

Radio Can Take a Cue From the Creativity of the Internet

Electric Effect's "D*J*E" calls for the need of more personal programming and personalities on the air

By: Kyle Petersen

Ah, what has become of the classic days of radio—when a stereo was the only friend you needed on a long car ride through the night? What happened to hearing what you want to hear on the radio? Whatever the answer may be, online radio entrepreneur Erin "D*J*E" believes the main problem with the current state of radio lies in this ever-widening disconnect between the broadcaster and the listener. What once was a very personal medium has turned into a squeaky voice that attempts to speak to the masses, not the individual.

D*J*E has worked in radio for a few years now, first spending time working at her university radio station, and now producing her own podcasted radio program. Her show, Electric Effect (available at [Electric Effect.net](http://ElectricEffect.net)), is a program dedicated to the local independent music scene in L.A. She writes, produces, and distributes her program, which is available as a podcast and will hopefully be broadcasted online in the future. The main purpose of the show, according to D*J*E, is to promote the sense of community she sees missing in the L.A. scene.

It's no coincidence that Erin is shooting for these goals; she feels that radio is clearly lacking the personal touch it once had and its ability to make the listener feel a part of something. A longtime radio fan, she believes that the medium "has historically been your station, what you want to hear." Due to the negative effects of consolidation,

such as shrinking playlists and DJ's that are becoming less and less real, radio has lost this ability to connect with the listener.

To offset these downfalls, Erin produces a show that is full of quality content from beginning to end. She stresses the importance of a wide and various playlist, making sure the listener will hear something they like. She also ensures that the DJ stays relevant and plays an important role in connecting to the listener. "The whole point of a DJ is that they're your companion, your friend," says Erin, "they talk to you, they share stuff with you." She believes terrestrial radio can improve itself by igniting the spark of personality that once was the primary source of radio's energy and value. How can the Clear Channel's of today, with a great deal of their on-air "personalities" pre-recording their dialogue, expect to make any connection with the audience? This effect of catering to the lowest-common denominator has weakened the bond in the relationship between DJ and listener.

One way that Erin retreats from the lowest-common denominator effect is through her writing. Through all of the program imaging, writing, song selection, and production of her show, Erin maintains that she is creating an image, a brand, for her program. As something terrestrial radio could learn from the current scene happening on the Internet, there is great power in targeting a defined audience for radio. With the growth of podcasting, it has now become easier for the average person to create their own radio program and distribute it to an audience. Erin believes that although the production value of many of the podcasts is lacking, terrestrial radio could learn from the creativity in programming that is occurring the podcast community—the same creativity that has been missing in terrestrial radio since its decline.

This isn't to say that she has shunned terrestrial radio forever; in fact, she would be thrilled with the chance to broadcast her show on the airwaves. She sees the potential of radio and the endless possibilities it offers. More importantly, Erin loves the magic and romance that is offered by a microphone, a broadcast tower, and an eager listener. Given the opportunity, she would create a show that has all of the elements that are lacking in today's programming: quality production, quality personalities, and quality programming with a wide variety of music. Terrestrial radio needs to "write to the real person, make it personal," according to Erin, who believes that reinvigorating the personal aspect of radio that was once so prominent and effective could solve the radio industry's problems and diminish the hatred much of the public has for the mass-appeal approach to radio.