

*Nick and Choose* { NICK ALTSCHULLER }

## GETTING AN EARFUL

Exploring the odd, unusual—frequently tedious—podcasting outskirts



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**M**Y LIFE'S MOST EXCESSIVE purchase is my iPod Touch. I employ no apps. I don't go online. I've never used it to watch a movie, and it holds little music. On the sliding scale of extravagance, I'm like the guy who buys a Porsche just so he can drive it in rush hour traffic.

During my own commute, my iPod serves its primary function as a podcast delivery device. I have a regular lineup of shows, all of which could fairly be deemed "mainstream." But on occasion, I do find myself checking out the dustier corners of the iTunes library. It reminds me of when I was a kid, taking my first exploratory steps away from the music on pop radio. To stimulate intellectual growth, sometimes you have to shock the system. So for a week, I strapped my headphones on like defibrillator paddles and plunged into the auditory fringe.

Perhaps still channeling my younger self, the first area I turned to was porn, and the show *Porn++*. The podcast features two guys dissecting scenes from current and "classic" adult movies. You'd think having been on the job since 2008, the hosts would've seen everything by now, but as they trade breakdowns, the commentary is often interrupted with an ear-shattering "WHHHAATT!?", as if somehow a particular bout of fellatio finally took sex into the 21st century. The show's only highlight was the coda, during which they discussed whether or not their parents knew about their side job. Said one cohost to the other, "In hindsight, I recommend you don't tell your dad."

On the opposite end of the spectrum was *Help Me Quit Porn*. I was hoping for a cheeky peek at religious self-righteousness, but after a bitching Christian rock intro, the show turned out to be just a recount of one man's struggles followed by quiet prayer. It's actually quite soothing, like having a remorseful Mr. Rogers discuss his dirty habits, then read you a passage from Corinthians.

Thinking elicited fear would be a good measure of a podcast's success, I turned to the supernatural. Sadly, the only alarming thing the Northwest Georgia Paranormal Investigation Team had to share was the bitter announcement that a team

from Tennessee got first dibs on a haunted swamp house. On *The Paranormal Podcast*, hyperdimensional physics expert Mike Bara announced that "Newton, Einstein and quantum mechanics are all wrong," and that the 2012 apocalyptic nightmare can be avoided through the power of positive thought. He may be an idiot, but he's not a dull listen.

Boredom did, however, strike when I tried to learn about other people's hobbies. The hosts of *The Antique Auction Forum* brought on Mark Moran, author of price guides on everything from salt and pepper shakers to West German pottery. I feel I owe my brain a sympathy card. Then there was *Crafternoon Tea* with Auckland's own Gran-nyg, aka an hour in which I could actually feel my body aging. *Steam Geeks* promised a breakdown of *True Grit* and a discussion on the influence of Westerns on the steampunk sub-genre of science fiction. Oddly, however, they began the show with more than 30 minutes of comparative whiskey tasting, and the subsequent hour was a wash.

Deciding to indulge my own nerdy tastes, I dug for podcasts about movies, video games and comic books. I found *Boston Bastard Brigade*, a show that perpetuates negative stereotypes about both nerds and

Bostonians. But I encourage you to check out *Giant Fire Breathing Robot* if you'd enjoy a lengthy commentary on how awesome it'd be to have director Kevin Smith's baby.

My podcast search's one salvation was *Band in Boston*. Light on chatter, and with tastes skewing toward Americana, the hosts list the weekly lineup at some local clubs and play select tracks. It answers the question, "I wonder what a band named Cat-Tooth Jim sounds like?" (Pretty good, actually.) The interludes allow the mind to wander, which is part of the reason I assembled my regular lineup in the first place.

Like picking your particular brand of cable news, sometimes your brain just needs the guise of edification in order to unwind—a springboard into day-dreaming. All I ask, and what my quest failed to find, is that a podcast give me what I want to hear, and the freedom to not listen. \*\*\*

Send your stories and suggestions to [nick@improper.com](mailto:nick@improper.com).

He may be an idiot, but he's not a dull listen.



*Impersonals*

## PILE IT ON

**T**O ALL MY FAVORITE SELF-ENTITLED SOUTH END NEIGHBORS:

Put down your texting paraphernalia, pick up a shovel and move your smug asses outside to clear your parking spaces. Some of us would like to be able to park when we return home from work. I know it's beneath you, but let's dip into our nearly depleted reserves of common sense and remember that we should work together... you know, like caring adults. Then you can go to the gym, look in the mirror and fall in love all over again. *Waltham Street warrior*

In response to "A very happy commuter":

You must not be from around here. Nobody is going to respond to anybody at all, especially if they're wishing everyone a happy holiday. Most people will think you're nuts. Don't forget, there are lots of hospitals and other 24-hour businesses—a lot of those people probably had to work that evening or Christmas Day, and that sucks. So before you go forcing your jollies on helpless commuters, think about how many people probably aren't ecstatic to be on the bus on Christmas Eve. It's great that you are, but bestow your excessive holiday spirit on people who give a crap.

*Boston-born babe*

To the man and woman who held the door open for us:

An Indian colleague and I were entering our Back Bay office building. As he proceeded up the stairs, I heard you say, "You have to be nice to them. God knows what they'll do to you!" and then, "Probably an illegal with no papers." Your racist comments exemplify the worst parts of this city and all of America. You make me ashamed. *Color-blind*

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