



March 1, 2010

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Comments of The Grand Ole Opry
Amendment of Parts 15, 74 and 90 of the Commission's Rules
Regarding Low Power Auxiliary Stations, Including Wireless
Microphones
Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
WT Docket Nos. 08-166, 08-167; ET Docket No. 10-24**

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Baker, Clyburn, Copps, and McDowell:

On behalf of the Grand Ole Opry, I applaud the Commission for recognizing that contemporary wireless microphone operations have outgrown the 30-year old rules that regulate broadcast auxiliary equipment, for acknowledging that the current licensing eligibility requirements may need to be expanded to accommodate important users groups, and for proactively exploring new rules under which advanced, future wireless microphone technology can flourish. While supporting the Commission's reform efforts, the Opry also takes this opportunity to reemphasize the importance of wireless microphones to productions and live events performed at our venues and other mid-sized venues. We strongly urge the Commission to avoid adopting any rule or regulations that would compromise the performance of the wireless microphones used at Opry venues or by Opry performers.

The Opry, the "home of American music" and "country's most famous stage" is Nashville, Tennessee's number-one attraction. Today, the Opry is a leading performance venue for a wide variety of music genres. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people make pilgrimages across town or around the world to the Opry Complex to see the show live. Millions worldwide enjoy the Opry through the Internet as well as the Opry's radio show and occasional televised programming.

Throughout the decades, the Opry has continuously evaluated and adopted technology that enables audience members, as well as remotely located viewers and listeners, to immerse themselves in our productions. No individual technology has impacted contemporary Opry productions more than wireless audio. Freeing the performers and their instruments from wires permits a more dynamic performance with improved mobility over a wider area. The grand stages and sophisticated choreography today's Opry fans expect and deserve are only possible because of wireless microphones. To meet this demand, our wireless audio requires interference-free spectrum capable of supporting high-fidelity, low-latency wireless microphones. As we have previously emphasized to the Commission, wireless microphones are an irreplaceable tool in virtually every Opry performance.

The Opry applauds the Commission's decision to evaluate and better align its Part 74 license rules with contemporary wireless microphone use. As the Commission begins this process, the Opry and its members urge the Commission to proceed cautiously and avoid taking any action that would harm the performance of our wireless microphone systems. In that regard, it is critical that the Commission's amended rules provide that professional entertainment venues such as the Grand Ole Opry House as well as other outdoor and mid-size venues are eligible for Part 74 wireless microphone licenses.

The Commission was correct when it stated in the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that entertainment venues are extremely demanding users of multiple channels for wireless microphone operations with similar (and perhaps greater) interference protection needs relative to many existing wireless microphone licensees. The Opry House is one such venue. The dynamic stage performances at the Opry House demand wireless technology to ensure performers can move freely without any compromise in audio quality. Our engineers and producers have no ability to mask or conceal disruptions or sub-standard audio quality from the audience. Performers at Opry House events should not and cannot have their wireless microphones competing with wireless devices in the audience or outside the venue for the same frequencies. Our audio systems will almost certainly suffer from significant interference if the Commission's rules do not provide us with protected status, including the ability to reserve frequencies in the future TV band database for the duration of our events. To the extent that a Part 74 license will be necessary to register microphones for the protection in the TV bands database, the Opry must be eligible under any new rules to obtain a license.

Unprotected Part 15 status is not appropriate for the Opry's venues, or, for that matter, the general wireless microphone needs of our members and guest artists. Wireless microphones in use at Opry performances and productions must perform flawlessly. The exacting audio quality we demand is simply unattainable under Part 15 rules where our wireless microphones would be forced to operate on a sufferance basis and tolerate any interference generated from inside or outside one of our venues. It is impractical, if not impossible, to police the handheld electronic devices that enter the Opry House during a sold out show where all 4,400 audience seats are filled. Needless-to-say, we have even less ability to control the radiofrequency environment outside the venue. Even if Opry performers could tolerate interference, which they cannot, the 50 milliwatt power limit proposed for Part 15 wireless microphones would present a serious

problem for many of our performers that require microphones with greater output. In sum, any attempt to reclassify our equipment as Part 15 is a showstopper, literally and figuratively.

As this proceeding moves forward, and the FCC begins to examine additional long-term regulatory issues affecting wireless microphones, we ask that the Commission consider modernizing the application process for Part 74 wireless microphone license applicants. FCC Form 601 and the complementary forms that must be completed to apply for a Part 74 wireless microphone license are complex and require information that is not relevant to many professional wireless microphone users. The complexity of the current application process is likely a deterrent for many users that would like to obtain a license. A more streamlined licensing process that eliminates or makes highly technical terms (*e.g.*, FCC emission designators) more understandable would promote compliance with licensing obligations.

Again, the Opry applauds and supports the Commission's renewed focus on wireless microphone regulation. Given the importance of wireless microphones to Opry events and programming, in addition to other suggestions discussed above, we ask that the Commission proceed cautiously and ensure that any future expansion of Part 74 license eligibility encompasses the Opry and our performers.

Sincerely,

/s/

Steve Gibson
Opry Music Director