

# RADIO, 1915-2015



HzS  G   d

“Fighting to Stay Free”

#199...January 2016

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

...did you ever wonder how much has changed – or not – from when radio began, to now?

### ORIGIN OF PROGRAMMING

1915: All from station studios or broadcaster's homes

1935: Most from national network studios

1965: Most from station studios

2015: Still mostly from station studios, but moving back toward national

### HOSTS

1915: Not necessary, as most early stations in test mode

1935: Not as necessary, except for network announcers and local pickup time

1965: A must for all stations all day, except for some automated FM

2015: Necessary in drive times, arguably expendable elsewhere

#### LIVE PROGRAMMING:

1915: All live

1935: Most live, some network programs recorded for broadcast

1965: Most live and locally originated, few recorded or live network programs.

2015: Most live but not necessarily locally originated, many recorded short-form programs for weekdays and multiple-hour for weekends

#### USE OF MUSIC

1915: Almost entirely music content

1935: Part of network programming, as live performances vs. recorded, while recorded music fills non-network time or featured on non-network affiliate stations

1965: Almost entirely music content on AM and FM, with news and talk formats just beginning

2015: Mostly music on FM, while AM features non-music content such as talk/news/sports

#### USE OF LIVE MUSIC

1915: Rare except for solo performances

1935: Almost nightly on network radio programs

1965: Common on FM, initially for classical and folk genres, later for rock as progressive/free-form FMs (and syndicated live rock programs) flourish

2015: Rare except for solo performances

## CHIEF PURPOSE OF RECORDED MUSIC

1915: Filling time

1935: Filling time between network programming, or program content on smaller non-affiliated stations

1965: Reflecting - and creating - popularity

2015: Legitimizing popularity

## NEWS CONTENT

1915: None

1935: Daily reports/coverage but newspapers rule, which would change during World War II

1965: Hourly reports and immediacy rivaling newspapers and television

2015: Mostly on News-formatted and AM stations, rivaled by cable and Internet's anytime-availability

## TALK

1915: Well, there was talk-ing.

1935: Still not yet a 'conversation medium,' which would also change during World War II, primarily in overnights.

1965: Rise of the format with syndicated night hosts and local hosts in major markets, covering all topics

2015: Primarily politically-driven, but also lifestyle-driven on mostly FM morning programs

## SPORTS

1915: None

1935: Coverage of major events like World Series, heavyweight boxing and Kentucky Derby

1965: Full-season coverage of local teams

2015: See 1965, add sports talk and network coverage

## LOCAL CONTENT

1915: That's all there was, if any content at all

1935: Minimal to the point of eventual FCC regulations to expand on it

1965: Plenty, even down to the music, where regional hits happened, and FCC regulations spurred more by limiting FM simulcasting

2015: Not enough, with national news and music programming compromising localness

## SYNDICATED CONTENT

1915: None

1935: None, with network dominance

1965: Some talk shows, soon to be music with *American Top 40* in 1970

2015: Available in virtually all dayparts. Today's network radio.

## SERVING THE PUBLIC

1915: Even then, important

1935: Mandate of the then-new FCC, but not necessarily of network-affiliated stations

1965: Required of all stations, with even top 40 stopping for public service programs; NPR forms in 1970

2015: No longer required

## NECESSITY INDEX

1915: Not relevant

1935: Highest ever, especially during the Depression and being the only immediate audio medium

1965: Still high, positioned as car, bedroom and personal companion, and music source

2015: Perhaps lowest ever, with younger consumers not even owning a radio, preferring alternate music sources online

What does it all mean? I leave that to you.

### **Shameless plug section**

**N-N-N-N-Nineteen:** *that thing with Rich Appel*, which tries to bring back radio as it was (and never was) closest to the 1965 column above, is now heard every week on 19 stations in two continents. But all you have to know is, it's easy to listen to just about anytime every weekend. A when/where/how-to-listen guide, along with everything else you'd ever want to know - and some things you probably don't - is at <http://www.thatthingshow.com/>. If you're already tuned in, thanks for being an Applehead.

Click.

*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. His services are available for your publication or website. Contact Rich at [richappel1@optimum.net](mailto:richappel1@optimum.net).*