



With News & Classifieds From: **THE PLAIN DEALER**

**NEWSPAPER SEARCH**  **GO**

**FIND A BUSINESS**  **GO**

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Local](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Forums](#)
- [Living & Travel](#)
- [Entertainment](#)

# Search

Back To Your Search Results | Search Again

## THE PLAIN DEALER



» More From The Plain Dealer

### Local innovators put 'wow' back in radio

Sunday, August 29, 2004

Alot of people remember when Cleveland was a trend-setting, hit-making radio market where things happened first. What fewer people know is that Cleveland still is the home of radio innovation - including the tools that could save traditional radio from irrelevance or oblivion.



**TOM FERAN**

These days, however, the innovation doesn't come out of a radio station. It comes out of Telos-Omnia-Axia, in a nondescript brick building on Superior Avenue at East 19th Street.

It's not a household name because the company doesn't make consumer products. But its audio equipment has become the industry standard worldwide. It's used at virtually every FM station in town, by a substantial majority of the top-rated stations in the nation and by most leading stations overseas.

The company looks for a "wow factor" in what it makes. Judging from reaction at trade shows and in industry publications, they've scored a major wow with one of their newest developments, FM Surround Sound.

You'll probably be able to hear it in about two years. When you hear it, you'll say "wow." Listeners don't often say that about radio anymore, but Telos remembers when they did.

The company has its roots in the WMMS of the late 1970s and '80s. Products developed as "in-house, home-brew projects" at WMMS were the company's foundation, said managing director Denny Sanders, who was an air talent at WMMS and WMJI for many years.

Frank Foti, who was the station's chief engineer, was dissatisfied with the sound it got from standard audio processors. Wanting a bigger, cleaner, crisper sound, he built a processor that gave WMMS what might have been the best-sounding signal in the country. He did the same thing when the station's owner launched WHTZ in New York City and put Foti in charge of engineering. "Z-100" became the nation's top-rated station, and everyone wanted Foti's processors.

Steve Church replaced Foti at WMMS and did a talk show called "Live Wire" as a sideline. But Church hated the standard equipment for taking on-air phone calls, so he came up with his own, the Telos 10, in 1984.

It was the world's first digital telephone-to-broadcast interface system, and it significantly improved the quality of phone-in segments.

Foti founded Cutting Edge Technologies on his advanced audio processors. Church founded Telos Systems to develop digital tools for radio. They merged into Telos-Omnia in 1992 and this year added the Axia division, led by Mike Dosch, whose radio control boards turn mazes of wires and cables into more versatile and economical Ethernet connections.

The product that really put Telos on the map, a decade ago, was the Zephyr - a

#### MORE SEARCHES

##### Classifieds

- » Jobs
- » Autos
- » Real Estate
- » All Classifieds

##### Death Notices & Obituaries

- » Death Notices
- » & Guest Books
- » News Obituaries

##### Local Businesses

- » Find A Business

##### Entertainment

- » Movies
- » Music
- » Arts & Events
- » Dining & Bars

##### Hot Deals on Wheels

##### Best Local Autos

- '99 Audi A4 Quattro, 85,555 mi, Black, \$12,995
- '01 Honda Cr-V Lx, 37,217 mi, Silver, \$15,900
- '02 Chevrolet Trailblazer, 42,174 mi, Black, \$17,999
- '02 Mercury Mountaineer, 28,000 mi, Spruce, \$20,995
- '04 Chevrolet Venture Minivan, 22,700 mi, \$16,995
- 1999 Pontiac Grand Am Se, White, \$5,900

• **See Total Inventory**

An Advertising Section

[SEND THIS PAGE](#)

[PRINT THIS PAGE](#)

#### CLASSIFIEDS

*Get The Best Local...*

- [Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Real Estate](#)
- [All Classifieds](#) | [Place An Ad](#)

#### SHOPPING

- » [Search Ads From The Plain Dealer](#)
- » **NEW!** [MaxValues Coupons & Savings](#)

#### FROM OUR ADVERTISERS

>> >>

» [Advertise With Us](#)

#### OUR AFFILIATES



unit about the size of a videocassette player that revolutionized radio by making it possible to do high-fidelity, high-quality broadcasting over conventional phone lines, instead of expensive satellite links or telephone Long Lines.

The cost-saving was staggering. Zephyr became the most successful digital radio product in history. It's difficult to find a network or syndicated program that doesn't use, or wasn't made possible, by it.

The company now is truly international - as underlined by the fact that Church, who speaks fluent Russian and French, now makes his home in Europe's Silicon Valley of Latvia. But headquarters for administration, marketing, customer support, quality control and research and development remain in downtown Cleveland, and manufacturing is contracted to companies in Highland Heights, Willoughby and Mentor.

And it's in a room downtown where Foti demonstrates their latest innovation - a way to transmit five completely separate channels of sound on FM, or by satellite or over the Internet. Hearing it is like going from mono to a really good stereo system, only more so. The sound is so good, it's scary.

Foti expects it will take two years for receivers to get to market, probably starting in cars, and for the system to be "mainstream."

It could be just in time. Conventional radio already is losing younger listeners to other media. When static-free digital broadcasting starts putting AM stations back in the music business, "FM could be what AM became in the '70s and '80s," Foti said. "It's going to have to keep up. Terrestrial broadcasters still have that mind-set that everybody's going to listen at 7 o'clock Thursday because they're going to give away a thousand dollars. Those days are over.

"Young people aren't going to care where they're getting their content from. They're going to have a little hand-held device, and they're not going to care if it's FM or AM or Wi-Fi or satellite. They're going to look at some little screen and say 'Here's this new song by my new favorite band,' and they're going to hit it and listen. They don't care where it comes from."

What they'll care about, he thinks, is something like theater-quality Surround Sound. Which, when it happens, will come from Cleveland.

"Now," he said, "we have a wow factor for radio."

To reach this Plain Dealer columnist:

tferan@plaind.com, 216-999-5433

© 2004 The Plain Dealer. Used with permission.

: |||

Order The Plain Dealer and receive a 1-year  
subscription to your favorite magazine at 75% off.

---

[About Us](#) | [Help/Feedback](#) | [Advertise With Us](#)

Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#). Please read our [Privacy Policy](#).

©2004 [cleveland.com](#). All Rights Reserved.