

Payola and the State of Hip Hop Urban Radio

Written by Davey D ID3347

Tuesday, 20 February 2007 05:16 -

Payola and the State of Hip Hop & Urban Radio by Davey D

The other week we alerted you about an urban music director at Chicago's WGCI being arrested and fired from her job for allegedly taking payola in the form of a Porshe from a local artist. We promised to follow up that story with a more in depth story/interview about payola and the state of urban / Hip Hop radio.

What you will be listening to is conversation that took place in Memphis, Tn last month (January 2007) at the Media Reform Conference. We caught up with longtime radio urban radio programmer Paul Porter of <http://www.Industryyears.com> and Professor Jared Ball of Freemix Radio. Both gentlemen participated in the conference's payola panel along with FCC commissioner Jonathan Adlstein

We talked to Porter, who has sat down and met with former NY Attorney General Elliott Spitzer as well as the FCC about the payola issue. He is also set to release a book called GOP (Gangstas of Programming) where he lays out some of the key individuals responsible for keeping palms greased and certain records spinning. In our interview he lends some insight about the role corporate media plays in keeping the payola practice alive and explains how it impacts urban radio and the urban/ African American community at large.

He contends that one of the main reasons we have indecent music on the airwaves is because everything is brought and paid for by the major labels who wish to play things safe by promoting familiar themes of sex and violence. He also notes that in today's radio environment the average program director has to follow dictates from nationalized playlists handed down to them from the VPs of the major radio chain. He feels like the practice is too far gone and that the FCC caved into the big media giants. Porter is particularly critical of the proposal before the FCC where the major radio chains will settle the payola issue by paying a small fee of six to seven million dollars between all of them and grant one half hour a day to playing independent records. On top of that the fines paid would go to the NAB-The National Association of Broadcasters)

Porter pointed out that at most that would be 6 records being played and that labels like TVT records or Koch records which is home to superstar artists like Lil Jon and Jim Jones would be considered "independent".

Payola and the State of Hip Hop Urban Radio

Written by Davey D ID3347

Tuesday, 20 February 2007 05:16 -

Porter also talked about a couple of well publicized incidents including the beat down that Game and his crew were accused of giving to a Washington DC disc jockey (Xzulu) at Radio One headquarters). He feels that payola played a big role in keeping Game's record on the airwaves in spite of the severity of what occurred. He's very critical of Kathy Hughes and her son Alfred Liggins some of the practices he saw first hand at her Radio One company

Porter also talked about the racial make up of many of the nation's popular urban stations including the fact that in many places you do not have Black programmers. He explains how that can have an impact on the African American community at large because of lack of sensitivity. He also talks about how what few Blacks they do have in key positions have sold out and not been responsive to community concerns.

We also spoke with Professor Jared Ball who is a professor of African American and Media Studies at the University of Maryland and the founder of Freemix Radio. He currently teaches a class that specifically focuses on Hip Hop and Mass Media. During our interview he shared some of his insights gave an insightful historical breakdown about the current state of urban radio. He noted that there has been a deliberate dilution of urban radio to keep it from being a tool that could be used to galvanize people around important issues.

Ball also feels that its no mistake that mainstream Hip Hop radio has been suspended in state of adolescence. He pointed out how you simply do not hear the Public Enemy type Hip Hop that he came up on being played on radio stations that target his age group which consist of people in their mid to late 30s. He connected current urban radio policies and practices with the Cointel-Programs that the FBI launched against Black leaders in the 60s during the Civil Rights era. One of the key provisions was to prevent young Blacks from controlling a media network and resource.

Building off of some of Porter's earlier points he noted that there is a perception and a comfort level that many in urban radio have where they see Black culture as such that anyone can define it and talk about it and promote it to the masses sans Black people. He said this has happened with the de-racialization of Hip Hop.

We kicked off our show with an excerpt from an interview we did with Questlove of the Roots where he explains in great detail how the Roots went about getting their Grammy Award hit

Payola and the State of Hip Hop Urban Radio

Written by Davey D ID3347

Tuesday, 20 February 2007 05:16 -

record "You Send Me" on the radio. He says they had to pay almost 3/4 of a million bucks and the record label had to make a bunch of behind the scenes deals. He talks in great detail about the way those various deals are structured resulting in air play for specific artists.

powered by [ODEO](#)