

# Radio World®

FEATURES

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PHOTO GALLERY

## 120 Stations — One Big Remote

**Marvin Collins**

A few months ago, when Barry Victor of Premiere Radio Networks learned I was retiring from KFI(AM)/KOST(FM), he called to ask if I could work on a project in Las Vegas for a few days.

The project involved having 150 radio stations broadcast all at the same time

Aladdin. The next morning, Tuesday, I reported to one of the large ballrooms at the Aladdin. I learned that the plan was to set up six rooms within the ballroom. Each of the six would be devoted to a particular radio format. Three rooms already had tables in place for each station to use.

Three also had Telos Zephyrs at the

sisted of three microphones, three headphones, headphone amplifier and Shure mixer plus cables.

The final count of radio stations turned out to be close to 120. We had a lot of microphones, earphones, headphone amplifiers and mixers to set up. The audio kits were rented from Steve Kirsch of Silverlake Audio in New York. The 65 or so Telos Zephyrs were also rented from Silverlake Audio.

I was impressed by the amount of gear Steve Kirsch has in his stable of equipment. By the end of the day Tuesday we had the audio kits set up on the 120 or so tables.

The next job was to string out the 12-pair cables to each group of three tables. Each table was served by a smaller four-pair cable that fanned out from the 12-pair cable. All cables were terminated with XLR connectors.

The 12-pair cables started at the front of the room, where the Telos Zephyr farm was located, and extended out in the room to serve a group of three tables. The room for which I was responsible had 15 stations, so five 12-pair cables extended out to each group of three tables.

At the front of the room, the five 12-pair cables plugged into an XLR patch bay. Cables coming out of the back of the patch bay rack were then plugged into the appropriate Zephyr inputs and outputs. This accounted for two of the four pair serving each table. The third pair serving each table was for a dial telephone located at each table for station use. The fourth pair provided a podium feed that went to all tables.

By Wednesday night we had three of the six rooms all cabled and plugged together and pretty much ready to go. The space in the ballroom for the other three



Barry Victor, director of engineering for the Radio Music Awards remote broadcasts, sits at the temporary Telos Zephyr farm during ISDN line checkouts. This farm eventually was divided and moved to rooms that were set up later.

from the Aladdin Resort and Casino.

I agreed, and soon learned the purpose of this mass remote broadcast was to promote the ABC television show “The Radio Music Awards” which aired Nov. 5, 2000. Guests on the Saturday night show were interviewed on radio stations all around the country on Friday and Saturday afternoons from noon until 4 p.m. to promote the TV show.

I arrived in Las Vegas the evening of Oct. 30 and checked into my room in the

front of the rooms on a large table on a riser. This much of the setup had been done before I arrived under the direction of Kirby Miovac, assistant to Barry Victor.

### **Zephyr convention**

There were so many Zephyrs the place looked like a Zephyr convention. I have never seen so many Zephyrs at one place before in my life.

My first duty was to assist in setting up the audio kits at each table. Each kit con-

rooms became available to us on Thursday morning at 10 a.m.

Now the rush was on to move all the previously set up tables from the “green room” center area of the ballroom to the now partitioned additional three rooms.

Thursday was a long day, with having to move into the last three rooms, cable and test the setups. We needed to be ready to put all stations on the air at noon on Friday.

### Doom and gloom

Doom and gloom appeared on the scene Thursday afternoon when it was discovered that the ISDN lines provided by Sprint were not working properly. Test calls were being dropped prematurely. As test calls were being placed using the Telos Zephyrs, it was also found that there was not enough capacity to handle but about half the outbound long-distance calls.

Barry Victor, the director of the project, was now a worried and busy man. What if we had 120 radio stations arrive on Friday and could not put them on the air reliably, if at all?

Barry was busy calling all his contacts at Sprint. Late in the day, Sprint technicians and supervisors started arriving. They did their best but it was not until about 2 a.m. Friday that the last of the ISDN problems were finally cleared.



Shown is an exterior night view of the new Aladdin Resort and Casino, from which the remote broadcast originated.

As it turned out, there was more than one problem. Telos advised that since the channel bank serving all our Zephyrs was located right in the hotel near the ballroom, the Zephyrs might be overdriven. To solve this problem, punch blocks quickly were purchased and put in series with the cables to the ISDN patch bays for each room. Five-hundred-ohm resistors were punched onto the punch blocks so that

each ISDN line would have 500 ohms in series with each side of the line.

This helped, but other problems continued. After much testing, Sprint determined that the CPU card for the fiber-optic system that brought all the ISDN lines to the Aladdin had an intermittent problem that was causing the disconnects. Replacing the CPU card finally cleared that serious problem.

Also during their testing, Sprint found a defective channel bank in a central office that reduced the number of ISDN outbound long-distance lines available for Las Vegas. The defective channel bank was replaced and finally early Friday morning test calls were made from all the Zephyrs and sufficient capacity existed. Whew!

Friday morning, the final checkout of the last three rooms was completed — a bit later than planned because the remaining three rooms had not been available until Thursday. Also the ISDN line problems put us behind on calling the stations to make sure we had good two-way ISDN connections.

Before we knew it, station staffs were arriving at their tables anxious to get on the air. This is when it really became hectic. Unplanned last-minute changes in ISDN settings with some of the stations made for some last-minute re-patching the assignments of Telos Zephyrs.

We had to group stations in pairs on the



Mike Phillips and Burt Weiner are shown in the largest of the six remote broadcast rooms. This busy room had 36 radio stations on the air simultaneously.

Zephyrs, which required any two stations to be using the same standard. The preferred standard was to send Layer 3 to the station and receive G.722 for the mix-minus return.

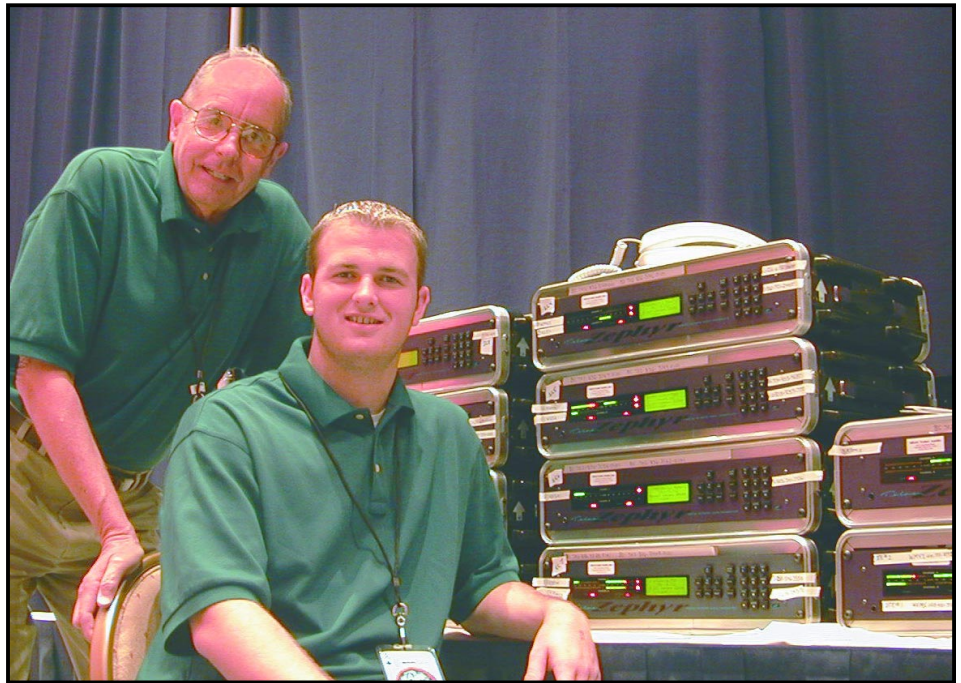
### Last-minute changes

At the last minute, some stations found they had to deviate from the planned standard. In one case, the Layer 3 would not work at the station end. Right up until noon Friday it was a busy time figuring out which stations to put on which Zephyrs to accommodate the last-minute changes and try to get them all dialed up on time.

I sure was glad when the last station was finally connected and checked out. The ISDN circuits worked well except for some unplanned disconnects. A quick redial usually took care of that problem.

After the stress of the Friday startup, Saturday's broadcasts were a pleasure. All we had to do was redial the stations for Saturday. No last-minute changes were needed. The rooms were full of personalities coming in for interviews and a good time seemed to be had by all.

All remote broadcasts ended at 4 p.m. Most of the people disappeared, preparing to attend the Radio Music Awards TV show in the Theater for the Performing Arts at the Aladdin.



Marvin Collins and his assistant Mark Perry. This room had facilities for 15 stations to be on the air simultaneously.

However, those of us who had been involved in setting up this big event now had the big job of packing it up. All those audio kits had to be packed back in their cases. All the Zephyrs had to be disconnected. All the cabling had to be taken up from the floor, coiled up and returned to their shipping cases. Hundreds of boxes were brought out from the temporary stor-

age area to contain audio kits, Zephyrs, etc. for shipping. Boxes had to be taped shut and labels attached.

By 11 p.m. Saturday, you would never have known that the Radio Music Awards mass remote broadcast had ever been in the large ballroom at the Aladdin Resort and Casino. 🌍



One of the six rooms set up and waiting for the radio stations to arrive