

MUSIC CONNECTION

THE WEST COAST MUSIC TRADE MAGAZINE

L.A. RADIO WARS

- Why Spanish Station KLAX Is Numero Uno
- Music Vs. Talk Radio: Is There Room For Both?
- MC Survey Challenges Arbitrons: Who's Really Tops In L.A.?

PLUS

First Artists:

4 NON BLONDES (Interscope)

A&R Report: Def American's
GEORGE DRAKOULIAS

Clockwise from bottom:

Rush Limbaugh, Mark & Brian, Howard Stern & Rick Dees.



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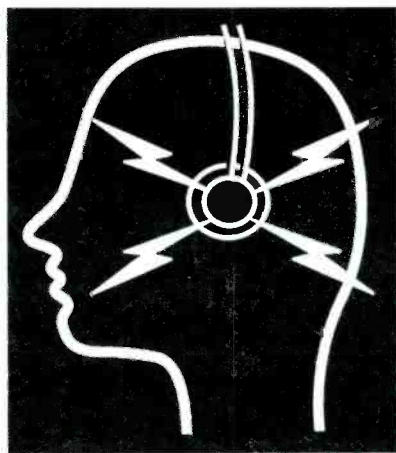
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L.A. RADIO WARS

The L.A. radio world was shocked when Spanish station KLAX and an unknown, Juan Carlos Hidalgo, achieved higher ratings than veterans Rick Dees, Mark & Brian, Ken & Barkley and Howard Stern. Find out who's winning the war to control the L.A. airwaves.

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CLAIRE WEST

It's difficult enough promoting a record when you're with a major label, but try doing it as an indie. Claire West has mastered the art of indie promotion with her aggressiveness and large doses of charm and wit.

By Oskar Scotti

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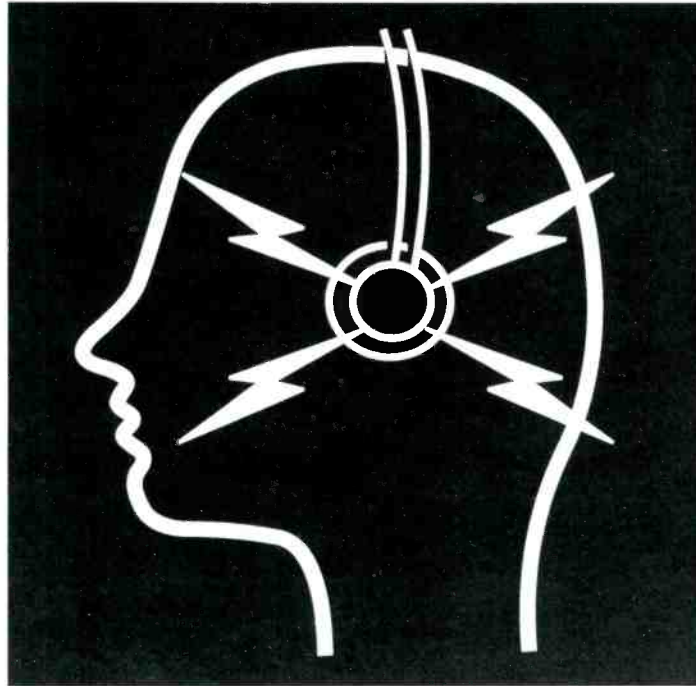


43 FREE CLASSIFIEDS

Cover illustration: Allen Mudgett

★ L.A. RADIO WARS ★

Let the Limbaughs, Sterns and Mark and Brians babble away. The end result may be that the value of stations, now in the hundreds of millions of dollars, will drop to the point where music-loving renegades will inherit the airwaves once again and the cycle will repeat itself. Let the screw turn.



CHR/TOP 40

"None of us can deny the fact that Top 40 radio is going through a lean period," states KIIS-FM Assistant Program Director Gwen Roberts, donning her best pair of rose-colored specs. "Looking over the history of the format, we've always gone through tough times and managed to rebound. We'll snap out of it this time, too."

Well, the vast majority of radio listeners over the age of twenty in Southern California certainly hope so. For as she's recounting the format's woes, Gwen Roberts' voice trails off slowly as if she's hoping that her prophecy will come true, but secretly doubts it. For things in Contemporary Hit Radio Land look anything but rosy at present time. Roberts' station has resorted to giving away a Porsche 944 a week to try and lure listeners into their lair of despair. Certainly, the music makes poor bait. Check out what KIIS, or for that matter, Power 106, or the Beat (FM 92) is serving up these days and the outcome is all the same: repetitious dance grooves, lacking in both substance and versatility.

Try to envision what music from this era the classic rock stations of the future will inherit, and you'll really be stumped. I asked Roberts if she and Program Director Jeff Wyatt ever put a record on the air based on sound alone, and she stumbled for words. "Well," she murmured, racking her memory banks, "I guess it was 'Achy Breaky Heart' by Billy Ray Cyrus, which was over a year ago. We heard that and knew it would work for us. But most stuff outside of the dance/beat genre doesn't test well at all for us. That's why we rely so much on our research."

While there is very little variety on KIIS these days, there is even less on cross-town rival Power 106's playlist. The Music Director at the

dance-only station, Michelle Mercer, also admitted that Top 40 radio is definitely going through some problems, but said, in this day and age, that's inevitable. "We've left forever the era where a mom and her daughter can sit around the house and listen to the same station while they're baking bread in the kitchen," states Mercer matter-of-factly. The problem is that everything is so niched nowadays. We're doing what we have to do: Go after a certain target audience and give them what they want—which, in this case, is dance music."

Mercer said that the techno wave of last year affected Power's

★ PREVIEWING THE BATTLEFIELD: L.A. RADIO OVERVIEW —Oskar Scotti

When Marconi, Italian inventor of the radio vacuum tube, unleashed his cryptic invention onto the world, he germinated a seed destined to affect humanity. And, while the repercussions of radio are felt in slumbering hamlets and metropolises alike, nowhere do its tentacles sink as deep into the collective consciousness of the masses as in Los Angeles.

Here in the Southland, we are truly a captive audience begging for bracing stimulation. Our prisons are the bucket seats of cars, where we stew in a seemingly endless series of gridlock and traffic jams. Nowhere does radio sway the thinking process more completely than on the freeways and thoroughfares of this oxygen-starved environment. Yet, this very popularity has rocketed station payrolls to new heights, taking away the element of fun from the recipe and ushering in the era of over-consulted, over-analyzed radio stations.

A respected radio analyst from the Alan Burns Group, Randy Kabrich, noted that two key statutes fouled the delicate, creative synergy that once made radio such a fertile playground for the imagination. First, he stated, the Federal

Communications Commission (FCC) abolished the three-year provision which decreed that new radio station owners hold onto their properties for a minimum of three years, ensuring that the new owners wouldn't merely buy the stations with the intention of turning them around for a quick profit.

Secondly, Kabrich noted that in the mid-Seventies, the FCC also forced the smaller mom and pop outlets, who were often the most experimental stations on the dial, to upgrade their power and equipment or lose their licenses. So, the smaller owners either complied or sold their stations, more often than not to boring corporate types. In effect, they insured that maverick renegade ideas would perish.

Here in 1993, the vast majority of spontaneous fun that once made radio in this town so refreshing has all but slipped into the pages of history. But such has not always been the case. As little as fifteen years ago, the Number One station in the market was KMET, a haven for imagination and experimentation, where air talents ran their shifts with the devil-may-care attitude of Pete Rose running the bases. These upstarts were not mindless automatons

that sat behind microphones, they were artists as well, and the public in L.A. welcomed them with open arms.

The word "consultant" was not even in KMET's vocabulary. It was a special world where each jock ran his own show, spinning music he picked himself. Their music sets told a linear narrative of the topics and politics of the day, and in many ways, the station played the soundtrack of a lifestyle we scarcely recognize today. They took chances just as the players on *Saturday Night Live* took chances on television, and the excitement was contagious.

Today is the era of talk. Music, once the lifeblood of the airwaves, has been swept back into the shadows, and for good reason: It's inferior nature warrants little attention. This is not to say that there isn't good music out there, merely that pop radio refuses to acknowledge the vast majority of it.

So be it. Let the Limbaughs, Sterns and Mark and Brians babble away. The end result may be that the value of stations, now in the hundreds of millions of dollars, will drop to the point where music-loving renegades will inherit the airwaves once again and the cycle will repeat itself. Let the screw turn.



Gwen Roberts
ASSISTANT PROGRAM
DIRECTOR, KIIS FM

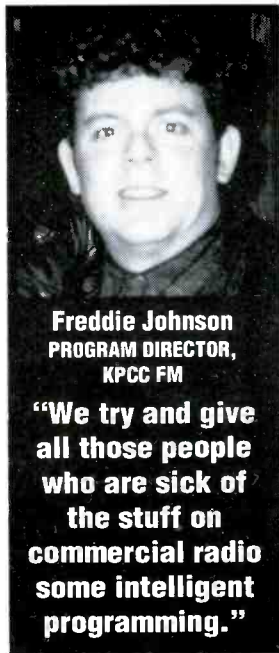
"Most stuff outside of the dance/beat genre doesn't test well at all for us."



Michelle Mercer
MUSIC DIRECTOR,
POWER 106

"We've left forever the era where a mom and her daughter can sit around the house and listen to the same station."

programming philosophy only slightly. "We still play some techno hits, but none of the new techno stuff tests well for us at all." Mercer agrees with KIIS that research is an extremely important programming tool, but thinks they use their ears and instincts more than their competitors. "We look at things like outcall research and sales to determine what music we add," she says, "but we only look at cassette sales, not 12" sales when we're making our music decisions. Rick [Cummings, Program Director] and I use our guts, too. We have a unique situation here because a lot of white kids listen to Power as well as Hispanics and blacks."



Freddie Johnson
PROGRAM DIRECTOR,
KPCC FM
"We try and give all those people who are sick of the stuff on commercial radio some intelligent programming."

What neither Mercer nor Roberts mentioned is, the station in town that is shelling them both out of the water is, of all things, a Spanish-speaking outlet. It's KLAX, and its Number One weapon is morning man Juan Carlos Hidalgo, who mixes light humor, ranchera Latin music and country charm and recently wrestled the top spot away from morning drive rating's leader Howard Stern. Hidalgo attributes the lofty numbers to the casual and amusing approach he takes in relating to his listeners, who, he quickly mentions, are not all Hispanic, but "who want somewhere else to turn; something different than what they're being fed on the other stations in town. Hispanics play a major role in my success," he admits, "but a lot of it is due to the fact I just relate to people in general. They may not come from my background [Hidalgo spent his first summer in the United States picking strawberries] but they know that what I say comes from the heart."

AN ECLECTIC MIX

There are places disenchanting listeners can turn to. One of those is at 89.3 on the dial where KPCC Music Director Freddie Johnson serves up a tasty menu of everything from Sun Ra to the Ramones. "We try and give all those people who are sick of the stuff on commercial radio some intelligent programming," states Johnson. "We don't have the budget to give away Porsches to our listeners, but we think we offer them something a lot more important: an intelligent and eclectic music mix."

Commuters traveling around Los Angeles may have noticed KPCC's placards in buses or seen their jocks handing out promotional material at events like the Topanga Blues Festival. Johnson maintains that while they can't "bang a big drum like the megawatt giants, we bang the little one we have with absolute dedication and intensity."

Every evening from 9:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m., KPCC offers up a tasty blend of classical American music, including ev-

erything from newartists like Natalie Cole to jazz greats like Kermit Ruffins. In addition, they also play a lot of reissues like Dinah Washington. "I'm really proud of what we do," he states with his ever-present good nature. "Listeners who may or may not like talk radio but who still want music with some intelligence can thank Johnson for keeping integrity instilled in Los Angeles area radio. "The station pulls in anywhere from 40-50 calls a day from new listeners asking for programming information and scheduling," he claims.

While KPCC and Santa Monica City College outlet KCRW are holding down the ultra eclectic position in town, KROQ labors doggedly at the right hand side of the dial, spewing out a steady diet of mostly ten- to twenty-year-old Adam Ant and Depeche Mode gems.

Stating the obvious, commercial radio in Southern California hasn't been this non-commercial since Bill Drake invented Boss Radio at KHJ in the late

Sixties. If you happen to win one of the Porsches KIIS is awarding to tone deaf listeners weekly, then you're one of the lucky ones. Just make sure that the station that gave you the car isn't tuned in on the car radio and you'll drive away a wiser and happier person.

TALK RADIO

While CHR radio in Los Angeles is at its nadir creatively, its downswing has radically boosted awareness of talk radio in the area. At present, there are two talk stations vying for the winner's circle, with incumbent KABC enjoying a healthy advantage over upstart KFI and its overwhelming ace airman, Rush Limbaugh.

Two months ago, it looked like a third talk outlet, KMPC, would challenge the two front-runners with its sport talk format, but at this writing, the all-sport pull-stop is showing signs of fraying around the edges.

George Green, GM at rating's leader KABC, insists that consistency has played the key role in his station's prosperity. "We're the Warner Bros. or MGM of talk radio," boasts the overtly confident Green of his station—the first talk station to take root in L.A. "That comes from putting top-notch people on the air and letting them explore both sides of controversial topics. No one else in this market has been able to match us airshift to airshift."

"KFI has but one ace in its arsenal with Rush Limbaugh," adds Green, "but our roster is stocked from dawn till dusk."

FRONT LINE HEROES



★ **Rush Limbaugh** ★
KFI 640 AM
Weekdays 9-Noon

Green's faith is buoyed by the fact that the recent Arbitron poll showed his morning team to be even up with noted shock jock Howard Stern. "He's merely a fad, a passing phase," said Green of the omnipotent bad boy Stern.

"A lot of people think Stern's audience and Ken and Barkley's audience are exclusive, but that's not true," he continues. "Twenty-five percent of our audience samples what he's doing, and Stern's audience checks out what our guys are doing from time to time as well. I guess it depends on what they're [the audience] in the mood for."

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★ THE SPOILS OF VICTORY: KLAX

KLAX-FM is Los Angeles radio's equivalent to the Miracle Mets of 1969, coming literally out of nowhere to shake up their fierce and formidable competition and winning the championship. Since debuting its current format of Mexican ranchera (country) and banda (wind instrument-oriented) music on August 1, 1992, the Spanish language station at 97.9 FM has sent shock waves through the local market with record-setting victories in the last two quarterly Arbitron ratings.

In the fall '92 period, KLAX (5.3) edged mainstream powerhouses KOST and KPWR (both at 5.0), and in the recently reported Winter '93 charts, "The X" increased that margin substantially, beating those same stations with an unprecedented 7.2 (as compared to 5.5 for KOST and 5.0 for KPWR).

The most surprising aspect of KLAX's seemingly overnight rise to Number One has been its consistent ability to top the mega-exposed, ultra-controversial Howard Stern and his syndicated KLSX morning show, as well as veterans like Rick Dees at KIIS-FM.

Though never imagining such quick and resounding success for his show (which runs from 5-10 a.m. daily), Hidalgo attributes his lofty numbers to the casual and amusing approach he takes in relating to his listeners. And, in clear contrast to the racy sleaze which seems to be Stern's bread and butter, Hidalgo attracts many young people by keeping his humor squeaky clean.

"The first thing we do is have fun on our show, but we stay away from dirty jokes," says Hidalgo, who in no way



Juan Carlos Hidalgo and "El Peladillo"

Anna "Flasi"

considers himself a star.

"People don't want to hear about problems and bad news first thing in the morning," he adds. "We make them feel better about the things they face by simply making them laugh."

The laughter comes from the natural, unassuming and seemingly unrehearsed way Hidalgo and his sidekick, "El Peladillo," approach ordinary, everyday topics. While working within a format and playing the music the station's program director dictates, the morning team prides itself on its disarming non-seriousness and unpredictability. "When you stick to a certain routine, people get tired of it," insists Hidalgo.

"We've won over a lot of Hispanic kids who were listening to the Anglo stations because they are more comfortable listening to a station that relates to their

own culture," Hidalgo reflects. "Parents now feel better that their children are listening to music that their own padres listened to. They're happy that the kids are hearing Spanish music and they, in turn, listen to us."

Now that he, "El Peladillo" and KLAX are Numero Uno, having lifted the station's previous Cuban-oriented incarnation KSKO's rating of .5 to 7.2 in less than a year, is the pressure to maintain the success manageable? Hidalgo is optimistically cautious: "When we got the November ratings, it was like a bomb goin' off. I thought I'd do well here, but nothing this big," he says. "Being first is not easy. I have a big responsibility and we have to work that much harder. And you can't get too excited because radio's always up and down."

—Jonathan Widran



KABC 790 AM
3321 S. La Cienega Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90016
310-840-4900 FAX 310-840-4977
PD: Diane Cridland
Format: Talk



KACE 103.9 FM (V-103)
161 N. La Brea
Inglewood, CA 90301
310-330-3100 FAX 310-412-7803
PD: Rich Guzman MD: Antoinette Russell
Format: Urban



KBIG 104.3 FM
7755 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90046
213-874-7700 FAX 213-874-4276
PD: Rob Edwards MD: Dave Verdery
Format: Adult Contemporary



KCBS 93.1 FM
6121 Sunset Blvd.
Hollywood, CA 90028
213-460-3293 FAX 213-463-9327
PD: Tommy Edwards
Format: Oldies



KFI 640 AM
610 S. Ardmore
Los Angeles, CA 90005
213-385-0101 FAX 213-251-3170
PD: David Hall
Format: Talk



KGJF 1230 AM
1100 S La Brea
Los Angeles, CA 90019
213-930-9090 FAX 213-930-9056
PD/MD: Don Tracy
Format: R&B Oldies



KIIS 102.7 FM
6255 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90028
213-466-8381 FAX 213-465-8810
PD: Jeff Wyatt APD: Gwen Roberts
Format: CHR



KJLH 102.3 FM
3847 Crenshaw Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90008
213-299-5960 FAX 213-290-1284
PD: Frankie Ross
Format: Urban



KJOI 540 & 1260 AM
1500 Cotner Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90025
310-478-5540 FAX 310-478-4189
PD: Chuck Southcott
Format: Adult Standards



KKBT 92.3 FM
6735 Yucca St.
Los Angeles, CA 90028
213-466-9566 FAX 213-466-2592
PD: John Monds MD: Harold Austin
Format: Urban



KKGO 105.1 FM
P.O. Box 250028
Los Angeles, CA 90025
310-478-5540 FAX 310-478-4189
PD: Bob Wenersten
Format: Classical



KKHJ 93.0 AM

5724 Hollywood Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90028
213-461-9300 FAX 213-461-9946
PD: David Gleason
Format: Urban



KLAC 570 AM
4000 W. Alameda
Burbank, CA 91505
213-466-0004 FAX 213-845-7136
PD: Gene Bridges
Format: Country



KLAX 97.9 FM
5700 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90028
213-466-3001 FAX 213-466-8259
PD/MD: Fedel Fausto
Format: Spanish



KLIT 101.9 FM
P.O. Box 710
Hollywood, CA 90078
213-464-5483 FAX 213-467-6000
PD: Scott O'Neill
Format: EZ Listening



KLOS 95.5 FM
3321 S. La Cienega Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90016
310-520-KLOS FAX 310-558-7685
PD: Carry Curlop MD: Rita Wilde
Format: AOR



**The Classic Rock Station
KLSX 97.1 FM**
3580 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90010
213-383-4222 FAX 213-383-5579
PD: Andy Bloom MD: Warren Williams
Format: Classic Rock



KLVE 107.5 FM
1645 N. Vine, #200
Hollywood, CA 90028
213-465-3171 FAX 213-461-9973
PD/MD: Adrian Lopez
Format: Adult Contemporary



KMPC 710 AM
P.O. Box 710
Hollywood, CA 90078
213-464-5483
PD: Len Weiner
Format: Sports Talk



KNAC 105.5 FM
100 Ocean Gate, #280
Long Beach, CA 90802
310-437-0366 FAX 310-436-8718
PD: Gregg Steele MD: Darren Silva
Format: AOR



KOST 103.5 FM
610 S. Ardmore
Los Angeles, CA 90005
213-385-0101 FAX 213-251-3170
PD: Jhani Kaye MD: Kim Amigon
Format: Adult Contemporary



KPWR 105.9 FM
2600 W. Olive, #850
Burbank, CA 91505
818-953-4200 FAX 818-848-0961
PD: Rick Cummings MD: Michelle Mercer
Format: CHR



KRLA 1110 AM
3580 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90010
213-3838-4222 FAX 213-383-5579
PD: Mike Wagner
Format: Oldies



KROQ 106.7 FM
3500 W. Olive, #900
Burbank, CA 91505
818-566-7625 FAX 818-841-5900
PD: Kevin Weatherly MD: Gene Sandbloom
Format: Alternative Rock



KRTH 101.1 FM
5901 Venice Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90034
213-936-5784 FAX 213-936-3427
PD: Mike Phillips
Format: Oldies



KTNQ 1020 AM
1645 N. Vine, #200
Hollywood, CA 90028
213-465-3171 FAX 213-461-9973
PD: Adrian Lopez MD: Pepe Lopez
Format: Spanish



KTWV 94.7
5746 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90028
213-466-9283 FAX 213-469-0210
PD: Christine Brody MD: Ralph Stewart
Format: New Age



KXEZ 100.3 FM
3500 W. Olive, #250
Burbank, CA 91505
818-955-7000 FAX 818-953-7759
PD/MD: Dave Beasing
Format: Adult Contemporary



KYSR 98.7 FM
3500 W. Olive, #250
Burbank, CA 91505
818-955-7000 FAX 818-953-7759
PD/MD: Greg Dunkin
Format: Adult Contemporary



KZLA 93.9 FM
4000 W. Alameda
Burbank, CA 91505
213-466-0004 FAX 818-845-3609
PD: R. J. Curtis MD: Lisa Puzo
Format: Country

◀ **21 L.A. Radio Wars/Talk Radio**

Green went on to say that both talents serve a purpose, with Stern, he believes, "providing more light entertainment and the *Ken And Barkley Company* supplying more news and information to the listener."

While things do indeed look dubious at the KMPC camp with the station having axed some of its most engaging personalities recently, Tyler Suchman, producer of Fred Wallin's morning show, says there is still plenty of room for optimism. "Sports radio has a lot of appeal for people wanting to find out information as it happens," he states. Suchman reports that KMPC has recently decided to alter its all-sport strategy and will augment its hoops and hardball banter with current events and topical information as well.

"We had a number of negative calls due to a segment featuring an author talking about his new book *The One Hour Orgasm*, cites Suchman on the strangely Stern-like topic. "But people are coming around steadily. Ten days after we aired the show, we were still receiving calls from people asking for the 800 phone number so they could order copies of the book. Obviously, when you stray from the style that people have grown accustomed to, you will lose some of your listeners—that can't be helped. But the most disastrous move a station can make is to stay complacent."

Suchman has a valid point. And one man who has risen to the top of the talk heap like a phoenix leaving his peers light years below is KFI's Limbaugh, a man who has espoused the "change is better" philosophy since his show's debut. Though the rotund hellraiser failed to return a half a dozen phone calls from *Music Connection*, his success speaks for him on every shore on the continent. Limbaugh injects a razor sharp wit and hayseed sensibility into his daily dialogue that appeals evenly to white collar intellectuals and tractor drivers.

And Limbaugh's appeal is not just reserved for Los Angelenos. In the past six months, his show has been syndi-

cated throughout the country and catch phrases like "ditto" are integrating swiftly into a large part of the population's vocabulary. But Limbaugh's rise, as well as the increasing popularity of talk radio in general, could not have happened without a visible void to fill. That void is the lack of quality fare now available to the over-25 set.

As George Green explains, the music lovers of ten years ago are the talk radio fans of today. "Talk audiences are getting younger and younger," he says. "Twenty-something listeners are finding out that they don't need music exclusively to be entertained anymore. No, we can't compete with

FRONT LINE HEROES



★ **Ken & Barkley** ★

KABC 790 AM
Weekdays 5-9 a.m.

Howard Stern; if we tried to, we'd lose. What we try to offer people is a variety of information and entertainment. We don't believe you have to be shocking to be entertaining. The ratings back us up!"

SHOCK JOCKS

"Howard Stern is not a shock jock," barks KLSX Promotions Director Scott Segelbaum. "I take offense to him being lumped in with all these other disc jockeys around the country who are really just imitators." Segelbaum may have a valid point. When Stern first took to the airwaves of Los Angeles, he was, to many Southlanders unprepared for his seemingly misogynist shtick, something of a shock. But those days are gone. Not that Howard has softened; Angelenos have merely grown accustomed to his brassy New Yorker approach.

What used to constitute radical dialogue is now considered merely status quo. Segelbaum maintains that Stern is not—as KABC GM George Greens insists—a passing fad. When you consider that he has been Number One in a number of cities on the East Coast, including New York and Philadelphia, for the better part of a decade, you can understand his adamant stance.

In almost direct defiance to what blasts over the airwaves every morning during Stern's shift, Segelbaum maintains that his boss is neither a racist nor a misogynist. "He's just having fun," he says of Stern, who Segelbaum describes as a truly decent fellow who "has been married for nineteen years to the same woman and neither drinks, smokes nor indulges in drugs." Segelbaum adds that Stern's sidekick, Robin Quivers, is black and he's very loyal to her. "If he was a racist, do you think she'd be on the payroll?"



George Green
General Manager, KABC AM

"Twenty-something listeners are finding out that they don't need music exclusively to be entertained anymore."

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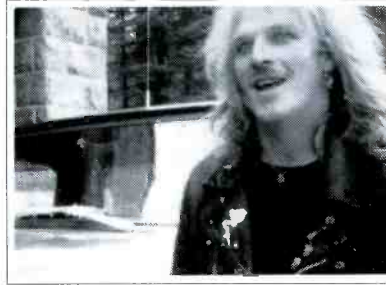
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L.A. RADIO WARS

Meanwhile, next door on the dial to Heckling Howard are Mark & Brian, the less than dynamic duo who seem to lose listeners as fast as Stern gains them. The pair who stole the hearts of the city when they arrived five years ago have used up all their tricks of late and even failed on TV. Fortunately, they're lovable lads and are rarely offensive enough to repel the more conservative elements of the Parent Teacher Organization.

Another key radio analyst privy to the red hot radio scene is Shane Media's Cheryl Broz, who, like Segelbaum, Green and virtually every other luminary in the country, believes that—like it or not—shock jocks are here to stay.

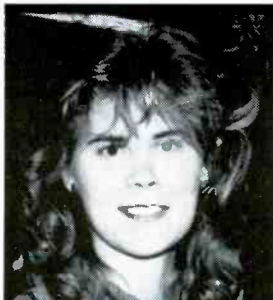
"You do what you have to do to attract people, and if that takes shocking them, then so be it," says Broz, who consults a dozen of the biggest pop stations in the country with the Houston, Texas-based firm. "The audience that makes up a lot of Howard Stern's audience consists of disenchanted baby boomers who don't feel like they can relate to what's on commercial radio today. They're frustrated because they've heard every Supremes song a thousand times and this, the talk radio shock jock thing, gives them something new to hang their hats onto."

She went on to say that while the Stern-led group of hellraisers are popular in large cities like L.A., they have failed in mid- and small-sized communities for a few key reasons. "In this town you have a lot of people who feel like they're living under the gun," said Broz, who discussed radio with me over lunch while she was visiting the City of Angels recently on business. "Residents of L.A. feel like they have crime, chaos and disorder dogging them on every street corner and really need someone like Stern to help them blow off steam. Through Howard, they can vent all their aggressions every morning while they drive to work. He's the madman in all of us."

★ ROCK FIGHT

Twenty-five years ago, rock radio was called "free-form" radio, but today it is divided into every type of musical genre, from alternative to classic rock. In the Eighties, DJs started screaming when radio consultants began programming stations with formats and set lists. While consultants aren't as hip today, their formats are still in place at most stations, and the idea of labeling a station with a specific genre of music is stronger than ever, especially in rock radio.

Album rock station KLOS is one of the only stations on the West Coast that hasn't changed its format in 24 years, but veteran DJ Geno Michellini says the way the music is programmed has. "We have a set list we have to go by that I stray



Cheryl Broz
VP, Shane Media

"You do what you have to do to attract people, and if that takes shocking them, then so be it."

Bruce S. Kessler

from," he says with a laugh. "When I first started, it was free-form radio and we played everything. Now, each of the different genres has its own expansion of music, so there's no way you could cover the whole ballpark. You can't go back to the old way either, because there's too much music. If you want to be successful, you have to program for ratings. It's a business, and people forget that."

"We had a program director about six or seven years ago who was trying to buy the audience, and it worked," he continues. "We gave away Porsches and \$100,000 and we definitely had their atten-

tion, but when we ran out of cars and money, they went away. Within a year, this PD got us the highest numbers we ever had and the lowest. So now we do have promotions like concert tickets, but they are things that are station-oriented, and we don't use that as the main thrust of the programming. We rely on the music."

Like Michellini, KLSX DJ Jim Ladd was also part of the free-form radio era, but he hasn't given in to corporate programming. KLSX focuses on classic rock, and while he must stay within the realm of classic rock, Ladd's shows are probably the closest thing Los Angeles has to free-form radio. "Everybody else you're

FRONT LINE HEROES



★ **Howard Stern** ★
KLSX 97.1 FM
Weekdays 3-7 a.m. (live)
7-11 a.m. (re-broadcast)

listening to is playing a list of songs that was given to them by somebody else. That's why I was off the air for two years, because I refused to do that. KLSX has been nice enough to allow me to not follow a list and not follow a structured format," Ladd explains.

"I'm trying to save an art form and I know it's working because the audience has responded to it. I get my songs from inspiration. If I come in and something has affected me, like a news story, I'll begin there and then find a song that follows up on that subject, whether it's politics, sex or religion. That song will then lead to the next."

KNAC concentrates on playing heavy metal music rather than relying on personalities, and Program Director Bryan Schock says that L.A. is one of the few places a radio station such as his can survive. "There are enough people out there that like the style of music that we

have formatted on our station, and enough people selling airtime so we can survive."

KROQ is a station that relies heavily on its format. Billed as an alternative album rock station, Program Director Kevin Weatherly says they have their own mix of music, from alternative to mainstream rock, to bring in listeners. "Right now, with the exception of KNAC, we are the only current rock music station in Los Angeles. We play different types of music, from some of the heavier, more industrial music to traditional rock."

Weatherly says one of the reasons they have been able to survive for fifteen years is, "We stay in touch with what our listeners want, and that's constantly evolving. In this city, it's really easy to get caught up in the whole industry hype. You have to stay objective and sort of step away from that and get out there with the real people and find out what they like and don't like." —Sue Gold

★ AC POWER

Targeting an audience from 25 to 54, most non-listeners only hear adult contemporary music when in their dentist's office or in elevators.

Going under the moniker K-Light, KLIT 101.9 uses direct mailing and on-air cash giveaway contests to promote their station. Their "Money Music Medley" contest usually gets up to about \$2,000 to \$3,000 before it is won, according to Program Director Scott O'Neill. The station uses a lot of features in drive time, including reports by *Entertainment Tonight's* Leza Gibbons and movie reviewer David Sheehan. Also, Jay Leno does a morning monologue for KLIT Mondays through Fridays.

Regarding the Arbitrons, O'Neill states, "We view the Arbitrons as very important, mainly because they're the only

★ TALK vs. MUSIC: THE BATTLE HEATS UP

In an effort to boost nighttime ratings, KLOS is airing a talk show during the coveted 6-10 p.m. week night time slot. Since April, Doug "The Greaseman" Tracht has taken over this time period, concentrating on his unique brand of humor and talk rather than music.

KLOS Program Director Carey Curelop says the move was prompted by troubled ratings during this time period. "We decided to put him on because that was the one part of the day where we consistently under-performed," he explains. "No matter what kind of music adjustments we made, we seemed to be lagging behind the rest of the music stations. Given those circumstances, we came to the conclusion we needed to do something else. Our job is to acquire an audience, and we thought we needed to make a drastic move. A very funny entertainer was available, so we picked him up."

The show features a variety of segments, from the Greaseman talking about current events to short comedy skits. He plays three or four songs an hour, compared to the normal eleven or twelve. "It's definitely not a music show," Curelop says. "But we didn't hire him for his ability to play records, we did it because he's a unique personality."

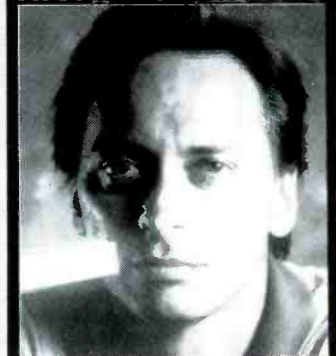
While label executives aren't too

happy about the move, they do understand why it was done. Capitol Records Vice President of AOR National Promotion Jeff Shane says, "I think the most important thing to KLOS is getting ratings, and that's the first thing the music industry has to accept. As a record company, we would prefer to have music on the radio at 6-10:00 p.m., because it's basically a time a station like KLOS would play new music. I'm not happy about it. But if the station's numbers go down and they change the format, then I have nothing."

PolyGram's National Director of AOR Promotion, Dave Ross, adds, "They would not have changed if they had an audience for the music that they were playing at night. I'm more disturbed by the fact that there wasn't a sizeable audience. When you break it down, more new music gets played from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m., so if there are more people listening 6-10 and the audience rolls into the later time slot, then there's going to be a bigger audience for the new music being played then."

Curelop says most of the promotion reps have accepted the new show. "Some people have mentioned things to us and I'm sure that some of them were irritated that for that four-hour period, we don't play as much music as the others do, but

FRONT LINE HEROES



★ **The Greaseman** ★
KLOS 95.5 FM
Weekdays 6-10 p.m.

nobody's going to get angry with me about it. I'm sure some of them would rather see me play music, but on the other hand, some of them tell me the Greaseman is the funniest thing they've ever heard."

Ross adds, "No one bemoans the fact that a station goes talk radio. If it brings people away from cable TV and Walkmans and back to radio, I'm all for it." —Sue Gold



L.A. RADIO WARS

game in town. We have a difficult time with them because of our weak signal. In some parts of town, we will have a strong signal, and in other sections, our signal is weak. So, our ratings often depend on what part of town they are surveying."

"We're adult standards," says KJOL 540 and 1260 AM Program Director/on-air personality Chuck Southcott. "The most contemporary music we play would be things like the new Natalie Cole. Also, we play a lot of Harry Connick, Jr., Linda Ronstadt standards and music going back to the Forties, but most of the music we play has been recorded post 1960 up to today. A couple of times an hour we'll play Forties and Fifties material, like Sinatra, Streisand, Basie," he finishes. Known as KJOY to its listeners, the station went on the air February 1st with its current format. Prior to that, 1260 AM



Mike Wagner
Program Director,
KRLA 1110 AM

"We assess with a grain of salt everything the DJs suggest."

was a news talk station, and 540 AM simulcast their FM format, KKKO 105.1, which is classical.

Popularly known as the Wave, the seven-year-old KTWV lists its "super target audience" as 35-44, according to Program Director Chris Brodie. The Wave's core artists are what Brodie describes as "progressive instrumentalists" like Pat Metheny, Dave Koz and Lee Ritenour. "We don't really have a direct format competitor," she adds.

On the Arbitrons, Brodie states, "Arbitron is the only source out there for the advertising community to find out the bottom line, black-and-white ratings, so we have no choice. No broadcaster does."

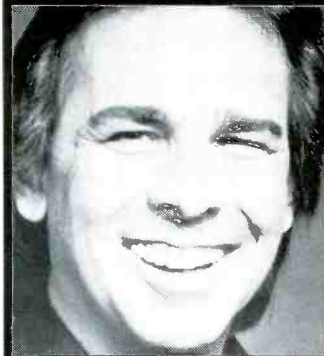
"Big Mix 104 plays a bigger variety" is the message of most of the promotion surrounding KBIG 104.3, according to Program Director Rob Edwards. The station frequently plays AC artists like Mariah

Carey, Michael Bolton, Elton John and Phil Collins. "We're a promotion-active station," says Edwards, whose station uses television, occasional billboards and transits [the small billboards on the sides of buses] radio vans, 5K runs, free promotional merchandise, direct mailing and community oriented promotion.

On April 2nd, KXEZ took over from hard-edged KQLZ, known as Pirate Radio. Prior to that, KXEZ was at 98.7. According to General Manager Bob Griffith, "We changed 98.7 to STAR 98.7 to a 'hot AC' in August '92. Since then, Viacom has purchased KQLZ at 100.3, and we put KXEZ back on the air."

When asked about the Arbitrons, Griffith chuckles and explains, "Ratings justify what you charge for your spots, so in the media buying world, the Arbitrons still maintain their Biblical proportions to our industry." —Tom Farrell

FRONT LINE HEROES



★ **Jim Ladd** ★

KLSX 97.1 FM
Weekdays 6-10 p.m.

That's virtually the only point on which programmers at the competitive trio of Los Angeles oldies stations would seem to agree. Oldies are a musical resource and the playing of them is more than just reminding baby boomers of their collective youth. These stations are edifying and enlightening, not just entertaining. What was once revolutionary is now cultural baggage.

And oldies radio is not just music for baby boomers, though that age bracket is the one targeted by oldies program-

★ BATTLE VETERANS: OLDIES RADIO

One of the granddaddies of American rock criticism, *Crawdaddy's* Paul Williams once wrote: "Rock & Roll is a resource, as much or more so today than it's ever been in the past. It has a unique power to aid the individual listener in the process of locating himself or herself amidst the confusion and complexity of the modern world."

★ THE FRONT LINES: MORNING DRIVE

From shock radio to Spanish humor, Los Angeles has become a mecca for breaking new ground. No other city in the world has as many high-profiled morning shows as L.A. When KLAX bumped Howard Stern out of the top spot earlier this year, the news took the radio industry by storm and the competition got hotter than ever.

KABC is the only AM station in the middle of the morning radio war, but they have consistently been in the Top Five for years with Ken Minyard and Roger Barkley's show. "The thing that sets any show apart in morning radio is the personalities," Barkley says. "I think when you have someone come blazing on the scene like Howard Stern, people get curious, but after a while, when you're not shocked anymore, you have to deliver more than shock value, and I think people return to places that are more comfortable for them."

Minyard adds, "This is the most competitive market in the world now. It's the same number of morning shows, but they're a lot more high-profiled. You need to have the right environment for the audience to stay comfortable. When you're there a long time, I think sometimes, if you don't stay current, people will take you for granted, so you have to keep challenging them and be willing to change when you need to."

Neither Minyard nor Barkley sees the morning competition subsiding soon, "but I think the tendency for shock radio has already leveled off," Barkley claims. "I think it's going to go in the direction of more communication of fun, the kind of values that have always been around."

Rick Dees is one of the most successful morning show hosts in the coun-

try. His humor has kept him situated at or near the top spot since he joined KIIS in 1982. And while he admits the morning drive time is more competitive than ever, Dees says he doesn't harp on the ratings too much, nor does it bother him that he is picked on by other DJs. "I wear it as a badge of honor. I think it's a wonderful, flattering feeling, and it does mean that while they're talking about me, they're not doing a good show of their own," Dees says. "It's kind of sad. They all come in and start talking about our show like it's bad or it's something that needs to be thrown out with the rest of the garbage, and we've been very fortunate because they have found *themselves* thrown out with the rest of the garbage."

"I don't like what's happening with radio, though, because there's a whole generation of young personalities-to-be

thinking that being mean to people and shocking people with things that you don't even say in your own bedroom to each other as a married couple are cool. I don't agree with it, and I don't understand it. I could do it myself, but I don't think we ever will. It's just too easy to do. It's harder to make people laugh with humor that's thought out."

While the rise of KLAX surprised Dees, he has found a way to compete with the Spanish station. "I'm taking Spanish lessons and, of course, I use Spanish words as often as possible," he laughs. "I've put together a whole group of bamba jingles and stuff. It's my way of saying, 'Hey, people are listening to this.' If I can catch a couple of them and have them come over, then that's fine," Dees says.

As part of the morning team of Juan Carlos Hidalgo and "El Petadillo," Hidalgo admits he was surprised by the sudden surge of popularity his show received earlier this year, but says the station hasn't compromised its focus. "We've always focused on the whole family, and we try to get everybody hyped," he explains. "We don't do sex or drug jokes. We play Latin music with a lot of small jokes. We talk about family problems and everything that's happening in the world, but we keep the focus on family."

The rise in popularity of KLAX has thrown the spotlight on Spanish radio, which many executives in radio say is long overdue, especially in Los Angeles. "There is such a big Spanish population in Los Angeles, and we're giving them what they want," Hidalgo says. "We don't do contests or giveaways. We concentrate on family entertainment."

While the other stations have well-known DJs on the air during drive time, Hidalgo says that because they aren't

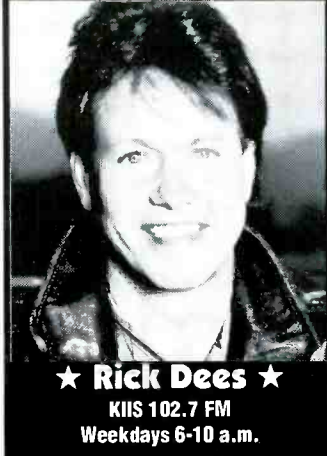
known, they are able to relate to their audience better. "We're just regular guys on the air. We don't feel like we are the stars, but rather the music is. The Spanish population in Los Angeles is very big, and we just try to give them what we like to listen to."

(KLOS morning stars Mark and Brian refused to be part of a story which mentioned other radio personalities and stations. They also asked that their production staff not talk to us as well.)

Howard Stern's show has garnered more publicity—good and bad—than perhaps any other in history. His outrageous manner and shock values have become known worldwide. But there has been a price: KLSX is in a heated battle with the FCC over some of his shows, and the station came under fire several months ago when they edited some of Stern's comments. KLSX Program Director Andy Bloom wouldn't comment on the FCC case, but with regard to editing Stern's shows, he says, "It's not something that has actively been done. It has happened in the past, but it's not a regular part of what we do."

In spite of these problems, Stern's numbers have continued to rise and "shock radio" seems to be as popular as ever. "Howard is the most successful morning radio personality in the history of radio. We're seeing Howard pull away from the pack and the rest of the major personalities, and I think he'll be the King of L.A. Radio for a long time, just as he has in other cities where he's been on the air for a long time. Radio can be every bit as entertaining as prime time television or other mediums, and Howard is an example of that." —Sue Gold

FRONT LINE HEROES



★ **Rick Dees** ★

KIIS 102.7 FM
Weekdays 6-10 a.m.



L.A. RADIO WARS

mers. KRLA AM (1110) programmer Mike Wagner says his target audience is adults age 25-54, or more realistically, those aged 35-49. In broad strokes, this is the group advertisers like best. At KCBS FM (93.1), the picture is painted in more detail. Program Director Tommy Edwards notes that, according to qualitative research, listeners to this station tend to be "upscale with a large amount of disposable income."

The casual listener might have a tough time distinguishing between the stations. All feature a mix that is heavy on music from the mostly mid-Sixties, some hits from the late Fifties

and is interspersed with variable amounts of the Motown catalog. Asked to clarify his station's identity, Edwards fell back upon research showing people consider KCBS to be a more upscale oldies station. At KRLA, their calling card is their standing as the "sole surviving rock & roll radio station in Los Angeles" with a history starting on Labor Day weekend in 1959.

In the competitive world of oldies radio, KRTH (recently purchased by Infinity Broadcasting for \$110 million) is the station to beat. It is also the station that took the biggest beating during phone interviews with its busy competitors. According to KRLA's Wagner, KRTH speeds up their records to make them sound "faster and brighter" than versions on other stations. According to Edwards, when KCBS started to promote and exploit veteran DJs, KRTH came in and hired away one of their high-profile afternoon people.

All three oldies stations recognize the importance of having well-known DJs on staff. KRTH employs Robert W. Morgan and the Real Don Steele, KCBS has Charlie Tuna and Humble Harve Miller and KRLA is home to Dave (the Hullabalooer) Hull,



John Mond's
Program Director,
KKBT 92.3 FM

"With twelve trends [ratings periods] a year, anything can happen. It's almost a crap shoot. So you have to be strategic and new all the time."

just as it was during the Sixties. But each station prefers to keep the administrative decisions, such as what records to play, to themselves. "The DJs are vocal about everything we do at the radio station," says Wagner, "and we assess with a grain of salt everything they suggest."

The most succinct synopsis of oldies radio's future and its place in a changing society comes from Wagner. "Oldies will always be a factor," he says, "whether it's the Fifties or Sixties or Seventies. Star 98.7 is the best of the Eighties and Nineties. Those are oldies to somebody."

—Tom Kidd

★ URBAN WARRIORS

African-Americans, who comprise about 10 to 25 percent of the L.A. population, appear to be among the most loyal of radio listeners. There are four stations, KKBT, KJLH, KGFJ and V-103 (KACE), that vie for the ear of its listenership. Add the urban-formatted though CHR-called stations Power 106 and KIIS, and you have a fragmentation that has caused confusion among listeners—as well as anger and disgust among the urban stations who fight over a piece of the advertising dollar.

KGFJ-AM is programmed by Don Tracy. The station has a mix of mostly older tunes (so-called "dusties") with new songs to attract younger listeners. He sees competition coming from the urban crossover: "Pop stations pick up on urban acts quicker than ever. That's pulling urban listeners away, but by default, the audience that hung with us continues to support us. If you take a look at the charts, and very few listeners do that, you'll find that fifteen of the Top 20 songs are urban. So there's a fierce fight to maintain the audience we have."

KKBT is programmed by John Mond's. Its powerful signal (43,000 watts boosted by strong antenna placement) gives KKBT (FM92, The Beat) a decided reach advantage over its urban competition, thus, higher ratings. "It's too bad ratings can't be more consistent," says Mond's. "With twelve trends [ratings periods] a year, anything can happen. It's almost a crap shoot. So you have to be strategic and new all the time."

"We keep ahead of the competition by keeping an ear to the street," Mond's continues. "We take an aggressive approach to music and our station's promotion. We create events such as concerts and community appearances so that, in turn, we create an aura that makes people feel they must listen to our station to know what's happening in music."

The venerable KJLH-FM is the oldest urban station in Los Angeles. Owned by Stevie Wonder, KJLH is programmed by Frankie Ross (who used to be at KKBT).

Ross feels that urban radio is fractionalized by the highly visible CHR stations. "This makes everything more fragmented for the urban listenership. CHR's playlist is 80% urban, but because they know the advertising game, they call themselves contemporary hits radio. And what's more contemporary than black music?"

KJLH was recognized nationwide for its strong, up-front coverage of last year's riots. Indeed, much of the burning and rioting took place right outside of KJLH's broadcast windows on Crenshaw Boulevard, providing gripping on-the-spot reports. "We have strong, solid community affairs involvement," Ross says. "We have a gang talk show called 'Peace Treaty' every week. Plus, we have the only full-time news staff in urban radio, headed by Carl Jones."

When we spoke with Anne McCullon, General Manager of V-103, the station was undergoing changes in its program and music directorship, and McCullon was eight days into her new position. She assured us, "We are not making abrupt format changes [because of the reorganization]. Black radio, because of its minority preferences, has the responsibility of super-serving the community."

V-103 (KACE) is simulcast in San Bernardino, so that makes serving both communities a little tricky. "V-103 has a commitment to serving its city of license [Inglewood]," McCullon continues. "However, every community needs the same kind of information and service."

—Gary Jackson

★ COUNTRY SHOWDOWN

Right now, there are over 2,500 radio stations playing country to a demographic group ranging from 18-55 years old. Market research shows that the country audience is also the fastest growing listenership with over 30.2 million listeners daily.

How does country music play in L.A.? According to R.J. Curtis, the recently returned Program Director of KZLA, "I see things really happening in the L.A. market for country. The record companies are selling a lot of product and the club scene is very hot. But for country radio, it hasn't been great for us. That's one of the things we're working on. I don't know that KZLA has been performing consistently and servicing people with the music that they've been going out and buying. People are using country music, but they aren't accessing country music via the radio here. That's what we have to accomplish."

KZLA's AM counterpart, KLAC at 570 AM, is a great listen. On KLAC you can still hear the artists that made country music great. Merle Haggard, Tammy Wynette and Johnny Cash are still staples here. The jocks are allowed to have a little more personality and maintain some of the fun that used to be FM radio.

KZLA's closest competition of any kind would be little KIK-FM 94.3 on the FM dial. They also play the Hot New Country with at least one classic per hour. Liz Pennington, an air personality and promotion person there, claims they consistently beat KZLA in their shared market.

KFRG 95.1 FM in San Berdo plays a mixture of Hot Country hits and is running almost even in the ratings with newcomer K-HITS in that area. Both sta-

tions are barely audible in greater L.A., however, when driving through that area, I've found them both enjoyable.

Peter Carlisle, the announcer for Ronnie Mack's Barndance, hosts a very fine local music show on KPRO 1570 AM in Riverside on Wednesday at midnight. His *New West Country Show* highlights the best of L.A.'s original music scene.

Those who want to enjoy the best of the old and the new, listen to *Citybilly* on KPCC 89.3 FM Monday nights at 8:00. Hosted by Rene Engel, it is L.A.'s best listen for country and folk. Engel feels, "The biggest problem with country radio is it is over strategized. Too much time is spent on how to sell advertising and not enough time is spent developing good radio." *Citybilly* will often feature live in studio performances with candid artist interviews. It's what good country programming is about.

—Billy Black

★ STANDOFF: MC vs. ARBITRON

Considering this is *Music Connection's* Special Radio issue, we thought we'd conduct our own survey to see which are the most listened to stations in Los Angeles and compare our results with the most recent Arbitron ratings. *MC* correspondents polled several hundred people—in malls, restaurants, concerts—and asked each one to simply name his/her favorite L.A. radio station. Listed below are the results of our poll as compared to the April 20th Arbs.

MC:	Arbs:
1 KROQ	1 KLAX
2 KLOS	2 KOST
3 KLSX	3 KPWR
4 KIIS	4 KIIS
5 KNAC	5 KFI
6 KKBT	6 KROQ
7 KXLU	7 KABC
8 KRTH	8 KROQ
9 KZLA	9 KLSX
10 KCRW*	10 KLOS
11 KPWR	11 KRTH
12 KTWV	12 KBIG
13 KJLH	13 KKBT
14 KPCC*	14 KFWB
15 KLON	15 KNX

A quick analysis of the two polls reveals that the Number One station in Los Angeles according to the Arbitron ratings, Spanish station KLAX-FM, didn't place at all on the *MC* poll.

The popularity of morning veteran Rick Dees solidified KIIS-FM in the #4 position of both polls, while KOST-FM (#2 Arbs) and KFI-AM (#5 Arbs) didn't make the *MC* poll at all!

The three stations that pulled in the most votes in the *MC* poll were KROQ, AOR champ KLOS and Classic Rock formatted KLSX.

The emergence of talk radio across the country seemed to have little meaning to those polled in Los Angeles by *Music Connection* correspondents as neither KFI-AM (#5 Arbs) nor KABC-AM (#6 Arbs) received enough votes to finish in the Top 15.

(*These are two of L.A.'s favorite college radio stations. More on these stations in *MC's* Back To College special issue coming in August.)



FRONT LINE HEROES



★ Mark & Brian ★
KLOS 95.5 FM
Weekdays 5-10 a.m.

