



HOSTS (FROM LEFT): SIGNORILE, MCMULLEN, MACKENZIE, NANGERONI, JOHNSON

GAY TALK JOCKS

Queer radio chat is still rare on mainstream airwaves, but it's booming across satellite radio and the Internet.

IT WAS JUST ANOTHER DAY ON OutQ satellite radio: Gay-porn star Michael Brandon, a guest on *The Derek and Romaine Show*, kept referring to his impressive appendage as "Monster." Romaine Patterson, the show's cohost, demanded he back up the use of such a name with solid proof. Clearly a pro, Brandon dropped trou and raised the drawbridge, and Patterson copped a feel. She was impressed.

Move over, Rush Limbaugh. The jock is in for a shock: GLBT pro-

gramming is blossoming as a powerful niche market on Internet and satellite radio, not to mention on scattered local programs in smaller traditional radio stations across the country. While satellite radio requires a special receiver and a subscription to a service provider, some analysts predict there could be 20 million subscribers in five years.

In April, Sirius satellite radio launched OutQ, the nation's only all-gay talk radio station. Notable hosts include columnist and author

Michelangelo Signorile as well as former out high school football star Corey Johnson, who makes use of his political campaigning experience by teaming with OutQ founder John McMullen as cohost of the political talk show *McMullen & Johnson*.

Always the provocateurs, McMullen and Johnson recently had as a guest U.S. representative Marilyn Musgrave, a Republican from Colorado who is the sponsor of the proposed constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage.

ILLUSTRATION BY ZACH TRENHOLM

“You find me a major FM radio station where you can always hear the word ‘gay,’ anywhere in this country, and I’ll go straight,” says MarkyG.

“She ended up getting incredibly defensive, and she hung up on me,” says Johnson. “[She] said that we were trying to ruin the institution of marriage.”

OutQ joins a chorus of nationally syndicated talk shows and local gay programming, most of which airs on public radio or is available on the Internet. One of those local shows is a cherished Cambridge, Mass., institution that tackles the T in GLBT. Transgender activist Nancy Nangeroni has hosted WMBR’s *GenderTalk* since 1995 and now cohosts with her partner, Gordene MacKenzie.

“We spend a lot of time talking about the representation of trans people in the media,” says MacKenzie. “For the most part,” adds Nangeroni, “we’re still [treated] like documentary subjects.”

The brutal November 1998 murder of a trans woman named Rita Hester in the Boston area was a case in point: “She was reported on very disrespectfully. She was called a transvestite, a man living a double life—stuff like that,” says Nangeroni. “She had been living as a woman for seven years. She was certainly committed to living as a woman. She wasn’t living a double life. She was

made to look tawdry.” In addition to discussing the events on the air, *GenderTalk* undertook a campaign to educate the media on transgender issues by speaking with reporters at local newspapers and appearing on local TV. The show’s effect on the media’s depiction of Hester was a watershed moment in the coverage of transgender issues.

A rare example of a local high-watt station catering to gays is, not surprisingly, nestled in the safety of a muscle-man mecca. Miami’s Party 93.1, an all-dance music station, has acknowledged its gay following by sponsoring events like the local gay and lesbian film festival for the past two years. But the station still relegates its half hour of gay talk, DJ MarkyG’s *Issues Over the Rainbow*, to 7:20 A.M. on Sundays. (The show is scheduled to expand to an hour, airing from 8 A.M. to 9 A.M. Sundays, beginning this month.)

“We know that there’s a market that’s just coming home. We know there’s a market that’s still sleeping,” says MarkyG. Besides landing Billy Bean and Cyndi Lauper interviews, he says he’s proud to have reached out to 13- or 14-year-old questioning youths, who have called in to say his show is their first

contact with the gay world.

“I think people love hearing the word ‘gay’ on the radio,” says MarkyG. And boasting his station’s exclusivity in uttering the word, he adds, “You find me a major FM radio station where you can always hear the word ‘gay,’ anywhere in this country, and I’ll go straight.”

Whether it winds up in your car, headphones, or living room at dawn or dusk, Signorile thinks the expanding gay presence on the radio is filling a gaping void. “I think for people beyond the big cities, it’s just a godsend,” he says. “They’re lucky if they can even find gay magazines in their stores.”

Which is not to say elite urbanites aren’t listening too. In July, Signorile was trying to maintain a journalistically neutral stance in the debate over New York’s funding for the expanded gay Harvey Milk High School when he got a call from a recognizably scratchy voice.

“Harvey Fierstein called up and said, ‘You’re not supporting our schools!’” says Signorile. “And you could definitely tell it was him. And that was cool, having a celebrity call up who’s listening. So you realize, people are starting to really listen to this.” **BENJAMIN RYAN**