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## Oldies Are Goodies Again in New York



Lenore Skenazy

For the past two years, WCBS-FM has been the Walter O'Malley of radio stations.

Maybe it didn't take the Dodgers out of Brooklyn, but it sure whacked the joy out of New York's airwaves when it ditched its beloved oldies format and replaced it with something called "Jack FM." Out went the Platters; in came all those groups who had hits in the '80s. You know ... uh ... those groups, those hits.

There were some hits in the '80s, weren't there?

Far worse than just tossing the tunes, however, WCBS tossed its humanity; its deejays. "Cousin Brucie," Harry Harrison, Dan Ingram, and others — all New York institutions — were dumped like the magic lamp mistaken for old junk. Instead, the station interspersed its new mishmash of songs with quips prerecorded in Canada.

These had all the local flavor of a Hot Pocket. And believe it or not, this was supposedly the beauty of Jack: It was just like an iPod, albeit one programmed by some guy far away with bad taste and zero personality. What's not to like?

Besides every single second, I mean? The station stank, shrank, sank. And this explains why, next week, it is switching back to its former format and hoping all is forgiven.

Is it? "New Yorkers are very nonforgiving," Bruce Morrow — aka Cousin Brucie — said in that flannel martini voice of his.

For a couple of generations, Mr. Morrow was second family to a wide swath of New Yorkers. "When Cousin Brucie was on the radio — and I'm on the radio now, I'm on Sirius — I'm a friend. I talk to people," Mr. Morrow said (sometimes in the third person). "You'd be in your car, or the bathroom, or the bed, and you'd have a friend with you." Him, that is. As CBS was showing him the door, Mr. Morrow said, "I warned them: You don't fool with the culture of New York City."

They learned that the hard way. Since the switch in June of '05, WCBS-FM has dropped to 16th

place in the local market from eighth. Revenues have slumped 30%. And anyone still paying attention seems just tickled by the plunge.

"From the day they did it, it was a message that boomers are no longer relevant," Marty Appel, the Yankees' publicist from 1968 to 1991, said. "I gave it [Jack] a few weeks' trial — the Katie Couric trial period — and it just didn't resonate for me. So it drove me to buy an iPod and load it up with the music I love." (Particularly the "Bristol Stomp," by the Dovells.)

So much for Jack being the iPod killer. And really, does it make any sense for radio to fight the iPod by being an unprogrammable version of it? That's like fighting TV by offering people shoeboxes with a picture of Teri Hatcher glued inside. Radio should fight back with its strength, the human touch.

"There's nothing as attractive as the idea of somebody presenting the music to you," the publisher of the radio magazine Talkers, Michael Harrison, said. "Great disc jockeys made the music sound better by giving it meaning."

And the WCBS disc jockeys were some of the greatest.

"They'd go, 'Do you remember this? Oh my gosh, this was one of our tops songs back in the '60s. Frankie Valli never sounded better!'" the author of "Punk Marketing," Richard Laermer, recalled. "It was patter, real patter, and very New York. Getting rid of them was like tearing down the Empire State Building."

Well, now it's being rebuilt. News reports say that starting Monday, Dan Taylor will be hosting 101.1's morning show, followed by Bob Shannon at midday and Broadway Bill Lee during the afternoon drive. Mr. Morrow still has a year on his contract with Sirius, but left numerous doors wide open with statements like "It's a very unusual business" and "Every day something happens."

That it does. And sometimes, when it's something good, we're even willing to forgive.

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## Civil Rights Leaders Hit Mayor, Klein

By ELIZABETH GREEN  
Staff Reporter of the Sun

More than a dozen civil rights advocates today will condemn Mayor Bloomberg and his schools chancellor, Joel Klein, for taking a position they say advances racial segregation in the city schools.

A Supreme Court ruling last month that limited race as a consideration in how schools assign students has led school officials to investigate how to lift two court orders mandating integration in a handful of city schools. Mr. Klein has called the court orders, which draw on the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, no longer necessary in a school system where nearly 75% of students are black and Hispanic.

"In an environment like that, a focus on racial balance seems to me to be not the way to solve the problem," Mr. Klein said on a WNYC radio program the day the decision was announced. "A focus on high-quality education for every kid in every school I think is the way."

The civil rights advocates, led by the executive director of the New York Civil Rights Coalition, Michael Meyers, and a civil rights attorney, Norman Siegel, said their working group will defend the court orders.

"Schools Chancellor Klein and Mayor Bloomberg should be expressing outrage, not agreement," Mr. Meyers said of the Supreme Court decision.

At today's press conference, Messrs. Meyers and Siegel will defend the decision and also recommend specific ways for the city to integrate schools, including redrawing school boundaries.

"We have to confront the increasing retreat from the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*," Mr. Siegel said.

### Metro Area Forecast

— TODAY —

Morning



Clouds and sun, warm and humid. Winds: S 4-8 mph.

76°- 83°

Afternoon



Partly sunny; a t-storm, warm and humid. Winds: S 8-16 mph.

84°- 87°

Afternoon



Partly sunny; a t-storm, warm and humid. Winds: S 8-16 mph.

84°- 87°

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather.com ©2007

### CORRECTIONS

Ben Parker took the photo of One Prospect Place on page 13 of yesterday's New York Sun. The photo credit was incorrect.

Woman is the gender of the director of Max Lang Gallery, Jamie Birkenhead. Her gender was misstated in an article on page 1 of the July 9 Sun. Zurich, Switzerland, is where the gallery's co-owner, Max Lang, was born and raised, and he is now based in New York. His birthplace and current residence were misstated.

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## Out & About

On the Web at www.nysun.com/outandabout

By Amanda Gordon

### Summer With a Fringe on Top



The artistic directors of the Berkshire Fringe Festival, TIMOTHY RYAN OLSON, SARA KATZOFF & PETER WISE



Fashion designer BETSY WISE

Doyenne of vintage clothing, PETRIA MAY

GREAT BARRINGTON, Mass. — Actress Sara Katzoff, 26, has temporarily said goodbye to her steamy Park Slope apartment and assortment of freelance gigs in theater, arts administration, and marketing.

For the next five weeks, she will be in the Berkshires serving as artistic director of the Berkshire Fringe Festival, a responsibility she shares with two New York pals: playwright Timothy Ryan Olson, 28, who lives on the Upper East Side and works at a design studio, and musician Peter Wise, 27, who lives with and is dating Ms. Katzoff.

The trio founded the festival two years ago to make an artistic mark they felt they'd be unable to achieve in the city, where expenses are high, space is hard to find, and hundreds of similar projects (including the New York Fringe Festival) already exist.

"We wanted something that wasn't like anything else in the Berkshires," Ms. Katzoff said at a fund-raiser for the festival Monday at the Lascano Gallery here. "We're hoping the festival is a new way for people to explore new ideas."

The founders have found the Berkshires economically and culturally friendly: Family and friends have been quick to pitch in, and audiences have been larger and more diverse in age than expected, perhaps because the area already has several strong theater companies.

The three-week theater festival, which starts next Tuesday on the campus of Simon's Rock College here, will present six productions that range from avant-garde to high camp. A highlight will be New York-based composer Yoav Gal's multi-media chamber opera "Venus in Furs," a love story based on the 1870 novel by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. The novel and Sacher-Masoch's surname are the basis for the term "masochism."

A Minneapolis solo performer, Amy Salloway, is to appear in a comedy about a Jewish summer camp. "So Kiss Me Already, Herschel Gertz!" A cabaret artist, Fiely Matias, is performing his spoof of lounge acts in "Lounge-Zilla!" which also appeared in the New York Fringe Festival and Don't Tell Mama.

The crowd at the fund-raiser was a mix of locals — the fashion designer Jeannene Booher, real estate broker Nancy Kalodner, and art dealer Kurt Kolok — and people visiting from New York — fashion designer Betsy Wise, whose clothes can be found in the Cobble Hill boutique Meda; a former chef of the restaurant Applewood in Park Slope, Bjorn Somlo, who is overseeing the kitchen at the Stagecoach Tavern in Sheffield, Mass., and vintage clothing seller Petria May, who has a store in Great Barrington.

"The fact that the Fringe is happening is a demonstration of a group of young people who feel they can do anything here. It's the entrepreneurial spirit, which is what built this region in the first place," an artist who lives in North Adams, Mass., and has work on view at the CRG Gallery in Chelsea, Joshua Fields, said.

In a county where the population is decreasing and aging, welcoming young entrepreneurs has become a priority.

"People in the Berkshires understand it's time to make room for the up and comers," the proprietor of the year-old Café Adam, Adam Zieminski, 31, said.

But the Fringe Festival artistic directors aren't giving up their places in the city any time soon. "New York is the hub of the theater profession in the U.S. It's important for us to be there and, in terms of work, it's much easier to make a living," Mr. Olson said.

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Restaurateurs BJORN SOMLO & ADAM ZIEMINSKI with the co-founder of Farm Girl Farm, LAURA MEISTER



Models in the fashion show, AVA DWECK & MARTHA LUITJE

One of Arthur Oliver's costumes for Shakespeare & Company, as seen on the runway



Artist JOSHUA FIELDS & musician NOEL THOMSON

Photographer JOHN BRYANT & cabaret artist FIELY MATIAS



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