



The

# Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

## The Southern View

### Notes from the 2015 NAB Radio Show



*by Alan Alsobrook*

*[October 2015] Some 2170 folks were at the Radio Show in Atlanta, including our intrepid Alan Alsobrook, who walked the floor with his southern viewpoint. Here is what he found of interest.*

It was NAB Radio Show time again and this year, it was just up the road from me in Atlanta. I almost snuck out of St. Augustine without incident. Well, almost.

Who was it that said cell phones were a great idea anyway? Just as I cleared my metro area, I got a call from a station having issues and had to turn around and leave my keys behind “in case.” My reward was a round-trip in rush hour traffic!

Those travails aside, a few hours later, I was walking into the Marriot Marquis and could tell I had found the right place by seeing familiar faces, along with banners promoting various aspects of the show.

The NAB reports that this year's Fall Radio Show pulled in an estimated 2,170 people, up just under 100 from last year.

#### THE BUZZ

The buzz at this year's show came from a couple of issues that broadcasters hoped would be clarified – and a last minute announcement that surprised some.

First, just as the Radio Show came to his home town, Cumulus CEO and Chairman Lew Dickey stepped aside in favor of Mary Berner (former CEO of *Reader's Digest*). With CMLS stock sitting around 70 cents and the company selling off prime transmitter sites to pay debt service, many shareholders welcomed the move and hope this will improve Cumulus prospects. Speculation as to the Dickey's ultimate departure was imminent was a topic of discussion.

The controversy over the integrity of the Nielsen PPM ratings system came to Atlanta, with separate presentations from Nielsen and 25/7, makers of the Voltair audio processor. Nielsen claims they have improved their encoding, to end the “uneven playing field” between stations of certain formats. Voltair responded with new algorithms (Version 2.0, with 2.2. in alpha testing), and enhanced analytical displays to

determine, in advance, which songs are better for PPM reception.

Watching closely are the folks at Orban. President Jay Bretlinger had conversations with Nielsen Matt O’Grady, suggesting that if Nielsen did not solve the problem soon, Orban might enter the issue with its own processors.

## FCC WATCH

The industry always hopes the FCC will have a “gift” or two at the trade shows. This year the lobbying pressure was for AM Improvement – but especially for a Window to give AM stations translators.

However, that appears to continue to be resisted by Chairman Wheeler, who notes several reasons for not favoring that solution. On the other hand, there is a lot of interest by Commissioners to allow moving translators as much as 250 miles.

The question continues: how do FM translators improve AM? Brazil has taken a look at this same issue and is reported to be opening up Channels 5 and 6 for migration of AM stations.

On a more practical note, Commissioner Michael O’Reilly voiced his desire to get pirate stations off the air “immediately,” and spoke of his efforts to accomplish that goal.

And, given the Election Season in progress, a presentation by Robert Baker, FCC’s head of the Media Bureau’s Political Programming, was welcomed by many stations. Baker said he was available 24/7 to answer questions about political ads, whether for candidates or issues. He gave out his office, cell, and home phone numbers, and his email [robert.baker@fcc.gov](mailto:robert.baker@fcc.gov). This level of accessibility is unusual for agency employees, and should be applauded.

## FLOOR WALKING

As many know, the Radio Show is quite a big step down the the Spring show in Las Vegas,

but that is not necessarily a bad thing – companies attending generally have more time to talk and go into greater detail about the products they have on display, as well as other models not at the show.

For example, at Inovonics Ben Barber was happy to talk about their various models, including the JUSTIN 808, an HD alignment box that keeps your analog and HD signals lined up to prevent those annoying audio shifts should the station fade to analog.



The relatively compact size of the Radio Show in the hotel allowed for more opportunities for the folks from different companies to chat.

Are competitors always this friendly?



Tim Anderson (GatesAir), Jeff Welton (Nautel)

I also found Kevin Campbell of WorldCast Systems showing a solution to a now well-known problem of lost packets when sending anything on the Internet.



They previously incorporated a solution sending the signal down two different paths for their own products. Now they have a stand-alone box that can be used with anyone's device to send data on different paths and carefully make sure it is complete and in order at the far end.

Over at the GatesAir booth, Geoff Mendenhall was readily available. to explain anything you wanted to know about the GatesAir product line.



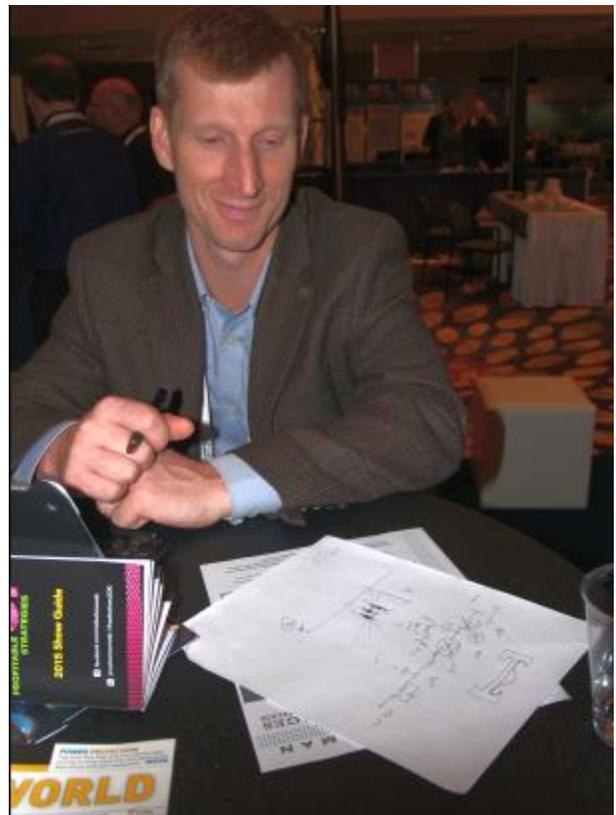
**Geoff Mendenhall and Jim Thompson**

That included their new water-cooled transmitter. For those properly impressed, Jim Thompson was immediately available to write up an order.

Over in the Nautel booth Gary Liebish and Jeff Welton stayed busy going over all the details of Nautel transmitters with customers.



When things slowed down, I got to sit with the Nautel Head of Engineering, Tim Hardy, for a moment.



It was nice to be able to discuss the difference between mica and ceramic capacitors as well as a few other design characteristics of Nautel transmitters with Tim.

### A VERY CONVIVIAL FLOOR

Unlike the Big Show in Vegas, one of the things I really enjoyed at the Radio Show was having food and drink were readily available right on the show floor.



If that was not good enough for some, entertainment was also available at the show. Grammy winning singer & songwriter Bonnie Bishop performed on the show floor and took the time to chat with everyone after her show.



The only thing I missed seeing at the show was any strong technically-based sessions. The next Radio Show is in Nashville, Sept 21-23, 2016

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