



# Rock Syndication In 2004

## Who's who in morning drive, and what's up with long-form shows?

This week we turn our attention to the world of syndication in the Rock formats, from morning giants like Howard Stern and Bob & Tom to long-running programs like *RockLine*, *Loveline* and *hardDrive*. Who runs these shows, and why? What are the advantages and disadvantages of syndication?

The most interesting facet of the whole syndication process is how the pendulum has shifted from weekly programming to morning drive. In recent years the number of syndicated morning shows has skyrocketed to the point that, in most competitive markets, you'll find one or more major syndicated shows battling it out with the local morning teams.

This onslaught of syndication begs the question, what is the best option for you in morning drive? Is keeping it live and local always better than featuring a strong syndicated morning talent? One thing remains certain: Today's technology and the global community it has spawned make syndicated shows much more personal experiences for the listener than they've ever been before.

### Howard Vs. The World

Syndicated morning radio begins and ends with Howard Stern. From

his home base at WXRK/New York, Stern started the syndicated morning craze organically back in the late '80s



Michael Picozzi

with a handful of stations including WYSP/Philadelphia and KLSX/Los Angeles. Today Stern broadcasts to approximately 46 affiliates, including nine Rock and Active Rock stations, like KISW/Seattle; KUFO/Portland, OR; and WCCC/Hartford.

While the power of Howard is obvious from a ratings standpoint, it's the intangibles he brings that make a PD comfortable giving up this valuable time slot. "I'm a firm believer in a live and local morning show — except for Howard," says WCCC PD Michael Picozzi. "At its worst, the Stern show is the most entertaining show on radio, TV, cable, satellite, the Internet or even at a Dunkin' Donuts in the morning. There is nothing else like him.

"We keep our breaks from Howard as local as possible with traffic, weather, contests, promos —

whatever there's time for. We treat Howard as if he's our morning man, as opposed to some stations that seem to treat his time like it was a different radio station."

### Stern's Loss, Lex & Terry's Gain

While Picozzi remains bullish on Stern, it's well documented that Stern's bout with the FCC earlier this year led to Clear Channel dropping his show from all of its stations and losing big in the ratings along the way. This has paved the way for shows like Lex & Terry to gain a few new stations.

Lex & Terry are currently heard on 22 stations from their home base of WFYV/Jacksonville, including Active Rocker WRQC/Ft. Myers. It's easy for WRQC PD Lance Hale to identify the advantages of running a syndicated morning show. "You get an established, developed product and don't have to worry about finding the right people and hoping that there is chemistry," he says.

Hale also notes that you don't have to put all of the elements of a show together to try to see what sticks. "In our case, with Lex & Terry, you get a show with a great and growing track record that's been at it for a few years and continues to grow and get better," he says.

"Lex & Terry are still in their infant stage here at WRQC, after the exit of Bubba The Love Sponge earlier this year. I believe they're actually a better fit for the station than Bubba was, and I'm expecting big things from them in the fall."

While Hale loves the content and chemistry an established syndicated morning show brings, he is also aware of the disadvantages. "Unfortunately, there's very little locality," he says. "It's harder to get your show out on the street in front of people, shaking hands and kissing babies.

"We're actually starting to get more interactive with Lex & Terry in the fall. They have features we'll be contributing to, like their popular Drunk Bitch Friday, and we're planning on bringing them in for a market visit as well."

### The Local Approach

While Picozzi and Hale like their chances running with Stern and Lex & Terry, Jack Paper, PD of Clear

## Rock's Top Personalities And Programs

The following is a list of the top syndicated morning shows and long-form syndicated programs based on their number of affiliates.

### Morning Shows

1. *The Bob & Tom Show* (Home base: WFBC/Indianapolis): 140 markets, including Atlanta, San Francisco, San Jose, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Tampa.
2. *The John Boy & Billy Big Show* (Home base: WRFX/Charlotte): More than 90 affiliate markets throughout the U.S.
3. *The Howard Stern Show* (Home base: WXRK/New York): 46 affiliates, primarily in major markets.
4. *Lex & Terry* (Home base: WFYV/Jacksonville): 22 affiliates, primarily in markets in the Southeast.
5. *Mark & Brian* (Home base: KLOS/Los Angeles): 13 affiliates, primarily in the Western markets.
6. *Mancow* (Home base: WKQX/Chicago): Eight markets, primarily in the Midwest.

### Rock Shows

1. *The House of Hair*: Hosted by Dee Snider and featuring two hours of '80s hair bands and metal. Approximately 150 affiliates.
2. *hardDrive*: Hosted by Lou Brutus and featuring two hours of new rock and new bands. One hundred and six affiliates.
3. *RockLine*: Hosted by Bob Coburn, this weekly interview show is in its 23rd year. Approximately 100 affiliates.
4. *Loveline*: Hosted by Adam Carolla and Dr. Drew Pinsky, this landmark daily two-hour talk show offers advice on all matters pertaining to sex and relationships. Approximately 90 affiliates.

Channel's Active Rock KMRQ/Modesto, CA prefers the local approach. "If you can get a good local morning show that has the potential and talent to really plug itself into your community and your listeners, you've got to take that any day of the week," he says.

"I'm fortunate to run a morning show called *The Front Row* that is only on in Fresno and Modesto, so I still have pretty good access to them. I can still get them to do local promotions and events when needed, and that's priceless with a syndicated morning show."

Paper echoes Hale's sentiments about the advantage a strong syndicated show may have in the area of content, noting, "The true positive to running a syndicated morning show is the availability of a strong product that you might not have in your local market. The negative is running the risk of sounding 'out of market' and alienating your listeners."

### Long-Form Programming

Morning show syndication may have taken off in the last 10 to 15 years, but strong syndicated rock shows are still prevalent, if not plentiful. Paper airs two favorites, *RockLine* and *hardDrive*. "They are both great shows that really add something to the station's success and diversity," he says.

Picozzi, however, is not a big fan of running syndicated programming outside of mornings. "WCCC is live and local with our music programming, and we like to brag about it,"

he says. "We have a local connection with Howard, as he was here in the early '80s, but outside of that we run *Wayne Manor* on Saturday nights.

"It's a brand-new live show done out of our studios here in Hartford. It'll soon be syndicated nationally and over the Internet live with pictures, making it unique and the coolest."



Jack Paper

*RockLine*, with Bob Coburn, is one of the longest-running syndicated shows on Rock radio, celebrating its 23rd year on the air in nearly 100 markets. The show runs an Active Rock version on Monday night and a Classic Rock edition on Wednesday night.

*Loveline* is another long-running syndicated show, airing on roughly 90 stations nationwide, about 25% of which have rock-based formats.

The most successful syndicated rock show in terms of affiliates (it's running in over 150 markets) is *The House of Hair*, with former Twisted Sister frontman Dee Snider, which offers two hours of '80s metal at its finest. Another popular long-form rock show is *hardDrive*, hosted by Lou Brutus. This two-hour show featuring hot new rock by today's biggest artists and baby bands runs in about 106 markets.

With the likes of Stern and Bob & Tom in morning drive, heritage long-form programs like *RockLine* and *Loveline* and a great history of entertaining personalities and quality programming, the Rock format continues to be a strong player in the syndication field and should be for years to come.



**MANOR WITHIN EARSHOT** Earshot vocalist Will Martin (l) offers pointers to WCCC/Hartford jock Stephen Wayne, host of the soon-to-be-syndicated Wayne Manor show.