

Internet Radio Making Noise Worldwide: Log On and Tune In

Published in [Bassline Magazine](#) Issue 3 - Summer 2005

Much like bygone days when radio revolutionized entertainment with free music floating through the airwaves, computers and the internet are doing the same today - online.

Internet radio seems to have sprung up around the time that high speed internet access grew in popularity and decreased in cost. Although it may have been possible to download music and possibly stream some music (with many pauses for users' systems to re-buffer) with 56k dial up connections, high speed internet connections made it easy to enjoy unbroken streams of music and video.

Internet radio's proponents recognize that there may be some limits imposed by technology, but they are small compared to the possibilities internet radio provides. "Really the only downside I see is people without a computer or the bandwidth to listen to the stream, or people so un-computer-savvy they can't figure out how to listen ..." Mighty, a.k.a. Crown, one of the masterminds behind online radio station www.destroyer.net says.

"For people without broadband it might be hard to access regularly," Barbara Wimmer, a.k.a. DJ Shroombab, an Austria-based DJ/artist and host of Junglistic-Sistaz radio on www.bassdrive.com says. Her show features guest mixes from worldwide members of Wimmer's www.junglistic-sistaz.com community.

The popularity of online radio shows in electronic music circles is evident by the mere number of stations popping up every day. DJs, producers and promoters have been quick to realize it is a fairly easy and inexpensive way to promote their name or music. After all, the audience of potential listeners from around the world is available 24/7, and the relative lack of regulations or rules make it a relatively easy medium to work in.

As Stephen Wiggins, a regular DJ on www.drumandbasstv.com explains, "By using the internet, setting up a chat room, posting on a message board and developing a community, you can really promote yourself and the music you are pushing to the masses."

"I don't think internet radio could ever affect a DJ's career negatively," says Chris Parente, a.k.a. Deucewild, host of the Home Bass show on www.dnbtv.com. "It just brings the DJ more listeners and potentially more fans of electronic music."

"I think internet radio helps a DJ's career," says Lisa Bassett, a.k.a. Lady Bass, a DJ and promoter with shows on both internet radio (www.club246.com) and conventional radio (100.7FM Toronto/97.9FM Ottawa). "It helps to get their

name out there, and gives them another avenue to promote themselves with. It helps a lot to be able to say to a promoter... 'Hey tune in to Club246.com Mondays from 8-10pm and you can hear me play live.' It's also great when people come up and ask for mixes and I am able to tell them a couple of different places where they can check me out each week, aside from parties."

"The absence of hard, fast censorship rules is definitely a plus on the broadcasting side," Mighty says, explaining one of the benefits for an internet radio broadcaster like himself.

Gerald Belanger, one of the brains behind the Nice+Smooth record label and an internationally respected artist, producer and DJ who has hosted shows on conventional radio for over 10 years, explains that internet radio does have some benefits for the makers of the music being played. "I think it's great that my music is now disseminated throughout the world, especially through the use of P2P networks [peer-to-peer networks] and torrents, and again through radio stations like www.somafm.com. We have received a lot of attention we wouldn't be able to get through normal channels."

The variety of music available online also works to increase internet radio's popularity. Listeners don't have to tune into a radio station where they hear the same top 40 songs played in an endless loop, while being bombarded with incessant advertising. Instead, they can choose a station playing the style of music and even the songs they want to hear, since many stations offer a viewable online playlist or even take requests via email or instant messaging.

"The best thing [about internet radio] has to be the wide variety of underground stations," explains Bassett. "You have almost every style of music available at the click of a button...all over the world!"

The accessibility of internet radio has also helped to make electronic music more readily available to listeners.

"I think it's a great way to introduce new people to the sounds of dnb who might not want to enter a club atmosphere for their first time experience," Parent says.

However, with shows made up of seamless mixes with no announcing of playlists by the DJs playing the tunes (or the automated mixes), musicians may lose out on potential recognition for their song. But, at this point in time computers have become entrenched in many people's lives, so it seems that internet radio is here to stay. So tune in and turn it up.

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