

MTN Radio Awards: rewarding excellence or exercise in self-promotion?

 By [Graeme Joffe](#)

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Before some people get a little further carried away with the [MTN Radio Awards](#), I feel a need to share my views to open debate. Do the awards actually reward excellence or is it all an exercise in self-sponsored self-promotion?

[Note: Graeme Joffe's sports talk show *SportsFire*, on Radio Today, won "Best Community Sports Show" at the 2012 MTN Radio Awards. Views expressed here are his own - managing ed.]

Title sponsor

First, MTN are the title sponsor of the awards, yet stations/nominees had to pay to attend the awards dinner.



R950 (ex VAT) for an individual ticket is a big ask in these times .

With a title sponsor and most, if not all, categories sponsored by another corporate, should nominees and stations have to pay for the awards dinner? For big commercial stations, paying R10 000 for a table is probably not an issue but, for community and PBS stations, that's a big number. I have a feeling some stations didn't enter themselves for the awards due to the high cost of attending.

Needless to say, there were over 1000 people at the gala dinner - so, I think it's safe to say that the awards dinner costs were more than covered by the nominees and stations.

Paying for what?

So, what is MTN actually paying for?

At least, SAB pays for the media to come to its [SAB Sports Media Awards](#) but even a former SAB award-winner [tweeted](#):

Kevin McCallum? ([@KevinMcCallum](#)): "Sounds like the [#MTNRadioAwards](#) have become as big a wank as the [#SABsportsmedia](#) awards, and as much a waste of time. [#judgeswhatjudges](#)"

I have to agree.

Twenty-two judges and almost 100 awards on the night.

Good mileage

Almost every station that enters wins something as that will get the MTN name onto every radio show for days and weeks to come. Good mileage for MTN.

Eg, 94.5 Kfm ([@945Kfm](#)): "Good Morning Everybody! You're listening to the Best Breakfast Show Presenter [@RyanOConnorSA](#) & the team! We're celebrating! [#MTNRadioAwards](#)"

[Apart from several press releases, I've also started seeing mentions of wins in email signatures - managing ed]

Self or independent nomination?

Should we be nominating oneself for an award? Would it not be more professional and special if five independent judges went around the country for a month to sample the various radio stations and they then nominate excellence? How do 22 judges come to a decision that Cape-Town-based [Ryan O'Connor](#) is "Best Morning Presenter" - better than [Gareth Cliff](#) - after listening to an edited radio clip?

Some commercial stations enter every category - so, no surprise when they win a handful of awards. It becomes a battle of egos and who's won more than the other, which gets played out to all corporates and marketing companies for advertising spend. The 'little' stations have no chance.

Also, the nominees per category varied from as little as one to seven. One category had two (being the same person). That drew some of the biggest laughs on the night - "Wonder who the winner is...?" Surely, three nominees for every category would be about right? And seven commercial stations were nominated for "station of the year" - didn't realise we were spoilt for great radio in this country!

Quality over quantity

The awards need to be streamlined. Rather have 400 nominees at a dinner, paid for by MTN, and get all the right winners, judged independently. Make it special - quality over quantity.

And should you have a judge from a radio station that is entered into the awards or, for that matter, a MC who's a nominee?

As for the Sandton Convention Centre, the welcome/outside bar ran out of water after an hour, the service was at times non-existent, and the food was very average. (You can see what's important to me - my tummy!)

Overall, I just felt you wouldn't have known you were at a black tie function (for R950 a seat) if not for those in black tie.

For more:

Bizcommunity: [MTN Radio Awards CEO responds to Graeme Joffe](#) by Lance Rothschild

- Bizcommunity Search: [MTN Radio Awards](#)
- Official website: www.mtnradioawards.com
- Official e-zine: [On Air magazine](#)
- Facebook: [Photo album of 2012 winners](#)
- Twitter: [@MTNRadioAwards](#)

ABOUT GRAEME JOFFE

Graeme Joffe, a former sports presenter for CNN and 94.7 Hghveld Stereo, now hosts his own hard-hitting sports talk show "SportsFire" on Radio Today and is syndicated on West Coast FM in Namibia, 90.3fm in Plettenberg Bay and Knysna FM. He is also a co-founder of Township TV (www.townshiptv.co.za). Email him himgraeme@butterbean.co.za and follow @joffersmyboy on Twitter.

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