

Syndication's Next Generation: Chad Benson.

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(**Inside Radio** continues its look at some of the hottest new names among syndicated radio hosts.)

Korean leader Kim Jong-Un? The brother of a slain African lion? When you “book” those guests on your radio show, the listener can assume it’ll be anything but typical. And that’s Chad Benson for you.

Granted, the 44-year-old host of “The Chad Benson Show” doesn’t actually speak to reclusive dictators or wild animals, but rather creates these characters—and many others—with his own voice. Along with a wide-ranging radio career, Benson is also a voice character artist. The faux guests are just one way the host injects humor and satire into his talk radio program, and tries to stand apart from others in the field. “By bringing in humor and other voices, it gives the show a three-dimensional perspective,” explains executive producer John McMullen. “It really resonates with the audience, it gets them to see seriousness and to laugh a little.”

While Benson talks politics, he also aims to appeal to younger talk listeners by blending humor, pop culture and personal experiences with the requisite political chatter. “It is info-tainment. We’re going to be edgy, satirical and take on subjects people won’t take on. It is not just politics all day long,” Benson says of his Radio America-distributed show, which debuted in March 2015 and airs on about 60 stations. “We do it all and we take a different point of view from 99% of the others.” On any given day, Benson, a single father to a 5-year-old son, says he might talk relationships, family, politics and the Kardashians. And, of course, he interviews some of his fictitious guests. Since Benson is courting social media-savvy Generation X and Millennial listeners, he is über-active on social media, posting throughout the day—and night—to keep conversations flowing. Younger listeners, Benson says, don’t want to call into the show, but they do want to post, tweet, like and share. And, he says, social media interactions help bridge the gap between a national show and local listeners, especially since his airtime varies by market.

Benson says engaging with listeners is what he loves most about radio. “Radio still has accessibility and one-to-one relatability,” he says. “With radio, I always felt like we were having a conversation and hanging out.”

In the coming year, to increase his profile and keep the connections coming, Benson plans to broadcast remotely from locales including the Republican and Democratic conventions and from Comicon. And he isn’t limiting his work to radio. In fact, characters from Benson’s show are spawning a new business. EP McMullen says they have a deal to develop animated programming based on voices from the show. “With Chad,” says McMullen, “we have this amazing, multimedia resource.”

