



MusicMaster and InfoAudio: A Unified Approach to Radio Scheduling and Playout

A co-branded integration brings music scheduling, broadcast automation and dedicated support under one roof

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 **MusicMaster + InfoAudio**
SCHEDULING AUTOMATION

MusicMaster and InfoAudio

What if there were a single, unified scheduling and broadcast automation product, with a single point of support and the same flexibility and reliability that made MusicMaster an industry standard?

That question drove the [formation of an integrated partnership between MusicMaster and Informa's InfoAudio](#), a radio automation platform with more than 25 years of success throughout Latin America.

This is not a typical third-party handshake between suppliers. The choice to work more closely with InfoAudio came after the MusicMaster team carefully sifted through numerous automation options. Ultimately, they selected InfoAudio to create a fully co-branded, bundled ecosystem. They found that the platform's core values matched its own, emphasizing "family-first" support as well as deep customization.

A legacy beyond playlist rotations

Great music segues have been MusicMaster's specialty for more than four decades. It harkens back to the company's inception in the 1980s, when founder Joe Knapp realized that music selection was a superb application of computer power.

One of Knapp's first hires was Scott Wirt as a software developer. Today, Wirt is vice president and chief technology officer. And MusicMaster is a multi-generation enterprise. Laurie Knapp, Joe's daughter, is CEO.

The software has evolved since then, but the company's pledge remains the same. Whether it's incorporating user feedback in its products or

responding to customer needs late on a Friday night or over the Christmas holidays, MusicMaster believes in earning the user's trust.

"It is our philosophy that we don't just sell you the software, hand you the keys, and let you go drive the car," Director of Operations Jerry Parker said. "We have a team that understands what you're doing. We speak the same language and can help you achieve your goals."

This ethos of functionality and support keeps customers satisfied with MusicMaster's song selection process.

In MusicMaster, its Optimum Goals and other intelligent features work under the hood to "think" like a programmer, designed to deliver stronger results with less manual effort. At the same time, custom attributes, scalable rule controls, dynamic clock elements, Auto Platooning and other exclusive tools blend structure with creativity, giving programmers both precision and freedom to craft a fresher, more engaging on-air product.

But scheduling is only one piece of the pie that shapes the listener's experience.

There's also automation playout.

Supporting the entire air chain

MusicMaster, over its history, has done its best to support whichever automation workflow stations chose.

Its Nexus API was designed to act as a universal translator. Instead of relying on manual workarounds, Nexus creates a persistent, two-way connection between the MusicMaster database and third-party

Right InfoAudio users can configure style and layout options within the automation software.





Above
Inside the studio of Texas Christian University's 88.7 KTCU(FM), a user of the MusicMaster/InfoAudio bundle. Geoffrey Craig and Janice McCall are pictured with student/board operator Bella Maty.

software. The API enables features like real-time library and schedule updates, smarter in-studio song replacement and instant airplay reconciliation.

None of that is changing. But the team is continually looking for ways to make the experience even more frictionless. "We hear from clients that they install scheduling on one computer, automation on another, and there are several disparate vendors in the loop. Getting them all to coordinate with each other can result in frustration," Parker said.

In the end, MusicMaster believes all of the juggling can result in dissatisfaction with the station's resulting product on the air. And that stuck with its team.

The goal for MusicMaster was to eliminate the "middleman" friction of multiple support calls, ensuring that the station's creative output remains the priority, not the plumbing.

Vetting an automation partner

Joe Knapp and the company's team began researching potential automation partners about two years ago.

His vision was clear: What if they could bundle one product, featuring a single point of support and service, with the same level of reliability MusicMaster is known for?

MusicMaster was already working with Brazil-based Informa Solutions, the parent of the InfoAudio automation system, as its Latin American sales and support partner. Informa has fine-tuned the InfoAudio platform over its 25 years in business, and the system is used by approximately 600 customers in South America.

"We did our homework," Parker explained. "This is not something we just landed on by accident."

The more the team explored InfoAudio, the more they felt its software design philosophy aligned with their own principles.

"At its core, what we hear from people who use MusicMaster is that they love that it lets them focus on their creative side — it's configurable, customizable, it can fit your station," Laurie Knapp said. "I started to see the same overall vision just from working with the InfoAudio product and team."

MusicMaster emphasizes that this partnership goes beyond a third-party integration; it is a complete, branded bundle. Under one umbrella, MusicMaster now sells, supports and guides the development of its scheduling software as well as the InfoAudio automation platform.

"The last thing we wanted is for a client to face having to choose an inferior music scheduling product because they had to bundle with another automation platform," she said.

Developers for the two companies spent approximately 14 months working hand in hand to prime the system for the U.S. market, overcoming initial language barriers and adapting the feature set.

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— Jerry Parker, MusicMaster Director of Operations

MusicMaster and InfoAudio



Above
MusicMaster
Founder Joe
Knapp, left,
and Informa
Solutions CEO
Gilberto Perez
Mariano.

The result was gratifying.

"I remember the first time I saw it, the first thing that came to mind was, this is the sexiest user interface I've ever seen on a playout system," Joe Knapp said.

KTCU(FM), the 10,000-watt FM signal at Texas Christian University, has been using the combination of MusicMaster and InfoAudio since 2019. Roger Helling, a member of the university's film, television and digital media department and the station's engineer, sought a suitable automation platform for the station. When Helling came upon InfoAudio, his search came to a halt. Helling said one factor clinched it, above all.

"We spent a long time evaluating automation systems," Helling explained. "It was the integration with MusicMaster that ultimately sealed the deal."

KTCU felt InfoAudio's modern appearance and high level of usability were strong considerations, but just as important for a campus media outlet, so was an able, helping hand on the support end. "MusicMaster's 'one-stop shop' for assistance is a huge time saver," Janice McCall, the station manager, said.

The voice of the Fort Worth-based university is just one example that the MusicMaster team kept in mind

as it decided to move forward with InfoAudio.

"I think in the end, our search was about identifying a playout product that was already closely aligned with our brand philosophy, and then working with a team that was 100% dedicated to us and to our customers. And with InfoAudio, it's a perfect marriage," Laurie Knapp said.

A two-way relationship

The MusicMaster Nexus API provides the framework for real-time bidirectional integration, but the partnership with InfoAudio takes this connectivity much further. While many systems use the API for basic data exchange, this integration introduces unique, deep-level features such as embedded voicetracking and a Marks Editor for modifying mix points directly within the workflow.

This creates a real-time back-and-forth between MusicMaster and InfoAudio: bidirectional metadata exchange, schedule updates and "smart" in-studio replacement.

"When you make a change in InfoAudio's schedule, it reflects back in MusicMaster, and vice versa. You can record a voicetrack in MusicMaster and it's available in InfoAudio," Parker said. "It's about blurring those lines so that you don't have to worry about how it is installed or where it is installed."

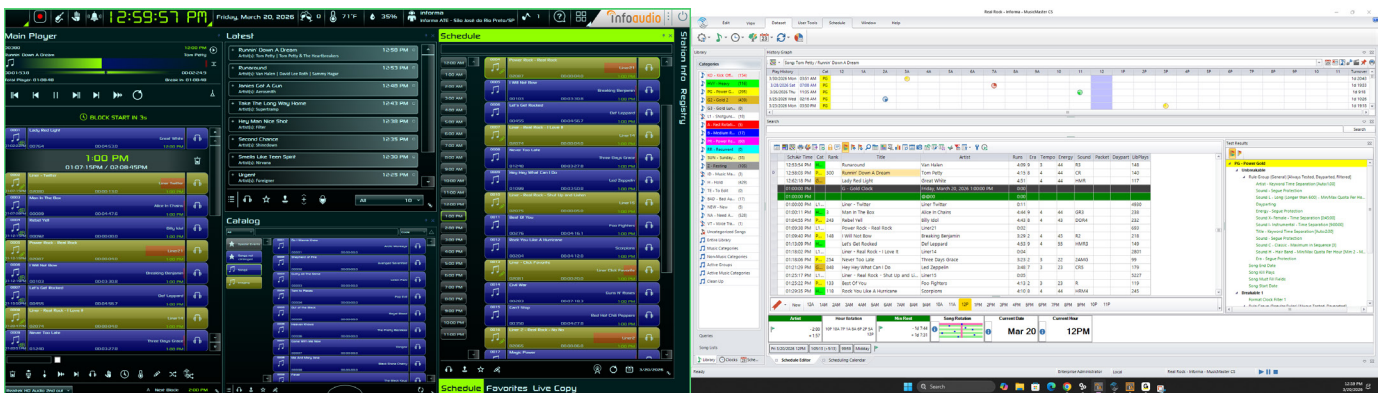
A key highlight of the bundle is the Studio Song Replacement feature. It allows on-air talent to search for replacement tracks that are automatically vetted against MusicMaster's specific formatting rules in real-time. The result is a unified playout and scheduling solution that functions as a single, cohesive engine.

Current InfoAudio and MusicMaster customers can take advantage of the integration. And now it will be marketed and supported for new users as a one-stop solution for broadcasters.

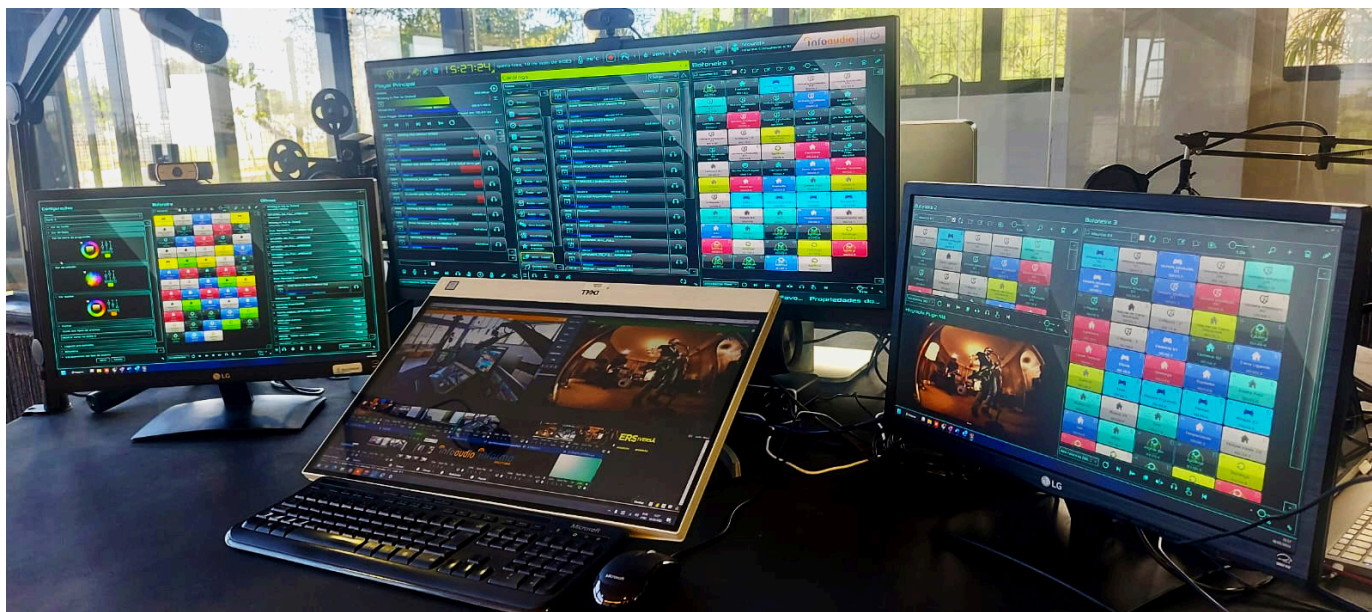
Breaking the hardware cycle: A unified database

For station engineers and IT directors, a new software deployment usually brings a familiar

Below
InfoAudio is at
left, MusicMaster
is on the right.



MusicMaster and InfoAudio



Above
InfoAudio's video switching capabilities are at work in this multiple monitor arrangement.

headache: more hardware to maintain, extra licensing fees and fragmented databases that refuse to talk to one another cleanly.

The MusicMaster and InfoAudio bundle is intended to break that cycle.

Rather than two siloed programs connected by a fragile export bridge, the platforms were retooled to share the same database server. For a radio cluster, the return on investment is significant.

"There is a savings of many thousands of dollars in that you're not spending money on SQL times two," Parker noted. "One SQL server is serving both platforms."

To achieve this, InfoAudio spent several months developing a module designed to handle real-time and batch data flow between the systems via MusicMaster's Nexus API. Because both scheduling and automation pull from the same enterprise data points, the traditional barriers between the departments are eased.

If a programmer makes a last-minute schedule change inside InfoAudio, it reflects in MusicMaster.

That unified infrastructure also paves the way for a more precise on-air product. Joe Knapp tested this capability, noting that the system logs and executes song starts down to the millisecond.

Beyond tightening the on-air sound, the database integration solves one of the most persistent headaches for IT and programming departments: database bloat caused by remote voicetracking.

In many traditional automation setups, every recorded voicetrack generates a new, permanent audio record in the system. Because these tracks typically are "one and done," they rapidly fill local databases or incur unnecessary cloud storage overages if left unchecked.

"Other systems will put hundreds of records in there for them to carry the voicetracks, and then they'll recycle those records," Joe Knapp explained. Users on competing platforms are often forced to manually purge these temporary files to keep their storage clean.

To eliminate the friction, the MusicMaster and InfoAudio developers re-engineered the storage process.

Now, rather than creating a standalone audio asset in the automation library, the voicetrack is attached directly to the specific MusicMaster history record. Once the track airs its single scheduled play, it is automatically discarded from the system. There is no manual cleanup required, no wasted server space and no lingering dummy records cluttering the interface.

Built by programmers, configured for you

Today's broadcasters often have a list of features in mind when they vet an automation system.

According to market research conducted by the MusicMaster team, software must be able to adjust seamlessly between live, live-assist and fully automated operations. Redundancy — the ability to fail over silently should something happen in the primary broadcast studio — is also consistently top of mind for veteran engineers.

According to the MusicMaster team, InfoAudio checks those boxes. How do they know? Because they've tested it themselves.

"Everybody who works at MusicMaster is coming from a radio programming background," Laurie Knapp said. "We know what people need and want because we have used it ourselves and continue to use it."

Joe Knapp runs several streams that use the MusicMaster/InfoAudio bundle out of his Texas

MusicMaster and InfoAudio



Above
At the home studio of MusicMaster Director of Operations Jerry Parker, InfoAudio runs on the screen at left, with MusicMaster on the right.

home. One setup, in particular, relies on two monitors configured in portrait mode.

"The user interface is very easy to manage," he said. "I have two hours pulled up on the MusicMaster monitor, and I can see the exact same time range on the InfoAudio end." That workspace can be highly customized and saved from user to user via different profiles.

"There are so many mature modules within InfoAudio because they've had such a long run in South America with such a broad customer base. They've spent a lot of time investing and building these tools that are coming to the U.S.," Parker said.

The modular design of the automation screen is intended to reduce clutter. Users can choose to turn off features like Instacart decks or weather integrations

if they're not needed, keeping the interface clean and focused on the task at hand.

The intentional design helps today's engineers too. The philosophy behind MusicMaster CS, the Client-Server edition of the scheduling software, has been to hide away much of the complex configuration. MusicMaster wanted to ensure that ethos was extended to its automation arm.

"One of the things that I see in automation systems is they're so noisy with the things that you have to be able to do to be able to make it work, that it is kind of a turn-off. Well, hide that. Make it available when and where you need it," Parker said.

The on-air user can get to what they need. And the engineer has peace of mind because there's less chance of a dreaded panic call.

"The board op is going to be less likely to change something and wake them up at three o'clock in the morning because they lost signal," Parker said.

KTCU's staff and personnel, including Texas Christian University students, have found the scheduling and automation integration easy to navigate, including when it needs to train students who have little to no prior experience. "It's intuitive, easy to learn, and we find they can become productive very quickly," Geoffrey Craig, the station's co-manager and sports director, said.

This flexibility naturally extends to the modern reality of voicetracking.

The new direct integration supports several methods to record and insert voicetracks, whether talent is using the web-based interface at home, sitting at the InfoAudio console in the studio or working directly inside MusicMaster.

"It's a module that is loaded up where it's needed,

Right
Here, InfoAudio is displaying trivia from MusicMaster.



“ We spent a long time evaluating automation systems. It was the integration with MusicMaster that ultimately sealed the deal. ”

— Roger Helling, Texas Christian University Film, Television and Digital Media, KTCU(FM) Station Engineer

when it’s needed,” Parker said. Voicetrack files can be easily edited, and mix points can be adjusted directly within the interface to ensure tight transitions.

Finally, the platform looks beyond traditional audio to accommodate modern media consumption. InfoAudio addresses this through its visual radio capabilities. The software can function much like a television studio, allowing operators to control cameras, switch video feeds and manage A/V mixing directly from the automation interface.

For stations managing massive digital footprints, a single instance of InfoAudio MultiStation on a single PC can generate, control and distribute up to 128 streams simultaneously.

Disaster recovery and IP scalability

InfoAudio’s built-in automation monitoring system was a major selling point for the MusicMaster team. The software allows for multiple instances to run simultaneously. While one system acts as the primary on-air playback machine, a secondary machine can run quietly in the background, continuously monitoring the

active air chain.

Instead of requiring manual intervention during an emergency, the software performs a constant pulse check on the primary system. Should it detect that something has gone wrong, the backup instance automatically sends a shutdown command to the primary unit and takes over the broadcast.

Because the entire architecture is built around AoIP, the transition happens at the console level. The board operator can continue their workflow without experiencing a loss of signal, giving the engineering team the opportunity to recover the primary system gracefully.

For MusicMaster President Joe Knapp, reliable disaster recovery was a requirement.

“As a broadcast engineer for many years, having worked in major markets, I was never comfortable unless there was dual redundancy,” he said. “I love how it can just take the pulse of the on-air system and say, ‘Oh, you’re down. I’m taking over.’ And it’s totally automated.”

For broadcasters looking to scale or manage complex distribution, InfoAudio includes scalability modules designed for wide-area networking. According to Parker, the software can emulate a traditional satellite distribution network over IP. This includes robust network head-end and affiliate synchronization, allowing endpoint “followers” to track the network programming.

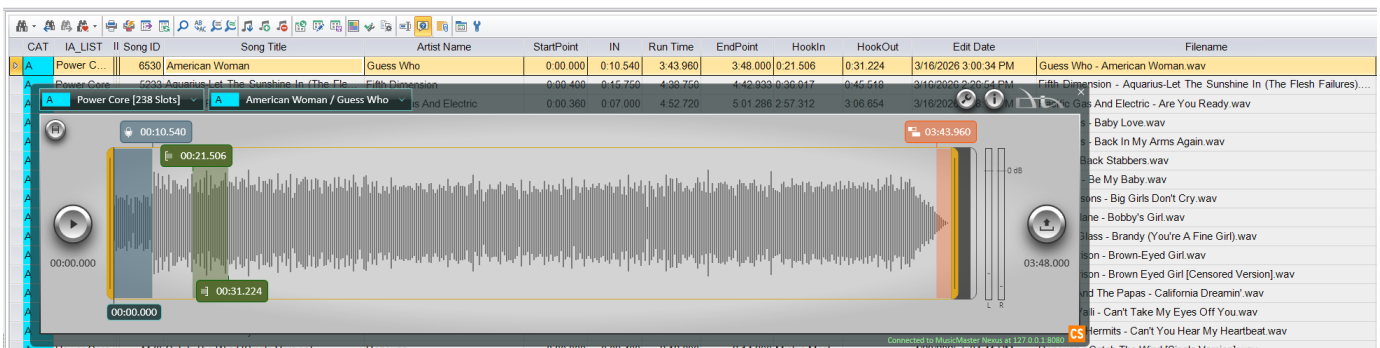
Beyond simple distribution, the platform allows broadcasters to time-shift programming at the affiliate level or seamlessly pass live broadcast control between multiple remote studios located anywhere in the world. “You can have multiple sources of audio and mix them down where they are needed,” Parker said.

No blame game

Perhaps the most significant advantage of a bundled scheduling and automation ecosystem is what happens when something goes wrong. Historically, broadcasters operating with disparate systems have found themselves caught in the middle of an endless cycle.

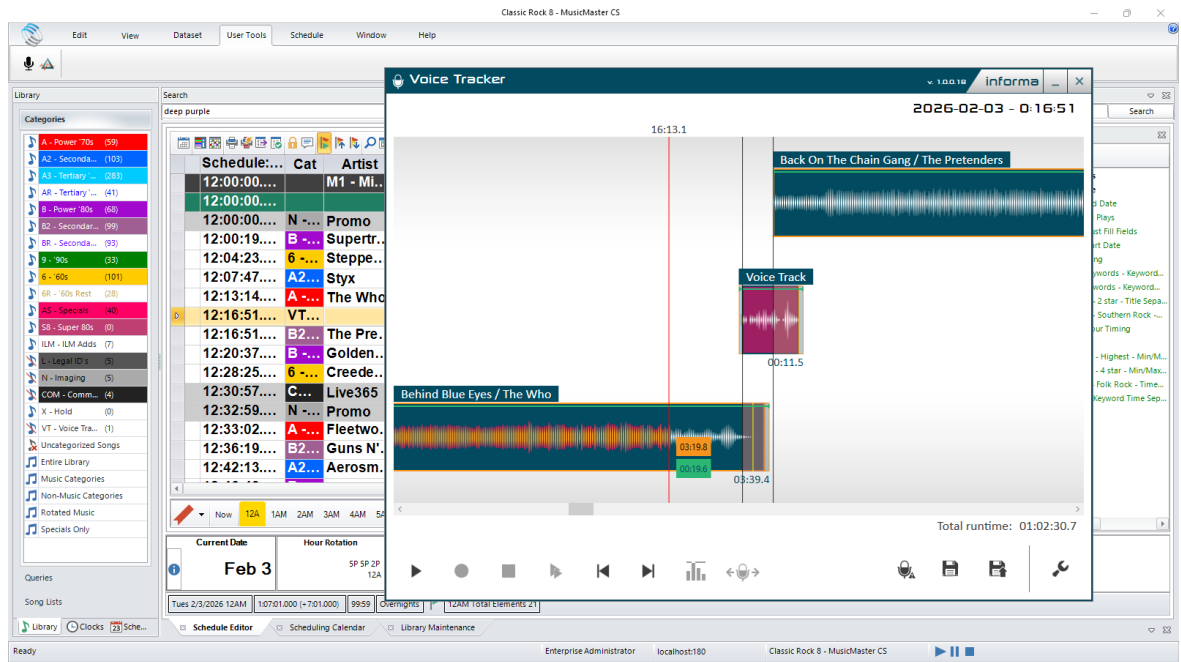
“One company would blame the other company. People don’t like that,” Joe Knapp said. “They want to be

Below
A Marks Editor for modifying mix points directly within the InfoAudio/MusicMaster workflow.



MusicMaster and InfoAudio

Right
A new feature of the MusicMaster/InfoAudio bundle is embedded voicetracking.



able to call somebody and say, 'This isn't working. You guys fix it.' And we will."

By bringing the products under one umbrella, MusicMaster believes it has eliminated this friction. Customers can call one support number and reach a team equipped to handle issues across the air chain. Parker said that he is actively retraining his support staff to adopt a comprehensive mindset.

"For years, you've been able to say, 'That's an automation-side thing.' Not anymore," Parker said. "Now you own it, soup to nuts."

The unified approach extends beyond answering support tickets; it helps shape the software's future.

With InfoAudio, MusicMaster has taken direct control of the automation's development timeline. MusicMaster dictates the roadmap, sets the priorities and ensures that the automation platform evolves concurrently with its scheduling software.

"Now we're making InfoAudio our business so it can fit our vision, our timeline. That's going to set us apart," CEO Laurie Knapp said.

For a radio manager, this means faster turnaround for new features. If the industry shifts and users demand a new capability, the MusicMaster team can immediately push it into the development pipeline without waiting for a third-party vendor to approve the request.

"Everything in our software is ultimately something that is derived from a request or need from one of our users," she said.

A tighter segue forward

Radio automation software often carries the stigma of being inherently complex.

That might have been the last goal of MusicMaster's quest for a suitable automation partner.

"It doesn't need to be complicated, and, in fact, it shouldn't be complicated," Parker noted.

If streamlining automation is what it takes to propel MusicMaster through its fifth decade of serving stations across the globe, the company is more than ready for the challenge.

"We love making people happy, and that's why we're still here," Laurie Knapp said.

Nothing about MusicMaster itself is changing, the team wants to emphasize. Neither has its support for third-party integrations. "My phone number has always been available to any automation vendor out there, and many of them have my personal cell number. That's not going to change as a result of this," Parker said.

"MusicMaster is all about meeting our clients where they are, without constraint," Laurie Knapp explained.

"No matter which playout system they prefer — whether ours, a competitor's or anything in between — the goal remains to make that experience as seamless as possible.

"But with InfoAudio, we now have direct control to take that promise to an entirely new level."

Through Informa Solutions' InfoAudio, MusicMaster believes it has unlocked the playout side of the radio software equation. **RV**



More Info

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