

THE RADIO WAVE  
"Keeping Radio People in Touch"

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Issue #18

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THE RADIO WAVE  
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is a far reaching e-book for radio beginners or people who want to make radio their career. All the information you'll discover here is "the basics" of radio. Stuff that applies anywhere in the world where professional commercial radio is established.

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G'DAY.

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Welcome to issue 18 of the Radio Wave newsletter. the newsletter aimed at people who'd like to be in radio, newbies who've just started and full-time professionals.

The issue of networking comes up again this month and with good reason. It's now being covered more and more by the mainstream press. Which means not just industry people are

concerned but now the listeners are asking questions too.

You can reach me at [ian@allaboutradio.net](mailto:ian@allaboutradio.net)

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COME AGAIN?  
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How would your listeners react if you had a promo running on air that referred to your competitors as "shit" and suggests that they "take a hammer and shove it up their arse"?

Is it possible they might say that, while they found the spot in bad taste, it was really not unduly coarse or offensive.

Well that's what the Canadian Broadcast Standards Commission ruled adding that it was not a breach of the CAB Code of Ethics referring to a complaint by a listener to CISS (KISS 92.5 Toronto).

Another interesting decision by the CBSC was that CHNL-A (Radio NL-Kamloops, BC) sports commentator Neil MacRae (no relation...I think) saying that the Philadelphia Flyers GM Bobby Clarke was a "freaked out paranoid schizophrenic" was not "abusively or unduly discriminatory toward individuals with the disease."

In reference to complaints about CFRQ (Q104) Halifax's Fake Orgasm contest the decision was that the bit was not sexually explicit and therefore did not breach any code.

Seems the contest was run in conjunction(!) with the second National Orgasm Day and had callers faking orgasms on the air.

All great moments in radio history.

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LISTENERS ARE HAPPY WITH NETWORKING (?)  
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In previous newsletters I've touched on the proliferation of networking and the downside of it. Things like loss of jobs and loss of local and emergency news coverage.

Here's an interesting story sent by Bob Price who says:

Following your story on local radio, and I agree with you .. can you believe the following taken from Ham Radio News in the USA? (I note the "happy with" which I reckon is a very narrow survey question.)

Bob Price  
[bob@box701.com](mailto:bob@box701.com)

## BROADCAST RADIO: INDUSTRY SURVEY SAYS LISTENERS ARE HAPPY WITH CONSOLIDATION

A recent listener survey has given credence to a claim by major radio chains that industry consolidation has provided more local flavor and diversity in programming.

The report by Arbitron Inc. found that most listeners were very pleased with the programming choices available to them. In fact, about 79 percent said they get more or the same amount of programming choices from consolidated radio than they did five years ago.

Skeptics say the report is biased as it comes from a company whose business is perpetuated by the growth of big radio company profits.

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I thought it would be interesting to get Arbitron's take on this and invited David Rogerson, Arbitron representative in this part of the world, to tell us about the study. And here's David's reply.

Ian:

The study, which focuses on America's media exposure, perceptions of media content and other topics, was based on telephone interviews with 2005 people, aged 12+, who were chosen at random from Arbitron's Fall 2002 Survey diary keepers.

The research was conducted independently by Edison Media Research and is in line with Arbitron's outstanding reputation for quality research and objectivity.

The section on radio listeners reporting high satisfaction with their radio programming choices was one of many useful pieces of information that came out of the "Internet and Multimedia 10: The Emerging Digital Consumer" study.

Arbitron has undertaken 10 of these studies in recent times,

with the majority involving Edison Media Research.

Complete details on the entire report including the programming satisfaction responses, can be found at the following link:

[http://www.arbitron.com/newsroom/archive/02\\_18\\_03.htm](http://www.arbitron.com/newsroom/archive/02_18_03.htm)

Thanks for the opportunity to respond.

Regards

David Rogerson  
Managing Director  
Strategic Media Solutions

e: [smspacific@aol.com](mailto:smspacific@aol.com)

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Well that's got me scratching my head let me tell you.  
Any response I've ever got from both listeners and on-air  
people is that everyone hates all the networking  
and would like to hear a return to more local programming.

While I absolutely accept that Arbitron has an outstanding  
reputation for quality research and objectivity it would  
seem that they talked to different types of people than the  
readers of this e-letter and myself have.

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MORE MAIL ON NETWORKING  
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Hi Ian

This was forwarded to me by a mate in Seattle. You may have  
seen this, part of it relates to the derailment in North  
Dakota which was mentioned in your latest newsletter.

Keep up the good work, I enjoy receiving the newsletters.

regards

Graeme Lemin  
98.9 North West FM  
Melbourne

Thanks Graeme. Here is that article. I've edited out bits  
that are no longer current. It's written by Marc Fisher of  
The Washington Post

Technology begets wonders, such as radio talk-show host Brian Wilson, who, thanks to satellites and the Internet, sits on his farm north of Baltimore and talks California politics with listeners on San Francisco's KSFO.

Wilson wakes each day, fires up his Web browser and reads the morning San Francisco Chronicle online for the latest news from clear across the country.

He's so good that his listeners could be forgiven for thinking that he's in the City by the Bay rather than in a bedroom in Maryland. This is what passes for local radio these days.

Satellites and digital recording also make it possible for oldies deejay Tom Kelly to finish up his afternoon air shift on WBIG in Rockville, Md., then sit down in front of a microphone and record his next job, as JJ Jackson, the overnight oldies jock on KQQL in Minneapolis.

Deregulation in the media industries begets wonders, too, producing not only deejays with multiple personalities, but multiple stations with single corporate identities.

Ever since Congress eased limits on media ownership in 1996, companies such as Clear Channel and Viacom, Inc., have gobbled up hundreds of radio stations, threatening diversity. In many cities, a single company controls a majority of radio advertising revenue and makes most of the programming decisions.

Since 1996, Clear Channel alone went from 40 stations to more than 1,200; add the company's prominence in the concert-promotion and outdoor-advertising businesses and you have unprecedented influence on the nation's popular music.

The combination of technological change and freedom from government regulation has not liberated owners to do more with less; rather, companies have lunged at the chance to do far less and rake in much more.

Despite the infinite promise of the Internet, cable TV, digital and satellite radio and whatever other marvels may lie ahead, the reality of corporate consolidation has been a serious diminution in the variety of opinions, news reports, musical choices and cultural offerings in both the commercial and public media.

The test case for consolidation has been radio. Ever since the

1996 easing of restrictions on ownership, big media companies have faced off against musicians, activists and some of the few remaining mom-and-pop station owners.

The media companies say the airwaves offer a more bountiful selection of artistic riches than ever before and that they have brought big-city talent to backwater communities, replacing farm reports, swap shops and amateurish deejays.

But listeners hear the nation's broadcasters pressing the culture to its lowest common denominator in a cynical money grab. Rush Limbaugh, Howard Stern and Tom Joyner are piped into your hometown by satellite.

In city after city, Clear Channel points to formats it has added : hip-hop here, alternative rock there. But critics contend that even when the big companies add program formats, the music they play is the same old stuff.

A study by the Future of Music Coalition, a Washington-based artists group, found that different formats feature almost identical playlists, sharing as much as 76 percent of the songs they play.

More important, the radio chain saddled with \$8 billion in debt from its '90s acquisition spree has cut costs and increased ad rates to squeeze operating profits from its stations.

The chain has replaced local deejays and news announcers with jocks who sit in Phoenix or Denver and record shows for stations thousands of miles away, tossing in a few local references for verisimilitude ("Hey, tough day on I-10! How about those Bucs!").

News operations have been eliminated or outsourced. And programming that once mirrored local standards now takes on the coarseness of New York and Los Angeles, where stunningly vulgar sex talk wins big ratings.

If deregulation was supposed to let a thousand flowers bloom, most of the garden appears to be in Clear Channel's yard. The company is regularly accused of limiting playlists, favoring artists who tour through the company's concert wing. (Clear Channel denies any connection between its concert operations and airplay.)

But so what? How many listeners know or care that their favorite pop or rap station is owned by a huge Texas conglomerate? So what if the deejay is talking about Richmond, Va., but sitting in Arizona?

"The fact is we're now a healthier industry and you have more choices," says Alfred Liggins III, chief executive of Radio One, the Lanham, Md.-based company that started with Washington's black talk station, WOL, and grew into the nation's largest minority-owned radio company.

"Is it tougher for the little guy, the mom and pop owner? Yeah. But that little guy could not provide the same level of talent and service. There aren't 10 Jay Lenos. Why wouldn't you leverage such a talent? Technology allows you to do it, so why wouldn't you?"

But there is a downside to diluting the localism that has given radio its distinctive edge since the dawn of the Top 40 era in the 1950s.

Radio for decades played a crucial role in building community ; from deejays visiting high schools to run record hops to news departments that provided essential coverage of storms, riots, elections and scholastic sports.

Consolidation and cutbacks in local staffing have eliminated many of those functions. The prime example wielded against the industry stems from an accident last year in Minot, N.D., where Clear Channel owns all six commercial stations.

When a train derailment in the middle of the night released a frightening cloud of anhydrous ammonia, Minot police sought to notify the citizenry of the crisis.

They called KCJB, the station designated as the local emergency broadcaster, but no one was home; the station was being run by computer, automatically passing along Clear Channel programming from another city.

Clear Channel argues that only a technical glitch prevented word from getting through. But glitches aside, the six stations now have only one news employee among them.

Radio executives know that listeners don't pay close attention to the source of what they hear, and that has freed the industry to economize on virtually every detail of programming.

Traffic announcers on most big-city stations can often be heard on several stations in the same city, using different names or tones of voice to keep listeners from noticing.

That showbiz stunt is one thing for traffic reports, but it raises tougher questions when it comes to news coverage. Yet

the nation's largest traffic reporting company, Metro Networks (owned by a division of Viacom), is trying to win the job of handling news coverage for hundreds of music stations.

With rare exceptions such as all-news stations in big cities, radio news has been entirely outsourced, and largely to one company.

In his recent song "The Last DJ," Tom Petty sings, "... there goes your freedom of choice/There goes the last human voice/ There goes the last DJ."

But the arguments against further consolidating ownership of the media are not simply nostalgia for a time when deejays served as guides to cultural shifts.

There is also a powerful rational objection to a new wave of consolidation, one that fits the FCC's penchant for justifying policy decisions with economic and legal argument: The enormous debt and cost-cutting that follow corporate consolidation has produced a need for safe, bland and cheap programming and declining consumer interest.

Chain ownership has diminished both the diversity and vibrancy of discussion and debate and that is what the FCC is charged to protect on the public's airwaves. As Justice Louis Brandeis once said, "We can have a democratic society or we can have the concentration of great wealth in the hands of the few. We cannot have both."

#### COMMENT:

The paragraph that says: "The media companies say the airwaves offer a more bountiful selection of artistic riches than ever before and that they have brought big-city talent to backwater communities, replacing farm reports, swap shops and amateurish deejays." absolutely sums up the situation.

The networkers are trying to put on a positive spin by pointing out that smaller communities are getting big city talent. But... is that what those communities want???

Like many radio people I began my career learning my way at a small country broadcaster. I believe nothing has changed from that time.

The point is...the locals WANTED farm reports and swap shops. And they were comfortable with their own local personalities who were part of their local community and reflected that on the air.

I'd appreciate your thoughts on this. Doesn't matter what country you're in or whether you agree with me or not.

[ian@allaboutradio.net](mailto:ian@allaboutradio.net)

Then...hot on the heels of the above story The Hollywood reporter ran an article saying that radio is suffering and the Internet and other media are taking over as music carriers.

SOUND IDEAS publisher STEVE WONSIEWICZ is quoted as saying that, "music stations sound prepackaged and aren't giving any incentive to stick around," adding that kids today, "gravitate to what's new, exciting and edgy; radio just isn't it these days."

Here is that story... by Paula Parisi

Music radio, once a radical force in shaping popular culture, has become all but irrelevant -- or hadn't you noticed?

The medium that brought us bell-bottoms, Jimi Hendrix and closer to each other through the acquaintance of mutual friends (DJs) has been turned into computerized wallpaper, a programmable backdrop whose cards are punched by format consultants.

Is it any wonder that the record industry is on life support, its pulsing blood flow reduced to an icy drizzle?

Other media have stepped in to replace music radio as purveyor of tunes to the masses: music videos; the opportunity to break acts through television or movies, of which labels increasingly have availed themselves (cool, but lacking radio's ubiquity); and Internet streaming and satellite radio, which ultimately could save the music business but remain in their infancy on an adaptive scale.

But listeners also have become disenchanted with music radio itself, according to one of the industry's most-respected consultants.

"We all think that by doing research, we're delivering what listeners want, but in an effort to reach consensus with a large group of people, we cease pleasing passionate people and stop delivering enough variety for their tastes," says Guy Zapoleon, a consultant and former program director at Nationwide Communication Group.

"Add to that the disappearance of the 'personality' and

green personalities (who) haven't been coached, and we have some serious issues in radio."

Focus-group studies reveal listener discontent in several critical areas, including complaints about a lack of musical variety, too many commercials and meaningless on-air chatter."

"Unless radio addresses those and other audience concerns, Zapoleon warns, the medium "will continue to lose listeners and be primarily (for those age 30 and older) in a few years."

Those listeners, most of whom are old enough to be comfortable with purchasing music at retail, are indicating that they want more, better and more intelligently presented music -- which they are not receiving from mainstream radio.

"Music stations sound prepackaged and aren't giving any incentive to stick around," says Steve Wonsiewicz, who publishes the music industry-centered financial newsletter Sound Values and adds that listeners might stick around for a bad sports or news radio segment, "but won't (do the same) for a bad music segment."

In particular, children -- once considered the pillar of the commercial music business -- have fled radio for greener pastures.

"(Radio is) much more predictable, and kids have picked up on that," Wonsiewicz says. "They gravitate to what's new, exciting and edgy; radio just isn't it these days."

Instead of buying music for his two preteen sons, Wonsiewicz opts for video games.

"That's what they want," he says. "(But) a 44-year-old father 20 years ago would be buying singles for his kids."

Of course, children and other radio listeners have migrated in large numbers to the Internet during recent years. Ironically, though, the medium that has done the most to hurt the music industry also offers its greatest hope.

"(America Online) is doing a great job of exposing new music," says Zapoleon, who believes that while radio still possesses tremendous potential, "the Internet (may) become the primary way to break music in a few years."

Internet music piracy is the primary culprit in the recent downfall of the record business -- but it is a problem that the labels saw coming.

"We talked about downloading in the mid-1990s," former Columbia Records and Capitol Records executive Burt Baumgartner says.

"Egos were involved, and record companies couldn't agree on a unanimous downloading decision, (so they chose) to move like turtles on it. Times were great, money was flowing and we were selling CDs - they didn't pay attention to (downloading) and just let it go."

Baumgartner believes that the record industry can rebound if it devises a consensus encoding system and stops worrying about its catalog material. "It's over; it's done: Catalog brought in a lot of money, but it's in the system, and companies won't be able to protect their old records," he says.

But Jeff Smulyan -- president and CEO of Emmis Communications, the nation's seventh-largest radio station owner -- does not believe that the Internet will salvage the record business.

"It will be impossible to aggregate enough listeners or viewers to make (the Internet) salable to advertisers, especially in concentrated areas," he says. "Therefore, it will never reach the aggregate masses necessary to sustain it as a commercial vehicle."

In addition, Smulyan notes, "everyone who uses the Internet believes they shouldn't pay for it -- that's certainly a challenging business model."

Meanwhile, radio remains a solid business, if not one that can boast of spectacular growth. Last year saw a 6% increase on 2001 figures -- with revenue estimated at \$19 billion by analysts Miller, Kaplan, Arase & Co. -- and first-quarter 2003 billings reflected a 2% improvement on the comparable 2002 period.

"There's a certain resilience out there among the advertising community, particularly the local ad community," Radio Advertising Bureau president and CEO Gary Fries says.

Theoretically, radio's advertising-on-the-cheap business model is viable, even during these financially challenged times.

"Tough times breed upticks in advertising," Fries says. "Radio would be in the most trouble when stores have all the business they need and products are moving off the shelves."

Fries also believes that station-ownership consolidation has benefited the radio market.

"It's made a dramatic improvement in the overall product," he says. "The top three stations in a market might not be any better than they were before, but the 10th, 11th and 12th stations are contenders. The bottom 25% of stations has noticeably improved, which has actually given listeners more choices."

Why, then, does it not sound that way? Why has music radio devolved into what often seems like mind-numbing sameness, whether it be rock songs, pop tunes or the sophomoric banter of hosts?

Most industry figures interviewed for this report deny the existence of ironclad playlists that push corporate agendas by requiring stations to play only certain songs.

Zapoleon, whose Houston-based Zapoleon Media Strategies consults about 30 stations in six radio formats, claims that neither consultants nor station-group owners operate with standard playlists.

His company's "suggested rotation list," Zapoleon says, is based "strictly on (Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems airplay) numbers, callout (research) and upward-moving songs in the top 100."

He notes, though, that "lists can become tighter, depending on the group (program director's) power base."

There is no question that the corporatization of radio has had a chilling effect on its imagination and creativity - and therefore on its "fun quotient" and selling power.

But despite all of the knocks, Wonsiewicz says, record labels believe that radio remains the place to break music. "They need a full-frontal assault, and that's what radio gives them," he says.

Mike Kinosian contributed to this report.

Not long ago, FM program directors fought tooth and nail with station general managers to adhere strictly to a maximum of eight commercial minutes an hour.

But the likelihood these days of locating stations with such "format clocks" and ambitious philosophies is similar to that of finding teenagers who prefer pay phones to cellular.

But for demanding listeners who feel alienated from commercial radio and can afford it, satellite radio is picking up the slack.

For a monthly fee, satellite consumers can listen to a virtual smorgasbord of formats -- from pop to hip-hop to classical -- with little or no commercial interruption.

Sirius Satellite Radio and XM Satellite Radio are the main players in this space. The former celebrates its first birthday next month with 100,000 subscribers, a number the company hopes to grow to 300,000 by year's end.

Subscriptions cost \$12.95 a month from Sirius, which offers 60 commercial-free music channels and a library of more than 500,000 songs, and \$9.99 a month from XM, which boasts about 500,000 subscribers.

"We (hope to be) right around 1 million subscribers -- or 3 million listeners -- at the end of the year," XM chief programming officer Lee Abrams says.

Both companies have inked deals with car companies that load their subscription services into new models: Sirius has pacts with DaimlerChrysler, Ford, BMW and their associated brands; and XM has an exclusive deal with General Motors and has been working with Honda.

But XM takes an on-air approach slightly different from that of Sirius, accepting advertising and playing within a more conventional format realm -- including some DJs that can be characterized as aggressive.

Sirius vp programming and market development Larry Rebich says satellite and terrestrial radio cannot really be compared because "they're two different animals. Sirius would compare to radio in the same way that HBO or Showtime would compare to broadcast television. Our business model makes it possible for our programming to be different."

Rebich and Abrams believe that the approach now taken by commercial radio broadcasters leaves ample room for opportunity for their firms.

Abrams characterizes as "absurd" the fact that enormous amounts of music and countless artists receive no commercial airplay.

"BB King closes down the (1996 Atlanta) Olympics in front of a billion people on television; Wendy's and Northwest Airlines use him on commercials," he says. "He's an icon who can't get arrested on (commercial) radio."

COMMENT: Of course the Sirius and XM Satellite networks only

cover the U.S. But I believe that commercial terrestrial radio will soon head into stormy waters in any country where networking goes on in a big way.

Your comments are welcome.

[ian@allaboutradio.net](mailto:ian@allaboutradio.net)

\*-----HOT TIP-----\*

When you're doing public service announcements, rather than just reading them, put a personal spin on them. e.g. A plug for the Red Cross Blood Bank: "I gave blood for the first time last week. I was kinda nervous but it was easy. Didn't hurt or anything and I still feel righteous about doing a good deed"

\*-----HOT TIP-----\*

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#### TOP RADIO PREP SITES

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<http://www.imdb.com> # This is the Internet Movie Data Base where you'll find a daily update on movies in production or you can search their database of over 140,000 movies. You'll find everything you need for movie trivia and even "The Kevin Bacon Game."

Anybody else found a good radioprep site?  
Tell us all [ian@allaboutradio.net](mailto:ian@allaboutradio.net)

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#### JIM WANTS A JOB

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"Wanting to Work For You!"

I want to be the APD at your station!

I have worked in and around radio for more than ten (10) years, am hard working, serious (when need be) well mannered and attentive. All the attributes of a wonderful pet dog, except

better. :-).

My working knowledge of RCS Selector, Powergold, Music Master programming systems, ability to translate, ratings and media research, along stints on air, reporting, promotions, marketing, sales (none media) and Business Operations, would make be the PERFECT! addition to your team.

Working for YOU would give me the "in the trenches" experience to become a Programmer in my own right.

\*\*\*THE WORLD IS AN OYSTER, LET ME HELP YOU MAKE A PEARL!\*\*\*

Jim McVay

Please email: [media\\_prince@hotmail.com](mailto:media_prince@hotmail.com) for further information.

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A FINAL NOTE FROM THE EDITOR.

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