

Positive Feedback

Bidding on radio comps with frequency

Every fall Alan Chitlik can't wait to get his hands on the annual in-studio music compilation *Live From The Mountain Music Lounge* from his hometown radio station, KMTT, in Seattle. "I really came to enjoy both hearing the versions of songs that I knew and discovering new artists as well," said Chitlik. Then two years ago while looking on eBay for a Christmas gift for his wife, he discovered that other radio stations around the country offer similar in-studio collections. "I started seeing some rare Barenaked Ladies songs on various radio station-produced compact discs, and then I noticed other acts that we liked were on them as well. So I decided it would be fun to collect them."

So far he has amassed 180 compact discs from 45 different radio stations. His latest purchase is a 1996 collection of in-studio performances from Washington D.C./Baltimore area radio station WHFS, called *Just Passing Thru*. The disc features, among other acts, a rare joint performance with members of U2 and R.E.M., recorded at MTV's 1992 Inaugural Ball. He paid \$34.33, but admitted that he has spent more for other collections. "I once paid \$152 for a KFOG [San Francisco] release," he said. "In some ways, I know that's a lot of money to spend on a single CD. But once I got the itch, I made the decision to collect them all. I rationalize it by the fact that the full sets of any of the big stations seem to return their value, sometimes going for more than \$1,000."

"We're flattered," said KFOG program director Dave Benson. "We sell 30,000 [*Live From The Archives*] every year, and if people didn't think it was a good CD, it wouldn't have the resale value it does."

Part of the collectibility, admitted collector Brian O'Malley, is having the live, in-studio performances not found on any other compact disc. The compilation collector recently paid \$1,100 for a complete set of annual releases from radio station KBCO in Boulder, Colo., on eBay. "They are kept in a lock box at a bank, along with the other rarities I own," he said.

"He actually got a deal," said KBCO program director Scott Arbough, who admitted that a promotional box set of the first 10 volumes, bound in a leather case, has been known to sell for upward of \$2,000. "It's like anything else — if there's a market for it, it will sell well," he said.

Most radio-station compilations are originally sold as fund-raisers for various local causes, and artists allow their proceeds to go to charities in lieu of receiving royalties. "My biggest regret is that most of these compact discs are being sold for



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**— Scott Arbough,
KBCO program director**

good causes. So when I pay \$152 for a CD on eBay, the charity the station is trying to support doesn't get any of it," Chitlik said.

However, he admitted that when the opportunity arises, he does become a member of the public radio stations, of which CDs he collects not only to support the programming, but also to pick up on the compilation directly.

Austin, Texas, radio station KGSR's donations from the sales of its annual *Broadcasts* discs go to the SIMS Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides access to low-cost mental health services for local musicians. The KGSR proceeds have topped \$1,000,000. Sales from KFOG's *Live From The Archives* CDs have generated more than \$3,000,000 for the Bay Area Food Bank, while KBCO's annual *Studio C* recordings support the Boulder County AIDS Project.

"You know, it really doesn't upset me that these are resold," said KGSR program director Jody Denberg.

"These charities get 100 percent of the profits. It's a good product, and we're actually pretty flattered that it has that kind of demand." Like other stations, KGSR is limited to the number of recordings it can produce, making the in-studio offerings an instant collector's item. "We have an agreement that we can only press 30,000 copies. We can't press any more," he said.

Have a story idea for *Positive Feedback*? Contact me at www.isleofwrite.com.

— Lisa Wheeler

Web site of interest

www.sbrcreative.com (Features a list of various 2004 radio station comps.)