

AM-AZING WISCONSIN!

by John J. Rieger

The reasons for the "AM-azing Wisconsin" title is this is a look at some of the AM radio stations throughout the dairy state! The trip was taken on Monday January 12, 1987. I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did! We will start at Wisconsin's Southeast section, go North on 141, West on 10, and head back home to the Milwaukee area on I-94. Hang on, this gets good!

When leaving home 1050-WLIP was AdCon, and a very lively variety at that! WLIP-Kenosha runs only 2 hours past sunset, and not 24 hours, as some stations have been granted! Many commercials, and local news is run on the hour. 1400-WRJR Racine is a more subdued AdCon, with personality. News is run from ABCI on the hour, with local news on the half hour. The station sounds good! 1460-WRKR Racine runs only til 6pm, and simulcasts the FM 100.7 at all times. The station has been WVEG with country, WRKR-AM with Spanish "Radio Hit" and many years ago was WRAC, a local Racine Top40 daytimer. Those, however seem to have gone the way of Fizzles! Remember those!

Milwaukee AM radio is basically the same as last week, hi! 620-WTMJ is heavily into news, talk, sports and personality. 860-WNOV is black, with GOS in the morning, 920-WOKY is MoR and really sounds good to this 33 year old. I grew up with "waukee in Milwaukee" and though it was a Top40 giant in the 50's, 60's and 70's, it is doing well today! CBS news hourly, and local news on the hour in AM/PM drive. 1130-WISN is into personality, and AdCon music. Sportstalk starts at 6pm with Larry King and then ABC Talkradio at 2am. WTMJ is Talknet by the way, so these two AdCon giants are head to head on programming. However, WTMJ with its good signal, and heavy sports emphasis beats the socks off of WISN. 1250-WEMP is 50's, 60's, 70's oldies and sounds good. It is nice to hear an oldies station that isn't AdCon in approach. The station kicks asphalt! ABCe runs on the hour after local news 6am-6pm. Half hour news updates. 1290-WMVP Greenfield-Milwaukee is Satellite fed. The Heart & Soul format is used. This appeals to an older black audience. However, WMVP has, by far, the best signal of any black oriented radio station in the area. WNOV runs 2.7 watts or something like that after local sunset, while 1590-WAWA runs about 7 watts until the 6pm sign off! WNOV is on til Midnight. WMVP is 24 hours. 1340-WBCS simulcasts the FM 102.9 country music format. Music Country Network is aired nightly, and Milwaukee Admiral Hockey games are aired.

That was the longest paragraph ever, hi! 1510-WAUK Waukesha Milwaukee is a 10,000 watt country music outlet. This station has had several format changes over the past few years. To me, the switch to country was stupid because they are trying to compete with 2 50,000 watt FM country outlets, 1340 is fulltime, plus we can hear WMAQ-Chicago too! You hardly ever hear ads on the station and I don't know now they pay the bills! News is run hourly whereas the FM's run news only in AM drive. WAUK also is only a daytimer! I am of the belief that the station could run a Music of Your Life format, which would attract older listeners, who might listen to AM radio during the day, and flip on the TV at night! Oh well. Lastly in the Milwaukee area, 1590-WAWA West Allis is a daytimer and runs black programming. The station recently has begun running GOS from 10am-2pm CLT. The station will soon be on 1200 kilocycles. I still like that word better...kilocycles! So, I wonder if someone will want the 1590 frequency!

Now going up Highway 141, you get to down home radio!

1470-WBKV West Bend is AdCon and personality oriented. High School sports abound, News on the hour, Tradio, etc. 1560-WGLB Port Washington simulcasts the FM (100.1) at all times. The station is a daytimer, and is a very hard AdCon with much black product. They must have good service from certain record labels, hi! I mean Port Washington is less than 3% black! The station however sounds good. Only problem is the many Milwaukee mentions! The station will never penetrate the Beer City market and thus should give up! The "hometown radio station" approach might be nice! 540-WYLO Jackson/Milwaukee is all religion/ethnic. They are on the air from 5am-12mid CLT. The were country for years until the mid 1970's. I can still remember picking up the "Way-Low Top 54" record surveys! Boy am I dating myself!

Going Northwest, 1430-WBEV Beaver Dam is an excellent example of what a good hometown station should sound like! ABCI news on the hour, local news on the half hour, with AdCon all day, 8000 commercials per hour, etc! The station runs oldies nightly from 6-12mid sigh off CLT. 1170-WLKE Waupun-Fond du Lac-Beaver Dam is satellite oldies, and is a daytimer. I guess I can't stand satellite operations. I just remember how well WLKE sounded back in 1966 when the station hit the airwaves! Top40, like so many AM stations were! That was how I got into dx'ing. I was trying to keep a record of all the Top40 stations I could hear! Some kid growing up now would have to love News or Talk or ethnic or religious programming! It seems AM has been made the dumping grounds! It is sad, because I remember how good it was! End of sermon.

1420-WPLY Plymouth is local, live oldies and the daytimer sounds good! Jingles and good oldies abound! CNN news is carried on the hour. Plymouth is near Sheboygan where 950-WKTS Sheboygan is Standards, and 1330-WHBL Sheboygan is AdCon with a heavy sports emphasis! ABCe news on the half hour, but WHBL announcers hardly ever say the stations call letters!

I can still hear 1370-WKSH Sussex-Milwaukee fading out. The station is Contemporary Christian, and sounds good. "KS 14" runs news at :50 during the daytime hours only. They are on the air until midnight, though you can't hear them in most of Milwaukee after their pattern change.

1280-WNAM Neenah-Menasha was playing "Help Me Rhonda" by the Beach Boys. The station is AdCon, dumping Top40 only a few years ago. The station, to me, never was a great Top40, as there was way too much personality, news, etc. 690-WCKK Oshkosh is Music of Your Life. The station has found its niche, and sounds fairly good. Another former Top40 outlet, 1150-WYNE Kimberly-Appleton-Neenah-Oshkosh-Green Bay is country. Another former Top40, and a good one at that! 1440-WNFL Green Bay is AdCon and has really had the same sound for the past 10 years! They are consistent, and they sound good!

1090-WISS Berlin is a treat, with a capital "I"! The station, tucked away in the farming community of Berlin, (BER/lin) is a gem. Polkas, country, and AdCon are aired on "AM 11-FM 102" and the station really sounds good for its market size. The WISS trivia contest would be upcoming soon! The station is daytime only, and recently got a new jingle package. 800-WOUX Waupaca is a bland AdCon. "AM 800-FM 92" has a good signal throughout central Wisconsin. Another former Top40.

West on Highway 10, 730-WJMT Merril starts to pop through. the station is AdCon, and local sounding, not small town, but not a 50,000 watt giant either. Not bad. "WOLO" by Harry Chapin is being aired with no call letters given between the ads and the song. Good place to insert a jingle.

1150-WAYY Chippewa Falls seems to have dropped its oldies format and is now playing some really old c&w music. Much personality is noted. 790-WEAQ Eau Claire seems to be soft AdCon now, after being nostalgia. Another former Top40. There was a contest on the air, and the lady was talking about a Beach Boys special on HBO I believe, and she asked the announcer: "Do you have any Beach Boy songs?" The answer: "No!" I guess WEAQ just lost a listener, hi! Too bad WAYY wasn't oldies, hi!

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680-WOGO Hallie was playing a softer c&w music, with some REL c&w too. Much personality and there was talk of a snow storm headed from Minnesota to Wisconsin. Time to head home! 1090-WHYD Rice Lake is satellite oldies. The station formerly simulcast WAQE-FM but it is funny how in some some towns, Rice Lake is not Chicago, the stations are run separately AM and FM! In Milwaukee WBCS is simulcast, as was WZUU-AM before it became WMVP. It is sad to hear 1220-WGAR Cleveland, 50000 watts, simulcasting an FM Sister!

Gotta beat the snow! The sun is out on 1-94 as 900-WNNO Wisconsin Dells is in with c&w music, and "AM 900" id. The station only id on the hour, when required. "AM 900" really isn't too descriptive. Oh well, at least the station is live, and not taped or satellite. This is good. The call letters W-N-N-O stand for Nine Oh when the station was on 990 up til a few years ago. 740-WRPO Baraboo is the latest station in Wisconsin to go on the bird! The station is AdCon and is using the "StarStation" slogan, along with satellite. The station really sounded good as a live AdCon, but as usual, money prevails.

Moving toward Madison and the sun is shining! What a beautiful day! The virgin snow is laying gently along the sides of 1-94, where it should be. However, it is picturesque! 1070-WTSO Madison is country, and the number one station in the Capitol City! Much personality, and many "AM 1070" mentions. Not the typical 5 in a row stuff! 1310-WIBA Madison is always strong on local news and carries CBS and seems to play oldies at night. AdCon all other times. WIBA is heavy on sports carrying the Milwaukee Brewers, Green Bay Packers and the Milwaukee Bucks. UW Badger football is carried here and also on WTDY and WTSO! 1550-WHIT Madison is automated oldies, 5 in a row with no talk. Bland. This daytime has been oldies for some time now. 1480-WTDY Madison is the former WISM, a Top40 giant! WTDY "Today Radio" is NBC and AdCon. Talknet is carried, and the station is trying to be the AdCon personality giant in 6 months, what it took WIBA years to do. Growth, station loyalty, etc. WTDY sounds bland. I think it could sound better. Of course half of the old-line AM Top40's could. Growing pains!

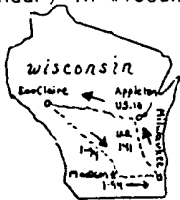
970-WHA-Madison is also noted with the regular NPR fare, and daytime call-in shows. Daytime only.

Now for the final miles home from Madison to Milwaukee along 1-94. Roads are still good and the sun is still high in the air glistening on those below. Still a wonderful winter day in Wisconsin! Not really too cold. 37 degrees is nice in January in Wisconsin. Believe me! 940-WFAW Fort Atkinson is noted with a fishing report, and an ad for "Lon's Country Store" open on New Year's Eve! However, remember it's January 12th! "Information94 WFAW" is AdCon with a good news commitment, and many, many commercials. The station, 20 years ago, was Top40, with its own weekly record survey! Still, the station sounds good.

From the stateline area, I can hear 1230-WCLO Janesville with AdCon and a promo for a High School basketball game to be

on the air later in the day! The station hardly used call letters between songs. This, for WCLO, is rare. The station sounds good usually. 1490-WGEZ Beloit is oldies. "Stand" by Sly and the Family Stone, and "After Midnight" by Eric Clapton are heard. The station is rockin on AM! "The Stateline Oldies Station" sounds good.

1350-WPDR Portage is c&w. Local news is aired along with a weather report from a staff meteorologist. Seems everyone has a staff meteorologist these days, hi! If they were ever right... hi! Many "1350" mentions, and the station sounds local, but not small townish. 1550-WMIR Lake Geneva is AdCon and uses many "Radio 15" slogans. Many ads, and the station has really had the same sound over the past years. Seemingly bland, but could



be a lot worse. Daytimer.

The nice thing is there are still a lot of stations with local programming in Wisconsin. Few AMs are taped, satellite or simulcasting the FM sisters. If you have two stations, you can make money on two stations! There are audiences for both AM and FM. It is just finding the right formula for each. While I'll admit FM seems to have the edge, I don't think AM can be written off yet. As a dx'er, for the hobby I listen to AM radio, yet if you ask anyone, I mean anyone, they will admit they listen to an FM station. The only time AM seems to be mentioned is for sports programming. Try it! And then you'll see why AM dx'ers seem to be a dying breed! The kids today have FM. AM to them must seem like shortwave or something! Oh well!

By the way, now comes the confession. This radio trip was for free. No gas, no wear and tear on the car, and no going to any of the great shopping malls through Wisconsin blowing money. This little trip was done from the privacy of my "DX den" in my home! I never even started the engine! Just flipped the receiver to "on" and "drove" around the state! I hope you found this as interesting as I did. It was fun. I think that was one lure to dx. I could, in the middle of a cold winter, always "escape" to anywhere...through my headphones!

I sincerely, again, hoped you liked the imaginary trip. Some other noted jotted down as a P.S. to this are in order. WRKR is Top40. WCKK is 24 hours on 690, and please remember, other stations can be heard, but this was a bandscan done between 10am-2pm, and I was only going after Wisconsin stations. Other stations that were too poor to log were not included in this.

Seattle SBE Battles RFI Sources

by Alex Zavistovich

Seattle WA ... An industry committee is being assembled by the local Seattle chapter of the SBE to investigate faulty transformers in the city's lighting system which have caused RF interference to broadcast facilities in the area.

The group was invited to present a draft of its proposed activities to the NAB, said Marty Hadfield, director of engineering for SRO Broadcasting and chairman of the local SBE chapter.

Hadfield said he sees RF interference to radio broadcasting as an industry-wide problem, citing numerous examples in Seattle alone.

In one instance, Hadfield said, a radio station in the city was experiencing interference due to a number of faulty supply transformers on a utility pole outside its broadcast facility. The transformers produced a "60 Hz to 120 Hz AC buzz, which could be heard on any broadcast radio," Hadfield said.

In another instance, complaints of poor reception of AM radio and TV broadcasts were traced to a sewage treatment plant running at reduced capacity, Hadfield said. The plant's "SCR" controller, which because of poor ground conductivity was poorly grounded, was the root of the problem, he added.

Hadfield maintained that extensive interference to broadcast signals was

caused by the electrical systems of the trackless trolley mass transit system of the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle.

The trolley system caused three distinct types of interference, Hadfield said. In one case, power substations of the system were rectifying, remixing and retransmitting radio noise; the other two types of interference came from trolley noise and from the system's overhead power distribution system.

The trolley system has 26 substations spaced approximately every 6000' to power the buses, Hadfield said. Noise from the substations was being generated by a diode in a 6-phase power supply which converted the city's electrical power to 600 VDC current for the trolley.

The system produced a 360 Hz buzz, audible on broadcast radios, Hadfield noted. He said the problem was corrected by using bypass capacitors.

Trolley noise

The problems of trolley noise and the overhead distribution system were not as easy to correct, Hadfield said.

The Seattle trolley buses used "chopper-type control circuitry" that emitted a continuous whine which was modulated when bus electrical systems were in use, he said. As early as 1980, noise peaks could be heard in the standard broadcast band at 100 KHz, 450 kHz, and 700 kHz, he said, becoming part of the background noise floor at 7 MHz.

In May 1982, in response to numerous interference complaints, a joint meeting was held in Seattle with the FCC and the Western Washington Cooperative Interference Committee, an independent public interest group. The meeting was attended by representatives from Seattle's

transit company and local radio stations, Hadfield said.

The FCC concluded that the problem was "incidental interference from unauthorized broadcast equipment," Hadfield said, and as such was covered under part 15 of the FCC Rules and Regulations. The problem was determined to be the responsibility of the metro transit group to correct, he added.

Correcting the problem

Trolley system officials were "very helpful" in correcting the problem, Hadfield said.

The group removed all but one bus from service for testing, during which chart recording and spectrum analysis of background noise and contributed noise for an unmodified bus was conducted. These findings were compared to those of a bus modified to increase common-mode rejection.

The transit group proposed a correction program in December 1982, Hadfield said, which included a provision for retrofitting approximately 109 trolleys with new SCR-type controllers.

The buses were also outfitted with an RF capacitor for the top of the bus, where the voltage is introduced, and a choke arrangement inside the bus to increase common-mode rejection, he added.

AM radios are now being used to test buses at a checkpoint in the transit company's storage facility, Hadfield said. If the radio's broadcast signal is interfered with, he said, the noisy bus is "red-tagged" and the problem is then corrected.

Officials at the Seattle transit authority could not be reached for comment.

For additional information, contact Marty Hadfield at 206-281-5633.