No More Wait For Rate—Webcast Royalty Rates Due. The long wait for a decision that could have enormous consequences for broadcast and pureplay webcasters is almost over. The Copyright Royalty Board (CRB) said Monday it would reveal new webcast royalty rates on Wednesday. The highly anticipated decision will set streaming royalties for the years 2016–20 for services such as Pandora, iHeartRadio and local stations that simulcast their programming online, as well as SiriusXM Radio when it streams. The rates won’t apply to on-demand services such as Spotify and Apple Music. The decision will have far-reaching consequences. According to the National Association of Broadcasters, most local radio stations have for the past five years paid streaming rates nearly double those of pureplays. For example, most NAB-member radio stations that stream music pay 25 cents for every 100 songs streamed, compared to 14 cents for every 100 songs streamed by Pandora. SoundExchange, which collects streaming royalties on behalf of labels and artists, has been pushing for a significant rate increase. Commercial broadcasters, Pandora and others that stream want lower rates. During the CRB’s epic Web IV rate-setting proceeding, both webcasters and broadcasters offered testimony and evidence suggesting that previous CRB rates resulted from flawed evidence and analysis. Broadcasters offered private deals, such as those that Beasley, Entercom, iHeartMedia and others have forged with record labels, as examples of fair market rates for establishing a new benchmark. In a statement released late Monday, the NAB said it hopes the CRB will lower the rates “to a level that will enable a viable streaming business model for local radio stations.” That would enable more broadcasters to “invest in and expand streaming services to the benefit of artists, songwriters, and consumers.”

Hot 97 Hits One Million YouTube Subs. Eight years after dipping a toe into digital video, New York’s “Hot 97” WQHT reached an impressive milestone last week: it surpassed one million subscribers for its YouTube channel. To put that in context, the number is equal to one-third of the Emmis rhythmic CHR’s weekly on-air cume in the New York metro. Of course, in the digital domain, the bellwether “Hot 97” brand isn’t confined by geographic boundaries, which was one reason for launching the YouTube channel in the first place. With over a billion global users, few online destinations offer the marketing potential of YouTube, particularly for music radio brands. “We wanted to explore a more national scale and find a way to get that out to the masses a little bit more,” says Jeffrey Thacker, director of digital content, Emmis. Launched in 2007, the channel started gaining traction in early 2013, when it began a steady climb from 60,000 subscribers to the current seven-figure number.

Hip-Hop Stalwart Hot 97 Retools Video Strategy. For New York’s “Hot 97” WQHT, this is what one calls a good problem to have. The brand having moved toward, and now finally passed, the one million YouTube subscriber mark has allowed company execs to rethink how they approach digital video distribution. The station hasn’t abandoned its Hot 97 TV channel that lives on its own platforms, but, as Jeffrey Thacker, director of digital content, Emmis Communications puts it, “We wanted to be where the majority of listener are consuming their videos. We didn’t abandon Hot 97 TV but we directed our focus to more of a YouTube world.” Hot 97 may be one of radio’s best examples of using YouTube to promote its brand to music lovers who otherwise may not be aware of it. The channel features hip-hop lifestyle content, including live performances curated.
from station events and behind-the-scenes interviews. “97 Seconds,” a producer-shot video series, showcases artists talking about their lives and how they made it in the world. The channel also carries full-length artist interviews, as opposed to the condensed, PPM-friendly snippets that broadcast on-air. In a given week, the station posts 12-20 new original video pieces of content. As the epicenter of hip-hop, Hot 97 has a steady stream of stars visiting its studios to fuel exclusive video content. “Digital video has become a major extension of the Hot 97 brand,” Thacker says. And that has brought a more video-centric approach to content creation. “We’re always thinking, how does it look in addition to what does it sound like,” Thacker says.

**Bubba Lawyers Try Tossing Out His Case—Again.** Are they hungry for justice or gluttons for punishment? That seems the operative question as attorneys for Bubba the Love Sponge (Todd Clem) on Friday filed a second motion to toss out Nielsen’s $1 million ratings tampering suit. Following its Nov. 17 court filing, the syndicated host’s legal team claims that the ratings company’s amended lawsuit “has again not satisfied the amount-in-controversy requirement” to qualify it for a federal court. They also insist Clem has already been punished, and that Nielsen cannot prove it was harmed by his actions. Nielsen sued Bubba in October in U.S. District Court in Tampa, alleging the syndicated morning man offered cash to a PPM participant in return for listening to Clem’s show more often. The new 26-page appeal, obtained by Inside Radio, states, in simplest terms, “This case still does not belong in this Court, if it belongs in any court at all.” Legal language and descriptions in the filing remain especially creative, if not downright snarky, featuring shouting section titles such as, “Nielsen’s Requests for Injunctive Relief and Punitive Damages Do Not Pass Muster.” Claiming the measuring giant has not provided—“because it cannot provide,” it seems to scream—properly pled allegations of a systematically created scheme, the attorneys are moving for dismissal. The document insists the charges represent, in reality, little more than a few fans contacting Clem independent of one another, without particulars on compensation and simply to show “hardcore support for Defendant Clem’s program. That is not fraud, and Nielsen cannot make it fraud by building a nearby tower of allegations,” it says. **Sides Collide—Clem has apologized and was suspended, while Nielsen delisted his flagship station; is that punishment enough? Read more at InsideRadio.com.**

**New Ad Opportunities For Radio To Sell a NY Minute.** A new report from NYMRAD (New York Market Radio) gives radio sellers in the Big Apple plenty of ammo and prospects for targeting new business opportunities in 2016, spelling out opportunities in seven major categories. Conducted by market research and strategy firm Provoke Insights, the trade group’s Third Quarter State of the Market Report suggests ad prospects in radio’s largest market in areas including technology, retail, restaurants, tourism, performing arts and spectator sports, education and supermarkets. “The research demonstrates why radio is pertinent to any media plan targeting the New York region,” NYMRAD says in the new report. Retail remains a growing category with NYMRAD pointing to Burlington Coat Factory, which is expanding into Queens, and cotton muslin blanket manufacturer Aden + Anais as solid radio advertising prospects. Long one of the food capitals of the world, New York’s food services industry grew by 2.6% in the past year, providing 288,500 jobs in New York City, the report says. Meanwhile, chains such as Bareburger and Panda Express have expanded their store location in New York City, opening up potential ad opportunities. Entertainment and supermarkets are also ripe for prospecting, per the report. One of New York’s largest growth sectors during the past year was Performing Arts and Spectator Sports, which boosted jobs by 11.5% in the period. Case in point: Broadway’s $183.4 million Number of digital radio listeners by 2018, per eMarketer estimates, up from 159.8 million in 2014, helping to drive radio broadcasters to increase on-demand audio and podcasting, and improve digital streaming.
gross revenue skyrocketed by 33.8%, from $1.020 billion in the 2009-10 show season to $1.365 billion during the 2014-15 season. Supermarkets, meanwhile, grew by 3.3% and now employ 84,900 in New York. Currently the fourth-largest tech center in the nation, New York boasts 114,716 technology jobs in the city, the report says, eyeing another category prospect.

More Money in Market Is Good Excuse For NYC Ad Sales. New York's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dropped from 6.7% in September 2014 to 5.2% this September, giving New Yorkers more money to spend and advertisers more opportunities to grow revenue and capture market share. So says a new report from NYMRAD (New York Market Radio), conducted by market research and strategy firm Provoke Insights. New York's more upbeat economic forecast jives with what some publicly traded broadcasters have previously said about the market beginning to turn the corner after hitting a rocky patch. Noting that some of the top ad spenders in the U.S. are not currently using radio in New York, the report identifies 25 advertisers who tapped TV and/or newspaper in August in the No. 1 market, tabbing them important radio prospects. The list includes clients in the all-important automotive category (Infiniti Motor, Audi Dealer Assoc., Volkswagen), telecoms and wireless providers (Time Warner ISP, Optimum Online, Optimum Mobile) and medical (Cigna Health Care, Cancer Treatment Centers of America, USA Vein Clinics), among others. Beyond new prospects, the NYMRAD report also acknowledges how prevalent the medium already is among certain categories. A 2015 study from grocery retail cooperative Topco and marketing and promotions management company Aptaris found that 93% of food retailers use radio as a media ad vehicle, trailing only printed circulars, and shelf tags and signs (each 100%) as predominant media choices. "Choosing radio is significant, considering that 71% of... wholesale and retail food operations say there are more media ad vehicles than three years ago," NYMRAD says in the report. The study quotes earlier reports from Nielsen and Edison Research showing how Americans use radio, along with advertising effectiveness studies that document radio's return on investment.

Country To Christmas Could Boost Vegas 'Coyote.' While AC stations typically lead the charge with seasonal holiday formats—alongside a handful of classic hits and oldies stations—in Las Vegas, Beasley is segueing country to Christmas. And it's not the first temporary rebranding for “102.7 The Coyote” KYCE. Beginning Sunday, Dec. 13, the station became 102.7 Santa FM, offering a 24/7 country Christmas with the likes of Brenda Lee, Wynonna, Kenny Rogers, Garth Brooks and Carrie Underwood, as well as sprinklings of Andy Williams, Dan Fogelberg, Burl Ives and the Carpenters. Its promotions deem the outlet "The Valley's Christmas Station." Santa FM comes after Coyote temporarily changed its moniker on Nov. 30 to “102.7 Rodeo Radio” during the recent 2015 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas. It seems a savvy enough move, especially given that country takes the biggest ratings hit during the Holiday survey from the all-Christmas format, according to Nielsen data. Rather than take classic hits KKLZ (96.3) all-Yule as it has done in the past, Beasley is offering KYCE as a holiday alternative to iHeartMedia's AC “Sunny 106.5” KSNE, which reaped a whopping 13.2 share in the Holiday survey last year with the seasonal format. Christmas failed to produce a meaningful ratings pop for KKLZ in 2014. But Beasley execs indicate they're taking a simple if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em approach. "We are not just planning to play rounds of traditional holiday music," said VP of programming Justin Chase. "We are going to share the joys of the season, with listeners of all ages." The station says its holiday station will offer "family-friendly content and music, mixed with lively interaction with listeners." Winning By Winning?—Beasley looks for contests, NORAD Santa updates and family fun elements to set things apart at the station; for more go to InsideRadio.com.

'Boom' Vs. 'The Beat' in Indy Classic Hip-Hop Battle. Radio One has expanded its classic hip-hop franchise to Indianapolis, launching "Boom 102.9" on Greenfield-licensed translator W275BD, fed by an HD Radio side channel. The flip sets up a classic hip-hop battle in the market, where Cumulus Media operates "93.9 The Beat" WRWM, which posted a 3.3 share of persons aged 6+ in Nielsen's November survey. NWA's "Straight Outa Compton" introduced what is Radio One's sixth throwback station since October 2014, joining "Boom" outlets in Houston, Philadelphia, Dallas, Atlanta and Columbus.
Indy marks the company’s second new “Boom” launch in the past month. Radio One says it will clear Reach Media’s soon-to-launch “Ed Lover Show” in morning drive, hosted by the former “Yo! MTV Raps” host and cohosted by MC and radio personality Monie Love. The show will be syndicated nationally beginning Jan. 11 with Radio One’s “Boom 107.9” WPHI-FM Philadelphia as the first announced affiliate. Radio One owns a majority stake in Reach Media. “Boom 102.9” becomes the company’s fifth radio brand in the Hoosier capital, joining rhythmic CHR “Hot 96.3” WHHH, CHR “Radio Now 100.9” WNOW-FM, gospel “The Light” WTLC (1310) and urban AC WTLC-FM (106.7). “Yes, we’re growing in size, but more importantly in depth of music variety and our ability to meet the diverse listening needs of our audience,” Radio One-Indianapolis VP/GM Chuck Williams said in a release. “From CHR to throwback hip-hop we have Indy covered.”

New Bill Would Hit FCC On Ownership Rules. Local television station owners are close to pushing back a tough Federal Communications Commission rule that limits ownership sharing agreements, according to a story in The Wall Street Journal. As part of an overall spending bill expected to go before Congress, a possible rider would allow for previous sharing arrangements to be grandfathered in, weakening the FCC rules. The push is being led by local TV station owners, but radio broadcasters have been monitoring the issue closely. Joint sales agreements (JSAs) and local marketing agreements (LMAs) are common in the radio industry and are counted against a radio company’s local ownership cap. The arrangements are popular because they allow station owners to share costs associated with sales, programming, marketing, engineering and other operations across outlets. Critics, however, say they reduce the diversity of voices in a market, and stifle competition. If broadcasters, backed by the National Association of Broadcasters and an intense lobbying effort, are successful in getting the rider included, it would signal a major win for station owners, and a comparative defeat for FCC chairman Tom Wheeler, who has made tightening ownership rules a priority. In March 2014, the FCC voted that any TV station handling more than 15% of advertising sales for another outlet would be considered the owner of both stations. Station owners have filed lawsuits against the ruling, and last summer received support from both Democrats and Republicans to exempt broadcasters who had TV sharing agreements in place before the 2014 ruling.

Roger Lanctot on the Dash: ‘Radio Always Endures.’ Fear not the vehicle dashboard of the future. Simplicity and ease of use remain essential for vehicle buyers amid a plethora of potential options. That’s the takeaway in a web piece titled “Radio Will Survive Dashboard Clash” from Roger Lanctot at analyst and consultancy firm Strategy Analytics. In the piece, Lanctot surmises, “The so-called battle for the automotive dashboard is not a zero sum game and radio will win.” As associate director in the Global Automotive Practice, Lanctot is devoted to studying the confounding array of competitors vying for real estate on the touchscreen in tomorrow’s cars, including connectivity platforms from Apple’s CarPlay and Google’s Android Auto systems, alongside a potentially expanding SiriusXM, which has its eye on expanding audio, video and vehicle-to-vehicle communications. “The picture of the future dashboard experience is not clarifying. It is fragmenting, much like the content consumption experience in homes where TV usage is fading in favor of desktop and mobile computing platforms,” Lanctot writes. “The success of Apple and Google gaining access to dashboards, just as in the case of SiriusXM, will contribute to the fragmentation of content consumption in cars. Drivers will still want easy access to the local radio broadcast for timely and local news, weather, sports and traffic information delivered in an eyes-free fashion.” He adds that terrestrial radio has survived the introduction of the eight-track, the cassette deck, the CD and the iPod, thus “the radio will survive and thrive amid and beyond this latest period of insurgency.” Enduring Classic—Radio, says Lanctot, will win the day in the dashboard clash; read more at InsiderRadio.com.
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