WIXY days in the 1960s, when I was a kid. I can remember listening to some of the WIXY deejays…there was the ‘Wild Child’ and a guy by the name of Jack Armstrong…and they had similar rapid fire ‘shouter style’ deliveries, and as a kid I used to like to listen to that. You just wanted to hear what they had to say next. They didn’t care what they said and with Mad Daddy I think it was the same way. You were never quite sure he wasn’t going to just launch into some vulgar tirade or he could just delight you (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

Miller also pointed to the rare recordings of Myers’ program that show “he is always right on the edge…totally unscripted, right off the top of his head….but in perfect syncopation. Everything rhymes, everything is right out there (personal communication, February 22, 2007).”

Myers as Mad Daddy did breaks over music beds, and was known for what industry experts called his:

- rhyming scatological style…able to spontaneously create rhymes through an entire four-and-a-half-hour show, doing even commercials in off-the-cuff rhyme at breakneck speed, handling all the physical demands without modern radio conveniences like prerecorded tape machines (“Wavy Gravy” par. 13, 2008).

- Myers was also credited for creating a bizarre new language. As one Myers’ historian stated, “The gabber's fun words appealed to the kid in everyone (“Wavy Gravy” par. 13, 2008).”

- Myers’ referred to his female fans as “mellow muffins,” and the boys were called “ghoul rockers.” Hot-rodning was a favorite past time among his young audience and race fans were labeled throttle jammers. A recurring song on his show was Andre Williams’ *Greasy Chicken* and another favorite was *Ghost Satellite* by Bob & Jerry (Holliday, 2002).
A teenage Cleveland Heights High student Neil McIntyre, was a fan of Pete’s “Mad Daddy” Myers show on WJW-AM. He would later say it was the appeal of so-called race records played by black artists that originally drew him in. The Mad Daddy fascinated him and he decided to track Myers down:

I had heard the radio station’s transmitter was in Seven Hills, so I borrowed my uncle’s car and started driving to the west side listening to him on the radio. The closer I got, the signal would come in stronger. All of a sudden, I saw a sign that said WJW. I drove down this dirt road, and there was the transmitter site. That’s where he was broadcasting from. So I knocked on the door, and a guy answers wearing a three piece tweed suit. He said, ‘What can I do for you?’, and I said, ‘I just like your station, and I was wondering if you needed any help.’ ‘Yeah,’ he said, ‘Here’s a pad and pencil. Write down what the kids say on the phone. They call in requests.’ He was by himself, and I sat down to answer phones. At one point, I looked around and saw this guy open the mike, and he turns into ‘Mad Daddy!’ I couldn’t believe it! I thought this fella was an engineer or something like that. He broadcast from the WJW transmitter until he eventually went to WHK-AM (personal communication, November 8, 2006).

McIntyre claimed he would hand Myers a handful of dedication slips and Myers would make rhymes with them as he read them cold on-the-air, and never used notes. In fact, his break-neck impromptu delivery became one of his trademarks. Kent State University’s Dr. Bob West is a veteran Cleveland broadcaster from that same era, and he pointed out there were other fast talking disc jockeys like Cleveland’s Howie Lund that used material written for them by a staff writer, often an African-American, who was familiar with the cutting edge lingo of the day.
(personal communication, May 8, 2009). But Myers could rhyme and rap off the top of his head with only names handed to him by his producer McIntyre.

Myers’ brother Ernie said, “Kids sure appreciated him!” (personal communication, October 4, 2006). While he played rhythm and blues almost exclusively, Ernie stressed “It was not his type of music, but it fit the character. They got mail (in Cleveland) stating, ‘What are you trying to do? Pollute kids’ minds?” (personal communication, October 4, 2006).

It’s been said that the best advertising is word-of-mouth, and word got around quickly about the “Mad Dadd.” Jim Jaworski (personal communication, February 22, 2007) said the unlimited accessibility of rock and roll radio while riding in your own car helped solidify teenagers’ loyalty not only to the music but to ‘Mad Daddy’ as well:

You had six buttons on the car radio back then. With those buttons on the radio you knew every station was on the right channel, and you’d hit those buttons and you knew what you would hear. Myers wasn’t on for two weeks before everybody in Cleveland knew about him. I had told one of my friends here about ten years ago, ‘You know. Way back then we never used to watch television. You know why? Because we were more interesting than what was on television. You could go to any drive-in restaurant and hear fifty cars in the back lot all with ‘Mad Daddy’ on the radio. You could hear it for four – five blocks away (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

Greg Miller observed that the music was a key component of Mad Daddy’s appeal (personal communication, February 22, 2007). Myers’ played music that was as distinctive as his alter-ego’s delivery:

There’s absolutely no comparison to what he playing and what the other disc jockeys were playing. Bill Randle was a big radio deejay in Cleveland. The other big names
were Carl Reese, who spun rock and roll records. “Mad Daddy” was not playing Frankie Avalon. “Mad Daddy” wasn’t even playing Duane Eddy. The stuff he was playing was absolutely cutting edge, records that were probably closer to what we would consider a form of punk rock today, or alternative rock. But he spun it in such a way that it was a real free flow. I think the show was bigger than the music. The audience was not listening so much for the songs. “Mad Daddy” would not have played even the Everly Brothers. He was playing stuff that was different (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

McIntyre (personal communication, November 8, 2006) agreed, but he doesn’t buy the argument that part of Myers’ popularity came from airing race records which drew so much attention to Alan Freed just a few years before on that same station. McIntyre noted,

Parents didn’t really pay attention to what their kids were listening to because they would be in their rooms lying in bed at night with their transistor radios under their pillows. Cars, too. They weren’t listening with their families, so their families didn’t know what they were listening to. They would know if the kid bought the record and brought it home and played it and all of sudden they would say, ‘What is that music you’re playing?’ and everything else. To them, their teenagers were listening to songs but they had no idea what they were listening to.

Jim Jaworski (personal communication, February 22, 2007) stated that the music was a huge draw, but added it was Myers who was still the center of attention. Jaworski observed, “The hours that he wasn’t on-the-air you could get the other music. That was twenty hours a day. We had plenty of hours to listen to the regular music. There were only four hours a day when he came on and you’d better listen to him because you didn’t know what you were going to
miss.”

Greg Miller (personal communication, February 22, 2007) added,

You were listening to Pete Myers the way people would listen to Howard Stern today. You never knew what was going to come out of his mouth next. You were on the edge and just hoping…was he going to step over the line and say something just totally off the wall. When you listen to him on the recordings today it has a hypnotic effect! Plus, the sound effects in the show were terrific. There was a bubbling cauldron, and he used a lot of reverb on his voice.

Myers scatological on-air patter was being refined during his years at WJW. In one of the rare recordings that exists of Myers’ air work, we hear in his show on April 1, 1958 that he was able to link his own catch phrases in a common theme of disc jockey patter, though he may have reached a bit by referring to WJW’s 850 on the dial as “Radio 85.” Listeners heard:

Here you are in the land of glee. Floppin’ and boppin’ at 10:03.

You know exactly where you are. Tuned to radio 85 on your wavy gravy jar.

Tell those bubbles of oobladi what kind of record this jukebox is going to be (Myers, 2003, track 11).”

Later that same evening, Myers lost no energy as he leads in to dedications from his station fan mail, stating:

Ooba dooba, Scooby doo. 26 before 11 the time in rhyme in R & B heaven.

In our first hour of power as on we go with our head all aglow.

The winky blinky light is glowing just right tonight as we got mail by the bale.

Remember we giggle, we jiggle, we bop and blast.

Mail, mail, mail keeps the show on the air to make it last.
Remember, never chicken…we’re always stickin’ so we gotta read all these names and burst into flames (Myers, 2003, track 12).”

Assisted by producer Neil McIntyre, Myers would then read names off pieces of paper rhyming at a fast pace off the top of his head until his next record.

A few years before, in July 1956, Bill Buchanan and Dickie Goodman released their novelty record *The Flying Saucer* and it spawned a series of other comedy recordings. Eager to capitalize on that trend, Pete Myers released two comedy recordings as ‘The Joker’ on the Cleveland based G & F Records. The A-side, *I Love a Practical Joke*, describes a battle of dangerous practical jokes between Myers and his friend, Melvin, using cobras, misguided diesel trucks into a home, nitroglycerin, a kidnapped lion from the zoo, high tension wires from a railroad track, and poison gas resulting in Myers death as he gasps with his dying breath, “I love a practical joke!” While it was released under the name “The Joker”, the piece ends with Myers’ familiar maniacal laugh. The commentary is delivered to a bongo beat (Myers, 2003, track 49).

The B-side, *What is a Fisteris?*, was basically a straight commentary on a nonsensical question stating, among others, that a fisteris is “big as a grendel, tiny as a suzman and sometimes middle sized like a fremesis on nibbling on the freeze (Myers, 2003, track 50).” It mixes strange rhymes with made up words accompanied by an instrumental version of the Chuck Berry composition *In the Wee, Wee Hours*. At two minutes and twenty nine seconds into the recording Myers’ voice is heard in a backwards message that would later be revealed as “If I said this in English I could turn this radio station into a parking lot (Myers, 2003, track 50).” The song includes a blues piano / bass / guitar / drum combo background.

Myers’ also won a spot on WJW’s television sister station, debuting on April 12, 1958 as host of WJW-TV’s double feature horror movie program. The first offering at 11:20 p.m. was
Dracula followed by Chamber of Horrors, with the ‘Mad Daddy’ appearing before and after commercials. Keep in mind that TV was still in its early years and the technology that put it on-the-air was oversized and extremely heavy. Myers argued unsuccessfully to have a camera suspended upside down from the studio ceiling, which would have been impossible due to its weight. Instead, Myers did the show in full ‘Mad Daddy’ regalia hanging upside down from a pole. The show failed to catch on and was cancelled after just four weeks (DeLuca, 1984).

As Myers popularity grew, so did the demand for personal appearances. As McIntyre recalled, record hops were a very busy and profitable time for Myers and his promotional team who would set up several appearances per night.

We would tell the promoters that Pete wouldn’t appear until the ‘mood was right.’ First he would come out in some type of Kabuki type make-up, white face make-up with a black cape, and then we set the mood with these heavy r & b songs. I remember one of the hops was in Ada, Ohio. It had a population of like 950. They packed the gymnasium. People were coming from all over the place, and this was a fairly rural area. I could remember doing shows like that and while Pete was doing ‘Mad Daddy,’ his wife would be at another place setting up for another hop the same night. We would do two record hops a night, and after he left for the other appearance I would shut down the first. I could remember doing a prom hop for a graduating class, going to another right after and getting home at about 2:30 in the morning… Pete was a total entertainer, and even though we didn’t bring the sound effects or the stuff from the studio, we would give out records the kids loved that Pete used on his show. They might not have been popular on other stations, like The Greasy Chicken, but Pete’s fans wanted to hear them (personal communication, November 8, 2006).
By June, 1958, Myers was said to be frustrated that the ‘Mad Dadd’ character was not bigger than it already was and thought that a station change could be the answer. An offer came from WHK-AM and FM (or, as Mad Daddy would say, “Amm and Fum. Don’t be dumb!”) WHK offered to double his salary, but there was a major stumbling block. Myers contract with WJW had a 90 day guaranteed non-compete clause, meaning he would still be paid but could not work at another station for three months. The contract also stated Myers would have to give WJW a 90 day notice, which he failed to do. As a result, he was kept off-the-air at a critical time in his career when he needed to maintain a high profile. His replacement at WJW was a young disc jockey from Detroit named Casey Kasem, who would go on to a nationally recognized career in radio, television and commercial voiceover (Deluca, 1984).

Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) also questioned his quick departure from WJW suggesting Myers’ may have been pushed out or forced the station’s hand with an off-color comment. The comment, which has been repeated by almost every Myers’ fan, was “Hang loose Mother Goose! Dipped her rag in tomato juice!”, which some saw as a crude reference to menstruation. Hunt stated,

I am convinced that his sudden departure from WJW was a result of the rumored ‘tomato juice’ incident. I remember listening to him one night and the next he was gone with no farewell or explanation of any kind. I suspect it really happened on his last WJW show, that the FCC suspended him and he was fired. The press releases about contract difficulties were just a cover-up….The long standing rumors of the ‘tomato juice’ incident have bothered me for years. Based on my own memory and surrounding known facts, I now believe I have finally put the pieces together. (personal communication, January 25, 2009).
Hunt recalled that on Tuesday, June 2, 1958 the Mad Daddy show had simply disappeared with no explanation from WJW as to why, and he later learned of his move to WHK. While no tape is known to exist to prove this, Hunt is convinced beyond a doubt that, having signed a new deal with WHK and being told by WJW management that they would enforce the 90 day no compete clause in his contract, Pete decided to show his displeasure and get even with the station. Hunt also believes that is why he signed off his June 1, 1958 show with the following poem:

Hang loose, Mother Goose
Dipped her rag in tomato juice
Goodbye, Mad Daddy, Goodbye!

Hunt went on to say,

He hoped that this would anger WJW management and perhaps even get them in trouble with the FCC. He figured that being so late at night it would not have been heard by most of his young fans, or even understood by those who did happen to hear it so his reputation would not be damaged (personal communication, January 25, 2009).

Over the years some fans have also claimed Myers actually delivered that rhyme a year later on his WHK-AM show, but Hunt also claimed this event definitely did not take place on WHK on June 29, 1959 as it has sometimes been reported. Hunt says he listened to Mad Daddy's last show on June 26, 1959 and tuned in to WHK again the following Monday, June 29 just in case. As Hunt recalled,

He was gone and, much to my disappointment, replaced by a ‘middle of the road’ show.

So I know for a fact there was no Mad Daddy show on Monday, June 29, 1959. I guess we will never have conclusive evidence but this is the only explanation that makes sense,
given that I personally heard both the June 2, 1958 and June 29, 1959 non-appearances. (personal communication, February 16, 2009).

Whatever the reason, Myers found himself banned from broadcast at a time when keeping a high profile was critical to his career.

Transition in Cleveland

Pete Myers kept the ‘Mad Daddy’ personae in front of the public as best he could during his forced contract hiatus. Weekends were golden time for Northeast Ohio’s young people and he would sometimes do three or four stage show appearances a day at movie theaters showing horror films. Myers had started doing the appearances during and after his short stint as a late-night movie host on WJW-TV and his non-compete status did not include stage shows. A recently discovered promotional film for his theater appearances promises two hours of Mad Daddy’s Shock Theater with swamp spiders and jungle worms lurking in the audience. The clip also challenges young women to see if their date is a man or a mouse, and states, “Girls, here’s a chance to cuddle up with your dates!” The promotional clip goes on to say “It” would be on stage, and urges patrons to buy their tickets early because of a sure sell-out with no standing room access. Trailers for the movies scheduled to be shown would be spliced into the promo, including double features such as Invasion of the Saucer Men and I Was a Teenage Frankenstein, I Was a Teenage Werewolf and The Screaming Skull, among others. While the appearances were said to be wildly successful and profitable, Myers was not reaching the audiences he could with radio (DeLuca, 1984).

Pete Myers could well support himself. He was still receiving a salary but was barred from doing radio for the remainder of his 90 day agreement. Myers was extremely concerned and came to the conclusion that he would have to do something both daring and newsworthy to stay
in the eye of the mass audience. In addition, Myers had gotten married that April, and was anxious to progress with his professional and personal life (DeLuca, 1984).

Myers came up with an idea to fill a portion of Lake Erie with Jello gelatin and parachute into the lake wearing a Zorro costume to promote the Walt Disney TV series of the same name. It would be a tough sell. Myers petitioned the Civil Aeronautics Administration for permission to jump 3000 feet from a Piper Cub airplane, hinting that Disney Productions would sponsor the event if he also dropped hundreds of promotional copies of the *Theme from Zorro* song (Disneyland Records F-062) by singer Henry Calvin. The Coast Guard was consulted and Commander E.R. Henry warned Myers that the relative shallowness of Lake Erie produced choppy waves and could be extremely dangerous. In fact, the odds of survival might only be 50-50 for an experienced parachutist. The Cleveland chapter of the Parachute Club of America also expressed concerns about his safety in a water landing. Myers was eager to stage the stunt, and claimed he’d parachuted hundreds of times in Korea. He stressed their worries were unfounded and his experience would keep him perfectly safe. In reality, Myers had only jumped from a plane once and it is almost certain the Coast Guard and CAA would have denied him permission if they had known the truth (Deluca, 1984).

There are few serious interviews with Myers out of character regarding his time as Mad Daddy. In 1967, WZAK disc jockey Dick Liberatore conducted a phone interview (WZAK, 1967) with Myers and asked him why he would pursue such a dangerous stunt. Myers said,

*Why did I do it? That was a warm summer! To be very frank with you, I never thought I would have to do it. I told one of the columnists out there… that I’d asked the boss at WJW to let me out of my contract and he told me to go jump in the lake. I said I would*
and somebody put it in the paper and it just snowballed and one day I was out there with two parachutes and I had to do it! (WZAK, 1967)

There were certain restrictions. The CAA put its foot down on his plans to wear a caped costume over the chute and refused to allow him to distribute records from the air. Plus, Myers failed to locate enough Jello to fill a contained portion of the inner harbor, and even if he did it’s unlikely the agencies would have allowed him to dump it in the lake. That didn’t stop the promotion. A week before the jump word of mouth alerted fans about the stunt and Myers was committed to following through.

It drew about 300 fans and at 3 p.m. on June 14, 1958, Myers climbed into his friend’s plane and buzzed the crowd before stepping out for the jump. As Myers remembered, “Once the parachute opened up it was all right because that’s the big suspense. The first three or four seconds… because that first step is terrible! (WZAK, 1967)” Producer Neil McIntyre, Myers’ wife Ann and his agent, Ray Goodlander watched from a cabin cruiser as he yelled “Zorro!” and jumped from the plane for an estimated 100 second fall into the choppy waves below. The water was cold, about 60 degrees, and Myers was pulled from the lake to resounding cheers. Myers dried off on the boat, put on his Mad Daddy cape, and upon reaching shore cornered Cleveland News reporter Jan Mellow to say he’d written a poem while still in the air over Lake Erie. He told the reporter, “If you want mellow publicity, bail out and win it. Though Mad Daddy’s not on the air, hang loose Mother Goose…he’s in it! (Mellow, 1958).” He added the, “fifty-fifty odds were better than I get at Hialeah [race track]" adding, "I didn't want those cats to forget me. (Mellow, 1958).” Myers then waded into the crowd of admirers to hand out copies of the Zorro record, sign autographs and pose for photos before heading to the nearby Captain Frank’s Restaurant on the East Ninth Street pier to warm up with hot coffee. When asked what he might
do next for publicity until he was allowed back on-the-air, Myers said, “Somebody suggested something about setting off sticks of dynamite in each of my ears…but I don’t want to do anything foolhardy! (Mellow, 1958).” Years later, in the 1967 interview, Myers was asked if he was afraid once he was in the air and would have to follow through. His only response was, “Any fears? Like I said, that first step is a big one (WZAK, 1967).”

Anxious to see what he might try next, newspapers reported on July 8 that Myers planned to broadcast his first day on WHK on August 1 from a huge bucket of Jello. Again, there was a snag when Myers reportedly couldn’t find a tank with refrigeration coils big enough to handle 100 gallons of the gelatin, though he planned to contact the makers of the dessert to ask their help in locating one (Frankel, 1958). Myers also took the role of Steve in the Musicarnival summer tent production of Show Boat that month for a two week run (“Mad Daddy” p.29, 7/16/58). On July 30 he was honored by Fillippo’s Restaurant at 12909 Miles Avenue in Cleveland when it debuted Mad Daddy Giggle Juice named after Myers in anticipation of his move to WHK (Gallagher, 1958).

WHK / Cleveland

This begins what Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) believed was the second and most productive phase of Pete Myers’ career as ‘Mad Daddy’, stating

His appearance on WHK was much more of a planned and commercialized format. He no longer did his own station breaks. Johnny Walter or other announcers did them. The ‘Mad Daddy’ persona was ramped up a notch being faster paced and much more frenetic. He now appeared in Dracula costume at his public events, and introduced his famous opening and closing themes, Night Train and In the Dark (personal communication, January 25, 2009).
Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) pointed out that much less time was given to dedications and there were many more commercials, one after every two songs. Plus, advertising was targeted to his teen audience, soda pop, blemish creams, razors, ‘going steady’ rings, Batty Bucks (shoes), speedway races etc. Often the commercials were made-up by Pete himself and all were delivered in the Mad Daddy personae. The show featured more popular hit songs in addition to his favorites.

While he kept up a busy schedule both on and off the air, it was Mad Daddy that was getting the attention and not Pete Myers. Producer Neil Mcintyre (personal communication, November 8, 2006) noted that’s exactly the way he wanted it. He stated that the real Pete Myers was pretty much a mystery even to those in his inner circle. “He was like many performers,” recalled Mcintyre (personal communication, November 8, 2006).

Myers had one personality on the radio, and was a completely different person when he was off. Very quiet. After I had known him for awhile, we sat in a bar for a few hours having drinks and I don’t remember having a real conversation with him. Off the air he was a person of few words. When he was working he was all words! His hobby was his work. I got to know him fairly well, at WJW and when I followed him to WHK. At WJW I was a volunteer, but when he went to WHK Myers told the management I was the guy who pretty much picked his music, and they made me the music director (personal communication, November 8, 2006).

The publicity and newspaper coverage apparently worked. The ‘Mad Daddy’ fan base grew dramatically, and while he was still courted by small record labels to play their product, nationally known artists and producers were knocking on his door as well. The manufacturers of Double Cola hired him on to do a national ad that appeared on “American Bandstand”. Jim
Jaworski (personal communication, February 22, 2007) and Neil McIntyre (personal communication, November 8, 2006) report his appearances at amusement parks, record stores and other retail outlets drew huge crowds. He would drive up in his pink Pontiac clad in his black Dracula cape and would have the audience in the palm of his hand. A recording of the Mad Daddy show on WHK shows he had lost none of his bravado or talent for off-beat scatological rhyme. With a suspense music bed underneath, Mad Daddy was heard saying:

   Loopin’ and a scoopin’ and a rockin’ and reelin’.

This is Mad Daddy here and we’re hangin’ from the ceiling!

Now, I know the show is nutty but it’s never ever dull.

Not as long as the liiiiiight burns bright in my skull (Myers, 2003, track 23).

One of Mad Daddy’s on-air trademarks was something he called Zoomerating. It was a spontaneous rapid fire recitation of nonsensical words in alphabetical order describing his show. He never did it the same way twice, and it became one of the most distinctive bits on the Mad Daddy show. Here’s an example from his show of July 26, 1958:

   Bumpa dumpa jing jing, On we go. This is Mad Daddy on my final show.

   But don’t tune out ‘cause we’re not through yet. We haven’t done my alphabet! Here we go, let’s scare them to death. From A to Z all in one big breath!

   (Deep intake of breath.) Aviating, bobbalating, crashevading, danceapating, elevating, fanagating, groovygating, hoopalating, idolating, jigglating, koolaidabating, lollypoparating, mutating, noisemaking, oobladobedating, poopaquating, quaking, raking, shaking, taking, ubulating, vegelating, wigglating, x-rating, yoyorating and zoomerating.

Still got breath to say…. you’re tuned in here to WHK! (Myers, 2003, track 30).
Greg Miller (personal communication, February 22, 2007) likened Mad Daddy’s show to an audio tapestry. He noted,

It was really just Pete Myers and an assistant in production. They did every thing with very primitive equipment. He had a reverb effect. He had some sound effects. But they did that show live. The sound effects that were introduced and the timing was done by cueing the sound engineer and that was it. For him to come up with fresh material for a four hour show every night and keep it fresh and cutting edge, he must have been a caffeine machine. It was just hypnotic. The guy had such a rapid fire and unique delivery. It’s almost like poetry. His delivery was so inspired. It was frenetic, but poetic (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

Miller also pointed to another factor that made the show unique and that was Myers’ taste in music, pointing out that it was extremely cutting edge, and even beyond rock and roll.

I looked at some of his play lists, the stuff he was playing at the station. Al Elias’ King Kong, the Rockefellers’ Orange Peel, Mickey Hawks’ Bip Bop Boom, Andre Williams from Detroit with The Greasy ‘Chicken. There are only a few of these that are even remembered let alone played any more. He would use The Champs’ Night Train as an intro, more of a jazz piece, and he had a real sense for what blended and what didn’t. It was a free flow, stream of consciousness type thing in his head and he was sound tracking it himself. He was a real artist (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

Myers could maintain ‘Mad Daddy’s’ top speed energy level from the first notes of his theme music to his sign-off. On the recording of his June 25, 1959 show we hear:

Yeah, the bubbles are cooling and we gotta go.

We’re coming to the end of another show.
Brook Benton, and I Want To Thank You, Baby. It’s going to be really big.

It sends crazy, wavy purple and orange spots under your Daddy’s wig!

It’s flying out time, but before we do one final word here about the Rendezvous.

With the pop and the bop and the rhythm and the blue

those rock and roll records are stacked up for you at 300 Prospect Avenue.

Listen to your Daddy and take his advice.

Get my crazy wavy feature record tomorrow just half price!

It’s your really big chance to save lots of money,

and still build up a big collection honey.

Fall by tomorrow and be sure to say, Daddy sent me in from WHK!

(Myers, 2003, track 50).

What was surprising was despite Pete Myers’ aversion to one-on-one contact, He welcomed meeting crowds of fans as the Mad Daddy. Many of those fans…described by Jim Jaworski (personal communication, February 22, 2007) as “hot-rodgers, hoods and high schoolers” who would listen to the shows in their cars and eventually make their way down to the WHK studios at 5000 Euclid Avenue. After his show, Myers would emerge from the studio for a few seconds dressed in a long flowing Dracula cape with his face highlighted with grease paint make-up. He would sign autographs, pose for photographs and then exit with a flourish and a maniacal laugh through a back door, speeding out of the parking lot in his pink Pontiac. Jaworski (personal communication, February 22, 2007) remembered other appearances.

I saw him at the Berea Fairgrounds in (August) 1958. He came to the Berea fair. WHK had a tent there. They brought him in at that time, and they had police all over the place. They had to escort him in with police, and later escort him out. If you listened to the
tapes and imagine what he was like, that was what he was like in person. He was absolutely wild. We knew as kids right away….kids are pretty sharp…we knew right away that this guy was really something very unique. The tent was packed. He had the cape, and the unique thing about the cape was that it had the hood, and he would ride around Cleveland in what I believe was a pink ’58 Pontiac convertible with that bat cape on…At the end of his radio show (on WHK) in downtown Cleveland, he would go outside and there would be a mob out there waiting for him. They were his people. (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

WHK announcer Ernie Anderson was Myers’ lead-in twice a day in split shifts at WHK, starting from noon to 2 p.m. when Myers would do the afternoon shift until 4 p.m., and then from 6 to 8 p.m., when Myers’ would return as ‘Mad Daddy’ until 10 p.m. While Anderson questioned Myers’ tactics to gain attention, there’s little doubt that Myers’ greatly influenced Anderson’s portrayal of ‘Ghoulardi’ on WJW-TV’s Shock Theater (1963-66) with use of weird sound effects, beatnik patter, and strange lingo. Ghoulardi was an extension of Ernie Anderson’s bizarre sense of humor, but there is little doubt he was influenced by Myers even borrowing the term “Amrap”, which was Parma spelled backwards. Parma is a west side suburb of Cleveland with a heavy ethnic Polish population (Feran, 1997).

Other WHK staff members remembered Myers as well. Johnny Holliday called Myers the “oddest of (his) fellow radio jocks, as well as the most talented and intriguing (Holliday p. 24, 2002).” When Myers was on-the-air in the imaginary Dracula Hall he drew the blinds and kept the door closed and no one was allowed entry during his show. There was a strict policy of no visitors and only his personal soundman Arnie Rosenberg was privy to what went on in the studio. Rosenberg said Myers act was completely spontaneous, and he was often hard pressed
to keep up with Mad Daddy. Eventually Myers would allow an outsider into the studio, but those occasions were few and far between

Holliday would write in his memoirs that he was a bit intimidated by Myers’ style and brilliance, claiming his ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ persona made him somewhat unapproachable. While he was polite and cordial, he was close to very few, and Holliday felt he simply lived in a different world than everyone else (Holliday, 2002).

Myers’ brother, Ernie (personal communication, October 4, 2006), recalled he once did an unscheduled live simulcast with Pete as the Mad Daddy between San Diego and Cleveland. Pete Myers called Ernie while he was on-the-air at KOGO / San Diego to say “hello” and did the ‘Mad Daddy’. Ernie Myers recalled Pete got a tremendous response similar to his fans in Cleveland.

Myers’ rapid fire delivery was only one aspect of his appeal. He also had a tight command of the studio and became a technological wizard with the primitive equipment of the time, which included several basic studio record turntables, early reel-to-reel tape recorders, reverb effects and a microphone. Disc jockey Norm N. Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) was one of the very few privileged individuals to actually see Myers at work in the studio at his prime.

I was a fan, of course, like most people living in Cleveland at that particular time of the 1950s, listening to his show religiously two hours a night Monday through Friday. I became very very fascinated by what he was doing, and I remember going down to WHK and walking into the studio on 50th and Euclid and watching him do his show when he had the two long counters with turntables, four on each side. He was doing that show with turntables and discs and everything, when nowadays it’s so much easier to do a
show and the records are two minutes in length. It was just fascinating to watch him work (personal communication, January 24, 2007).

Along with his on-air schedule and live appearances, Pete Myers branched out into marketing himself on the retail level. Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) recalled attaching the Mad Daddy name to a product or retail outlet would bring dramatic results. Appearances were key to his appeal.

He knew how to promote himself, because if someone sponsored his show like Record Rendezvous...’at the ‘vous! All the round sounds and nothing square!’ Green’s Jewelers and all the things he would promote. Horne’s on 71st and Carnegie. People just loved him because he was so good at getting that name identification with the product. He knew how to sell (personal communication, January 24, 2007).

Greg Miller (personal communication, February 22, 2007) pointed out,

If you look at the advertisements, it looks like on the weekends he was promoting himself at record hops somewhere, and the big buzz would be ‘Mad Daddy is going to make an appearance’ and give away some records or something. Or the county fair, or there would be the opening of a store, a supermarket somewhere. He would promote it on the show and make an appearance (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

Jim Jaworski (personal communication, February 22, 2007) added, “He had the ‘Batty Bucks.’ Stone Shoes in Cleveland had made up a special set of shoes with bat wings on them. The kids would go out and buy these ‘Batty Bucks’, and he took everything by storm.”

Myers’ show of June 26, 1959 provides a glimpse at the way Mad Daddy would market his own brand of footwear that was introduced the previous year at the Stone’s Shoe store chain.
We’re all just bubbly in the land of rhyme, and it’s time to make a buck cause it’s commercial time. If you like Daddy’s rhythm and blues you’d better stop by Stone’s and get those shoes. Remember, in style and value and fit you get more at any neighborhood Stone’s shoe store. You find them everywhere. Southland, Westgate and Shaker Square. Downtown? You can buy them there at ninth and Euclid.

Remember, half the fun of having feet is wearing romper stompers that look this neat. $6.95 for girls. $9.95 for boys. That’s batty bucks we’re talking about. Styles for everybody…the kind that everyone enjoys …at Stone’s. You’ll find those batty bucks really big with Mad Daddy wings that will flip your wig! For dancing on the ceiling there’s a non-skid sole. It’s the official foot gear for rock and roll. Yes sir! You’ll be really digging Akron or Barberton or Orange or Heights High if you wear my shoes when you go bye-bye (Myers, 2003, track 29).

Myers participation in a promotion meant more revenue flow into WHK. The station would advertise his appearances with a station wagon fitted with large bullhorn speakers on its roof and signs on each side of the vehicle. But nothing sold the appearance like Mad Daddy himself talking up the event on his show. Again, we refer to the show of June 25 as he plugs his sponsor, Record Rendezvous.

Whizzy dippy do dow. Scooby doo! Before we play another etch now here’s a word from the ‘vous. At 300 Prospect Avenue.

They got the pop and the bop and the rhythm and the blue. And the monoraul records and the stereo, too! They’re all racked up and they’re waiting for you. 300 Prospect Avenue! I’m sure you’re gonna whip in and say, “Daddy sent me in from WHK!” Round sounds, none of the square.
The Rendezvous sonny...buy your records there! (Myers, 2003, track 29).

It should be noted that the Record Rendezvous chain and its main store at 300 Prospect Avenue were owned by Leo Mintz, who sponsored and supplied records for Alan Freed’s groundbreaking Moondog Show on WJW. Mintz was also said to have been the person who told Freed that white kids were ‘rockin’ and rollin’ to so-called race records in the aisles of his store, and may have been the first person to use that term for the music before Freed (Van Tassel, 1987).

Jim Jaworski (personal communication, February 22, 2007) said Mad Daddy’s delivery on his commercials drew as much attention as his patter about the music and artists. He noted that delivery tells us a lot about the real Pete Myers.

With his delivery, and no notes, Mad Daddy had to be the real Pete Myers. He rhymed everything, even the commercials. I remember one night when some girl called in and requested a record. It was Witch Doctor and at the end of the request she said, ‘Make something rhyme with witch doctor.’ That’s what he would do. You would call in a request, he’d play the song, and then he’d come back on and make something rhyme. We were riding around in the car, and we bet it was impossible. He could never do this. A minute and a half later, whatever it was, Myers comes back on and….I can’t remember the exact words…but he said something about, ‘The police was chasing him and that’s how he clocked her. The witch doctor!’ (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

While Myers as Mad Daddy relished the spotlight like any actor in front of an audience, his true love seemed to be his show. He was often introducing new elements, and on December 20, 1958 listeners heard a character named T. Smedley Rosewater, who was said to be a new member of the WHK staff. In reality, Myers would tape segments in a different voice while
records were being played and play the tape back to have comical conversations with himself (“Little Character”, 1958).

Myers’ success as Mad Daddy in Cleveland drew the attention of WHK’s sister station in New York City, WNEW. It offered Myers his big break into the New York market to replace Al “Jazzbo” Collins on the 8 to midnight shift, and Myers eagerly accepted (WNEW Fans, 1959). His Cleveland fans were stunned. Jim Jaworski (personal communication, February 22, 2007) said the news hit like a bombshell.

I remember the last show. I remember the first announcement I heard, ‘This is my last show.’ We were in my buddy’s mother’s ’57 mint green Plymouth four door sedan heading down Rocky River Drive, and he came on the radio to say, ‘Doggone it. This is my very last show.’ We were just devastated. We couldn’t believe he made it to New York that fast. A lot of people like Alan Freed stepped up to New York. That wasn’t uncommon. There was no need to listen to the radio anymore. I mean, what was there to listen to if he’s gone? Half the show was the music, but the other half was him. Maybe the most important part of the show was him. (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

Pete Myers seemed to be at the top of his game and had become an icon to radio fans in Northeast Ohio.

Norm N. Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) observed it was simply a case of the right place at the right time.

All the other guys on the air were just playing the records, had a nice delivery and everything else. But he created something related to the teenagers. He came up with the phrases and was able to speak to the teenagers at that time on their level. He said things
that they admired and thought were cool, and they’d repeat them at school. I remember very, very vividly his last show. I remember his last song. LaVern Baker. *In the Dark.*

When he said, ‘The winky light is out’ and everything else, all of us were just devastated. ‘Pete Myers! He’s leaving us!’ He was only on the air for a short period of time at WHK and before that at WJW, but for the short period of time that he was here in Cleveland he made such an impact. (personal communication, January 24, 2007).

Pete Myers had a new wife, Lisa, and a new challenge on a super-sized stage, New York City.

**WNEW / New York**

New York was the dream of many broadcast professionals. It was the center of the industry in the biggest city in the country, and there was also talk that Myers would get a spot on WNEW-TV. Recalling his brother’s career, Ernie Myers (personal communication, October 4, 2006) said he was “Delighted… and very proud of Pete’s quick rise in radio.”

There was a slight hitch. WNEW was not a top 40 rock station. It played what was known then as standards, and now as the Great American Songbook. The station hung its hat on artists like Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Perry Como and similar artists. It was also the home of New York favorite William B. Williams, who made it clear to his audience that hated rock and roll. Station management wanted Pete Myers as a straight announcer, but Myers successfully pleaded for a chance to do Mad Daddy on his opening night. WNEW agreed to allow Mad Daddy an on-air audition to test audience reaction (“WNEW Fans”,1959).

Pete Myers debuted as the Mad Daddy on WNEW on Saturday, July 4, 1959 and did so with a great deal of pre-show publicity from the station. His Cleveland engineer Arnie
Rosenberg would later say the move to New York was Myers’ dream saying, “He wanted to be the biggest guy in the world (“Wavy Gravy”, 2008).” The dream would last one night.

The following Monday WNEW’s phone lines were jammed from the moment the offices opened for business. In addition, more than 100 letters arrived and the response to Mad Daddy was not good. They included comments like “Who is that idiot?” and “What is he doing on WNEW?” Station manager Jack Sullivan met with Myers that same day, and published reports indicate both agreed Mad Daddy would not return to WNEW, though Myers was later said to be despondent over the move. Sullivan stressed to the New York newspapers that WNEW was not contemplating any format change, despite the rumors it might go Top 40, and promised Mad Daddy would never be heard again on his station. He said, “We’re not going to copy any other station. We just want to make WNEW a better number one than ever (“WNEW Fans” p. 32, 1959).” The TV offer was rescinded as well.

New York was the biggest radio market in the world, and a far more cosmopolitan city than Cleveland. A great deal of the arts community and emerging counter-culture was centered there. Mad Daddy would seem to be a sure hit in the Big Apple, but not at WNEW in 1959. But as Myers’ friend operatic tenor Ben Arrigo put it, “WNEW’s format can't be tampered with. Big Broadway producers, politicians, and corporate executives listen to it. New York's stable upper-middle class. They got home and listened to this craziness? They were appalled (“WNEW Fans” p. 32, 1959).”

Norm N. Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) said Mad Daddy’s quick failure would lead to bouts of depression for Myers.

He had hoped things were going to take off like in Cleveland, and when it didn’t it had to bother him. When you have an ego in radio like that, you succeed in one market…”
Like Alan Freed. He was here (in Cleveland) and he became bigger in New York.

Here’s a situation where you had a highly talented guy (Myers) yet it just didn’t work.

Ernie Myers (personal communication, October 4, 2006) also said that he noticed his brother falling into depression. Few people back in the late fifties and early sixties owned home recording equipment. It was expensive and bulky, and few saw any need to own that type of gear. There were some hi-fi enthusiasts who invested in tape machines, but most used them for music reproduction. As a result there is precious little audio footage of Pete Myers. However, some audio does exist, and in a recording from Myers’ July 26, 1961 show on WNEW we hear a far more sedate announcer introducing songs like Helen O’Connell’s *All of Me* and Dave Brubeck’s *Take Five*. Myers seems perfectly at home in that format, though his fans still held fond memories of Mad Daddy.

Pete Myers still pursued acting gigs, and while at WNEW got theater jobs as well as roles on TV’s *Hallmark Hall of Fame*. In addition, he was named spokesman for Pepperidge Farm Cookies, which sponsored his show on WNEW.

Myers spent four years at WNEW building a loyal and solid audience, but in 1963 a fateful reunion would open new doors for Myers and his alter ego. An offer came from New York’s top-rated rock station WINS, which was also home to the highly popular disc jockey Murray the K Kaufmann. The offer came from program director Neil McIntyre, the same Neil McIntyre who worked as an intern for Myers’ Cleveland stations and acted as his assistant. McIntyre sold WINS management on the idea that Myers’ Mad Daddy was the kind of unique entertainer that New York was looking for (“Wavy Gravy”, 2008).

WINS / New York

Myers accepted the job and Mad Daddy took the airwaves at 1010 WINS, but reaction
was mixed. It’s hard to pin down why Mad Daddy didn’t hit at the time. John Zacherley had been doing a similar horror host character on TV since 1958 in Philadelphia and New York as host of the *Shock Theater* Universal Studios film package. He had a hit with a novelty record called *Dinner with Drac*. Ernie Anderson’s “Ghoulardi”, which was based in good part on his time watching Myers’ Mad Daddy at WHK, skyrocketed to fame in Cleveland on WJW-TV’s *Shock Theater*. TV may have been the key because Myers continued to do Mad Daddy exclusively on radio.

Myers’ decision to move on to WINS begins what Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) said is the third and final major phase of the Mad Daddy character. He noted that,

Myers retained his old persona but it was greatly toned down and the show was just a shadow of its WHK days. The playlist would eventually include typical top forty hits of the period, Neil Sedaka, Bobby Darren, The Supremes, The Beatles, even Peter, Paul and Mary. (He must have hated that!) Advertising was a mixed bag appealing to a multi-demographic, newspapers, gum, beer, Broadway performances etc. He still did dedications but even they were greatly toned down and he frequently begged for cards and letters to keep his show on the air.

Myers even tried syndicating Mad Daddy for a brief time, broadcasting nightly from the imaginary Sponge Rubber Heaven to stations like WPOP / Hartford. Ernie Myers (personal communication, October 4, 2006) recalled visiting Myers in New York and sitting in to observe one of the syndicated shows, and said his brother seemed happier, but tired. He still played Mad Daddy to the hilt, but the style of radio and music that helped sell the character was passing by rapidly. The early sixties saw the emergence of Motown, surf music and the Philadelphia R & B
sound, and radio formatting was becoming tighter and more controlled. It certainly wasn’t the style of entertainment that took him to the top in Cleveland some years back, but it was play by the new rules or don’t play at all.

By 1964, the music world was in for an earth shaking transition. Following the long mourning period from the assassination of John Kennedy in November 22, 1963 and a brutal winter over the northern United States, much of the country was ready for some hint of optimism and that came from England in February 1964. The Beatles debuted on the Ed Sullivan show on February 9, 1964 beginning the so-called “British Invasion” by European pop bands. Having lived and studied in London ten years before, Myers immediately saw the appeal and potential of the Beatles and drew side glances from his colleagues at WINS when he said the act would be bigger than Elvis Presley. In fact, Myers made it his business to be at LaGuardia Airport when the group landed to cheering crowds, handing out Beatle wigs and promotional t-shirts. It marked a drastic change in music and a passing of the era that Myers embraced as the Mad Daddy (Hinckley, 2005).

Change was also in the wind at WINS as Myers former coworker at WHK / Cleveland, Johnny Holliday, was announced as his replacement on the 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. slot. Myers was reassigned to a less desirable position earlier in the evening following Murray the K’s Swinging Soiree. In just over a year, on April 18, 1965, WINS would go to an all news format (Holliday, 2002).

WNEW / New York…Again

Myers left WINS to return to WNEW, the highly rated middle-of-the-road outlet that was still playing standards, but it also provided a secure position in the world’s largest media market. Myers was back to being a mellow voiced disc jockey providing patter between records, and
while he did have some degree of job security, at 40 years old he was not confident about his future.

The syndication continued, and there was talk of a British Mad Daddy TV show catering to the British Invasion crowd but it never got beyond the talking stages. Myers seemed enthusiastic about the British offer, because it would have given him an opportunity to educate and entertain at the same time. As he told WZAK's Dick Liberatore in 1967, it would have also provided him a chance to reintroduce Mad Daddy to a new audience.

It was a lot of fun. Sure I would. As a matter of fact there was a period where a couple of people in England were interested in putting it on the air in a Carnaby Street bit over there, when they discovered rock and roll. Actually all the Beatle records and the Rolling Stones are ‘steals’ from old American rhythm and blues songs. These kids in London and up in Liverpool bought a lot of these old records that were part and parcel of the American scene. That was a whole new bag in England. The groups they bounced back from us kind of ricocheted in England, (WZAK, 1967).”

He went on to praise “Big Bill Broonzy, and Howling Wolf, Lightnin’ Slim and Screamin’ Jay Hawkins.

They’re rediscovered in England. They’re a brand new bag there. They’re part and parcel of a traditional form of American music, rhythm and blues, which it is and they hadn’t heard this prior to about 1955 (WZAK, 1967).

Pete Myers was in a position that most disc jockeys would have loved to be in. He had a steady job in the world’s largest media market and was pursuing a number of additional opportunities. But Myers saw it in a different way. He was consumed by ambition and rationalized his position as a small fish in a big pond of 10-million listeners.
It also should be considered that Myers may have been stuck in a phase of broadcasting that had passed by both himself and the industry. The day when a disc jockey chose his own songs changed rapidly after the payola scandals of the fifties. The industry now anointed the program director with the final say on what acts got air time. Play lists now pretty much ruled the industry, with an emphasis on major label acts with the promotional muscle to make stars. Plus, the emphasis also was placed on playing more music, with less between record patter from the disc jockeys. Individuality was fading from radio stations across the country (“Wavy Gravy” par. 13, 2008).

It is also vital to closely examine Cleveland’s importance as a break out market for radio talent. In the 1950s, Cleveland radio presented major air personalities like Bill Randle, Tommy Edwards, and Alan Freed. As Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) observed, Mad Daddy was a perfect follow-up to pioneer Alan Freed in Cleveland. That was a key to his success there. Why he failed in New York is a bit of a mystery. Perhaps it was because he was such a radical departure from anything WNEW had done before that their audience just couldn’t accept him. Later on at WINS he again became popular, even syndicating his show, but he was never the same, being severely limited in his choice of music by the strict top 40 format and the Drake formula. (Note: Drake was a highly structured format developed by the late Bill Drake that stressed less disc jockey patter, fewer commercials and more music presented in a tight schedule of presentation.)

Greg Miller (personal communication, February 22, 2007) said the New York programmers may not have understood Myers’ act or the audience he appealed to. Miller added, He may have not been marketed correctly in New York. I don’t know that he was on the
right station. They weren’t ready for him. Another thing that is lesser known is that he was also one of the first late night TV movie hosts. In the late 1950s you had these late night movie hosts, and Pete Myers made that transition. It was a double feature on Friday nights, and he had the same schtick…the cape and the pancake makeup, and he hosted the movie. That never took off, but when you look at the phenomena that started here in Cleveland with Ernie Anderson and Ghoulardi, and so on, it’s a genre that always seemed to find a home here in Cleveland.

Miller says Cleveland TV, as in the case of New York’s radio programmers, may not have been ready at the time to exploit Mad Daddy’s true appeal. Ernie Anderson’s Ghoulardi was a local television phenomenon due in great part to Anderson marketing the character himself through personal appearances.

Cleveland’s reputation as a break out market for music and personalities may have been at its peak at that time. Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) suggested, Cleveland in the 1950s was where the innovations in pop radio in the Northeast happened. Alan Freed, Bill Randle, and Pete Myers all picked up southern R&B, rockabilly and rock and roll and brought it to northern listeners before anyone else did. They exported the concept to Chicago, Buffalo, Detroit and New York. The Cleveland audience was ripe for new things and Mad Daddy was the coolest thing on the air in 1958. New York was a different scene. They already had established patterns, Harlem blues, bebop, jazz and Tin Pan Alley pop and didn’t crave something new the way we did.

It’s also a possibility that the New York audience was more sophisticated and found Mad Daddy too extreme. Perhaps if he had gone to a different radio station whose main audience were
teens looking for something new, he would have had a far different impact. Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) suggested if public or alternative radio had existed back then he would have found an ideal home, though even today that type of radio draws a very small and select audience and is not especially lucrative for the programmers or air talent. Myers wanted a bigger stage.

Norm N. Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) isn’t so sure, and said you can’t take your radio audience with you from market to market. He observed,

Certain things happen in certain places and certain markets, but for some reason or another it didn’t fly in New York. It depressed him because he was so big here in Cleveland at what he was doing when he was on-the-air. It wasn’t catching on. People didn’t go for it. It bothered him, and then he had to change his style and he became just ‘laughable, lovable Pete Myers’ on WNEW. That’s what got to him, when they changed his shift. They wanted to put him on in evenings after being on all those years in the afternoon. He just couldn’t take it. He was such a talented artist, and when things didn’t work the way he wanted it affected him greatly (personal communication, January 24, 2007).

In 1966, Myers received a visit from two Cleveland friends, WJW-TV’s Ernie Anderson (who worked with Myers at WHK) and Tim Conway, the Chagrin Falls native who played Ensign Charles Parker on ABC-TV’s McHale’s Navy. They had worked together at Cleveland TV stations in the past and were promoting their comedy album on Liberty Records titled, Bull! However, Myers couldn’t promote the record because the program director didn’t feel its content fit the format. While disappointed, the two understood the situation Myers found himself in and used the opportunity to renew old acquaintances. However, Anderson, Neil McIntyre and Arnie
Rosenberg, who stayed in touch with Myers, all noticed a gradual personality change in both his voice and demeanor (“Wavy Gravy” par.12, 2008).

Final Days

Personal problems had apparently affected Myers. He divorced his wife Ann, the dancer from Ohio, and remarried a New York model named Lisa. It was his third time down the aisle and a number of people noticed he’d started to slow down a bit and spent more time at home. Still, there were those that thought his professional life was affecting him most. Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) saw it as well, though he pointed out that Myers was still capable of flashes of inspiration stating

What I did was I kept in touch with him and when he went off to New York I had an opportunity to visit and say hello when I went over to WNEW. In 1967, I came out with an album on Laurie Records called *Rock and Roll: Evolution or Revolution*, a documentary. I went to see him over at WNEW and I gave him a copy, and he took it home and listened to it. I saw him the next day, and…he was the one who came up with this one phrase…he said, ‘You know what? This is called a rockumentary!’ Record World was doing a review of my album and they asked, ‘What do you call it?’ I said, ‘A rockumentary’ and the headline in that review asked ‘Are you ready for a rockumentary?’ That phrase to this day is still used and it came from Pete Myers.

It wouldn’t be the last time Nite had dealings with Pete Myers. He recalled a show he staged on May 5th, 1968 at the Cleveland Arena called “I Remember Rock and Roll”, featuring Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, the Shirelles and the Coasters, all booked for just $7500. The show featured local disc jockeys as emcees, including Ken Hawkins from WJMO, WZAK’s Dick Liberatore, and Jim LaBarbara and Joe Finan from WIXY. He also contacted Pete Myers who
agreed to come in for what would be his final appearance in Cleveland. Myers didn’t want an appearance fee which could have cost Nite as much as $1000. The only compensation Myers asked was a round trip airline ticket so he could return to New York that same night. Myers took the stage as Mad Daddy to a huge response from the audience. When the concert was over, Myers returned to his quiet introspective self, Nite drove him to the airport and the two parted ways.

Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) said he found Myers quiet demeanor puzzling, but at the same time understood the quiet side of his personality, and observed

He was a performer doing his thing in a studio and on the radio, but when he was away from all that he was just a normal person. I guess that’s what charges your battery and makes you go and do the things that you do because, again, it’s very difficult for a person to be twenty four hours a day doing the same thing. Being the person you are on-the-air and the same way off the air, because it has to burn you out real quick. You don’t take that character home with you.

The radio landscape changed drastically by autumn 1968. Broadcasters were now programming their FM bands separately, and a number staffed their stations with young, often inexperienced disc jockeys playing progressive rock. With all the artistic freedom on those stations, to a great degree because they had problems selling advertising on those new untested formats, the programming on the more popular AM stations was much tighter. Program directors forced adherence to logs that required a number of songs per hour, along with promotions and commercials, and that left little time or freedom for air personalities to be heard. Some described the lack of freedom as leaving them professionally impotent (“Wavy Gravy”, 2008).
Pete Myers had accepted his situation at WNEW. Perhaps he was forced to, but still seemed comfortable with a secure job in the midday 1 to 4 p.m. shift. But the old saying in radio even back then was, the only constant is change. Change was on the way that first week of October 1968.

Myers was told by management that he was to be given a later shift, from 8 p.m. to midnight. He would start the new shift on Friday, October 4. Station officials would later say Myers accepted the change with a smile and even seemed enthusiastic about the new time slot (“Pete Myers Dies,” 1968).

That Friday, in the early evening, Myers dressed in his best suit, and said goodbye to his wife who was just waking from a nap. Lisa Myers would later remember how elegant Pete looked that evening. He excused himself and walked into the bathroom where he had placed one of his most prized possessions, a rare and valuable shotgun. Moments later a shot rang out and Lisa Myers found her husband dead by his own hand (“Pete Myers Dies,” 1968).

A note was found and reportedly stated Myers was despondent over the change in his shift and the direction of his career (“Pete Myers Dies,” 1968). Myers’ brother Ernie (personal communication, October 4, 2006) recalled that Pete was “very depressed when the station changed his shift.” and his former producer and program director Neil McIntyre (personal communication, November 8, 2006) believed Myers’ profound interest in eastern culture may have led him to commit a form of “hari kari”, or ritual suicide by honor. Norm N. Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) claimed that was a distinct possibility, saying, Who knows? There were many sides to him, more than just being the character of ‘Mad Daddy.’ He had a knowledge of all kinds of music. He liked the big band era and he was a trained actor. A man who has all this going for him…there were many spokes in the
wheel, but we just knew one spoke and that was him being Pete Myers and ‘Mad Daddy.’ There were other sides to him, and unless you were real close to him, you didn’t know the other sides. Few people, if any, did.

Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) said Myers’ failure to make Mad Daddy a hit to a bigger audience weighed heavily on him, and by no real fault of his own. Hunt said,

In the end, it was the changing music scene that killed off Mad Daddy. By 1960 original rock and roll was dead replaced by phonies like ‘Bobby This’ and ‘Bobby That’, Fabian and even fake groups like The Monkees. It’s no wonder that the next great innovations came out of Britain, not the U.S.

Years later, Ernie Anderson would say he still thought about Pete Myers claiming, "He was a brilliant, sensitive, lonely man, but I think his brilliance killed him (‘Wavy Gravy’ par. 16, 2008)."
Kurt Vonnegut once wrote in a foreword for a book about comedians Bob Eliot and Ray Goulding that,

It is the truth: Comedians and jazz musicians have been more comforting and enlightening to me than preachers or politicians or philosophers or poets or painters or novelists of my time. Historians, in the future, in my opinion, will congratulate us on very little other than our clowning and our jazz (Eliot, 1975).

If that is indeed the case, Pete “Mad Daddy” Myers will likely be treated kindly by those historians, not only for his taste in roots rhythm and blues music but also for the unique style of entertainment he pioneered with his alter-ego. Myers was able to combine four key aspects in his promotion of the “Mad Daddy” character. They include his image as a comical “creature of the night” as seen in photos, live appearances and on TV; the music he played…race records and b-sides… that offered an alternative to the mainstream fare heard on other commercial stations; his masterful use of editing, reverb and other studio techniques that combined for his unique on-air sound; and his rapid-fire delivery peppered with off-beat hipster jargon.

Despite recent interest in the alternative press and a career retrospective issued by the New York based Norton Records, Pete “Mad Daddy” Myers is mostly remembered by radio historians and his many fans in Northeast Ohio. Norm N. Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) observed that accessibility may be the reason.

His stint here in Cleveland was so brief, and the same thing with the shows. When he was on in the evening, kids at that time were out riding around in cars and listening. They weren’t home. If you had a Webcor or one of those big bulky tape recorders of that
time, you’re still not going to stay home in the evening. You’re going to be out with your friends. How are you going to record him? That’s why there are so few tapes of him. But again, some things have surfaced and there are things that you find out from other people. This guy might have recorded a couple of hours, this guy a couple of hours. Slowly but surely you’re finding material out there (personal communication, January 24, 2007).

Research Questions

This research addressed the five following questions, which are answered individually:

The first research question asked: What was Pete Myers’ role in radio’s transition in the 1950s as the industry reacted to the threat of TV robbing it of audience and advertising dollars?

Myers’ historian Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) doesn’t believe Myers ever directly considered this issue.

He was simply one of the ‘cult personality deejays’ typical of the early rock and roll era. Their presence on the airwaves helped to define radio’s new role as primarily a deliverer of pop music rather than its radio theatre of the air past.

It’s evident that Myers’ Mad Daddy brought in a large and loyal audience to his Cleveland radio show, but could not duplicate that anywhere else. Even though he was wildly successful on Cleveland radio, his role in that transition was limited to Northeast Ohio. Some disc jockeys, like Bill Randle at WERE / Cleveland, were able to expand their base of influence. Randle worked in both Cleveland and New York City, splitting his time between the two cities during the week at the height of his popularity as a disc jockey. But Randle’s on-air presentation was more direct and true to his own character as a straight talking air personality. Randle’s
personality was also suitable fit for the radio formats he worked in. Pete Myers had success as Mad Daddy with WJW and WHK’s rock and roll format in Cleveland, but it was a disaster on middle-of-the-road WINS in New York. He would have likely had a greater role in that transition if Mad Daddy had been placed in a rock and roll format right from the start in New York City.

Myers also used a bizarre alter ego. He created a character that appealed to the young audience sought by radio programmers battling TV for advertising dollars. Plus, it was the first time that an entire generation was being targeted by marketers differently than their parents. Myers could deliver that audience in Northeast Ohio, but this researcher believes Myers ambitions for a larger radio market and the failure of programmers in New York to recognize and successfully exploit his talents and personality limited the role he could have played in that transition.

John Zacherle at WCAU-AM in Philadelphia had a similar though less frantic gothic style character on-air. However, he did not have the same wide appeal as ‘Mad Daddy’ in Cleveland. In addition, the purchase of that station by the much more traditional CBS radio network forced Zacherle to find work elsewhere. He was able to revive the character, now known as ‘Zacherley’, hosting a late night Friday horror movie on WABC-TV. But Zacherley’s air time was limited and he played to a niche audience on TV once a week. Myers’ ‘Mad Daddy’ was prime time in a music format that didn’t fit the character playing to an older radio audience in the most important media market in the world. Plus, his attempts to sell the character in syndication met with little success. This researcher found no other major radio market that showed a character with the same appeal and popularity that Myers’ “Mad Daddy” had in Cleveland. That indicated Cleveland was unique in embracing Myers’ character, which
failed to make an impact and influence anywhere else. Myers was able to hold his radio audience from going to television, but his influence was confined to Northeast Ohio.

Research question two asked: Many radio air staffs were compelled to change to sell their personalities to connect with their target audiences. What compelled Pete Myers to develop the ‘Mad Daddy’ character?

Myers told WZAK’s Dick Liberatore in their 1967 interview that he came up with the Mad Daddy character while sitting at the WHKK / Akron transmitter site (WZAK, 1967). It leads one to believe that Mad Daddy was the brainchild of a creative individual frustrated by boredom and his own stalled incentive. Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) offered this assessment,

Who knows what drove him to become Mad Daddy? He seems to have always been a prankster at heart as evidenced by his ‘Monster from the Sea’ while in the service and his Joker record. I believe he originated an early form of his Mad Daddy format on WHKK / Akron, possibly drawing from early horror film hosts on TV but more likely from Mad magazine. The rhyming patter was original although he may have seen it in comics like Basil Wolverton’s Powerhouse Pepper.

This observation provides a key link to Mad Daddy’s on-air personae. Wolverton was a regular contributor and artist for Mad. His Powerhouse Pepper was a strip based on a wise cracking strong man published as a separate comic book in Timely Comics between 1942 and 1948. Myers’ was also a regular reader of Mad magazine, even having a letter published in one of its issues in the 1950s. This would show Mad’s likely influence on Myers’ ‘Mad Daddy.’ While Mad Daddy took this to a new often extreme level, WHKK / Akron was able to sell critical advertising time on his show. The ‘Mad Daddy’ may have been completely out of
character with other members of the air staff, but as long as he generated revenue the station programmers allowed him free reign. Myers’ enjoyed free reign with a one-man show, and as long as it brought in ratings and advertising dollars there was no reason to change. Mad Daddy was a combination of popular culture influences from print, film, recorded music and Myers’ own fertile imagination. They were the same influences embraced by much of the emerging youth culture that was now being targeted by advertisers and marketing concerns.

Research question three asked: What extremes did Pete Myers pursue to promote his bizarre alter-ego?

Myers’ self-promotion both on and off the air is well documented in the results. As Norm N. Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) stated, “He was a performer. Bailing out of a plane when his contract was up. He was so far ahead of his time with the things that he did and thought about. Absolutely amazing.” Myers also was one of the first local on-air personalities to do self marketing with his attempts at syndication deals, and product like Batty Bucks shoes. This researcher could find no other radio personality that took self promotion to the extremes pursued by Pete Myers. Keep in mind that Myers also pursued the parachute jump when he was between stations. It is unlikely that any other station would have assumed the liability and risk of having one of its employees risk their lives in a stunt that could have easily turned tragic.

Research question four asked: Why was ‘Mad Daddy’ a hit in Cleveland, but never caught on anywhere else, especially in the much larger and more sophisticated market of New York City?

Cleveland had a long standing reputation as a breakout market for artists as well as a training ground for up and coming radio personalities. Still, Pete Myers’ Mad Daddy failed to
get the same reaction in New York as in Cleveland. Jim Jaworski (personal communication, February 22, 2007) said, “The Cleveland fans were ahead of all the other fans in accepting rock and roll. New York was behind the loop. They probably got scared of him. They didn’t know how to handle him.”

It is also vital to closely examine Cleveland’s importance as a break out market for radio talent. In the 1950s, Cleveland radio presented major air personalities like Bill Randle, Tommy Edwards, and Alan Freed. As Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) noted,

Mad Daddy was a perfect follow-up to pioneer Alan Freed in Cleveland. That was a key to his success there. Why he failed in New York is a bit of a mystery. Perhaps it was because he was such a radical departure from anything WNEW had done before that their audience just couldn’t accept him. Later on at WINS he again became popular, even syndicating his show, but he was never the same, being severely limited in his choice of music by the strict top 40 format and the Drake formula.

(Note: Drake was a highly structured format developed by the late Bill Drake that stressed less disc jockey patter, fewer commercials and more music presented in a tight schedule of presentation.)

Greg Miller said the New York programmers may not have understood Myers’ act or the audience he appealed to:

I don’t know that he was on the right station. They weren’t ready for him. He was also one of the first late night TV movie hosts. In the late 1950s you had these late night movie hosts, and Pete Myers made that transition. It was a double feature on Friday nights, and he had the same schtick…the cape and the pancake makeup, and he hosted the movie. That never took off, but when you look at the phenomena that started here in
Cleveland with Ernie Anderson and Ghoulardi, and so on, it’s a genre that always seemed to find a home here in Cleveland (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

Miller said Cleveland TV, as in the case of New York’s radio programmers, may not have been ready at the time to exploit Mad Daddy’s true appeal. Ernie Anderson’s Ghoulardi was a local television phenomenon due in great part to Anderson marketing the character himself through personal appearances.

Cleveland’s reputation as a break out market for music and personalities may have been at its peak at that time. Jay Hunt (personal communication, January 25, 2009) suggested:

Cleveland in the 1950s was where the innovations in pop radio in the Northeast happened. Alan Freed, Bill Randle, and Pete Myers all picked up southern R&B, rockabilly and rock and roll and brought it to northern listeners before anyone else did. They exported the concept to Chicago, Buffalo, Detroit and New York. The Cleveland audience was ripe for new things and Mad Daddy was the coolest thing on-the-air in 1958. New York was a different scene. They already had established patterns, Harlem blues, bebop, jazz and Tin Pan Alley pop and didn’t crave something new the way we did. In that sense they were more sophisticated and found Mad Daddy too extreme. Perhaps if he had gone to a different radio station whose main audience were teens looking for something new, he would have made it. If public or alternative radio had existed back then he would have found an ideal home.

Norm N. Nite wasn’t so sure, and said it was impossible to take your radio audience with you from market to market (personal communication, January 24, 2007). He said:

Certain things happen in certain places and certain markets, but for some reason or another it didn’t fly in New York. It depressed him because he was so big here in
Cleveland at what he was doing when he was on the air. It bothered him, and then he had to change his style and he became just ‘laughable, lovable Pete Myers’ on WNEW. They wanted to put him on in evenings after being on all those years in the afternoon. He just couldn’t take it. He was such a talented artist, and when things didn’t work the way he wanted it affected him greatly (personal communication, January 24, 2007).

Finally, the fifth research question asked: Did Myers’ have a continuing influence?

Ernie Myers (personal communication, October 4, 2006) visited Pete in New York and sat in on his show during his WINS days. There was a large teen audience, but nowhere near the numbers seen in Cleveland. Ernie Myers said no one influenced Pete. Mad Daddy was completely original. He was so unique it would be painfully evident if someone did try to imitate him or duplicate “Mad Dadd”. And, a continuing influence doesn’t necessarily mean imitation.

Norm N. Nite suggested that influence could be on the audience level as well (personal communication, January 24, 2007). As Nite stated:

People who cherish that era of rock and roll, and he was at rock and roll’s peak in ’58 and ’59 in Cleveland, for him to be able to come in at that particular time and be able to do the things that he was doing and make an impact…. The people who grew up in that era and all the songs that came out at that particular time are real treasures as far as the history of rock and roll goes. For him, with all the disc jockeys that were out there, to make an impact on teenagers was remarkable.

But Nite (personal communication, January 24, 2007) pointed out there were still a lot of people who tried to emulate him:

There were disc jockeys who wanted to go for the rhyming thing like Scott Howitt on “Majic” (WMJI-FM). There was another guy who was imitating him and sounded just
like him, and who knows how many others that we don’t know about that tried to do the same thing? (personal communication, January 24, 2007).

Greg Miller agreed, acknowledging that there were imitators who could not match Myers’ innovative style as “Mad Daddy”:

I think there were a lot of deejays in the early sixties that tried to copy that style. Jack Armstrong, the “Wild Child” at WIXY. I think that he was back in an age when the deejays had a lot more power and a lot more latitude in what they could do. I know Ghoulardi, Ernie Anderson, was influenced by him. That whole late night horror movie genre was from him.

Miller went on to say:

He had his own unique style, but as far as that frenetic delivery…unscripted…nobody could match Pete Myers. Nobody. . What he was doing was true artistry, where he could just recite stuff off the top of his head and make it flow with the rhythm and just lead it into a record, and with music of different genres combining jazz, rock and roll and offbeat beatnik sounds. They had a free wheeling free flow kind of stream of consciousness thing (personal communication, February 22, 2007).

Nite stressed the uniqueness of Myers’ style and personality. Nite remembered his last meeting with Myers at the Cleveland Arena in 1968, and how it may have affected him to see the influence he still had on an audience he left nine years before:

What happened was he was there and everyone loved him, and then he went back to New York. On October 4th of ’68 is when he committed suicide. Over the years I just thought he was ahead of his time, the way he did what he did, the rhyming…he was just so good
and clever and quick and everything else. I never saw anyone else who was able to do 
the things that he was able to do (personal communication, January 24, 2007).

Jay Hunt had a different idea:

I wouldn’t say he was ahead of his time because that would mean that others had 
followed in his footsteps doing the same thing. I’d say he was like none other in his time. 
He was truly unique and totally in tune with his teen audience of the day (personal 
communication, January 25, 2009).

Myers’ influence also manifested itself in a way that neither he nor anyone else could 
have foreseen during his lifetime. While he did have an influence on Ernie Anderson’s 
Ghoulardi on WJW-TV, Myers also influenced punk rock pioneer Lux Interior of the band The 
Cramps. Born Erick Lee Purkhiser in Stow, Ohio, he developed his band’s “psycho-billy” 
sound based on the free-form horror and exploitation movies heard on “Mad Daddy’s” and 
Ghoulardi’s TV programs as well as the free wheeling controlled chaos heard on Myers’ radio 
shows. As Plain Dealer writer John Petkovic wrote in Lux Interior’s obituary profile in 
February 2009, “Their mix of hip, beatnik rapping, raunchy blues tunes and ‘so bad it’s good’ 
sensibilities provided the template for the band’s sound” (Petkovic, 2009).

The Cramps also recorded a tribute to Myers’ in the song Mad Daddy on the album Songs 
the Lord Taught Us (A&M,1980). Included in the lyrics were the words “Pair of shades. Purple 

The last line would seem to be a reference to Myers’ promotional jump from a plane in 
Lake Erie, as well as his “Batty Bucks” shoes. Myers’ memory was obviously held dearly by a 
number of creative and influential performers, as well as many of his aging fans who heard him 
during his heyday in Cleveland.
Even so, on a much larger scale, Pete Myers is remembered today as an odd postscript in broadcasting history, though a loyal group of fans still keep his memory alive. Jay Hunt is one of them. He said:

Overall deejays like him were a dying breed in the new format oriented radio. Just like rock and roll, by the early sixties radio had lost much of the individuality that fifties generational rebellion had fostered. White backlash against black music, the payola scandal and Tin Pan Alley re-establishing its control over the music industry were all factors in bringing both down. A few like the Cramps tried to keep him alive, but sadly he is mostly remembered nostalgically by old folks like me (personal communication, January 25, 2009).

Pete Myers was said to have been so troubled by the change in his shift that he decided death was a better alternative. But even he realized that change is inevitable, telling WZAK’s Dick Liberatore that it was evident in the world of popular music. Myers told him:

There’s an old saying ‘there’s nothing new under the sun’ and I think that’s very true because nothing seems so constant as change. Yet all the changes seem to come back to the same old thing. There’s a real earthy gut bucket beat to it and there’s twelve bar blues and by me it’s going to be “mellow J-ello” in 1987 every time I hear a new record with a new group. The names are getting wilder, that’s all I know. I hear Dow Jones and the Averages. Six and the Single Girl. That’s another group. I used to think the wildest name for a group would be the Foregone Conclusions. Now there is the Foregone Conclusions, but I don’t know where they are on the charts. But they’re all singing twelve bar blues and it still goes the same way (WZAK, 1967).

It’s also evident that opting to end his life may have been a spur of the moment decision. In an interview done before Myers’ death we hear that he was thinking about what his life would
be like twenty years in the future in 1987.

It was an era when his fans would listen from car radios or transistor sets hidden under a pillow after bed time they sought to hear Mad Daddy say good night in a way that might have been used to eulogize him when he chose to end his own life.

No more time to rhyme and shout.

Daddy disappears! The winking eye goes out!

Brush your teeth and say your prayers.

Cha-cha softly up the stairs.

Remember your Daddy loves you! Pleasant dreams.

See you tomorrow…in the land of screams!

Just the beat of my heart…in the dark. (Myers, 2003, track 31).

A CD career retrospective, magazine and newspaper articles, songs such as the Cramps’ “Mad Daddy” and even cell phone ring tones recall a much simpler and more creative time in Cleveland radio. They also reveal an individual who was so wildly creative that certain radio programmers and marketing people didn’t know how to exploit his character to its maximum potential.

Summary

Radio needed unique personalities and programming to draw and keep young listeners in the 1950s and 60s who may have otherwise been lured away by the increasing popularity of television. The industry was in need of new creative ideas and personalities that could sell themselves as entertainment as well as the music they played. There were no limits, but no one anticipated the degree that Pete Myers would take his imagination. As the radio programmers in Cleveland had hoped, the Mad Daddy became an immediate hit with his young audience,
presenting music and live entertainment that was radically different from any other station. Pete Myers’ Mad Daddy character was embraced by listeners on WJW-AM and later WHK-AM and could have remained very comfortable at WHK, though his ambition compelled Myers to take his creation to a bigger radio market. When the character was introduced and quickly failed on New York City’s middle-of-the-road music station WNEW, Myers faced what appeared to be his first major career failure. Shortly after his final visit to Cleveland, perhaps frustrated that he could not duplicate his fame in Northeast Ohio, Myers took his own life.

Pete Myers failed to reach the full success of his alter-ego “Mad Daddy,” but he was not alone. Radio programmers demanded a new type of personality to bring in audience, and Myers delivered that personality beyond their expectations. The programmers weren’t prepared for this radical departure and may have failed to market the “Mad Daddy” character to its fullest potential. If Pete Myers would have stayed in Northeast Ohio, his Mad Daddy may well have become one of the most respected and revered voices in local radio. Instead, he accepted a small role in the world’s biggest radio market of New York City, and was destined to become a footnote in broadcasting history.
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