June 8, 2009

"Amazing Radio" Lets Listeners Pick the Songs

Many of the FM broadcasters who have implemented HD Radio digital radio broadcasting are making use of the "multicasting" feature of this technology, which allows a station to air multiple audio channels on their signal. One of the challenges these broadcasters are facing is to program these new channels with compelling content that will drive listeners to these new stations and accelerate the listening public's transition to HD Radio service.

One new programming concept was launched last week in the UK. The "world's first interactive radio station," dubbed "Amazing Radio," initiated service on a DAB multiplex across Britain. This new station brings to the airwaves an innovative approach to music radio, leveraging Internet technology for both obtaining content and for enabling listener participation.

Amazing Radio's debut is the start of a 6-month pilot run on Digital One's national DAB digital radio network. DAB is the trademarked acronym for Digital Audio Broadcasting, a "new-band" digital radio service which uses so-called "Eureka-147" technology. Each DAB carrier (or "multiplex") is approximately 1.5 MHz wide and is a "multicast" containing 6 to 10 audio channels (newer forms of DAB, in particular "DAB+" and "T-DMB" have been developed to accommodate 20 or more audio channels per carrier). Digital One operates the only nationwide commercial DAB multiplex in the UK. Additional information about DAB can be found on the Internet at www.worlddab.org; for additional information about Digital One, visit www.ukdigitalradio.com.

Content for Amazing Radio comes from the amazingtunes.com Web site, devoted exclusively to unsigned artist and bands. Launched in 2006, this site now contains around 15,000 tracks and reportedly has a global audience of around 35 million people. Artists create a profile then upload their music to amazingtunes.com, where it is available for streaming to listeners and in addition is available for airing on Amazing Radio. If the artist chooses to sell their music on amazingtunes.com, they receive 70% of any download revenues obtained (individual songs are sold for 79 pence which is equivalent to about $1.25). Some of the functions afforded users of amazingtunes.com include the following:

- **Tagging** – users create playlists by "tagging" songs. Artists and fans have created over 50 tags such as "indie," "techno," and "tuneswelove," and users can add their own tags to any song or artist. Users can submit playlists to Amazing Radio by creating them on the amazingtunes.com Web site and tagging them "amazingradio;"

- **Recommendations** - once users have registered with amazingtunes.com they can indicate which songs they like and don't like using the "heart" and "broken heart" buttons. Users can then get recommendations for new music, based on their ratings;

- **Gigs** – a Web page called "Gigs" is included which has a list of artists' and links to artist profile pages which will list their upcoming Gigs and other information.

In addition to playing unsigned artists, Amazing Radio will feature new presenters – "unsigned voices" – who audition by uploading a demo voice track to the Amazing Radio Web site, http://amazingradio.co.uk/. Amazing Radio is available as a streaming Internet station from this site, as well.