

The whisper numbers for New York

Who's ahead in the very unofficial New York PPMs for March?

Arbitron doesn't really want this stuff out, since the New York launch is on hold and Arbitron's not even into "pre-currency" numbers yet. But it's continued to circulate the very offline New York monthly results from the panel and I suspect that deep in their heart of hearts, they don't mind the publicity that folks like New York Daily News columnist David Hinckley give them. There are plenty of changes – like the debut of former "La Mega" morning star Luis Jimenez on rival "La Kalle" WCAA – that make some kind of numbers relevant. And who can resist peeking at them? Hinckley says "things are looking good for WCBS-FM, Z100, WKTU, WABC and [WABC] morning man Don Imus." The March PPM book also has "good news" for WPLJ, and for WOR in mornings (and this was before John Gambling's return). While "not so happy are [urban] WBLS and [La Mega] WSKQ." At the top of the total-week rankings are Z100 (WHTZ) and "Lite" WLTW. Talker WABC (which relishes this election year) ranks higher in PPM than in the diary, at #3 overall. All-news 1010 WINS is "a strong #1 in the morning." Arbitron will officially say it discourages such stories in the press. But if they help get buyers and agencies more comfortable with the People Meter – it won't protest too much.



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Rush's so-called driveby media wonder if "The Limbaugh Effect" is real.

The Washington Post questions whether Rush is truly affecting the outcome of state Democratic primaries, with his pitch to Republican listeners to cross over and vote for Hillary Clinton. Now the Wall Street Journal's "Numbers Guy" says "the poll numbers don't confirm the existence of this so-called Limbaugh Effect." Among his arguments – exit polls have a higher margin of error "because of how they select respondents." But I doubt this will discourage Limbaugh from taking as much credit as he possibly can, because this is marvelous publicity for his show, and proof to the fans of the enormous influence he claims. And as long as the Clinton-Obama tussle goes on, it's going to give Rush and other conservative talkers plenty to talk about. Isn't it ironic that they're the ones getting the radio-related headlines, and not the progressive talkshow hosts?

You see Randy Michaels' influence in what two Tribune papers are trying.

Or should I say "trying to pull", based on what the Southern California Broadcasters Association says in a second scathing letter to the Los Angeles Times. SCBA President Mary Beth Garber calls the recent house ad comparing the reach of the Times to 20 local radio stations "a blatant attempt to misinform" and she practically sneers at the statistics used by the marketing department. (It excludes some big stations like KRTH and all the Spanish stations, for instance.) She also can't believe the Times included three public radio stations "that can't even carry :60 commercials." Garber says "these unwarranted attacks on radio will not stop the continual decline of circulation for the Times" – and my hunch is that what's going on in Los Angeles and Tribune-owned Newsday on Long Island is that the executives are trying to take Randy Michaels' advice to heart. The "old" Tribune wouldn't have resorted to aggressive full-page anti-radio campaigns in a million years. (Or if they thought about it, they'd have had 57 very long meetings to analyze the possibilities.) Randy Michaels' looser style is starting to take in some corners of the Tribune empire – and they're just not used to it yet. But the new attitude is something that Michaels would applaud. By the way: was it Sam Zell's plan all along for Michaels to run the Tribune newspapers as well as the TV division and interactive? And they just held off making it official until the editors and publishers at the big papers got used to the new ownership?

Why aren't station offering prices dropping? Here's another theory.

Broker Mike Bergner says "There are properties out there that are worth much more to the people who currently own them, more than they would be to anybody else. That makes them, in a sense, unsaleable" in today's environment. And there's nothing wrong with that: some of the clusters that Clear Channel's pulled off the market are going to be worth more to it than to many potential buyers. And why shouldn't Clear Channel keep them, for now? They're producing cash flow, and until the right buyer with the right price comes along, San Antonio continues to benefit from owning them. Why are they worth more to CC than to others? For one thing, Clear Channel-owned stations enjoy corporate savings from deals with vendors – both in-house, like RCS, and outside, like Arbitron. Every potential buyer's got a different situation and a different set of reasons to buy. We'll get to Clear Channel's Big Deal in a moment – but first, the ratings.

Can Cumulus really re-make the ratings in small markets?

They're sure as heck trying and they say their Request For Proposals elicited ideas from "over a dozen companies who have invested considerable time and thought into this effort." The process itself is going at warp-speed, because Cumulus wants something concrete in place very soon – "first measurements" to start August 15 and "data publication" on October 15. This New Service would replace the Arbitron diary-based ratings in the Cumulus markets ranked 100+. In a way, Clear Channel's 2005 Request For Proposals now seems like a kind of dry run. It flushed a number of potential Arbitron competitors out into the open (most notably the Media Audit/Ipsos effort) and broke the ice in getting researchers to think about competing with Arbitron, knowing that a major group was willing to open its checkbook. (Cumulus will commit 52 of its 70 markets to The Eventual New Service.)



The Clear Channel process wound up not leading anywhere – and maybe one of the lessons Cumulus learned is that it's critical to enunciate a clear timeline and keep pushing. Of course it's a lot easier to do that if it's just one company, like Cumulus, which happens to be run by former researcher Lew Dickey. Cumulus says this about the various proposals in the hopper: the range "includes everything from significant enhancements of traditional approaches to innovative applications of new technology, and hybrid solutions."

That doesn't mean Cumulus was handed a dozen proposals for a complete system.

Its RFP outlined two components for a system that would be "unimpeachable" - #1, Ratings/Qualitative data. And #2, Software for reporting, analyzing and presenting that data. So some of the "more than a dozen" proposals are from companies which want to do just a piece of the job. Cumulus said that was perfectly okay. It now turns to sifting through the ideas and communicating with the bidders to "fine-tune the solutions that have the greatest potential." It will select the "vendor finalists" on June 1 and have system testing wrapped up by July 18. (See what I mean by "warp-speed"?). By the way: Arbitron sees itself as a top-shelf bidder for the new RFP. And Cumulus says it's not fleeing Arbitron, per se: it's a believer in the Arbitron PPM. It simply thinks that Arbitron's current small-market system is inadequate and expensive. And don't kid yourself – this is definitely about cost as well as other priorities.

Talkers Sharpton and Ballentine make the daytime lineup at Radio One's Q92.7, Charlotte.

More talk and less music on WQNC, says the Charlotte Observer's Mark Washburn - which makes you wonder how far Radio One will go to re-shape some of its music FM's in the interest of clearing more of its Syndication One black-talk lineup. Add attorney Warren Ballentine from 10am-1pm, then the Rev. Al Sharpton and (soon) the Radio One-syndicated Mo'nique, and you're really changing the balance of programming at urban AC Q92.7. Radio One's using something like this approach in Atlanta on "Magic 107.5" WAMJ. Only thing is, some folks are wondering how the talk-heavy approach for these formerly music-centered stations will play in the People Meter universe. Both Atlanta and Charlotte are on the list to get electronic measurement by 2010.  **Discuss**

More ticking clocks and timebombs for Clear Channel.

The six-bank lenders group has just 14 days to fund the escrow piece of the new going-private sale agreement priced at \$36 a share. Otherwise, they'll be back in front of New York Judge Helen Freedman, and they don't want that. Yesterday, T-R-I ran through the hurdles that Clear Channel and its buyers need to clear, and you can add the goal-line date of "late third quarter" for a closing. CEO Mark Mays predicts a shareholder vote in August or September and then a closing in September. Though they're playing it safe and giving themselves until December 31. But let's play "what if" – what if the stock begins trading really close to the \$36 level? Would investors like Highfields Capital or Fidelity or Calpers start asking for an even richer price, back toward the original \$39.20? Alternatively, what if the stock starts heading toward the South Pole for whatever reason – will the banks go cold on the deal again? Wall Street's certainly paying attention –

"CCU" was the second-most-heavily traded stock in America yesterday.

An awesome 93,360,773 shares of Clear Channel crossed the ticker and that was more volume than Microsoft or Yahoo or anybody else on a public exchange except for EDS (Electronic Data Systems) – which HP wants to acquire and which traded 108 million shares. The other thing about how the Clear Channel stock behaved is that the price barely moved. Its range was a very narrow \$34.30 to \$34.88. That suggests that lots of folks (arbitrageurs?) are now playing the game of forecasting just when the stock will converge on the new Bain Capital/Thomas H. Lee Partners buyout price of \$36. "Arbs" can make a pile of money on daily swings of just a few pennies, and barring some major piece of bad news, they'll be settling in for the late-September closing.

It's not just American employees of Clear Channel who are now anxious about the future.

Will new owners Bain Capital and Thomas H. Lee Partners immediately set about lowering their debt (and pulling some money out) by selling off Clear Channel's extensive international outdoor advertising interests? Or maybe spinning off its international radio investments in Australia, New Zealand and Mexico? The analysts have been raising those possibilities, and that's a reminder that Clear Channel's not just a U.S. radio company, as much as the Street wants to view it that simplistically. I told you last week that the domestic outdoor division just passed radio in total revenues. But there's still plenty of international business as a hangover from the days when San Antonio saw itself as a global radio super-power and sought partnerships in almost every time zone. Clear Channel once had radio interests in Norway, Denmark, the U.K., Singapore, China, the Czech Republic, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The ironic thing is that the relatively-small Emmis is now the one that's bragging about its startling international radio growth, mostly in Europe. But because of CC likely going private, all the Clear Channel-related staffers in France and Mexico and Australia (at stations like Sydney's CHR "Edge") just opened a new pillbottle of anxiety about their ultimate owner.



"It was déjà vu" on a call - Clear Channel's once-departing markets now re-join the family.

Those "departing markets" had been separated – almost like foster children – from the mainstream of Clear Channel's management system since November 2006, when Jerry Kersting took on the role of stepfather. Last month, with Kersting leaving for Tribune, Clear Channel announced those long-for-sale markets were being "re-integrated" into the company and taken off the market. So here's the story: last Friday was the first time these once-distant relations were back on a John Hogan monthly call for GMs, GSMs and PDs. One veteran says the conference call was pretty much déjà vu in terms of the format: Hogan's opening remarks, some success stories, almost down to the minute. He says getting back into the system (or at least the monthly conference call) "was like Days of Our Lives, where you can miss several months and still jump right back into it."

Checking in on Cumulus stock and Radio One stock...

Cumulus ("CMLS") was literally unchanged yesterday, just two days after the bungee-cord 24% drop that resulted from officially blowing up its go-private deal with Merrill Lynch. Still no announcement from the Cumulus board about a stock

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re-purchase. Meanwhile: Radio One ("ROIA") added another nickel yesterday to close at \$1.10. When you're down close to \$1, everything counts, and that's good news for the company. Hard to see any near-term catalysts that might cause a drastic uptick, but at least they're out of immediate danger of a possible de-listing by the exchange.

The other shoe drops after Citadel-Disney – Interep keeps the five ESPN Radio O&Os.

But they'll shift from Interep's now-defunct ABC Radio Sales rep firm and bunk down with Interep's D&R Radio shop. On March 31, Citadel's Farid Suleman pulled the 22 former ABC Radio stations away from Interep and placed them with Katz, along with the rest of Citadel. (Those properties are now split among Katz-owned Eastman Radio, Christal and Katz Radio; there won't be a "Former ABC Radio Stations Rep.") Now Interep says the Disney-owned ESPN stations in New York, L.A., Chicago, Dallas and Pittsburgh will stay with it and will be serviced through D&R.



Who are radio's innovators? Voting's open at Radio-Info.com.

The nominations we got on the site were very thoughtful and – and produced seven nominees for a list of innovators Radio-Info.com will be saluting in more detail, later this year. The nominees are Mike Agovino, David Goodman, Kurt Hanson, Evan Harrison, Steve Jobs, Dan Mason and Bill Moore. To vote, just make sure you're registered for the message boards (you stay anonymous there, remember). Read more about them – and vote – [here](#).

Wheeling and Dealing:

In Maine, Blueberry Broadcasting will park two FMs with Kalil Holding Group. That's the hold 'em-for-now subsidiary of Tucson-based brokerage Kalil & Co., and the idea is that KHG will take oldies WGUY, Dexter, ME (102.1) and modern rock WFZX, Searsport (101.7) as Blueberry closes on the 17 Maine stations it's acquiring from Clear Channel (May 2 T-R-I). That's because Clear Channel can be over the FCC local-market limits because its ownership is grandfathered (the cluster was in place before the agency changed the rules). But any new owner must come into compliance, and Blueberry's asking Kalil Holding Group to take temporary custody of WGUY and WFZX until Kalil (the brokerage, that is) can find a buyer or buyers for them.

Sound Bites:

Streaming media ad company TargetSpot (partly owned by CBS) says its nationwide network "will now receive an Arbitron ranking, with a full third-party accounting" of its growing listener base. The TargetSpot client list of 600+ stations will get a combined comScore Arbitron Online Radio Rating, with AQH and cume estimates, just as the ad buyers are used to seeing, with the standard dayparts and demos.



New York City's little-low power TV station-that-could hires some local DJs and producers to do new mix shows on dance-flavored CHR "Pulse 87." Those include "DJ Serg" for "Nooner at Noon" and James Anthony for "Free Ride@5."

Buzzing on the Radio-Info.com Message Boards:

In Dallas, the board's got more about the rumored flip of "Twister" from country. The poster says "I talked to [afternoon driver] Allan Peck and he told me his last day is next Friday. I bet you they'll change then." To True Oldies, as one poster speculated earlier this week? Another user (the "grouchy oldtime radio groupie" David Eduardo) observes that the Citadel-owned KTYS (96.7) signal is "still a rimshot. The 70 dbu covers only 688,000 persons, while [Kiss] KHKS does 4,590,000." [D Discuss](#)

Fans of Rick Dees and XM are psyched about the rumors of Rick's "Weekly Top 40" supposedly showing up somewhere on XM. Though it could be a case of XM using his vintage countdown shows on the 80s channel or 90s channel, perhaps for Saturday morning. In other words, not the current shows that air on CHRs around the country. The XM/Dees topic is up for discussion here. [D Discuss](#)



Faces on the Radio:

Greg York joins mobile marketing service HipCricket as its new VP of Engineering. He'd been the VP/Engineering at VoiceBox and VP of Technology at GiftCertificates, which does e-gift cards for clients such as Coke and T-Mobile.

Patrick Gallagher earns a promotion to Local Sales Manager for Clear Channel's smooth jazz KYOT (95.5) and adult standards KOY (1230) in Phoenix. He'd been an AE at sister "Mix" KMXB – and jocked and programmed in Las Vegas before coming to Phoenix.



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