

No Requests, Please

Album sales, not government or DJs, responsible for broadcasts



(Left) Darren Taylor performs the Afternoon Stretch for Mix 104.7; (top right) Rhino broadcasts live from GTE for Mix 104.7

JASON BENNYHOFF
The Battalion

Deciding what is played on the radio is a lot like voting, but in this race, votes cost money.

While radio station playlists may seem to be decided by advertising executives looking to make money, corrupt DJs or the Federal Communications Commission, there is a system that gives radio programmers the outline for their daily playlist.

Terry Hunt, program director for Aggie 96, said most radio stations use a system called Soundscan to help them decide what songs to play.

"Soundscan is a system that keeps track of what albums are selling in stores," Hunt said. "The service is provided to radio stations by record companies, and you can find out what is selling nationwide or in your local area. This helps when picking out songs to play."

While Soundscan is a national service, Hunt said, stations can do localized research to find out more about their listeners' tastes.

Hunt said the local research that goes into deciding which songs will get air time depends on the radio station's format.

"Most stations have a heavy, medium and light format," Hunt said. "Songs are played in an order by how hard or soft they are on the listener. When we get our songs into a regular rotation, we can do some research to see how they are doing."

"There are two kinds of local market testing we can do," Hunt said. "The first is auditorium testing. In this, we call about 500 people and probably come up with about 150 who fit the target audience. Then we have them come to an auditorium where they listen to song clips and tell us what they think of them."

Hunt said auditorium testing is much slower and more expensive than its high-tech alternative.

"The better way to test is online," Hunt said. "You just ask people to go to the station's Website, say, between Tuesday and Thursday, and have them listen to clips and rate them online. This is a lot more cost effective because we do not have to take people out to do interviews. It is also a lot less painful because we might have up to 500 clips to listen to,

and, online, the people do not have to do them all at once."

However, these market testing methods are not for every radio station. Mario Juan, an employee of KBMA radio, said his station relies on more intuitive methods to pick its tunes.

"A lot of (music selection) is based on our gut," Juan said. "We listen to the new records that come in and try to pick the next big one."

Juan said, despite the instinctive nature of his station's music choices, he also uses industry publications to select popular tunes.

"Music industry sources play a big part in our music selection," Juan said. "We particularly use trade magazines to see what is new and climbing the charts."

Despite a radio station's need to attract a large audience in order to gain advertising revenue, Hunt said, advertising does not play a large part in the selection of music.

"Our target audience at Aggie 96 is women between the ages of 25 and 54," Hunt said. "So our advertising caters to them. However, radio stations pick their format and then the advertising follows. Advertisers pick stations that will appeal to their targets; for example, you will not find ads for Clearasil on a station that plays (classical) music for older people."

Despite complaints that the Federal Communications Commission interferes in radio business, Michael Wagner, a supervisory attorney for the FCC, said his organization does not have any impact on what radio stations play.

"We just license radio stations," Wagner said. "Our job is to allocate bandwidth for radio stations and resolve complaints that stations' signals are interfering with each other. That is as far as our influence on radio goes."



PATRIC SCHNEIDER/THE BATTALION

Wagner said the Arbitron Corporation is responsible for rating radio stations' programs. Curious listeners can check the Arbitron Website at www.arbitron.com for ratings information on their local station.

It seems listeners will have to stick to complaining about popular music in general rather than government conspiracies or DJ payoffs if they are unhappy about their local radio programming.

Aniston, Pitt exchange vows Saturday

MALIBU, Calif. (AP) — After months of rumors, Brad Pitt, 36, and Jennifer Aniston, 31, were married Saturday at a ceremony on an ocean bluff.

About 200 guests attended the lavish sunset ceremony at an estate owned by television executive Marcy Carsey.

Guests seen going into the Malibu estate included actress Cameron Diaz and Aniston's "Friends" co-stars, including Matthew Perry.

Aniston wore a floor-length white satin silk gown designed by Lawrence Steele, according to a press statement. Her ivory-colored, suede high-heel sandals were designed by shoemaker Manolo Blahnik for Steele. The bridesmaids wore pale green silk chiffon slip dresses with pale taffeta mules.

Pitt wore a black tuxedo designed by Hedi Slimane. His attendants wore black tuxedos designed by

Prada. Helicopters buzzed overhead for days before the event as a large white tent mushroomed at the location to ensure privacy.

The event cost \$1 million, according to widespread media reports, including \$100,000 for security, \$75,000 for flowers and \$20,000 for fireworks. A publicist did not immediately confirm those reports.

Entertainment reporters and paparazzi who had been staking out the site for days were kept away by security.

Part of Pacific Coast Highway was shut down to accommodate the guests and workers.

Rumors the couple were engaged and planning a wedding have been swirling in Hollywood for months. Though the couple had never confirmed their engagement, their publicist on Thursday confirmed

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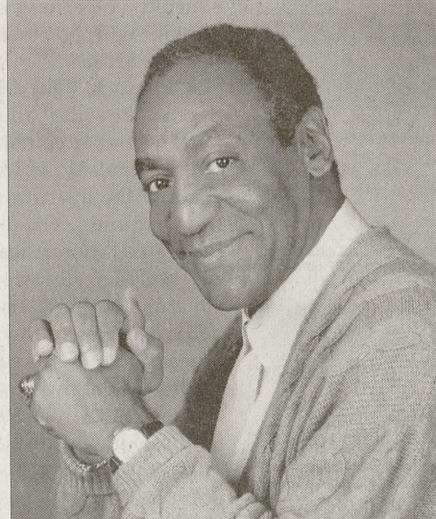
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