

The Day The Music Died

Most people in our customer group are knowledgeable about music. That's why you use DC Six and other products from Tracer - so that you can restore and again enjoy those tunes that you have lovingly added to your collection. So, my friends, as experts, my question to you this month is this:

What is The Day The Music Died?

If I asked you to email us with your answer to this question, I'd bet a crisp dollar bill that the most popular answer from the thousands of responses would be Feb. 3, 1959. If you don't know why, look it up. As knowledgeable folks, you'll get it.

But I would argue that this date isn't really accurate. After all, there were plenty more musicians and plenty more records and plenty more music after this date.

But I can pinpoint a date when the music really did die; a date that marked the end of an era in music once in for all. A date where a musical way of life simply forever ceased to be.

That date was May 10, 1982. I'll tell you what happened on that date later, but first . . .

Have a look at your record or tape collection. If you are like most Tracer customers, this is the music of your life. You've got loads of albums from the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s. You grew up with this music and you enjoy hearing it even today. You enjoy it enough to lovingly restore it using DC Six, make CDs of it and load it on your Ipod - many years after it was made. Truly, your music is kind of like a personal time machine.

However, if you grew up during the 1960s and 70s, you have another musical soundtrack embedded somewhere in your brain. And that's the sound of this music on the radio.

And the reason you grew up with music on the radio is due to something that happened late in 1954 - the shipment of the first transistor radio. Here's the first one, the Regency TR-1. http://people.msoe.edu/~reyer/regency/Regency_ad.jpg

Over the next few years, dozens of different and cheaper transistor radios came out. They were small, didn't have a big sound, ate up batteries like wild and were exactly the opposite of the large tabletop radios that were popular in that day. As radios they left a lot to be desired. Only one group could possibly like these little things - young people.

And like them they did. Suddenly millions of kids were attracted to radio and radio stations responded with shows that played their kind of music - rock and roll. By the early 1960s, just about every locality had a popular radio station that played the latest rock hits.

But you didn't have to have a radio station nearby. If you lived on the east coast in the

1960s or 1970s, your radio would pick up a world of stations after dark. And one of the most popular stations in the country - sometimes called the best radio station in the world - was WABC in New York. This station would come booming in at night all over the Eastern US. It could be heard sometimes in England by our soldiers. It was gigantically popular as well with ratings showing one in every four radios in use in New York tuned to WABC at night. Such a ratings feat could not even be imagined today. It made gigantic stars of people like Cousin Bruce Morrow and Dan Ingram.

The radio played a soundtrack of music that became hugely popular and is probably represented in your record collection today.

So, back to The Day the Music Died - this was the date that WABC switched from being Music Radio 77 WABC to a Talk Radio format. In very short order, FM took over the playing of music and turned over the playing of songs to computers that repeated a playlist of 20 songs, while AM radio struggled to survive. It was truly the end of a musical era. Today, AM not only survives, but is doing quite well, while FM now seems to be trying to find its way.

But the days of pushing in the tuning button in your Dodge and hearing WABC come booming in with the latest hits like it was next door are over. No longer can you get that bassy AM sound with an amazing amount of reverb on the voice of the announcer.

Except on the web, of course. Goto <http://www.musicradio77.com/> and you can hear hundreds of clips and full shows from the glory days of WABC. You'll find interviews with the stars, and even full copies of the signoffs from the music format to the news/talk format.

Many of these clips are in Real Audio format and can't be downloaded to your computer. See our other article this month on how to actually record them on your machine.

Or, you can even still listen in at night - and on AM radio - and on WABC. Every Saturday Night from 6pm to 10pm Mark Simone cranks up the reverb, plays songs and reverts the station back to 1969. It sounds just like it did with all the jingles, and even though we're in a bad part of the sunspot cycle right now, you can still hear Music Radio 77 all over the east coast. This is guaranteed to bring back memories and Mark Simone has a perfect radio voice.

If you can't hear it on you AM, then listen on the web at www.wabcradio.com.

This music really did die back in 1982, but it's still possible to enter the time machine and hear this music in full AM quality again. Just like in 1969.