



AIRCHECK

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Split Personality

WFLA/Tampa afternoon host, and **Dial-Global** nationally syndicated personality **Todd Schnitt** is a busy guy. So is “MJ,” the morning guy down the hall at legendary Tampa Bay CHR WFLZ. Both shows have dominant ratings in their respective dayparts and both have been rated #1 in 25-54 adults simultaneously in their drive time slots. Why is that interesting? Well, “Todd” and “MJ” are one in the same person. I managed to grab a few mobile minutes with Schnitt as he cruised the supermarket aisles on the way home from his two-a-day hosting schedule to talk about his new nationwide radio show and his concerns that a new administration in Washington could bring about a return of the Fairness Doctrine.



TODD SCHNITT

Talk a little about your split personality.

I don’t really think there is one. I’m the same guy on both shows, just the formatics and some of the content are different. But, they’re both talk shows.

Who were some of the first talk hosts you listened to?

I tuned into music radio at a very early age. I was fascinated by radio and always knew it was what I wanted to do. As a teenager I got a job as a weekend board op at **WNIS/Norfolk** running network talk shows and I listened to hosts like Ira Fistel, Ray Broom, Bernard Meltzer, Michael Jackson, Owen Spann and Sally Jesse Raphael. Those were really the first Talk radio shows I listened to.

What’s the essence of your afternoon talk show and have you had to make any adjustments to it since the national rollout?

We were on regionally before the national deal, so I think the show had already adopted a national scope personality. And keep in mind that Florida -- or, as I call it, ‘the freak show state’ -- is always a hotbed of news and topics for discussion. There’s a reason why Fark.com has a Florida tag, ya know? This state can be pretty bizarre. So even a lot of the local and regional stuff ends up being national fodder. As to the essence of the show, I just take a look at the world everyday and decide what’s important to talk about in an irreverent and humorous way. And we try to keep things pretty fast-paced.

As stations continue to evolve and look for the next generation of national Talk show hosts, what do you think makes your show one that programmers should consider including in their lineup?

I hear a lot of predictable Talk radio out there and I think we deliver a show that is totally unpredictable and packaged in a way that is different and a lot edgier than some of the more dry and stodgy shows I hear out there. Our show is all about

entertainment first. I’m not the preacher and I’m not the teacher. I just want to be the entertainer. And within that parameter we can deal with it all - the funny and the serious. We can deal with everything from the most intricate issues to pop culture morons who are in the news.

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You don’t specifically do a political talk show, but you do talk about issues that are political. So what’s your take on the potential of a return of the Fairness Doctrine from the new Democratic administration and congress moving into DC next January?

My eyes have been on this issue for a very long time, I have a folder about 8 inches thick with material on the Fairness Doctrine. I think it’s scary and it is clearly an attempt to suppress free speech. I would imagine if it is reinstated, it will ultimately end up being challenged to the Supreme Court. Although I think our show has the ability to adapt better than most, it’s an issue we should all be concerned about. I don’t think it will come up right away, but face it -- [Senate leader] **Harry Reid** and [Speaker of the House] **Nancy Pelosi** have both said they want it. I think they really want to get back at Talk radio. It’s personal for them. But it is just such a bankrupt notion. Let liberal talk succeed or fail on it’s own. Let the marketplace decide what it wants and what it doesn’t. Trust me, there isn’t a radio operator in America who wouldn’t flip every AC or Country station they own to liberal Talk tomorrow if they thought they could make money with it. Actually they’d probably do it by eight o’clock tonight, they won’t even wait ‘til tomorrow.

So, any advice for Talk radio in the months ahead as this issue potentially evolves?

Pay attention to the enemy and keep your powder dry. I would hope there would be a huge outcry from Americans over any sort of attempt to resurrect the Fairness Doctrine, stifle free speech, trample on the first amendment and change the media landscape, as we know it. I think it would result in the equivalent of a radio civil war.

So, at the end of the day, what is it that you hope a listener will take away from your show after agreeing to spend a couple of hours with you?

Number one, I hope you were entertained. I also hope you leave a little bit more informed and it makes you say to a friend, “Hey, you won’t believe what I just heard on Schnitt.” I want to be the guy who people say, “It’s three o’clock, turn on the Schnitt show.”