

Introducing A Truly Killer App For The Radio Industry

By **Adam Jacobson** - January 21, 2019



In the last week, one newly launched app has received a lot of attention and has created some noteworthy buzz. Why? It could absolutely destroy commercial radio's lifeblood — ad dollar intake.

Introducing **AdBlock Radio**, a French operation that uses AI to skip ads on streaming audio.

RBR + TVBR OBSERVATION: "You knew it was only a matter of time," one industry veteran who shared AdBlock Radio's website with us notes. We agree. Consider it the ultimate punishment for ridiculously long stop sets in a Spotify world.

From January 15, Tweets have lauded the technology.

A U.K.-based boutique design and technology agency with a focus on start-ups and innovation for existing businesses loves it.

Data Elixir calls it a "cool project."

Then, there is radio industry veteran **Bill Figenshu**.

He warns, "Adblock Radio is an automatic revenue reducer. If you don't cut back on abusive spot loads, the listeners will! Yikes."

One visit to Adblock Radio's website should provide a boatload of fear into every radio broadcasting company C-Suite.

In big bold letters is the company's mission statement: "We

improve your radio experience.”

How so?

Adblock provides users with “the first working ad filter,” one that can skip ads and/or “chit-chat.”

At present, it is not available in the U.S. The company’s web demo, however, is enough to cause worry for the Radio Advertising Bureau, the NAB and executives from David Field to Bill Wilson.

With European radio stations featured in Adblock’s demo, users are promised the following:

- During ads, turns the volume down or hops to another station
- If an ad gets through, report it to improve the filter

To achieve this ability, Adblock uses a filter that combines machine learning and acoustic fingerprinting (**Shazam**-like) techniques. It is able to distinguish between music, talk and ads; it recognizes most new ads by itself and periodically receives updates in the background.

Under development is a buffer player. With live metadata capabilities, Adblock is developing a standalone player that plays webradio streams, time-shifted by 10 minutes. “When ad breaks are detected, it fast-forwards them so you get continuous music and radio shows,” it promises.

Also startling is just where Adblock thinks it can have a presence:

... and soon available on multiple platforms



Smart speakers

Sonos, Google Home, Amazon Echo... Get a better radio on your smart speakers

In your car

Smart radio to have more enjoyable rides, with Android Auto and Apple Car Play



DAB and Wifi radios

Smart radio that follow you everywhere at home and on holidays

Mobile applications

Wherever you go, get the best radio content without the hassle of managing playlists

The reason Adblock exists is offered by data scientist and entrepreneur **Alexandre Storelli**.







He says, “In 2015 I completed physics Ph. D studies that involved data analysis and signal processing skills. As a radio listener, I decided to put this experience to good use by bringing about major change in the radio sector. My goal is to encourage media to rely less on ads, and more on direct subscriptions.”

While this may have value for **Spotify**, **Deezer**, and for **Pandora** in the territories it operates in, AM/FM radio is not addressed by Storelli.

RBR + TVBR signed up for access to the Adblock demo. The demo player allows the user to select their favorite radio stations and/or brands. This includes France’s popular NRJ and Nostalgie brands; **Bauer Media** U.K. brands Kiss and Absolute Radio; BBC Radio 1, Radio 2 and Radio 3; CHMP-FM 98.5, a top-rated French-language Talk station from Montréal; Italy’s Radio Capital and Radio Company; and Spain’s Cadena SER, the leading spoken word network.

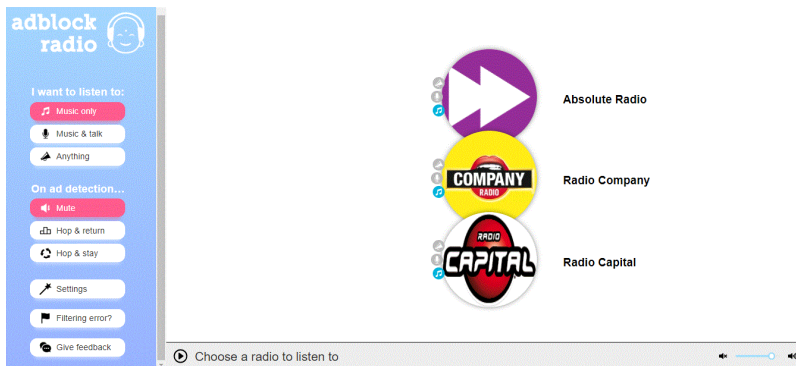
Then, a selection window appears, as follows:

I choose what I want to hear
Adblock Radio recognizes music, talk and ads on the radio.

<input type="radio"/>	Musical mode Music only. No ads, no chit-chat	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Ad-free mode Music and talk, but no ads.	 
<input type="radio"/>	No filter Radio as it is traditionally broadcast, including ads	  

How does one replace “unwanted content”?

One can simply reduce the volume level during ads or channel hop, with options to return when the commercials end or to stay on the new selection.



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While commercial breaks and interruption from the music is less pronounced, to some extent, on the European stations we consume — including **Global Hot AC Heart** and Top 40 sibling **Capital** in London, we believe the issue of clutter and jabber and taking consumers away from music and content your brand stands for is a universal one.

As such, it took an Italian in France to develop an app that could potentially harm North America’s commercially licensed stations. Already, in the U.K., Kiss and Absolute Radio are included. These are Bauer-owned stations that rely on paid advertising, not subscriptions, to remain financially viable operations.

That is, under the radio model from 1920-2020. The next 100 years will require radio to think differently. This starts here in the U.S., but requires vision, guts and new thought.

Is that really going to come from a bankrupt media company with hundreds of radio stations run as economically efficiently as possible, built on a model with lengthy stop sets, **iHeartMedia** promotional announcements, and other clutter?

Is revolutionary thought going to come from the RAB, the Relic Advertising Board?

Can **Entercom** and the industry’s No. 1 cheerleader pull the

trigger and blow up the stop set?

We highly doubt it. The radio industry is under too much pressure — from its lenders, from Wall Street and from the financiers that control the industry's biggest players.

That's why our dream is to see a smart Silicon Valley whiz buy Mt. Wilson FM Broadcasters, and take KKGO-FM in Los Angeles and revolutionize the business in one WHTZ-like killer attack.

How? Go back to basics and do what Spotify does and what Pandora's masterful marketing promises. Cut the clutter. Reduce the stop sets. Increase rates.

As Netflix and Amazon have invaded Hollywood, the time is now for an Apple or Amazon to invade the audio content industry. While podcasting promises Netflix for radio, there is still a need for the premium cable of radio, if you will.

More music, less commercials ... Z100 was a liner Malrite Communications used for WHTZ in the weeks before Christmas 1985.

Today, that premise is long forgotten. It's a shame, because Jeff Bezos could throw \$70 million at the Pacifica Foundation, buy WBAI-FM 99.5, and destroy Z100 just as Z100 went from "worst to first" in fall 1983 with the very thing that made it a much-copied legend.

Will Adblock Radio ever launch in the U.S.? It's very possible. But, it's up to the industry to make sure it never happens.

We're convinced the industry will do nothing, and continue to air too much clutter on its AMs, FMs, and respective audio streams.

Adam Jacobson

Adam R Jacobson is a veteran radio industry journalist and advertising industry analyst with general, multicultural and Hispanic market expertise. From 1996 to 2006 he served as an editor at Radio & Records.

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