

# Adult/ Contemporary



JEFF GREEN

## AFTERNOON ACES, PART IV

# Dan Daniel: From "Goodness" To Greatness

R&R concludes its look at the nation's top afternoon A/C talents with WYNY/New York's Dan Daniel. Dan is listened to by more people than any other A/C afternoon personality in the country (spring '83 Arbitron, 12+ Cume Persons, M-F 3-7pm, MSA).

A 26-year broadcasting veteran, Dan got his "basic training" as a serviceman in Manila on Armed Forces Radio following the Korean War. Returning home to Houston in 1955, Dan worked at KXYZ for 15 months and then moved to Minneapolis for four years to work for Todd Storz at WDG. In 1961, Dan joined WMCA/New York for afternoons as one of the station's original "Good Guys," and stayed until WMCA shifted to Talk in 1970. From there, he cohosted a show called "Monitor" for the NBC Radio Network for two years, and also did some parttime work for WNBC. By then, Dan was ready for something new, and for the next five years he concentrated exclusively on freelance on-camera TV, voiceover, and film narration, including such national accounts as Publisher's Clearing House, Colgate, Alka-Seltzer, Standard Brands, and Anheuser-Busch. Dan then returned to WMCA to handle a telephone talk show for a year, also working a short while at WHN. In 1979, Dan came to WYNY, and he's been there ever since — first in middays, then mornings, and now afternoons.



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### Making The Full Circle

R&R: What led you to leave radio for so long?

DD: When WMCA went half-talk/half-music (and subsequently all-Talk), they wanted me to stay. I was scared to death, as I didn't think I could do it. Furthermore, I was hating to see the demise of the "Good Guys," as that had been my life for so long.

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There were also cultural and social changes occurring: the advent of FM, the Vietnam war, the Monterey Film Festival, dope, and all those changing mores. I wanted to get out of radio for awhile, and it was almost like going through a divorce.

It took a number of years to reconcile with myself that there were many people who remembered me when they were growing up as kids and teenagers, and that it might be nice to be part of their lives a second time. And that's exactly what's happened here at 'YNY. On a daily basis —

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whether on the phone, through the mail, or in the street — someone will say to me, "Dan, I'm grown now, with my own family and career, but I grew up listening to you, and I can't tell you what it means to me to have you a part of my life again." That's been very gratifying.

### Knowing Who The Audience Is

R&R: With such a large audience, what sort of listener do you imagine yourself talking to?

DD: It's not that I don't talk to men, but we know 'YNY is more of a female station. So, I basically talk to a 33-year-old woman. Our hot demographic is 25-34, and I'd rather aim high and not "talk under" the audience.



**CAMEO APPEARANCE** — Among other recordings, WYNY's Dan Daniel made a single for Neil Bogart's Cameo Parkway label back in 1967 while at WMCA. The moody narrative "If Love Is," backed with the peppy "(I Don't Stand) A Ghost Of A Chance," was produced by Terry Knight, later Grand Funk's producer.

I don't flirt with this 33-year-old listener, because I don't want to turn off the woman's husband or boyfriend, and I want to be liked by both of them. So instead, through song lyrics or my own words, I try to communicate things I think she wants her man to say to her, that he might want to say to her, or that they should both be saying to each other.

In the early days at WMCA, I talked to a 19-year-old, then a 27-year-old, and now it's a 33-year-old. There's nothing that happens to them that hasn't happened to me: I'm a father married 25 years with two grown children and an 8-year-old. I have so many life experiences which parallel what's going on in the world, and I try to get those across one way or another.



'YNY "KEYS" INTO LISTENERS — A record 874,000 phone calls boiled down to 97 hopefuls in WYNY's "Key Winners" contest to see if their keys would open the doors to two new red Porsche 944 sports cars. Personalities Dan Daniels and Steve O'Brien (left) emceed the event held in front of Madison Square Garden. Dan is seen calling out the final numbers (above) and calls the play-by-play (below) as one of the winners hits the jackpot.

R&R: Everyone says one-on-one communication is the important technique. How do you develop this skill?

DD: First, be a good listener and stay constantly aware of what's going on. I try to view more than one side of an issue, because I know I have my own prejudices. It's important to let your listeners know that, too. Don't get up on a soapbox and preach, but instead occasionally "leak out" little bits to let them know something about you and that you feel strongly about certain things.

An example of this occurred the morning after John Lennon was shot. To be honest, I went on the air very angry. Following the

your PD won't let you do anything besides give liners. But you can actually bring something to these by learning to say them a number of different ways. On the other hand, you can get lazy by saying, "Well, I'm not allowed to talk anyway, so I'll just read the goddamned liners." That's just wasting your show! I always approach every show as if something was going to happen — that none of the carts would play and I'd have to talk for the whole three hours. The idea is to be prepared, and that's the meaning of a professional. Someday, by really working at it, you'll get to the point where if you're suddenly forced to talk at length, you could do it.

### Making Magic

R&R: Didn't that happen to you once?

DD: It came in 1965 during the famous blackout here in the Northeast. I was at WMCA, and I guess I was the only DJ on the air in town. It was 5:27pm when the cart machine began to slow down to a "TTTTT." The next thing I knew, everything went out. We were one of the first stations back on the air, and I stayed to cover my usual 4-7pm shift. I worked by candlelight with a hand mike, operating a single turntable from the auxiliary shop. We played Ramsey Lewis's "The In Crowd," over and over again because it was so dark, we couldn't find any other records! For the most part, I was talking, but every once in a while we'd play that song for a little break.

You'd look out over the city, and there was a beautiful moon that night. There were no accidents, burglaries, murders, or muggings. That night was so special, I stayed on the air until 11pm. Afterwards, I received 18,000 letters, many from people who had never heard the station before. Most just said, "Thanks for helping me through the night." It was absolutely the most fantastic experience I've ever had in radio... the closest I had ever come to intimacy with the listeners. It was complete magic!

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show, I got some memos from upstairs saying, "Hey, you sounded a little funereal this morning." I'm sorry, but that was just the way I felt that day. It was one time when I let my listeners know I'm a real person.

### A Matter Of Discipline

R&R: What would you recommend to today's rising stars?

DD: Get yourself a liberal arts education — not to fall back on, but to use in your radio experience. The more you know, the more you can bring to the microphone — even if you work in a very tight format like ours.

Having only a few seconds to talk on 'YNY is still the biggest challenge for me. Back at WMCA, when there were fewer music stations, we could be more self-indulgent and talk for 38 seconds, as long as we were entertaining. Nowadays, with a station like 'YNY, I must be able to say something worthwhile in six, nine or 14 seconds. With an advanced education and a lot of life experiences, you can relate better in a condensed form. The idea is to make one word do the work of ten.

You can be extremely creative in a short bit. In advertising, some of the most creative concepts are the least wordy. It's a constant challenge, but never think you're going to sound boring, because then you will be! You can't allow yourself to believe you're automatically dull just because you've only got 15 seconds to talk. I went through that myself in the beginning, but I know now it's up to me to be creative within the given framework. Even though I've been successful in this business for 25 years, the same rules apply to me as they do to everyone else.

You really must discipline yourself. You may think you're being disciplined because

## Progress

WMJJ/Birmingham parttimer **Bill Barron** is elevated to News Director... **Angela L. Smith** is appointed News Director at WYEN/Des Plaines, IL, formerly of WAUR/Aurora... **Lisa Glasberg** moves from the RKO Radio Network to WPIX/New York for morning news... **KEZR/San Jose** midday man **Joe Roberts** becomes News Director... Former KGW/Portland staffer **Mike Beard** rejoins the station as reporter and anchor... **Cynthia Menzel** comes to KQDI/Great Falls as anchor/reporter, most recently of KNAT-TV/Albuquerque... **KEXO/Grand Junction, CO** names **Steve Marsh** Production Director... **Russ Eckerson** becomes Production Director at KWEB/Rochester, MN... **Dennis Hambley** adds the title of Production Director to his midday duties at KRDO/Colorado Springs.