

I.R.S. #8: LET THE FILING BEGIN!

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“Fighting to Stay Free”

#190...February 2015

...toys with the notion that

ARCHIVES R”US



And now, ladies and gentlemen...

...30 years ago, commercial radio was still happy to play the role of music historian, but not for much longer. Deregulation greased the path to greater success through research, ratings and advertiser demands. Playlists got shorter, “oldies” were shelved and you know the rest of that story.

Truth be told, even before everything that led to radio’s current state of affairs, programmers were sloppy when it came to oldies, airing versions of songs which didn’t match the original hits. Let’s forget for a moment that most listeners don’t notice and couldn’t care less: playing the original Cadence 45 of the Everly Brothers’ “Bye Bye Love” as opposed to their re-recorded version for Warner Bros. should boost a music station’s credibility.

Not until FM oldies’ rise in the 1970s did it become clear how much of pop music’s history wasn’t carefully archived. An astounding proportion of those stations’ playlists were made up of incorrect versions, probably because those stations’ owners weren’t in the business when those songs were hits, or were but programming other formats. Not to mention the hundreds of 1955-1967 hits on indie labels that went out of business and never reissued those original versions, and the majors that re-released collections without regard for the original single takes. In some cases, those single version masters were probably destroyed or not preserved.

Luckily, there were enough savvy folks in the radio and record business

who understood the importance of getting it right, that many of those correct original 45 versions re-emerged during the digital music era, whether on commercial CDs or issued privately to stations. But this only goes so far, when there isn't one place or expert to tell most programmers which version of a song is correct and which isn't. And it only goes so far when most PDs feel any re-mastered version is more pleasing to a listener's ear than an original mix without a sonic updating.

Far as I can tell, here's where we are now. With the exception of those commercial stations which still refer to themselves as "oldies" and cover the full history of rock 'n roll in doing so, the baton has been passed to satellite and Internet-based radio when it comes to doing right by the hits of the past. And if you're thinking the hits of the 70s and 80s - the current focus of "classic hits" formats - are exempt from all this, you'd be wrong: here the issue isn't so much re-recorded or remixed versions but lost single and/or radio promo edits. Playing the album version is fine, but it doesn't reflect what most of us heard on top 40 during those years.



We've got a thing...but is it the right thing?

In a perfect world - the one I imagined existed when I started listening to radio as just a kid - there exists a "master library" of every original hit recording ever, both physically and digitally, for any station's use if the price is right. It's a musical equivalent of a lending library, if the books weren't free. As many of us are already aware, such a library exists in the basement of chart reference author Joel Whitburn, only he's not servicing radio with any of that material.

So, what about the "master music libraries" most consumers today are aware of - in iTunes, Spotify, even YouTube, where quite often you can watch an original 45 spin while hearing the song the way it was and ought to be? For the first two, where labels hold sway, there's no guarantee you'll locate an original, or at least something that sounds like the original. For YouTube, there's a great likelihood you'll stumble upon a lot of radio versions, but the audio is too crude for most professionals.

Which means, when it comes to oldies radio stations, services or programs today – and I consider myself part of that group – Archives R Us. The experts are us, too. Plus, just try to get a consensus on what a song’s “correct” version is. There’s mono vs. stereo, real vs. fake stereo, proper vs. improper mix, commercial single vs. radio promo, to consider. “Homemade” edits by radio stations during the 60s, 70s and 80s also need to be taken into account. There’s shortened fades, elongated fades, and in a few cases, more than one original single version. If you own 45s from 1970-71 and have two copies of Gene Chandler’s “Groovy Situation” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROyUcDehJNw> or Donny Osmond’s “Sweet and Innocent” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYzkoH8VfUw>, each with a different take (the lesser-played one of each linked to here), you know what I’m talking about.

For the program I host, I’ve tried to be extremely careful about airing the original radio single edits (along with, not for nothing, original commercials from the era), but that’s not easy to do when limited to a panel of experts who happen to be friends, other radio hosts and/or those whose steel-trap memories I respect as much as my own. If not for such an ad-hoc network, I’m convinced we wouldn’t hear pop music history preserved anywhere on radio. The sad part is, there is still no place on any audio-driven media where keeping and making available all of that history comes first.

I’M I.R.S. THE 8TH, I AM: To file your 2015 I.R.S. “1040 E-Z” form – the only one that matters – go directly to <http://www.musicradio77.com/IRS.html> from now until April 1. As always, we’ll slice off the Top 104 from the 1040 and count it down over tax deadline weekend on Rewound Radio.com. And you just might hear some of that countdown a few other places around the dial after that.

FURTHER PLUG-OLA: If you haven't checked out *That Thing with Rich Appel* on the aforementioned RewoundRadio.com, whaddaya waiting for? Join me Sundays at 6pm Eastern for 3 hours of radio as it once was...and never was. If you're on Facebook, we're at <https://www.facebook.com/ThatThingRichAppel>.



Catch up with my *Billboard* "RevisionistHistory" series (also a part of *That Thing...*) along with the first of "Hot 100's Hottest Weeks" at <http://www.billboard.com/author/rich-appel-4314453>.

HZ So Good online (current issue, and archive back to 2010) at <http://www.60s70s.org/HZSoGood/>.

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Rich Appel is a talented and experienced writer about the radio and music industries. He's written HZ So Good since 1996, and written for Billboard since 2011.

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