



Music

Cancel My Subscription: The Worst of NPR

Moe Moskowitz, narrator

The Punsters, narrator

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National Public Radio provides unflappable refinement for the savage heart that beats wildly in the modern breast. The eloquent voices of NPR commentators announce soothing classical notes that swirl out of car stereos and float into quiet oblivion. However, for close to fifteen years, this ebb and flow of perfect syntax from the likes of Bob Edwards, Alex Chadwick, and Susan Stamberg sometimes billows and blows into a storm—a storm by the name of Moe-Moe Moskowitz.

Who is this Moe fellow and why is he interrupting the contemplative tone of NPR? The history of Moe’s shenanigans-ah, career-is detailed in irreverent fashion in this audio book.

The earnest nature of NPR, with its music, fundraising, and politics, is subject to the satirical sword of Moe and his musical sidekicks, the Punsters. “Dr. Moe Moskowitz,” an astrological tax consultant, interrupts a solemn commentary on “Swan Lake” to crow this tip from “The Fear of Filing,” his latest book: “Earn big money! Declare yourself a foreign country—then apply for foreign aid.

Moskowitz offers great fundraising strategies by enlisting rock stars, albeit dead ones like Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, and Elvis, to beg for the coffers of NPR: “You know it’s not easy being dead especially when you don’t have much money and you know that’s the same problem we have at NPR.” The Punsters chime in, singing “Stronger Than Dead” in the background.

These entrepreneurial skills (or lack thereof) landed Moskowitz at NPR for the long haul where “Moe Moskowitz and the Punsters” rock and roll to some very familiar-sounding songs. The lyrics, however, are a little different—“Punstered up,” so to speak.

Ever the businessman, one of Moskowitz’s alter egos, Basil Starling, creates musical “Cliff Notes” for those twenty-first-century students who hate to read. During a demonstration,

NPR commentator Terry Gross is asked to choose a book to be made attractive to students. When she picks Moby Dick, Basil raps: “There’s a cat who only had one wish / name of Ahab and he dug this fish / he tried to catch it but you know he’s batting zero / I call this cat a tragic hero.”

Cancel My Subscription: The Worst of NPR fulfills its intent as a wry attack on the peaceful, erudite world of culture radio.