Journal of the Society for American Music (2021), Volume 15, Number 1, pp. 30–59
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A "Fresh New Music Mix" for the 1980s: Broadcasting Multiculturalism on Crossover Radio

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Abstract
This article examines the racial politics of radio programming in the United States by focusing on the development of a new radio format in the late 1980s. This new format, which the radio industry referred to as Crossover, attracted a coalition audience of Black, white, and Latinx listeners by playing up-tempo dance, R&B, and pop music. In so doing, this format challenged the segregated structure of the radio industry, acknowledging the presence and tastes of Latinx audiences and commodifying young multicultural audiences. The success of this format influenced programming on Top 40 radio stations, bringing the sounds of multicultural publics into the US popular music mainstream. Among these sounds was hip hop, which Crossover programmers embraced for its ability to appeal across diverse audiences; these stations helped facilitate the growth of this burgeoning genre. But like many forms of liberal multiculturalism in the 1980s and 1990s, the racial politics of these stations were complex, as they decentered individual minority groups' interests in the name of colorblindness and inclusion.

In early January 1987, Dennis McDougal of the *Los Angeles Times* noted that something was a little odd about the compiling of the *Billboard* charts. Each week, *Billboard* asked hundreds of radio stations across the United States what songs they were playing and calculated the "Hot 100" and other charts in the magazine based on these reports. But, he wrote, the most popular station in the second largest radio market in the country, the one that over 1.4 million Los Angeles area listeners tuned into every week, was not being included in the chart calculations.[1] The reason for this exclusion? *Billboard* staff and station management could not agree how to classify the station, Power 106, which claimed to be playing a "Fresh New Music Mix."[2] According to *Billboard,* this fresh new mix included too much music by Black musicians for the station to count as a Top 40 station, but according to Power 106, the station was playing too much music by non-Black musicians to count as an Urban station. Playing a mix of music by Black and white artists, it seemed, exceeded the norms of the commercial radio industry; in the words of the publisher of *Billboard's* major competitor, *Radio & Records*, the station was so "violently different" from the programming status quo that it might necessitate the creation of a "whole new category."[3]

I would like to thank Craig Comen, Stephanie Gunst, Victor Szabo, and Brian Wright for their feedback on earlier versions of this article, as well as the many others whose questions and comments at conferences over the past few years have helped shape this work. In addition, this article has benefited from the insightful feedback of the editor and the anonymous reviewers of this journal, and from the hard work of Oliver Kendall, Meredith King, and Lorelle Sang, my brilliant undergraduate research assistants at Amherst College.

[1] Dennis McDougal, "L.A. Turn-On is a Top 40 Turnoff: Power 106 Top Local Radio Station, but Dispute over Trade Publications' Hit List Is Proving a 'Black' and 'White' Issue," *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1987, G1, G8.

[2] Joel Denver, "KIIS 'Powered' from Number One by a Hair," *Radio & Records*, July 25, 1986, 42.

[3] Dwight Case, quoted in McDougal, "L.A. Turn-On is a Top 40 Turnoff," G8.

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But McDougal's piece missed the most "violently different" aspect of Power 106's programming. It was not just that the station confounded the Black/white musical color line which the radio and record industries had relied upon for at least the last half century. Rather, the station also targeted Hispanic audiences alongside Black and white listeners, creating what consultant Don Kelly deemed an "Urban Coalition" station.[4] In the late 1980s, Power 106 and other stations like it challenged the structure of the radio industry by distancing themselves from the racially demarcated radio formats of the past and embracing multiculturalism as a method of understanding and commodifying the increasing diversity of the United States.

In this article, I argue that these stations, which coalesced into a format called Crossover, transformed the racial identity of the mainstream by finding ways to commodify and account for the tastes and identities of multicultural audiences across the United States. Beginning in Los Angeles, where the first nationally renowned Crossover station Power 106 began broadcasting in early 1986, I narrate the emergence of this format, examining how Power 106 challenged the organization of the radio industry by playing diverse styles of music to appeal to a multicultural coalition audience of white, Black, and—significantly—Hispanic listeners. From there, the narrative expands geographically as the format became popular nationally. Through an analysis of radio trade journals, I examine how programmers carefully created playlists to appeal to multicultural audiences, and how these stations monetized previously ignored demographics. These stations were so successful that by the end of the decade, mainstream Top 40 stations regularly played the same music, meaning that the tastes of Crossover stations' multicultural publics were incorporated into the sound of mainstream popular music. But these stations were hardly without fault, and I end by critiquing the racial politics of Crossover stations and multiculturalism more generally.

[4] Kelly quoted in Yvonne Olson, "Forging Formatic Frontiers," *Radio & Records*, September 12, 1986, 70. Throughout, I use the terms hip hop and rap interchangeably to refer to this diverse genre of music. For the sake of clarity, I capitalize all radio format names. For simplicity, I refer to stations programmed primarily for Black audiences as Urban. During the 1980s, many of these stations changed their name from Black to Urban, Urban Contemporary, or Progressive Contemporary to appease companies that were less inclined to advertise their products on stations that called themselves Black. For more on this, see David Brackett, *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016). Similarly, I refer to stations that played current hits as Top 40, although many in the industry also used the format name CHR (Contemporary Hits Radio). For additional information about this format, see Eric Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy: The Rival Mainstreams of American Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

When discussing specific stations' demographic targets as well as historical conceptions of audiences, I use the terms white, Hispanic, and Black to accurately reflect and to draw attention to the terminology that the radio and advertising industries used during the late 1980s. I use the term Latinx when referring more generally to people living in the United States with Latin American heritage. Arlene Dávila notes that the use of Hispanic during the late 1980s was likely due to the "business preference for the officially census-sanctioned category." See Arlene Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 15. The term African American gained popularity in the late 1980s, but was not widely used by the radio and advertising industries until later; see Isabel Wilkerson, "'African-American' Favored by Many of America's Blacks," *New York Times*, January 31, 1989.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Formatting Race on Commercial Radio Stations

To understand the impact of radio programming, we must first look to the business model that shapes this industry.[5] Commercial music radio stations operate by playing music to generate demographically specific audiences whose attention they sell to advertisers.[6] The radio industry categorizes stations that play similar songs to attract similar demographics into formats such as Top 40, Urban, and Country. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, commercial media of all forms increased the number of options available to the public, utilizing new technologies and more precise audience research and measurement techniques to target increasingly specific audiences.[7] On the radio, programmers during these years refined their playlist and station presentation based on research indicating relationships between musical styles and distinct demographics of listeners, generally assuming a homology between the racial identity of a performer and the racial identity of the people who might listen to that performer.[8] The Urban radio format, for example, played mostly music made by Black musicians to attract an age-diverse, gender-diverse Black audience.[9]

Radio stations in the 1980s commonly defined their audiences by race and age to easily sell these audiences' attention to advertisers. Companies that advertised on the radio typically preferred white audiences between twenty-five and forty-nine years

[5] Laurie Ouellette argues, more broadly, "To approach the study of media critically involves situating media within economic, political, cultural and social contexts and addressing its relations to capitalism, labor, citizenship, gender, race and class dynamics, inequalities, sexuality, globalization and other issues . . ." See Laurie Ouellette, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Reality Television*, ed. Laurie Ouellette (New York: John Wiley, 2013), 3.

[6] This two-sided market has been radio's business model since at least the mid-1930s. See Timothy Taylor, *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 52; Jody Berland, "Radio Space and Industrial Time: Music Formats, Local Narratives and Technological Mediation," *Popular Music* 9, no. 2 (1990): 183; and Eric A. Drott, "Music as a Technology of Surveillance," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 12, no. 3 (August 2018): 239. For more on the concept of the audience as a commodity, see Dallas Smythe, "Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism," *Canadian Journal of Political & Social Theory* 1, no. 3 (1977): 1–27; Eileen R. Meehan, "Ratings and the Institutional Approach: A Third Answer to the Commodity Question," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 1, no. 2 (June 1, 1984): 216–25; and Lee Artz, "Media Relations and Media Product: Audience Commodity," *Democratic Communiqué* 22, no. 1 (2008): 60–74.

[7] For advertising-industry-focused analyses of this trend, see William Leiss, Stephen Kline, and Sut Jhally, *Social Communication in Advertising: Persons, Products, and Images of Well-Being* (New York: Methuen, 1986); and Joseph Turow, *Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). For analyses of specific narrowcasted cable channels, see Sarah Banet-Weiser, Cynthia Chris, and Anthony Freitas, eds., *Cable Visions: Television Beyond Broadcasting* (New York: NYU Press, 2007). Some cable television scholars have noted this narrowcasting trend while claiming that cable stations still often reach a mass public; see, for example, Amanda D. Lotz, *Redesigning Women: Television after the Network Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Amanda D. Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New York: NYU Press, 2007); and Jackie Byars and Eileen R. Meehan, "Once in a Lifetime: Constructing 'The Working Woman' through Cable Narrowcasting," *Camera Obscura: A Journal of Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 33–34 (1995): 13–41.

[8] For two excellent histories of radio formatting, see Kim Simpson, *Early '70s Radio: The American Format Revolution* (New York: Continuum, 2011); and Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*.

[9] For more on the history and politics of the Urban format, see William Barlow, *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

old, and stations which attracted other demographics commanded lower rates.[10] In many ways, the radio format structure in the United States resembles the organization of major label record companies, which for most of the past century have structured their companies by separating music made by and for people outside the white mainstream into Black, country, or other divisions.[11] The Top 40 format, like the central pop division of a record company, attracted a so-called mainstream audience that, as David Brackett writes, is "nominally unmarked in terms of identity, but . . . implies a white, middle- or upper-class, urban subject," by playing pop and pop-adjacent styles—what is often referred to as mainstream music.[12] Top 40 programmers in the 1980s played most of the songs on the upper portion of the *Billboard* "Hot 100" chart but, to maximize revenue, would often emphasize musical styles thought to attract white teens and their advertiser-friendly mothers—teens gave the stations hipness and energy, and older listeners paid the bills.[13] Minority audiences were tolerated but rarely catered to, as they lowered advertising rates.

The influence of this organizational model goes well beyond a radio station's profit margin. Jarl A. Ahlkvist argues that radio is a producer of culture rather than simply a disseminator or gatekeeper, because the radio industry creates new cultural products by combining music into sellable formats.[14] By linking specific audience demographics to styles of music, radio formats contribute to defining racial identities. Michael Omi and Howard Winant write that racial categories are created through "historically situated *projects* in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized," projects that through repetition and

[10] Philip M. Napoli, *Audience Economics: Media Institutions and the Audience Marketplace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). For more on racial bias in radio advertising, see Kofi Asiedu Ofori and Civil Rights Forum on Communications Policy, "When Being No. 1 Is Not Enough: The Impact of Advertising Practices on Minority-Owned & Minority-Formatted Broadcast Stations" (Washington, DC: Office of Communications Business Opportunities, Federal Communications Commission, 1999); Tom Joyner, "Losing National Buys," *Radio & Records*, September 25, 1987, 56; and Walt Love, "Ad Dollar$: Still Fighting Bias," *Radio & Records*, March 18, 1988, 46, 50.

[11] Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 21–25; Keith Negus, "The Business of Rap: Between the Street and the Executive Suite," in *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, ed. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 538.

[12] Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 21, 23. Deborah Wong describes the mainstream similarly as "a phantasmatic late capitalist framework that effectively defines and maintains an Elsewhere much as race records did during the first half of this century." Deborah Wong, *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 253. Also, see Barry Shank, "From Rice to Ice: The Face of Race in Rock and Pop," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[13] In the mid-1980s, *Billboard* expected Top 40 stations to play all of the songs in the upper reaches of its "Hot 100" chart without omitting or adding too many songs from any genre, and most industry members agreed that musical diversity was the lifeblood of a Top 40 station. See Joel Denver, "The Way It Was," *Radio & Records*, October 7, 1988, 58, 60; Joel Denver, "Shining Up the Crystal Ball," *Radio & Records*, January 11, 1991, 52, 54. For more on the teen/adult balance, see Alan Burns, "Maturing Generation Seeks New Formats," *Radio & Records*, March 29, 1991, 24; Joel Denver, "Making Money with Teens," *Radio & Records*, September 29, 1989, 41; Joel Denver, "Teen Titans," *Radio & Records*, October 6, 1989, 46, 48; Joel Denver, "Teens: Not a Tough Sell," *Radio & Records*, October 13, 1989, 50; Joel Denver, "Format Heart Pumps to Teen, Family Beat," *Radio & Records*, October 18, 1991, 52, 54.

[14] Jarl A. Ahlkvist, "Around the Dial: Commercial Radio and the Production of Popular Music," (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1995), 47, 307.

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reproduction become ways of making sense of people in the world.[15] I contend that radio programming is one such racial project, as formats create what Omi and Winant term "racial common sense" for understanding who listens to what.[16] Reporting in trade journals such as *Billboard* and *Radio & Records* documents the process of racial formation on the radio; in the pages of these journals, radio executives, programmers, musicians, and record executives debate what musical styles best generate demographically specific audiences.[17]

In an era of increasing fragmentation, Top 40 radio produced the mainstream, every so often incorporating new styles and rebranding these to be part of US mainstream popular music.[18] As Tamara Roberts argues, the mainstream in the 1980s was not defined by a specific sound but rather was "an arena of racial confrontation and negotiation" between artists, listeners, programmers, and other music industry members, where all players debated the inclusion of new musical styles.[19] By introducing and popularizing new genres, the Top 40 format defined this zone, normalizing each new style's position in the mainstream once it proved it could generate the desired profitable audience.

Top 40 radio stations in the mid-1980s played mostly pop and rock songs by white artists for mostly white audiences—Madonna, Bon Jovi, and George Michael were some of the decade's biggest stars. But they also played the most popular songs from other formats that programmers thought would appeal to their audience, a process called crossing over.[20] In the mid-1980s, many in the radio industry noticed that an increasing number of songs by Black artists such as Whitney

[15] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 56.

[16] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 60.

[17] For more on the utility of trade journals, see Simpson, *Early '70s Radio*, 5; and Anthony Kwame Harrison and Craig E. Arthur, "Reading *Billboard* 1979–89: Exploring Rap Music's Emergence through the Music Industry's Most Influential Trade Publication," *Popular Music and Society* 34, no. 3 (July 1, 2011): 310.

[18] Even though Top 40 stations in the 1980s did not play all of the hits, David Brackett contends that they "continued to evoke the mainstream in a symbolic sense in order to convey mass acceptance." Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 285. Eric Rothenbuhler and Tom McCourt argue that radio exposure is a large factor in a song's popularity. See Rothenbuhler and McCourt, "Commercial Radio and Popular Music: Processes of Selection and Factors of Influence," in *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, ed. Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, and Jason Toynbee (London: Routledge, 2005), 309. For more on the working relationship between the recording and radio industries, see Keith Negus, "Plugging and Programming: Pop Radio and Record Promotion in Britain and the United States," *Popular Music* 12, no. 1 (1993): 66.

[19] Tamara Roberts, "Michael Jackson's Kingdom: Music, Race, and the Sound of the Mainstream," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 23, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 23.

[20] Crossing over from one format or audience to another has a long history; for more, see Reebee Garofalo, "Crossing Over: 1939–1989," in *Split Image: African Americans in the Mass Media*, ed. Jannette L. Dates and William Barlow (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1990); David Brackett, "The Politics and Practice of 'Crossover' in American Popular Music, 1963 to 1965," *Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (December 21, 1994): 774–97; and Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*. For more on crossover music in the 1980s, see David Brackett, "Black or White? Michael Jackson and the Idea of Crossover," *Popular Music and Society* 35, no. 2 (May 1, 2012): 169–85; Jim Sernoe, "'Now We're on the Top, Top of the Pops': The Performance of 'Non-Mainstream' Music on Billboard's Albums Charts, 1981–2001," *Popular Music and Society* 28, no. 5 (December 1, 2005): 639–62; and Roberts, "Michael Jackson's Kingdom."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Houston, Lionel Richie, and Tina Turner were successfully crossing over from Urban radio playlists to Top 40 ones.[21] Only a few years earlier, Top 40 stations had played very little music by Black artists, responding to white audience backlash against disco in the late 1970s.[22] But by the mid-1980s, realizing how lucrative crossing Black artists over to wider and whiter audiences could be after the multi-format success of albums like Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, record companies regularly asked Black artists to create songs that would appeal to diverse audiences.[23] The wide appeal of these crossover songs meant that Top 40 and Urban stations played many of the same songs; by the end of 1986, Paul Grein of *Billboard* heralded "the breakdown of the color line between pop and black radio" as six out of the top seven pop songs were by Black musicians.[24] But, as David Brackett writes, the very notion of crossing over depends upon the existence of boundaries; despite musical cross-pollination and evidence of superstar acts crossing over, commercial radio's "color line"—its race-based format structure—was still firmly in place.[25]

Crossover Radio Begins

In 1986, a new station broadcasting out of Los Angeles began testing the solidity of that line. In February of that year, programmer Jeff Wyatt moved to the sunny City of Angels from Philadelphia, where he had been working at Urban station Power 99 for the last three years. In Los Angeles, Wyatt became program director at KPWR, Power 106, the month-old station owned by national radio group Emmis Broadcasting.[26] Industry insiders celebrated the arrival of what *Billboard* described as the area's first "high-powered urban outlet," which came on the air playing up-tempo music mostly from the Urban charts.[27] But Power 106 was not quite an Urban station: Emmis's regional vice president Doyle Rose, who helped create the station, admitted that he was not sure what format it fit into, joking that Emmis was "considering having an industry 'name the format' contest."[28]

Rose's confusion demonstrated that the station's playlist and audience did not match the standard conception of an Urban station. Around two-thirds of Power 106's playlist consisted of R&B and pop songs also played on KIIS, Los Angeles's long-time-dominant Top 40 station.[29] The other third was made up of less popular

[21] Fred Goodman and Nelson George, "Majors See Black Music Boom," *Billboard*, January 25, 1986, 1, 72. While this essay focuses on radio airplay, *Thriller* also opened doors for Black artists to start appearing on MTV, further incentivizing record companies to create music aimed at a crossover audience. See Jaap Kooijman, "Michael Jackson: *Motown 25*, Pasadena Civic Auditorium March 25, 1983," in *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time*, ed. Ian Inglis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 126.

[22] Weisbard, *Top 40 Democracy*, 63, 181.

[23] Goodman and George, "Majors See Black Music Boom," 1, 72.

[24] Paul Grein, "Chart Recap: Whitney Is Top Artist," *Billboard*, December 27, 1986, 93.

[25] Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, xiii, 311, 313. Tamara Roberts similarly notes that the concept of crossover only reinforces the "de facto white" nature of the mainstream. Roberts, "Michael Jackson's Kingdom," 22.

[26] Kim Freeman, "Wyatt Gets PD Nod at L.A.'s KPWR," *Billboard*, February 22, 1986, 14.

[27] Kim Freeman, "Welcome Mat Out for KPWR Los Angeles," *Billboard*, January 25, 1986, 12.

[28] Quoted in Freeman, "Wyatt Gets PD Nod at L.A.'s KPWR," 14.

[29] Freeman, "Wyatt Gets PD Nod at L.A.'s KPWR," 14.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

dance and up-tempo R&B hits released on 12-inch records intended for playing at clubs as well as songs that had "crossover potential that ha[d] not yet been realized."[30] The playlist, full of crossover music, was designed to attract an audience made up of Black, white, and Hispanic young adults, ideally between eighteen and thirty years old.[31] While radio stations all over the country have long attracted multiracial audiences regardless of programmer intent, so explicitly designing a station for this "Urban Coalition" audience had rarely been attempted on contemporary commercial FM radio. Reflecting on the station's beginnings, Emmis Vice President Rick Cummings claimed that the company did not know whether "something like this could reach two or three ethnic groups."[32]

Over the next six months, the station's ratings dramatically soared; by July it was the number one station in the Los Angeles area, the second largest radio market in the country.[33] Throughout the year, Power 106 and KIIS fought over the top spot in the market.[34] Regardless of exact ratings, the station was already making a mark on the industry: conventions that year were abuzz with discussions about the new hybrid format, 12-inch single purchases were on the rise, and in August, Emmis Broadcasting demonstrated their confidence in the concept by creating a similar "Contemporary Hit Urban" station in New York.[35]

Or at least that was the format description Yvonne Olson of *Radio & Records* used for Power 106. The radio industry did not quite know what to make of this station and had trouble classifying it within its racially defined format structure—it was hard for those in the radio industry to make sense of a station aimed at "two or three ethnic groups" within the industry's long-standing Black/white binary.[36] Intended for a coalition audience of Black, white, and Hispanic listeners, Power 106's playlists, which *Billboard* described as "upbeat, pop/urban fare," did not fit into the radio industry's preexisting categories, although radio journals tried: *Billboard* called it an "urban hybrid" and an "Urban/hit" station, while *Radio & Records* described it as an Urban station.[37] This word choice was not simply a question of semantics or identity—money was on the line, because the station's categorization, which denoted whether audiences were mostly white or non-white, determined advertising rates. Indicating the station's hybridity as well as his unwillingness to come down on one side of the debate for fear of financial consequences,

[30] Freeman, "Wyatt Gets PD Nod at L.A.'s KPWR," 14. Also see Freeman, "Welcome Mat out for KPWR Los Angeles," 12.

[31] "Emmis Turns on 'Power 106'," *Radio & Records*, January 17, 1986, 3, 9.

[32] Quoted in Olson, "Forging Formatic Frontiers," 70.

[33] Kim Freeman, "L.A.'s Power 106 Is Tops in Spring ARBs," *Billboard*, July 26, 1986, 1, 76.

[34] Kim Freeman, "Urban Outlets Hot in Summer ARBs," *Billboard*, October 25, 1986, 1, 86; Kim Freeman, "Newcomers Make Strong Show in Gotham, L.A. Arbs," *Billboard,* January 17, 1987, 1, 69; Kim Freeman, "Winter Arbs: Hot and Cold," *Billboard*, May 2, 1987, 1, 81.

[35] Adam White, "'Penguins' Under Fire, Etc.," *Radio & Records*, August 1, 1986, 39; Joel Denver, "Radio '86: Not a Programmer's Delight," *Radio & Records*, October 3, 1986, 46; Adam White, "The 12-Inch Single: Healthier Than Ever?," *Radio & Records*, October 3, 1986, 43; Olson, "Forging Formatic Frontiers," 70, 72.

[36] Quoted in Olson, "Forging Formatic Frontiers," 70.

[37] Kim Freeman, "Out of the Box," *Billboard*, January 31, 1987, 10; Freeman, "L.A.'s Power 106 Is Tops in Spring ARBs," 1; Kim Freeman, "Vox Jox," *Billboard*, December 20, 1986, 15; "Gilmore Returns as KJLH PD," *Radio & Records*, April 18, 1986, 3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Jeff Wyatt described the station as "CHR [Top 40]/Urban," a term that Urban programmer Lee Michaels agreed with, saying that it "isn't really Urban and really isn't CHR [Top 40]."[38]

The station's mix of Urban and Top 40 was the more comprehensible aspect of its programming. Yes, radio stations were usually Top 40 *or* Urban, not some "pop/urban" mixture, and, yes, they typically targeted majority white *or* majority Black audiences, not both. But some Urban stations had been attracting white audiences, given the cross-demographic appeal of Black superstars like Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie.[39] And Top 40 stations, also noticing Black artists' diverse appeal, were playing much of the same music; in early 1986, Los Angeles's Top 40 station KIIS reported that half of the songs they played were by Black musicians.[40]

Harder to explain was Power 106 trying to attract a Hispanic audience, as the commercial radio industry was only beginning to target this demographic. Like other forms of media, radio was rather slow to target Latinx audiences, although a few radio stations had been broadcasting Spanish-language programming since the 1920s, when individuals purchased time on English-language stations.[41] Following the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act in 1967, Spanish-language or bilingual public radio stations, Dolores Inés Casillas argues, have acted as "acoustic allies" for their local communities by acknowledging their presence and voicing their identities and political concerns.[42] However, the number of what Casillas describes as "Spanish-oriented" stations was limited; in 1980, there were only sixty-seven such stations nationwide, although this increased exponentially to 168 by 1986, 390 by 1990, and close to six hundred by 2000.[43]

Defining and monetizing Latinx audiences was complicated. Casillas's "Spanish-oriented" stations defined their audience through language preference, broadcasting mostly in Spanish to attract audiences of Spanish-language listeners.[44] Advertising agencies in the 1980s also used language as a way to classify certain Hispanic audiences. As Arlene Dávila writes, advertisers assumed that more "acculturated" Hispanic populations, such as those whose families had been in the United States

[38] Wyatt quoted in Freeman, "Wyatt Gets PD Nod at L.A.'s KPWR," 14; Michaels quoted in White, "'Penguins' Under Fire, Etc.," 39.

[39] For example, see "WDKX: Winning an Uphill Battle," *Radio & Records*, November 21, 1986, 64.

[40] Freeman, "Welcome Mat Out for KPWR Los Angeles," 12.

[41] De La Torre, "Sonic Bridging: Locating, Archiving, and Preserving Spanish-Language and Bilingual Radio in the United States," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 16, no. 4 (2018): 448. In certain regions, advertisers have paid more attention to Latinx audiences since the mid-1940s. See América Rodriguez, *Making Latino News: Race, Language, Class* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999), 30.

[42] Dolores Inés Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging: U.S. Spanish-Language Radio and Public Advocacy* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 24.

[43] Dolores Inés Casillas, "Listening to Race and Migration on Contemporary U.S. Spanish-Language Radio," in *Radio's New Wave: Global Sound in the Digital Era*, ed. Jason Loviglio and Michelle Hilmes (New York: Routledge, 2013), 97; Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 137.

[44] For more on Spanish-language radio, see, for example, Jillian M. Báez, *In Search of Belonging: Latinas, Media, and Citizenship* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018); Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*; Sonia De La Cruz, "Latino Airwaves: Radio Bilingüe and Spanish-Language Public Radio," *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 24, no. 2 (July 3, 2017): 226–37; Monica De La Torre, "'Programas Sin Vergüenza (Shameless Programs)': Mapping Chicanas in Community Radio in the 1970s," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 43, nos. 3–4 (2015): 175–90; and De La Torre, "Sonic Bridging."

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for several generations, were better targeted by English-language media.[45] Interestingly, until 1990, radio ratings measurement firm Arbitron identified potential Hispanic radio listeners by "Spanish surname" rather than language preference, and, as Casillas notes, the firm required the listeners they surveyed (or those around them) to have some English proficiency, as Spanish-language surveys were available only if requested in English.[46] This meant that, during these years, Arbitron failed to accurately measure the audience that Spanish-language stations were trying to cultivate, and almost certainly included the listening habits of English-dominant Latinx audiences in their Hispanic audience profile.[47] Until the mid 1980s, however, English-language radio stations rarely catered to these listeners.

Power 106, notably, acknowledged and took into account the distinct tastes and identities of English-speaking Hispanic listeners, creating an intentionally multicultural audience. Indicating the station's awareness of this audience, consultant Don Kelly, who devised the initial concept for the station, classified it as part of the "Urban Coalition Format."[48] This formatting, what one programmer deemed "California Urban," made the station unique; programmer Tony Gray noted that Los Angeles's large Hispanic population made it "diametrically different from any other market in the U.S."[49] It is important to note that English-speaking Hispanic listeners in Los Angeles, of course, had already been tuning into other local Top 40 and Urban radio stations. It was not *their* listening habits that were remarkable; rather, it was Power 106's recognition of and orientation towards this "California Urban" coalition audience that deviated from standard commercial radio programming practices.

Power 106's monetization of a multicultural coalition audience aligned with the broader contemporary trend of acknowledging and profiting from the multicultural makeup of the United States.[50] Jodi Melamed writes that during the 1980s and 1990s, many in the United States adopted a racial attitude of "liberal multiculturalism," advocating for pluralism in response to the growing diversity of the United States as well as mounting critiques of the failure of civil rights–era race-based movements exacting equal opportunities for all.[51] In contrast with the "more or less unchallenged ideological common sense of the first half of the century," that is, the melting pot ideal of monoculturalism, multiculturalism challenged the idea that the diverse public of the United States should assimilate into a single, homogeneous culture. Instead, it highlighted the distinct identities of diverse racial

[45] Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.*, 79.

[46] Dolores Inés Casillas, "Lost in Translation: The Politics of Race and Language in Spanish-Language Radio Ratings," in *Contemporary Latina/o Media*, ed. Arlene Dávila and Yeidy M. Rivero (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 215.

[47] Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 142.

[48] Quoted in Olson, "Forging Formatic Frontiers," 70.

[49] Chris Collins and Tony Gray quoted in White, "'Penguins' Under Fire, Etc.," 39.

[50] Jillian Báez notes that the press dubbed the 1980s "the Decade of the Hispanic" due to increased mainstream attention paid to this demographic group. See Báez, *In Search of Belonging*, 12.

[51] Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 26–27.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and ethnic groups.[52] Liberal multiculturalism in particular advocated for reforming preexisting institutions and constraints to better represent diverse interests; liberal multiculturalism inspired heightened visibility and acceptance of the United States' multicultural population, leading to more diverse reading lists in public schools, the institutionalization of Ethnic Studies in universities, the coalition politics of Jesse Jackson's National Rainbow Coalition, and even the creation of additional skin tone–colored markers and crayons.[53] Like Power 106, each of these examples of liberal multiculturalism simultaneously recognized *and* commodified previously ignored minority groups, using inclusion to create larger markets.[54]

The radio industry did not know how to adjust to Power 106's multicultural racial project. For more than a year, the trade journals argued with Power 106's staff about whether the station counted as a Top 40 station or an Urban station. During this period, *Billboard* and *Radio & Records* offered to include the station's playlist in their Urban charts, but staff at the station refused to report its playlists because they objected to trade magazines trying to "pigeonhole" the station.[55] As McDougal noted in early 1987, this meant that airplay on the most popular station in the second largest radio market in the country did not affect official measures of song popularity because the organization of the radio industry could not make space for a station that so overtly desegregated its local radio market.[56] Power 106 challenged the radio industry's unsophisticated racial logic, which simplistically assumed that white audiences mostly listened to Top 40 and other white-oriented stations, Black audiences mostly listened to Urban stations, and Hispanic audiences, if they lived in the right area, mostly listened to Spanish-language stations. Instead, Power 106 was defined by its multicultural audience. The station desegregated one part of the radio dial, monetizing multicultural audiences and normalizing their existence. In an industry that had for decades imagined audiences as racially segregated, Power 106 consciously created a multicultural public.

As the industry debated exactly how Power 106 fit within its preexisting format framework, other programmers around the country who were inspired by the

[52] David Theo Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions," in *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 11. See also John A. Garcia, "A Multicultural America: Living in a Sea of Diversity," in *Multiculturalism from the Margins: Non-Dominant Voices on Difference and Diversity*, ed. Dean A. Harris (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 30. Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield note that multiculturalism's early development occurred in the first half of the 1970s in elementary and secondary education. See Gordon and Newfield, "Multiculturalism's Unfinished Business," in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, ed. Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 76.

[53] Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*; Glynis Christine, "National Rainbow Coalition," in *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society*, ed. Richard T. Schaefer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 940; Peter McLaren, "White Terror and Oppositional Agency: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism," in *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 51.

[54] Marilyn Halter, "Review of *Latinos Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People*, by Arlene Dávila," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22, no. 1 (2002): 92.

[55] Wyatt, quoted in McDougal, "L.A. Turn-On Is a Top 40 Turnoff," G1.

[56] *Billboard* listed Los Angeles station KIIS-FM, which KPWR overtook in ratings in early 1987, as one of the five largest stations in the country. See, for example, "Power Playlists," *Billboard*, January 17, 1987, 18.

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station's success created similar stations, playing up-tempo dance music for multicultural audiences throughout the United States. Joel Salkowitz, for example, designed Emmis's New York station, WQHT, to have "enough of a twist to appeal to the typical [Top 40] audience, and a great percentage of Hispanics and some blacks."[57] The popularity of these stations in places such as Milwaukee, New Orleans, San Antonio, and Honolulu inspired MTV, the music video outlet famous for its reticence towards playing artists of color, to create a Friday night show of multiracial dance music, "Club MTV."[58] Power 106, in turn, was likely inspired by Miami's WHQT; in a similarly ethnically diverse radio market, WHQT had quietly yet successfully programmed pop, Urban, and dance music for white, Black, and Hispanic audiences since early 1985.[59] By the fall of 1987, *Billboard* tallied thirteen hybrid stations like Power 106 in the United States, mostly in urban areas, along with thirteen other Top 40 or Urban stations that leaned noticeably towards the other format.[60] Together, these stations' success struck a blow to the radio industry's simplistic model of assuming whites and Blacks by and large listened to separate stations, not to mention the added complexity of what to make of Hispanic audiences listening to the same stations.

While these stations all claimed to play music for a multicultural mix of Black, white, and Hispanic listeners, the ethnic and racial composition of an individual station's audience varied depending on each city's demographics and the makeup of the local radio market. For example, nine months after Power 106 came on air, the station estimated that at least 48 percent of their audience was made up of non-Black listeners; on the other coast, a year after New York's WQHT began broadcasting the audience was reported to be "57% white, 31% Hispanic, and 12% black."[61]

But these demographic terms failed to capture the diversity of listeners on these stations. The term Hispanic—criticized for emphasizing a connection to colonial Spain while ignoring the "nonwhite indigenous cultures of the Americas, Africa, and Asia, which historically have produced multicultural and multiracial peoples in Latin America and the United States"—collapses populations with diverse backgrounds, language preferences, and cultural histories into a single category.[62] Latinx,

[57] Quoted in Joel Denver, "Grappling for the Apple," *Radio & Records*, September 4, 1987, 60.

[58] Brian Chin, "Dance Trax," *Billboard*, May 16, 1987, 33.

[59] In 1986, program director Bill Tanner converted another Miami Top 40 station to a more hybrid format. Linda Thornton, "Miami Outlets Go for Pieces of Pie," *Billboard*, September 20, 1986, 10, 13.

[60] Kim Freeman, "Crossover Outlets Prove Their Power," *Billboard*, September 5, 1987, 1, 80.

[61] Lee Michaels, "Crossover Begins on Urban Radio," *Billboard*, October 4, 1986, 9; Joel Salkowitz, quoted in Denver, "Grappling for the Apple," 60.

[62] Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (London: Verso Books, 1989), 11. See also José A. Cobas, Jorge Duany, and Joe R. Feagin, "Introduction: Racializing Latinos," in *How the United States Racializes Latinos*, ed. José A. Cobas, Jorge Duany, and Joe R. Feagin (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 9. Angie Chabram Dernersesian notes that even prior to the wide adoption of the term Hispanic, similar pan-ethnic coalitions existed; she writes that as those with Latin American and Spanish backgrounds joined the Chicana/o movement, they "strategically gloss[ed] over their ethnic and cultural distinctions . . . for a chance to join in to forge an alliance." See Angie Chabram Dernersesian, "'Chicana! Rican? No, Chicana-Riqueña!': Refashioning the Transnational Connection," in *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1995), 272.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a term more recently embraced by many "because it has represented a more organic alternative to the government-imposed term 'Hispanic'," similarly erases the particularities of individuals' national backgrounds, racial identities, and cultural experiences.[63] Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, among others, argue that Afro-Latinx identities in particular have been marginalized; in the United States, mainstream understandings of race and ethnicity often separate Black and Latinx into discrete, non-overlapping identities despite the government officially measuring non-white Hispanics since the 1980 Census.[64]

Turning back to the radio industry, Arbitron and trade journals grouped together the tastes of all those who self-identified as Hispanic, even though—at the most superficial level—the self-identified Hispanic listeners tuning into Power 106 in Los Angeles had distinct musical tastes, not to mention racial identities and cultural backgrounds, from the self-identified Hispanic listeners tuning into WQHT in New York.[65] Industry personnel regularly overlooked the racial identity of Hispanic audiences, largely understanding them to be a discrete group that did not overlap with white or Black audiences. For example, while acknowledging their influence on his musical programming, Joel Salkowitz of New York's WQHT never disclosed how his station's racially diverse listeners of Puerto Rican background may have self-identified.[66]

Just over a year after Power 106 launched, *Billboard* resolved the problem of how to categorize stations aimed at a multicultural coalition audience by introducing a new chart recording airplay at these stations, the "Hot Crossover 30" chart.[67]

[63] Francis R. Aparicio, "(Re)Constructing Latinidad: The Challenge of Latina/o Studies," in *The New Latino Studies Reader: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective*, ed. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Tomás Almaguer (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 57. Also see Juan Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 8.

[64] Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, "Introduction," in *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, ed. Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2010), 1–18; Clara E. Rodríguez, "Counting Latinos in the U.S. Census," in *How the United States Racializes Latinos*, ed. José A. Cobas, Jorge Duany, and Joe R. Feagin (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 40–41. Also see Agustín Laó-Montes, "Afro-Latinidades: Bridging Blackness and Latinidad," in *Technofuturos: Critical Interventions in Latina/o Studies*, ed. Nancy Raquel Mirabal and Agustín Laó-Montes (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 117–40.

[65] In the late 1980s, Arbitron asked survey recipients to self-identify their race/ethnicity. See, for example, "Radio Hispanic Market Report: Los Angeles," The Arbitron Company, Winter 1989–Spring 1989, 1, https://www.worldradiohistory.com/Archive-Arbitron/ARB-LA-Hispanic-1989-Winter-Spring.pdf; Rhody Bosley and Alan Tobkes, "Presentation to Black Broadcasters Group," paper presented at the Radio 1987 NAB Convention, Anaheim, CA, 1987, 6, https://www.worldradiohistory.com/Archive-Ratings-Documents/Arbitron-Black-Broadcasters-Presentation-1987.pdf. Radio research firm questionnaires likely informed programmers' simplistic understanding of the racialization of Hispanic audiences; Arbitron in 1987 reported asking listeners if their household was "black, white, or other." See Bosley and Tobkes, "Presentation to Black Broadcasters Group," 6.

[66] As Jorge Duany argues, the Black/white racial binary in the mainland United States rarely makes sense for Puerto Ricans, who "have African as well as European backgrounds and range phenotypically across the entire color spectrum from black to brown to white." Duany, "Neither White nor Black: The Representation of Racial Identity among Puerto Ricans on the Island and in the U.S. Mainland," in *The New Latino Studies Reader: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective*, ed. Ramón A. Gutiérrez and Tomás Almaguer (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 164.

[67] Kim Freeman, "Hot 30 Crossover Chart Tracks New Breed of Radio," *Billboard*, February 28, 1987, 1, 83.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Programmers at stations in the format that was beginning to be called Crossover celebrated the creation of the chart, as they previously had been operating without the benefit of knowing national programming trends in their format. What's more, the chart demonstrated the popularity of Crossover songs that had not charted elsewhere because their airplay had not been previously recorded. This chart highlighted the rigidity of the radio industry, making it clear that stations which successfully challenged the racially demarcated radio landscape could not fit within previously existing categories. But it also gave Crossover stations an identity separate from Urban or Top 40, meaning that, as programmer Dave Allen put it, the stations could exist without having to be "lumped in with something we're not really doing."[68]

But the chart also "lumped" *individual* Crossover stations "in with something [they were] not really doing." Like many charts, the "Hot Crossover 30" chart consolidated data from stations across the country, despite vast and obvious differences in geography, demographics, and local radio markets and despite Crossover programmers' insistence that local demographics mattered more to programming their stations than any chart did.[69] *Billboard* acknowledged part of this complexity by categorizing Crossover stations according to their proximity to the Top 40 or Urban formats. But the diversity of these stations did not stop there; Joel Salkowitz noted that the particular ethnic and cultural background of the Hispanic segment of a Crossover station's audience—such as the large proportion of Hispanics of Mexican heritage in Los Angeles, Cuban heritage in Miami, and Puerto Rican heritage in New York—accounted for what *Billboard* recognized were "significant programming differences."[70]

Crossover Sounds

Due to the complex demographic makeup of their audience, each Crossover station played a unique set of songs, with the song selection often homologically reflecting the precise demographic profile of the intended audience. The stations, according to *Billboard* dance music journalist Brian Chin, did not try to cultivate a certain sound so much as they programmed records that other stations "generally ignored for an audience that was not directly served."[71] That said, playlists at Crossover stations were unified by their proclivity toward up-tempo pop, dance, and R&B and their avoidance of the guitar-driven rock songs so popular on traditional Top 40 stations. The week that *Billboard* created the Crossover chart in February 1987, for example, most Top 40 stations in the United States were playing quite a bit of pop and a fair amount of rock; their playlists contained Huey Lewis and the News, Journey, and Bon Jovi's number one single for three weeks running,

[68] Quoted in Freeman, "Hot 30 Crossover Chart Tracks New Breed of Radio," 83.
[69] See, for example, Terry Wood, "Jeff Wyatt Plays It by Ear at KPWR Los Angeles," *Billboard,* July 4, 1987, 21.
[70] Brian Chin, "Radio's Resurgent Dance Beat Puts Heat in 'Hot' Format," *Billboard,* July 18, 1987, D-3.
[71] Chin, "Radio's Resurgent Dance Beat Puts Heat in 'Hot' Format," D-3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

"Livin' on a Prayer."[72] Using slogans and descriptors such as "power," "hot," "The Fresh New Music Mix," and "danceable top 40 without any hard-edged rock records," Crossover stations rarely played these songs and instead played music that listeners might have heard in the club: up-tempo, danceable music with audible roots in disco or other Black dance music styles.[73] In Jon Pareles's belittling but largely accurate words, Crossover stations mostly played songs which "percolate and kick with an electronic drumbeat, an overlay of gleaming keyboard sounds and Latin percussion and, most important, a chirpy, girlish vocal dispensing come-ons or back-offs."[74] This included up-tempo R&B music (by artists such as Club Nouveau and Cameo), dance-pop derived from disco (by artists such as Samantha Fox and Cyndi Lauper, who Pareles described as "Madonna wannabes"), and freestyle (by artists such as the Cover Girls and Exposé).[75] But the Crossover chart revealed that Crossover stations also played more stylistically diverse songs such as Janet Jackson's shimmery ballad "Let's Wait Awhile," actor Bruce Willis's first foray into music with a cover of the Staple Singers' 1970s soul hit "Respect Yourself," and the Beastie Boys' rap-rock hybrid "(You Gotta) Fight for Your Right (To Party!)."[76]

At Power 106, playlists were aimed at women ages eighteen to thirty-four and were influenced by what Jeff Wyatt heard while strolling the Santa Monica pier; he claimed that he took notes at the beach of what tapes the "Hispanic kids" were playing, and advised other programmers to "be damned" with what was popular nationally because "it doesn't make a lot of sense to care about anything but your audience."[77] Across the country in New York, WQHT's Joel Salkowitz considered the most acute similarity between Power 106 and WQHT, the two biggest Crossover stations in the nation, to be their "general affinity for up-tempo, high-energy songs with a lot of high-end in the mix—like the 'Miami sound.'"[78]

Power 106 and WQHT were not alone in this regard: many Crossover stations centered their playlists around the "Miami sound," the genre more often called freestyle. Occasionally referred to as "Latin hip-hop," freestyle arose in the 1980s from the same majority Puerto Rican and African American communities in New York from which hip hop emerged; venues would play freestyle records in between rap songs or would alternate between hip hop and freestyle nights.[79] The style combined the electronic-rich, fast-paced beats of electro songs like Afrika Bambaataa & the

[72] "Power Playlists," *Billboard*, February 28, 1987, 20.

[73] Brian Chin described these stations as "so-called top 40/urban hybrid/crossover/hot/power radio stations." Chin, "Radio's Resurgent Dance Beat Puts Heat in 'Hot' Format," D-3.

[74] Jon Pareles, "Critic's Notebook: Clones of Madonna," *New York Times*, April 9, 1987, C25.

[75] Pareles, "Critic's Notebook: Clones of Madonna," C25.

[76] "Hot Crossover 30," *Billboard*, February 28, 1987, 16.

[77] Quoted in Wood, "Jeff Wyatt Plays It by Ear at KPWR Los Angeles," 21.

[78] Quoted in Jeff Green, "New York's HOT 103: Dancing in the Streets," *Radio & Records,* March 20, 1987, 34.

[79] Christina Verán, "Let the Music Play (Again)," *Village Voice*, April 11, 2006, https://www.villagevoice.com/2006/04/11/let-the-music-play-again/; Raquel Z. Rivera, *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 88, 93. For more on the Puerto Rican roots of hip hop as well as other Afro-Latinx influences on American popular music, see Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*.

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Soulsonic Force's "Planet Rock" with vaguely Latin rhythms, repetitive synthesizer riffs, and often rather stifled female vocals.[80] Singer K7 of TKA, one of the few male freestyle groups, claimed that the group took the "same breaks and beats, the hardness of, say, a Rakim track," but sang instead of rapped because "we weren't being embraced as rappers."[81] As K7 describes, freestyle arose as a response to the marginalization of Puerto Rican artists in hip hop culture as rap gained popularity and became understood as something created primary by African Americans, and African American males in particular.[82]

Developing playlists that appealed equally across their multiethnic audience was a problem for many Crossover programmers, whose careers in the radio industry relied on understanding (and generating) correspondences between musical styles and audiences of specific demographics. Despite a plethora of new releases designed to cross over between the R&B and pop charts, programmers found pleasing their coalition audience to be challenging, as their diverse audience segments' tastes did not always align. Often programmers' complaints about the difficulty of programming to a multicultural audience were based on a flawed conceptualization of their audience that racialized Hispanic listeners as a separate group apart from their Black or white audiences regardless of the actual racial identities of their Hispanic listeners.[83] Duff Lindsay of Miami's WHQT, for example, described his station's playlist as a careful negotiation between the tastes of the Black, white, and Hispanic segments of his audience. During music meetings, the staff would "openly discuss who [they thought] a song would appeal to, and who would be turned off by it," and they tried to only play songs that they anticipated at least two out of the three discrete demographic groups they simplistically assumed their audience was made up of would enjoy.[84] Another programmer recounted the "nightmare" experience of trying to balance the sound at his station, especially because it was difficult to find musical common ground between Hispanic and Black audiences.[85] Other programmers noted that freestyle divided their coalition audience, as Hispanic listeners preferred the style more than Black or white listeners.[86] All of these accounts demonstrate the inability of a multicultural framework making sense of diversity *within* individuals or groups; indeed, as Angie Chabram Dernersesian writes,

[80] David Toop, *Rap Attack 2: African Rap to Global Hip Hop* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1991), 174; Alexandra T. Vazquez, "Can You Feel the Beat?: Freestyle's Systems of Living, Loving, and Recording," *Social Text* 28, no. 1 (2010): 111.

[81] Quoted in Verán, "Let the Music Play (Again)."

[82] Verán, "Let the Music Play (Again)"; Alexandra T. Vazquez, "Instrumental Migrations: The Transnational Movements of Cuban Music" (PhD diss., New York University, 2006), 180; Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*, 128.

[83] For more on the prevalence of racializing Latinx people, see Rubén G. Rumbaut, "Pigments of Our Imagination: On the Racialization and Racial Identities of 'Hispanics' and 'Latinos,'" in *How the United States Racializes Latinos*, ed. José A. Cobas, Jorge Duany, and Joe R. Feagin (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009), 15–36.

[84] Quoted in Walt Love and Sean Ross, "The Return of the Zebra," *Radio & Records*, January 2, 1987, 44.

[85] Bob Perry, quoted in Sean Ross, "More Dance Stations Are Now Stepping to an Urban Beat," *Billboard*, October 6, 1990, 13.

[86] Ross, "More Dance Stations Are Now Stepping to an Urban Beat," 1, 13.

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multiculturalism presupposes that diversity occurs as "a mixture on the outside of us," rather than one that is also on the inside.[87]

For all these apparent complications, most Crossover programmers began noticing that all their diverse audience segments seemed to agree on one style: melodic, upbeat songs with rapped vocals in them.[88] For most of the 1980s, commercial radio stations of all formats had been hesitant to play rap. While DJs were unsure whether the genre's unique sound could fit onto their playlists—programmer Ric Lippincott, for example, claimed that rap was "very hard to program" because it was "difficult to line up next to a ballad, a top 40 hit, even Van Halen"—station management and sales staff were more concerned with the people associated with the genre.[89] In the 1980s, rap was a sonic symbol for poor Black urban youth due to press coverage which, Mark Fenster has demonstrated, approached the genre "as the expression of an essential racial difference: an authentic expression of 'blackness' and particularly of urban underclass 'blackness.'"[90] Radio personnel worried that advertisers would not want to associate their products with rap because of the perceived race and age of rap's audience, as minority and teen audiences lowered advertising rates.[91] In addition, programmers were concerned that playing rap would alienate adult audiences, who were understood to dislike the style.[92]

But many Crossover stations questioned contemporary radio sales practices privileging older and whiter audiences. One of the Top 40 format's long-standing problems was generating sufficient advertising revenue because of the youthfulness of the Top 40 audience. Advertisers' preferences for older audiences created tension between Top 40 station management, who needed to generate advertiser-friendly audiences, and programmers, who believed that teen listeners were important for the vitality of the format.[93] Crossover stations' upbeat dance mix often attracted larger teenage audiences than traditional Top 40 playlists, which might have made

[87] Dernersesian, "'Chicana! Rican? No, Chicana-Riqueña!,'" 288.

[88] Ross, "More Dance Stations Are Now Stepping to an Urban Beat," 1, 13.

[89] Quoted in Yvonne Olson, "As Rap Goes Pop, Some Say Black Radio Is Missing Out," *Billboard*, June 18, 1988, 68.

[90] Mark Fenster, "Understanding and Incorporating Rap: The Articulation of Alternative Popular Musical Practices within Dominant Cultural Practices and Institutions," *Howard Journal of Communications* 5, no. 3 (March 1, 1995): 225. Also see Scott Appelrouth and Crystal Kelly, "Rap, Race and the (Re)Production of Boundaries," *Sociological Perspectives* 56, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 301–26; and Loren Kajikawa, *Sounding Race in Rap Songs* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

[91] Jason Tanz, *Other People's Property: A Shadow History of Hip-Hop in White America* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2007), 84; Tricia Rose, "Contracting Rap: An Interview with Carmen Ashurst-Watson," in *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, ed. Tricia Rose and Andrew Ross (New York: Routledge, 1994), 139; Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: Picador, 2005), 52; Murray Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan, 2002), 130–1.

[92] See, for example, Sean Ross, "Teens, Adults Split on Top 40 Hits," *Billboard*, February 3, 1990, 12, 18; Joel Denver, "PD Forum: State of the Format," *Radio & Records*, September 7, 1990, 66, 68; Joel Denver, "What the Hell's Wrong with CHR," *Radio & Records*, December 7, 1990, 35–36.

[93] Programmers dealt with management pressure in a variety of ways, musical or otherwise: some only played music that they thought adults would tolerate, meaning they typically did not play rap; some dayparted their stations to create adult-friendly workday mixes and teen-friendly nighttime playlists; some created station content blatantly aimed at adults, such as promotions about child safety; and some pushed back, insisting that adults followed teen trends. See Kim Freeman, "Panel: Top 40's

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generating revenue at Crossover stations difficult.[94] However, sales staff at these stations resisted the idea that pandering to adult musical taste was necessary for their stations' financial solvency. Charlotte Crossover programmer Mark Shands claimed that his station made "a lot of money" from generating adult listeners despite playing teen-oriented music because "almost all teens have parents, and teens often control the radio in the home and especially in the car."[95] Power 106's general manager Phil Newmark agreed, insisting that it was "bullshit to think you can't make money with teens."[96] Crossover stations often modified their sales strategies; for example, rather than try for the highly coveted advertising accounts that preferred adult audiences between twenty-five and forty-nine, Newmark worked to find advertisers who favored audiences between twelve and thirty-four. He also priced commercial spots by audience demographic, charging the most for commercials aimed at teens. With enough teen and young adult advertisement buys, he calculated, the station did not have to work with companies who wanted older audiences.[97] This meant that the station, and others like it, did not need to cater to the tastes of older audiences, making it easier to add rap to their playlists.

What's more, rappers in the late 1980s were making tracks that fit well onto Crossover station playlists, creating songs that mixed sonic elements of hip hop with the pop, R&B, freestyle, and dance music styles that Crossover radio was already playing. As I've expanded on elsewhere, many artists influenced by hip hop found success in the late 1980s by combining the sounds of pop and R&B with rapped vocals, hard-hitting drum machine beats, record scratches, sampling techniques, and other musical elements of hip hop.[98] New jack swing singers used hip hop–inflected beats as their musical backgrounds, and their blend of danceable sung R&B and hip hop made the style easy to program on Crossover stations. Bobby Brown's "Don't Be Cruel," for example, peaked at number two on the "Hot Crossover 30" chart thanks to Brown singing and rapping atop a sparse hip hop–inspired beat.[99] Pop rap artists used sung choruses and upbeat rapped lyrics to close the sonic distance between rap and dance pop; for example, Young M.C.'s 1989 pop rap hit "Bust A Move" featured a chorus with a catchy sung melody and clearly enunciated lyrics that Janine McAdams of *Billboard* noted are "inventive, humorous [and] don't offend."[100] And occasionally, artists combined forces to

Sounding Good," *Billboard,* September 27, 1986, 10; Denver, "Teen Titans," 46, 48; and Denver, "Making Money with Teens," 41.

[94] For example, in February 1988, KPWR generated the largest teen audience of any Los Angeles radio station. See Joel Denver, "Power 106 Leads L.A. Market Again," *Radio & Records*, February 19, 1988, 40, 42. According to Phoenix programmer Rick Stacy, making money at a Crossover station was difficult because "the median age of [his] station was 19, and you can't live on that." Quoted in Phyllis Stark, "Top 40 Swinging Mainstream?" *Billboard*, February 12, 1994, 111.

[95] Quoted in Joel Denver, "Teen Titans," 46.

[96] Quoted in Denver, "Teens: Not a Tough Sell," 50.

[97] Denver, "Teens: Not a Tough Sell," 50.

[98] Amy Coddington, "'Check Out the Hook While My DJ Revolves It': How the Music Industry Made Rap into Pop in the Late 1980s," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hip Hop Music*, ed. Justin D. Burton and Jason Lee Oakes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[99] "Hot Crossover 30," *Billboard*, September 24, 1988, 92.

[100] Janine McAdams, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, October 7, 1989, 21.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

replicate the kind of environment out of which freestyle originated; freestyle group Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam teamed up with R&B/hip hop group Full Force on the 1987 track "Go For Yours," and rapper and member of the Boogie Boys Romeo J. D. rapped on freestyle group Sweet Sensation's 1989 hit "Sincerely Yours."[101]

Hip hop rapidly became an integral part of the sound of Crossover stations. The percentage of songs with rapped vocals on the "Hot Crossover 30" increased substantially between 1987 and 1990, from about 8 percent of the chart to one-third of it, and many other songs appeared on the chart that lacked rapped vocals but were otherwise sonically indebted to hip hop's musical texture. According to some program directors surveyed by *Billboard*, their Hispanic listeners' tastes were "becoming blacker," meaning that the listeners they simplistically categorized as Hispanic increasingly liked the same music as those they categorized as Black.[102] While this development failed to push programmers to acknowledge the diversity of their Hispanic listeners or consider the possibility that many of their Hispanic listeners might already have also identified as Black, it made programming their stations easier because all members of their diverse audience agreed on a style: pop- and R&B-influenced rap.[103] Indeed, they liked this style so uniformly that *Billboard*'s Sean Ross hypothesized in 1990 that artists like Bell Biv Devoe and MC Hammer were safer to play on Crossover stations than the freestyle that these stations had been playing because not all demographics who listened to the stations still liked freestyle. Rap, on the other hand, was a "common denominator" between the divergent tastes of all three parts of Crossover stations' multicultural audiences, meaning that rap songs were easy and convenient additions to playlists.[104] By 1989, Crossover stations were playing more rap than any other commercial radio format, and in 1989 and 1990, songs with rap in them charted better than any other style—pop, R&B, ballads, freestyle, rock—that the Crossover format played.[105]

Broadcasting Multiculturalism

As Crossover stations tinkered with their playlists, they exerted influence on more mainstream Top 40 stations. When *Billboard* debuted the "Hot Crossover 30" chart in 1987, Joel Salkowitz noted the possibility of this format influencing mainstream Top 40 stations, claiming that were *he* programming a straight-ahead Top 40 station, he would "certainly be looking at this chart to pick up a competitive edge

[101] Freestyle producers also worked with hip hop artists. For example, the Latin Rascals produced the Fat Boys featuring Chubby Checker's "The Twist," a song that Crossover radio programmers embraced. The week of its release, music director Chris Bailey at the Crossover station in Charlotte, North Carolina, recommended the song to *Billboard*'s readership. See "Fat Boys Are Coming Back Hard Again," *Billboard*, June 11, 1988, 1; Yvonne Olson, "Outa' the Box," *Billboard*, June 18, 1988, 10.

[102] Ross, "More Dance Stations Are Now Stepping to an Urban Beat," 1.

[103] Ross, "More Dance Stations Are Now Stepping to an Urban Beat," 1, 13.

[104] Ross, "More Dance Stations Are Now Stepping to an Urban Beat," 13.

[105] Olson, "As Rap Goes Pop, Some Say Black Radio Is Missing Out," 1, 68; Leo Sacks, "The Majors," *Billboard*, December 16, 1989, R-3, R-25, R-28, R-32.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with some fresher music."[106] And mainstream Top 40 stations did just this, watching the newest format closely for musical inspiration. Crossover stations had quite a bit in common with mainstream Top 40 stations: most of their operating staff had experience working at Top 40 stations, were familiar with Top 40 audiences, and understood the game of how to simultaneously satisfy conservative advertisers and more adventurous listeners. Recognizing these similarities, many Top 40 programmers treated Crossover playlists as testing grounds for songs that they were considering playing on their own stations, and began adding the most popular songs from the format to their playlists.[107] And, thus, as Crossover radio embraced "common denominator" rap songs to help soothe their programming troubles, they influenced Top 40 radio to start programming these very same songs.

By the end of the decade, Crossover programming had so influenced Top 40 programming that the two formats were virtually indistinguishable. In 1988, *Billboard* chart editor Michael Ellis described the relationship between Crossover and Top 40 stations by writing that Crossover stations "play a music mix that's a twist on top 40" that could be "the new top 40 for some large urban markets, particularly those with a large Hispanic population."[108] A year later, *Billboard* renamed the "Hot Crossover 30" chart to the "Top 40/Dance" chart, reflecting its closeness to the Top 40 format.[109] By the end of 1990, the "twist" that distinguished the Crossover format from Top 40 was so negligible that *Billboard* eliminated the chart altogether.[110] While some Crossover stations had moved more mainstream since the chart's inception, this was not the reason *Billboard* cited for the change; rather, the periodical claimed that the format's "success has influenced the Hot 100 Singles chart to such a great extent that a separate chart to break out dance titles is no longer necessary."[111] What had once been such a foreign formatting idea that it necessitated its own chart was now simply Top 40. The music that had once been only for specially cultivated multicultural audiences was now part of the mainstream.

But, of course, radio does not just play music—it commodifies audiences and formats racial identity. In recognizing and monetizing young diverse audiences, Crossover stations reshaped the radio industry. The Crossover format transformed the radio industry's understanding of local markets by acknowledging the presence and unique tastes of Latinx audiences. In so doing, Crossover programmers

[106] Quoted in Kim Freeman, "Hot 30 Crossover Chart Tracks New Breed of Radio," *Billboard*, February 28, 1987, 83.

[107] Sean Ross, "PDs Struggle with Crossover Logic," *Billboard*, January 28, 1989, 1, 12. In 1988, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that all but one of the fourteen songs that reached number one on *Billboard*'s "Hot Crossover 30" chart that year made it to the top five on the "Hot 100," demonstrating that Top 40 programmers were regularly and frequently incorporating the popular songs from Crossover stations onto their playlists. See Paul Grein, "Mass-Appeal Dance Music Still Calling the Tune: But Some Record Producers Are Hoping for a New Voice to Break Through," *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 1988, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-01-06/entertainment/ca-22857_1_dance-music. In 1988, *Billboard* made this type of monitoring easier by moving the "Hot Crossover 30" chart closer to the "Hot 100" chart. See Michael Ellis, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, September, 24, 1988, 92.

[108] Ellis, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," 92.

[109] Michael Ellis, "Hot 100 Singles Spotlight," *Billboard*, September 9, 1989, 84.

[110] "Billboard Drops Crossover Radio Airplay Charts," *Billboard*, December 8, 1990, 84.

[111] "Billboard Drops Crossover Radio Airplay Charts," 84.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

capitalized on one of the fastest growing demographics in the United States, as the Hispanic population increased by over 50 percent during the 1980s.[112] The number of Spanish-language radio stations also increased by over 500 percent during the same period, but Crossover station programmers acknowledged that Spanish-language stations did not always meet the needs of young language-diverse Hispanic listeners, who were the "linchpin" of Crossover station audiences.[113] Many Crossover programmers, like Jeff Wyatt walking along the Santa Monica pier, intently focused their programming on Hispanic audiences.[114] Bob Perry of San Antonio station KTFM, for example, understood his demographic "bull's-eye" as "Hispanic, aged 18–34," or more precisely as a "25- or 26-year-old woman who likes dance music and thinks she's up to date on music, movies, fashions, and the new nightclubs and restaurants. She may not be a trendsetter, but in her mind she is."[115] By 1990, Crossover station programmers recognized that musical taste was not bound by demographics—their multicultural audiences agreed on R&B- and pop-influenced rap—and they acknowledged that their Hispanic listeners' tastes were not that different than those of their other audience segments. Perry claimed that "If you go to the Spanish clubs where they play Tejano music . . . you'll discover those artists and songs sound like [freestyle group] Exposé or [new jack swing singer/rapper] Bobby Brown."[116] By playing music for a coalition audience of Black, white, and Hispanic listeners, and by recognizing the commonalities and distinctions of these demographic groups, Crossover stations embraced the type of pluralism associated with liberal multiculturalism.

However, representation on playlists did not often extend into representation in Crossover station offices. Most Crossover stations were owned and operated by white radio professionals who hired DJs, program directors, and sales staff who had experience at Top 40 stations, most of whom were also white.[117] And although these stations' playlists were stylistically varied, their non-musical presentations rarely represented the diversity of the artists they played. Knowing that to do otherwise would lower their advertising rates, these stations tried to maintain a Top 40 identity, usually by encouraging white-sounding DJ patter to give their stations a white "stationality." For example, when asked how a Black DJ could get a job at a Crossover station, Joel Salkowitz replied that any DJ he would consider hiring

[112] "Radio Plays Key Role in Hispanic Target Ads," *Radio & Records,* September 6, 1991, 1.

[113] Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging*, 17; and Chin, "Radio's Resurgent Dance Beat Puts Heat in 'Hot' Format," D-3.

[114] This targeting differentiated Crossover from the Disco format, a white/Black coalition format that briefly trended in the late 1970s before the "disco sucks" movement precipitated its hasty demise at the end of the decade. See Sean Ross, "A Decade After Disco: Some Rock, Some Dance," *Billboard*, April 22, 1989, 10, 12, 20.

[115] Quoted in Joel Denver, "KTFM: Dancin' to Dominance," *Radio & Records*, June 14, 1991, 42.

[116] Quoted in Denver, "KTFM: Dancin' to Dominance," 42.

[117] Walt Love, "Mixed Blessings," *Radio & Records*, December 12, 1986, 111–13; Mark Gunn, "Racism in Radio?," *Radio & Records*, April 10, 1992, 13; Ross, "PDs Struggle with Crossover Logic," 1, 12; Sean Ross and Yvonne Olson, "Vox Jox," *Billboard*, September 17, 1988, 10.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

needed to sound like they fit on his radio station, implying verbal whiteness as the norm regardless of the multicultural musical sound of the station.[118]

As Crossover stations generated multicultural audiences by capitalizing on the popularity of rap, a genre mostly made by Black artists, these same stations failed to represent their local Black communities. In his critique of multiracial political movements of the 1990s, Jared Sexton demonstrates that, although these movements claimed to be the "logical extension of the civil rights movement," they had profound anti-Black effects.[119] He writes that multiracialism acted as a "rationalizing discourse for the continued and increasing social, political, and economic *isolation* of blacks," as the coalition politics of these movements decentered Black interests.[120] Stations like Power 106, which Jeff Wyatt claimed was "not defined in color" but was instead "defined in sound," downplayed their Black audiences, rarely playing advertisements from identifiably Black businesses and denying their closeness to the Urban format because of advertiser prejudice.[121] They were often criticized for, in the words of Urban programmer Michelle Santosuosso, "playing [Black] music but not educating or going into the [Black] community."[122] Norfolk, Virginia Urban programmer Steve Crumbley complained that, unlike Urban stations, Crossover stations were not "going into the projects. They [were] not going into black neighborhoods—not even affluent black neighborhoods—because they [did] not want to 'damage their image.'"[123] The rise of Crossover stations led Pittsburgh Program Director Keith Clark to conclude that "White people like black music, but they're not really into the black experience."[124]

Crossover stations' failure to fully represent minority listeners had financial payoffs. Perhaps because their multicultural coalition audiences were not always reflected in their (largely white) management structures or their political leanings, these stations could choose to eschew these audiences when necessary to reap financial rewards. As Ruth Wilson Gilmore notes, forms of "official antiracism" such as liberal multiculturalism have "steadied, rather than dissolved, race as a structuring force of capitalism."[125] Although Crossover stations helped incorporate marginalized listeners and their musical tastes into the mainstream, they failed to dismantle racist advertising practices, as the format itself benefited from their very existence. *Radio & Records* columnists Walt Love and Sean Ross pointed out in early 1987

[118] Sean Ross, "'Why' Questions Rule Radio Panels," *Billboard*, July 30, 1988, 10. For more on racialized voices, see Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019); and Jennifer Lynn Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: NYU Press, 2016).

[119] Jared Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes: Antiblackness and the Critique of Multiracialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 49.

[120] Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*, 35. David Brackett writes that the radio industry has long been concerned about the effects of racial integration on Black radio. See Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 253.

[121] Quoted in Joel Denver, "Power 106 Closes In on KIIS," *Radio & Records*, August 14, 1987, 43. See also Love and Ross, "The Return of the Zebra," 44; Sean Ross, "Top 40s Let Black Audience Slip to Urbans," *Billboard*, March 9, 1991, 5, 17, 22.

[122] Quoted in Phyllis Stark and Carrie Borzillo, "Gavin Attendees Playful & Serious," *Billboard*, March 5, 1994, 75.

[123] Quoted in Walt Love, "Facing the Churban Challenge," *Radio & Records*, July 19, 1991, 46.

[124] Quoted in Stark and Borzillo, "Gavin Attendees Playful & Serious," 75.

[125] Gilmore is quoted on the cover of Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that this situation raised the specter of "two separate but not very equal drinking fountains dispensing similar music": one with industry connections and advertiser backing and the other fighting for financial solvency.[126]

Furthermore, the Crossover format chipped away at the cultural and economic power of the Black sector of the music industry. Previously, Top 40 airplay of Black artists was dependent on their success on Urban stations.[127] This meant that Urban stations—which were typically managed by, sometimes owned by, and certainly intended for Black Americans—had editorial control over what Black music crossed over to the mostly white audiences at Top 40 stations.[128] But as the Crossover format prospered, Top 40 programmers had another source for determining which songs by Black artists had mass appeal. Instead of looking to playlists on Urban stations, they began watching Crossover stations' playlists, which some programmers thought were better indicators of what new songs the Top 40 audience might embrace. By the late 1980s, most songs by Black artists needed to demonstrate success on Crossover stations, rather than on Urban stations, before Top 40 programmers would consider playing them.[129]

This declining relevancy of Urban radio changed the relationship between the radio and record industries, as record companies noticed that Urban stations were no longer as influential as they had once been.[130] In 1990, Kenny Ortiz, director of A&R for MCA's Black music division, revealed to *Billboard* that labels no longer waited to see how Black acts did on Urban stations before crossing them over. They instead marketed them towards Urban, Crossover, and Top 40 stations at the same time, meaning that the labels "almost d[id]n't really need [Urban] radio."[131] And it increasingly seemed that labels no longer needed their Black music divisions. As Black music became more mainstream in the 1990s, thanks to the influence of Crossover stations, several major labels reduced the size of their Black music divisions without finding the mostly Black staff in these divisions other jobs.[132]

[126] Love and Ross, "The Return of the Zebra," 44. More tangibly, in the first year of the Crossover format's existence, Sean Ross counted more new Crossover stations than new Urban stations. See Ross, "B/U Fall Wars '86," *Radio & Records*, November 14, 1986, 64, 68.

[127] Reebee Garofalo criticizes crossover for just this reason, that it places an unequal burden on Black performers because they need to show success on Urban radio stations before Top 40 will consider playing them. See Garofalo, "Culture Versus Commerce: The Marketing of Black Popular Music," *Public Culture* 7, no. 1 (September 21, 1994): 277.

[128] Garofalo, "Culture Versus Commerce"; Nelson George, "The Rhythm and the Blues," *Billboard*, March 18, 1989, 27; and Terri Rossi, "Terri Rossi's Rhythm Section," *Billboard*, December 2, 1989, 67.

[129] Ross, "PDs Struggle with Crossover Logic," 1, 12.

[130] Ross, "PDs Struggle with Crossover Logic," 1, 12. David Brackett notes that increasing crossover opportunities in the early 1980s did not often translate to economic equality; see Brackett, *Categorizing Sound*, 300.

[131] Ortiz, quoted in Janine McAdams, "Competitive R&B Climate Poses A&R Challenge," *Billboard,* September 8, 1990, 24.

[132] See Walt Love, "Top-of-Mind Issues Facing UC PDs," *Radio & Records*, April 28, 1995, 37.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Where Hip Hop Lives

But, of course, this is not how the story ends. Crossover radio, now referred to as Rhythmic CHR/Top 40 or Rhythmic Contemporary radio, still can be heard broadcasting music to multicultural audiences across the United States. In the fall of 2012, Nielsen counted 145 Rhythmic stations in the United States, and in the fall of 2018 the company reported that Rhythmic CHR was the thirteenth-most-listened-to radio format in the country.[133] And in an era in which hip hop is easily the most popular genre of music in the nation, it is clear that this format played a role in facilitating hip hop's mainstream popularity.

To get a sense of the complex legacy of this story, let's return one final time to Los Angeles. In 1991, Power 106 substantially increased the amount of hip hop the station played, eventually becoming the station "Where Hip Hop Lives" on the West Coast. Sister station WQHT in New York made a similar programming move a couple years later, in time adopting the same slogan and becoming what is arguably the most important radio station for hip hop in the country, Hot 97.[134] But even as Crossover radio more openly embraced hip hop's Black sound, the racial politics of broadcasting to multicultural audiences remained complicated. In 1993, Black community activists in Los Angeles denounced Power 106 for, among other reasons, playing rap songs with "racially demeaning" lyrics.[135] Nationally, many Urban stations responded to similar criticisms by editing out certain profanities and deleting the more offensive songs from their playlists.[136] But Power 106, like other Crossover stations which "didn't have to deal that much with community pressures and . . . advertising concerns," according to the director of rap promotions at Polydor Records, continued playing songs that Black community activists objected to.[137] Indeed, the station justified playing this music by pointing out its multiculturalism; in response to these criticisms, general manager Doyle Rose claimed that the station only played songs that "unifie[d] the largest possible multicultural audience."[138] Only after members of the local Black community launched a successful boycott of companies advertising on the station did Program Director Rick Cummings decide to bleep the n-word, saying that although he did not want to "tell [Black rappers like] Snoop Doggy Dogg how to address his homies," he conceded that the station might be "doing harm by legitimizing the word for other cultures that can't or don't understand the black culture."[139]

[133] "Radio Today 2013: How America Listens to Radio," Arbitron, 2013; and "Audio Today 2019: How America Listens," The Nielsen Company, 2019.

[134] Steve Hochman, "All Shook Up: For Power 106 and the Beat, Sometimes Even Good Ratings Are Not Enough," *Los Angeles Times*, May 28, 1998, 23. WQHT transitioned to the station "Where Hip Hop Lives" on the East Coast in 1993. Eric Boehlert, "Hip-Hop Takes Manhattan, with Help from Hot 97," *Billboard*, September 17, 1994, 1, 91, 111. For more on the transition to hip hop programming, see Dan Charnas, *The Big Payback: The History of the Business of Hip-Hop* (New York: New American Library, 2010), 326–51.

[135] "Street Talk," *Radio & Records*, December 3, 1993, 16.

[136] Phyllis Stark et al., "Gangsta Rap under the Gun," *Billboard*, December 18, 1993, 1, 141.

[137] Quoted in Havelock Nelson, "Rapping Up '93," *Billboard*, November 27, 1993, 31.

[138] Rose, quoted in "Street Talk," 16.

[139] Quoted in "NY, L.A. Stations Announce Curbs on Questionable Songs," *Radio & Records*, December 10, 1993, 1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196320000462 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Unsurprisingly, it seemed that simply listening to music made by and for minorities did not resolve centuries of racial discrimination in the United States. And the same was true for the Crossover format more generally; although these stations challenged the racial segregation of the radio and record industries by commodifying multiracial publics, the musical color line was simply too ingrained, as they failed to dismantle structural racism in those very same industries.

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