



December 21, 2008

Stations shake up lineups for new year

By MAUREEN
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Seems like only yesterday Radio Somewhere was interviewing Bob Grant, recently returned to 77WABC radio, about the two-time nominee's new nomination to the Radio Hall of Fame. The "father of controversial radio" was cautiously optimistic. "It is nice, but I'm not going to celebrate until and if I'm elected," the Toms River resident told us.

That was in April. The Radio Hall of Fame passed over Grant again in July, leaving its long list of inductees minus the vitriolic personality's moniker. Did getting passed over again doom him with 77WABC Radio, which let Grant go this month? (Thanks to a reader named Barbara for the heads up on this.) Or has the Age of Obama made racial rants like the one that got Grant ousted from ABC a decade ago, now declassé?

Internet newsletters and print-side industry wags such as Daily News columnist David Hinckley are strangely muted. "Grant will no longer do his 8-10 p.m. nightly show," Hinckley quoted a spokesperson, who left it open that Grant may do fill-ins at the station.

Grant's contract ends at year's end. But his replacements, Joe Scarborough and Mika Brzezinski, could already be heard the week of Dec. 7 from 10-11:45 a.m. "Adding Joe Scarborough to our all-star lineup is going to be an amazing addition to our station, and we're thrilled to have him on—77 WABC," said Steve Borneman, president and general manager.

We got tired of waiting on hold for Borneman. Grant's producer, Jessica Howard, was also already gone.

MSNBC-TV fans will recognize Scarborough and Brzezinski from the "Morning Joe" show. It's one I can't help tuning into for the cast of characters they manage to rout out of bed at ungodly hours to wax on politics and the economy: people such as columnist Mike Barnacle, MSNBC's political guru Chuck Todd and guests including Mika's dad, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was President James Carter's National Security Adviser and many others of his stature. My main complaint is that Scarborough, clearly the least equipped of the brains trust, hogs the mike. On the radio, Mika seems to have a better grip on the mike button. Good for her!

More changes

Then a reader, named Al, asked about Dennis Miller over on WOR News/Talk Radio 710. Sure enough, syndicated talker Miller, who occupied the 2-4 p.m. slot and Bill O'Reilly's "The Radio Factor" show in the noon to 2 p.m. spot, will be dropped come Jan. 5. A Westwood One representative tells Radio Somewhere, "We are still in negotiations with WOR about continuing the Dennis Miller show."

Also, there are plans to cut "Food Talk" with Michael Colameco. A spokesperson for WOR said, "There has been a long 'food' tradition on WOR. Joan Hamburg has been doing Friday restaurant reviews for 30 years and food will continue to play a role on the station. Joan will continue to welcome all of her food friends. WOR wants to continue the "Food Talk" brand and is exploring ways to make that happen with Colameco."

That's three down! We suspect economic reasons. However, Hinckley quotes O'Reilly saying that it's his idea to go, so he can focus more on his FOX-TV show in the night talk arena where the competition, he says, has turned on the heat: "The media business is getting more and more intense."

Instead of them, look for Glenn Beck, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., following John Gambling, who also comes from the right-wing FOX network via CNN. Mr. CNN, Lou Dobbs, billed as "America's Most Influential Independent Voice," takes over the 2 to 4 p.m. spot. Beck's slot was occupied by Joan Hamburg, who moves to the 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. spot, followed by one hour of Dr. Joy Browne, who also keeps her 9-11 p.m. show.

You can't help but wonder how Michael Savage's "Savage Nation" survived these cuts after his huge bomb of a show attacking autistic kids and their parents. For that matter, how could WOR management pass over for a show someone as loyal and talented as Donna Hanover, who got shifted aside to make room for Gambling's return and still co-hosts the morning news with Joe Bartlett. Maybe Hanover has to learn how to shout and rant aimlessly. Strange.

Asbury Park Press radio correspondent Maureen Nevin Duffy created and hosted "Asbury Radio — The Radio Voice of Asbury Park," a weekly public affairs talk show over WYGG, 88.1FM. It continues as a blog on AsburyRadio.com. Please send your comments and suggestions regarding Radio Somewhere to AsburyRadio@aol.com or 3 Deal Lake Court, Asbury Park, NJ, 07712.
