

*Toys, Toys, Toys..*

# Music from Outer Space In Your Miata

By Sara J McBride

Listening to the radio can be a good thing, but sometimes very frustrating. As you leave the city, your signal fades and eventually you're forced to look for a new station. The new stations can be faint and fuzzy or not to your liking ("All polka! All the time!"), so what's a radio alternative? Radio signals from space, that's what.

Two companies, Sirius Radio and XM Satellite Radio, are poised to make satellite radio a reality. They each offer 100 channels of programming with a clear, digital, CD quality signal.

How does it work? As one of the providers says, "Big freakin' satellites". XM Radio has two satellites (one named "Rock" and the other "Roll") in a geosynchronous orbit over the US, while Sirius Radio uses three satellites in a high elliptical orbit over the US. Geosynchronous means the satellites are over the US all the time, whereas the elliptical orbit means a satellite will be over the US at least 16 hours a day, with one satellite over the US at all times.

Both transmit on the "S" band to receivers and will use land based repeaters in urban areas where buildings and obstructions may interfere with signals. Both services are truly offering "coast to coast coverage", you could drive from New York to Los Angeles and never have to change the station.

Both companies have teamed up with manufacturers of aftermarket car stereos (Alpine, Pioneer, Sony, and others) as well as car makers (GM, Ford, Daimler-Chrysler, and BMW) who will be offering satellite radios in their vehicles as standard equipment. Don't want to replace your existing in-dash unit? An add-on component can be installed. Most major retailers are all ready carrying units.

And here's the bonus: you can get a home receiver. One manufacturer is offering an "Plug and Play" model that with an adaptor, can be used with your home stereo.

The services are subscription based, like cable. XM Radio is priced at \$9.95 a month, while Sirius Radio is at \$12.95. What, pay for something I can get for free? That's what people originally said about cable TV, and look how that turned out!

What are the differences between the two services? They both offer 100 channels of programming (XM Radio offers 71 music, 29 sports/talk/news while Sirius Radio offers 60 music and 40 sports/talk/news), but all of Sirius Radio's music channels are commercial free. Most of XM Radio's channels will have commercials. XM Radio launched nationwide in the fall of 2001, while Sirius Radio is launching in three market areas this month, but plans to be nationwide by the third quarter of 2002.

Just like cable TV, satellite radio offers a multitude of options. Music channels will cover the decades (the 40's through the 90's), big band and swing, and jazz. Like country music? You can pick which style of country you want to listen to: classic, blue grass, traditional, Nashville, or progressive. There will be world channels of Reggae, New Age, Hindi/Indian, Mandarin/Chinese. Hit channels including MTV, VH1, soundtracks, and showtunes. Urban channels which will include classic soul, urban top 40, gospel, old school R+B, classic rap and hip-hop. For the classical lovers can listen to traditional classic, eclectic, opera, and more.

The news junkie is not forgotten with feeds from CNN, NPR, Fox News, CNN Financial, C/Net Tech, Bloomberg and CNBC. Sports fans are covered with ESPN radio, CNN/SI radio, Fox Sports and NASCAR Radio. Comedy and variety channels are also offered.

Will satellite radio succeed? Statistics show that 75% of all Americans age twelve and up listen to the radio daily. Also, 50% of existing radio stations use one of three formats (Adult contemporary, Country, and news/talk/sports), but 21% of all music sales are from totally ignored formats. Industry analysts indicate that each service needs just 2.5% of all the cars on the road to succeed. With more than 200 million registered vehicles in the US and people spending more time in their cars, prospects are good. Just as FM took over the airwaves from AM radio, satellite radio is poised to be the format of choice.

For more information, both services have web sites: <http://www.siriusradio.com/> and <http://www.xmradio.com/> To see and hear the systems in action, the larger audio stores in town have the units on display (HH Gregg, Ovation, Best Buy or Circuit City).

## Classifieds

### For Sale

I have a 1990 Miata with hardtop for sale . I bought the car with 67k four years ago. It now has 87k. It is red with black cloth interior. I have original window sticker and all maintenance records from owner #1 and myself. (#2 owner did a poor job on records). It has been serviced by Brent Whited at Wellings Toyota Mazda in Richmond since I owned the car. I have spent \$4000 since I owned the car. (Do not tell wife.) Asking \$5000 without the hardtop. (I would like to keep the hardtop for my '99, but would let it go.) Call me! Phone 765-649-3448 or e-mail [bacieone@aol.com](mailto:bacieone@aol.com)

### For Sale

Are you "fashionably" correct? If not, we've got what you need! Indy Miata Club T-shirts and Polo shirts are still available, though the selection of sizes is dwindling. Check out the styles on the club web site or call Chuck Wills for availability. Don't show up at any event in 2002 without being properly attired!