



## The Most Exciting Radio Today



# Hz S G d

“Fighting to stay free”

#166...August 2012

### And now, ladies and gentlemen...

...I believe that there is still excitement on the radio – on anything that can be called radio today – although it may not be in the places or formats we might expect.

Those of us raised on top 40 probably felt it was very exciting, while our parents were more likely to call it annoying. Both adjectives are, I bet, still in play when it comes to most of the radio platforms listed below. While I understand that the term “excitement” is subjective, I’m hoping others hear what I hear. Where is there the most passion, the most creativity, the greatest feeling that if you switch stations, you’ll miss something?

I admit, much of what’s listed isn’t really of interest to me as a listener, but I feel I’ve got to give credit where due. If excitement helps keep radio vibrant and, well, healthy, it’s these formats that are doing it.

**1. TALK.** I dislike what most talk radio has become, but it’s hard to argue with its success, based squarely on the excitement of the subject matter and the unusual nature of its hosts. Talk has become what top 40 used to be: the place where personalities are larger than life. Plus, it changes every day: all it takes is one news story to switch the focus. Once upon a time it was about the new Beatles record; now it’s about what Rush or Sean said.

**2. URBAN.** Perhaps the last place left where DJs are allowed to get truly excited about music. Where else can you talk inside a record and listeners don’t complain? Even though Hip-Hop’s appeal has been waning of late, it remains as strong as country is among its fans (and if only their radio was as exciting). Urban DJs seem unafraid to speak out, often getting closer to talk than any other music format. That may mean that DJs and performers are lightning rods for controversy, but is that not excitement?

**3. TOP 40.** No, it’s not what it was, but there are times, such as at night, when there are flashes of brilliance. The night jock can still dictate tastes and sound like he – or, more often lately, she – rules the world. Top 40 loses points when it comes to breaking new songs because there are so

many other places listeners are discovering them first now, and because the format's even tighter and more slow-moving than it was in any earlier era. The mission statement today is closer than ever to 'play the hits and only the hits.' Another reason the excitement factor's lower: the commercials don't sound like hits anymore. That was a big deal.

**4. SPORTS.** Blame it on Penn State. I was going to rank it #5, but that's what made it go up. Guys obsessed with scores, team dynamics and who's-gonna-win were forced to step up, take a stand and talk about a serious issue. Even without Penn State, the format spits, sweats and almost swears, just like the fans. Although there are times when nothing's going on and hosts are trying to fill each hour with the same stories, often a good host can rise above this and still get callers going.

**5. CLASSIC HITS.** If only because this is where jocks still get to be jocks. You can hit a post and talk to the audience without resorting to liner cards every time. Jingles and pace still matter too. What doesn't matter as much, of course, is the music, which has been reduced to super-tested 70s and 80s. Not every station is a CBS-FM that spikes with a possible out-of-format surprise each hour, but we'll take excitement where we can get it.

**6. LOCAL.** This is not an attempt to pat myself on the back. But the idea that I as well as others can color outside the lines on local radio does, I believe, up the excitement factor. While years ago local radio was regarded as less professional and mostly a training ground for younger announcers, now it's one of the last places you can be creative as long as you keep your eye on the ball, that ball being the community served.

**7. TRIPLE-A.** Where "AOR" sometimes really does mean "all over the road." Went from being an album rock old folks' home – by that I mean with current music accessible to adults wanting more than just classic rock – to an alternative-based springboard for several top 40 hits this year. Bigger surprise factor, and higher intelligent/informed-DJ factor, than just about any commercial music format.

**8. NEWS.** This should be the most exciting format of all, since it really is new all the time. Maybe it's #8 because there are so many other places to get news now. The addition of splashes of contemporary music to intro or back up stories has helped de-stodgify the format, but only a little. In this so-far-slow news year, news radio has mostly been dull (but then, I sure hope it stays that way).

**9. COUNTRY.** I hate to say it, but it's been awhile since the radio was more exciting than the fans. Hit song development has been slow as molasses; isn't a hit supposed to just jump out at you? Personalities may be the one potentially exciting thing left about country radio.

**10. INTERNET RADIO.** It's not really a format, but there may well come a day when this will be #1, should the "wild west" strategy continue. So far the excitement has been more focused on music you won't hear anywhere else anymore vs. personality, and an online jukebox will only take you so far. It's also been exciting the way early broadcast and early cable TV were: when the occasional live program breaks through, it's better than anything on terrestrial.

As always, pains, feel free to tell me what I've left out or where I've gone wrong.

## **And the hits...**

**THE PIG TALE, PART 2** A couple of *Hzs* back, I mentioned that *Hz So Good* "Jock 100"-voted #83 (#129, December 2008), "Big Jay" Sorensen, not only jocks on at the legendary CBS-FM, but also still asks those killer multi-part Record Pig trivia questions. If you didn't get to win a shirt during the WNBC "Time Machine" era, your chance comes again every Wednesday at noon at [www.BigJaySorensen.com](http://www.BigJaySorensen.com). So mark it on your phone and take a shot. Lots of other cool stuff at that site too.

## **ELSEWHERE ON THE DIAL...AND BEYOND** Yes, the closing plugs.

\* "The CHRONICLER" in Thursday's *Billboard Top 40 Update* (subscribe free at <http://www.billboard.biz/newsletters>)

\* "The Rest Of The Week With Rich Appel" Saturdays 6am-1pm ET, Sundays 10am-3pm ET (listen at <http://wrnradio.com/streaming/>, sample at <http://wrnradio.com/2012/03/watch-rich-appels-video-aircheck-video/>). Also on afternoons 3-7pm ET Thursday August 9<sup>th</sup>, Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> and the week of the 20<sup>th</sup>. And the "Top 100 1-Hit Wonders" Labor Day weekend Saturday and Sunday.

\* The page at WOR radio (<http://wor710.com/pages/13810913.php?contentType=33&contentId=135319&stationId=753&isPreview=1&noCache=1>)

\* Follow me at <http://twitter.com/#!/@Restoftheweek>

\* Friend me on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/richappel7>).

Thanks as always for the looks and listens.

click.