
The new talk of the town

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Radio, Dec 1, 2002



A major provider of syndicated talk programming and home to well-known personalities including Bruce Williams, Doug Stephan, Mort Crim, Heloise and Barry Farber, Talk America Radio Networks has completed its new studio complex in Newark, NJ. This was a studio move on a grand scale, taking the network operation more than halfway across the country from its previous location in Las Vegas.

Talk America, owned by IDT Media, a division of IDT Corporation, moved to the East Coast to consolidate several IDT business divisions into one location, allowing them to share facilities and resources, including studios and other technical facilities. There are three control rooms. Two rooms are designed for on-air use, while the third is used mainly for production. If needed, any studio can be used to feed programming to the satellite uplink.

While this installation looks similar to most radio facilities, it has its own unique aspects. Creating network trigger tones is the biggest difference between this facility and a traditional radio facility. The studio move allowed Talk America to change how it deals with generating these tones and keeping the schedule running on time.

The facility's audio is stored and delivered with a Mediatouch system. While the company has installed numerous systems for stations that receive satellite-delivered programming, this was the first time that

the system was being used by a program originator.

Breaking away from its old ways, and eliminating many of the common problems associated with satellite programming, Talk America uses the Mediatouch system to generate the cue tones. Mediatouch did not have to modify its software in any way. Instead, some operational methods were applied to allow the system to generate the cue tones and automatically schedule the fixed breaks.



The production studio is the smallest studio. The console, which sits on the tabletop and is connected by a few cables, can be placed wherever it is needed when the room is in use.

The local spot breaks are on a fixed time schedule. To eliminate slight variations in timing, these breaks are initiated by the Mediatouch system. As a break approaches, a bumper begins to play automatically, increasing in level to the final post. Likewise, once a break has ended, the rejoinder is played.

Profanity delay operation is also handled through the automation system. The first five minutes of each hour are covered by a newscast, which needs to be in real time. When the top of the hour approaches, the automation system plays the show's theme to the end and then dumps the delay, instantly joining real time. At the same instant, the newscast begins. Once the news has finished, the show begins again and delay is slowly added.



Studio A is the largest studio and includes an 18-fader console and call screener booth.

Satellite studios

Of all the programs carried by Talk America, only one host is actually in the studio facilities. The others contribute their shows from remote locations through ISDN codecs. The ISDN return carries a low-delay, mix-minus feed and an IFB. Additionally, some hosts have complete access to the Telos Assistant Producer call screening software through the data connection. The hosts have access and control of their callers, the same as if they were in the studio with the telephone equipment.

All the audio events are handled through the main studio. At the heart of the audio routing and switching is a Logitek Audio Engine. Each air studio has three ISDN codecs available for the greatest flexibility.

The smaller production studio is designed around the DAW. The console, a Logitek Remora, is used primarily for line selection and level control of signals feeding the DAW. It is often pushed out of the way during a production session. If necessary, the production studio can feed the network.

When a host plans to take time off, the network prefers to not rerun previously aired shows. Instead, a live show is prepared off line and played back in the time slot.

There are two primary on-air control rooms. Studio A also has a call-screener station. The facility's rack room is in the corporate data center, which is about 300 feet from the studios. It houses five racks and 150 punch blocks.



The Talk Studio is set up with minimal equipment between the host and the guest, which makes guests feel more comfortable.

Studio A boasts as the largest console configuration with 18 faders on the control surface. Studio B houses a 12-fader control surface. The production studio has a four-fader control surface.

There are no system computers in any of the studios. The studios are connected to their computers through Cybex extenders. In case of an automation system failure, there are mirrored Mediatouch systems running in tandem for complete redundancy. If one system fails, the other can be brought up to take control. As a further safeguard, the network tries to run backup programs on the second system in case a show host's ISDN connection is lost. Also, to aid troubleshooting, one Mediatouch OpLog system is set up as a receive station to verify that all tones and cues are being sent and received properly.

The completed audio program and its embedded cue tones are sent to ABC Satellite Services to be uplinked. Program audio for both channels is sent via a T1 on the Harris IntraPlex system with an ISDN backup ready to go if needed.

Talk America's new facilities are designed to serve the needs of the network, as well as some additional demand from its collocated parent company. The network currently serves nearly 1,000 affiliates, and boasts one of the most varied lineups of talk shows available during its weekday service.

Equipment List

Airtools 6100 delay	Microboards Disc Factory CD burner
AKG K141 headphones	Microboards Orbit II CD burner
Antex LX-44 audio cards	Microboards StartRec 400 CD burner
Aphex 120A distribution amplifier	Middle Atlantic furniture
Aphex Compellers	Middle Atlantic rack accessories
Arrakis furniture	Middle Atlantic racks
Belden 1854F wire and cable	MXL 2003 mics
Comrex Matrix w/ ISDN	NEC MultiSync LCD1700M+ monitors
Comrex Nexus ISDN codec	OMT iMedialogger
Conex tone generators and decoders	Presonus ACP88 compressor limiters
Cybex KVM extenders	Presonus M80 mic processors
Denon DN 720R cassette	Presonus MP20 mic processors
ELO TouchSystems monitors	Rimage Auto Everest CD printer
EV RE27 mics	Sony CDPXE370 CD players
Eventide BD500 delay	Sony MDSE12 Minidisks
Fostex rack-mount monitors	Symetrix 506E headphone amps
Furman power conditioners	Syntrillium Cool Edit Pro
Gentner DH30 hybrid	Telos Assistant Producer software
Gepco Gep-flex wire and cable	Telos Desktop Director phones
Hafler P1000 amplifier	Telos Twox12 ISDN phone system
Harris IntraPlex T1 interface	Telos Zephyr Xstream ISDN codecs
JBL 4410 studio monitors	Tieline Commander w/ ISDN Card
Logitek Audio Engines	
Logitek Numix and Remora consoles	
LPB Silent Mic Booms and risers	
Mediatouch automation system	

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