

R&R ALTERNATIVE/ACTIVE/ROCK



Returning to terrestrial radio in mornings while continuing afternoons on satellite has re-energized Bubba the Love Sponge

Bubba's Back

Mike Boyle
MBoyle@RadioandRecords.com

Indiana native Todd Alan Clem has come a long way since beginning his professional radio career as "Rockin' Bubba Clem" at WPER/Terre Haute, Ind. Since, the soon-to-be 42-year-old has been hired and fired in cities across the country—Grand Rapids, Chicago, Philadelphia, Orlando, Milwaukee—for being what he describes as "too controversial." However, he is best-known for a lengthy, ratings-validated stretch in Tampa as "Bubba the Love Sponge," first at Clear Channel CHR/top 40 WFLZ (the Power Pig), then at active rock sister WXTB (98 Rock). At 98 Rock, his show was syndicated by Clear Channel to a handful of markets—most in Florida—and carried on XM Satellite Radio.

All of that came to a crashing halt on Jan. 27, 2004, when the FCC hit Clear Channel with a whopping \$755,000 fine for alleged indecency on four of the company's stations during Clem's show. One month later, Clear Channel cut the chord with Clem, removed Howard Stern from its stations and adopted a strict "zero tolerance" indecency policy. Clem sat on the radio sidelines until Stern brought him to Sirius Satellite Radio in early 2006 to do an afternoon show on his Howard 101 channel. Signing a one-year renewal with Sirius recently—after publicly stating his unhappiness with the way negotiations had progressed—Clem stunned the radio world last December by announcing that he was returning to the same terrestrial world that banished him four years earlier.

On Jan. 8, his new morning show debuted in two Clear strongholds: Tampa, on Cox Radio classic rock WHPT (102.5 the Bone), and Jacksonville, via classic rock sister WFYV. Now competing with Clear Channel, "The Bubba the Love Sponge Show" airs from Clem's Tampa studio where he also does his afternoon show for Sirius.

The Road Back

Clem says his Cox deal came about fairly quickly and without much drama. Cox Radio/Tampa Bay regional VP/market

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in other markets is OK, although he does have to give Cox right of first refusal. Clem believes there is a "major void" for what he's doing now throughout terrestrial radio. Stern "has obviously given us the branding nationwide, so I think it would make a lot of sense for stations that don't have alternative programming geared toward men to take my show."

And yes, Cox laid down ground rules prior to Clem uttering his first on-air words in January. "To Cox's credit," Clem recalls, "we had several workshops with their attorney, who told us, 'Yes here, no there, absolutely not here.' I will not break the rules when I know what the rules are. Clear Channel never in my 12 years there told me the rules. If Clear Channel had said to me, 'Bubba, you can't say 'tits,'" I wouldn't have said 'tits.' We're not hard to work with. We are not problematic at all."

Ask him about the difference between his Cox show and his old Clear Channel show and Clem says, "It's just as provocative, but there are a lot less strippers." He adds, "We're still dirty, but we reel ourselves in. At Clear Channel we would just drone on and on with topics. I think we're all just getting a little bit older and I don't think we draw the titillation out as long as we used to."

The Future Of Satellite

Frustrated that a year has passed and the Department of Justice and the FCC have not yet ruled on the proposed merger of Sirius and XM, Clem, who now works on both sides of the fence says, "The NAB and others that are making a big deal out of this are doing so because they are scared. I don't understand it, because there is enough pie for everybody."

As for his future at Sirius, Clem is uncertain. "I'm locked into Sirius until the end of this year. After that, I have no idea at all. I would love to be there mainly because of the relationships I've established with friends and fans and of course my loyalty to Howard Stern. There are a lot of people in the Sirius organization that don't care for me, especially after the impasse during the last contract. But if I do continue on at Sirius, it will mostly be because of Howard."

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Bubba's Broadcast History

Todd "Bubba the Love Sponge" Clem began his radio career April 1, 1985. This history does not include his syndicated affiliates.

WPER/Terre Haute, Ind.: Spent two-and-a-half years, left for Grand Rapids.

WGRD/Grand Rapids, Mich.: 91 days, fired for being "too controversial."

KTFM/San Antonio: Six months, split for Chicago.

WBBM-FM/Chicago: One year, fired by new management.

WIOQ/Philadelphia: 73 days, fired for being too controversial, sued for breach of contract and won.

WXLU/Orlando: One year, canned for controversy.

WYTY/Chicago: 83 days, format changed to news/talk (as WLS-FM).

WLUM-FM/Milwaukee: 10 months, sacked to news/talk (as WLS-FM).

WFLZ-FM/Tampa: Four years, two months (October 1992-December 1996). Left for WXTB morning show.

WXTB/Tampa: Seven years, two months (December 1996-February 2004). Fired by Clear Channel.

Howard 101, Sirius Satellite Radio: Currently on in afternoons. **WHPT/Tampa and WFYV/Jacksonville:** Debuted Jan. 8.

