

variety," he continued. "The old Ed Sullivan thing. First you see the dancing bear act followed by the Russian ballet. It's variety. An LP cut is music, period. I don't care if it comes from a single or an album or if it was cut on a rock."

KILT(AM) Houston has been the top-rated station in that city ever since Bill Young, the current program director, has been there. That's since 1966, "and I know we were number one for a very long time before that," he said with a laugh. Despite the dominant place KILT occupies in its market, Mr. Young expresses a bit of honest consternation about the state of programing research in Houston.

"When a person buys a record," he said, "I have to think that to radio, that record's popularity value is diminished, if not dead altogether. After all, anybody who has the record in his home where it can be played at will—and I know when I buy a record, especially a single, I go home and play the thing to death immediately. I don't know what kind of value you can place on that record afterward. Our appeal has to be to the non-record-buying public. To program a radio station strictly according to record sales is self-annihilating.

"This station, and most good stations I know, programs according to what types of music we are lacking at the moment," he went on. "On the other hand, most record stores will tell a radio station what it wants to hear. If you ask them what their top-selling records are, they'll break it down and only give you the records they think you want to play. If an R&B station were to call, they'd give them a whole different set of records. So I finally had to say to them, 'Give me your top-20 records, but don't break it down. Let me do that.' There's no other way you can provide a wider selection of music for a mass audience."

People on both sides of this argument, though, are saying they put more records on their playlists last year by virtue of sound, and not sales, than in past years.

Few programers rely solely on singles-sales reports any more, anyway. They are learning how to temper singles reports with album reports; juke box play has



WIXY's Chuck Dunaway

re-emerged as a gauge of popularity and stations in the Bartell group, for one, are even going out to do periodic opinion-survey work at shopping centers and schools.

George Wilson, national program director of the Bartell stations, says that "research and execution are still the name of the game. There's very little difference between KCBQ(AM) San Diego or WMYO-(FM) Miami and the other stations in town. We all play the same music. It's execution that makes the difference. I don't care if there are only ten records selling in any market, or seven. Then those are the seven you play."

But if record research is what is behind contemporary top-40 radio, it is the DJ, jock, disk jockey, air personality or what-have-you who is still out in front. And his role in the reborn top 40 of today is a bit unsure.

Tom Allen of country WIL(AM) St. Louis says, "I don't know if you could say that the music left me or I left the music, really. But when I left top 40 in 1966, it was just when the 'head' or 'drug' music was coming on and I just couldn't relate to that. I couldn't continue to grow with it.

"You could say I'm old-fashioned," he continues, "but I'm a guy who believes that a jock has got to like the music he plays. When I put a record on the turntable I have to be able to enjoy that music enough to communicate it. I'm just more comfortable with country music.

"It [top 40] was invaluable training for me. It taught me the basics of good format programing with all the production techniques and jingles involved. Top 40 is as consistent as it has ever been, and that's probably its strength. But it is also probably as sterile as it has ever been, too. Those great 'honcho' programers did a great job uncluttering the format. There aren't the great ups and downs there were 10 years ago. But at the same time, they took a lot of the excitement out of it. There is nowhere for those wacky, funny jocks to go anymore in top 40.

"Today, a disk jockey has got to be so damned prepared—from pulling music, to the way he reads a line of copy, to what he says about an artist," John Rook once the program director of WLS-(AM) Chicago and now a programing consultant, says. "And I hate the word disk jockey for the very reason that if someone's a disk jockey, then he's no damn gooJ. If he's right, he should be an entertainer, he's in show business."

John Rook, like many other programers today, is telling his clients that music is not one of the problems with contemporary radio. The problem, he says, is the people on the air.

"Back when I was working for Storz," says Bill Stewart, who was head of programing for the Storz group of stations from 1955 to 1959 and again in the mid-sixties, "we had a phrase we used on the air: It's what's between the music that counts. And that's probably truer now than before. But unfortunately, I hear very little of interest between the music any more. To try to build a foreground station, you need things that will keep attention. The average top-40 guy today came up from the Drake thing. The guys who worked for Storz or Gordon McLendon are in country radio or MOR. It used to be that when a station got in trouble, you immediately cut the playlist. I don't think that's going to work any more."

"Everyone complains that there isn't any air-talent any more. That's ridiculous," John Rook continued. "I've seen hundreds of guys all across the country who are just begging for motivation. And that's the fault of the program directors out there. Program directors aren't 'directors' any more. They want to be called operations managers or they're waiting to become general managers. Too many of them are just administrators."

Bob Henabery, head of programing development for ABC Radio—the man who keeps the program directors of the ABC-owned stations talking to one another—when asked what he saw as the most important thing that happened this year in contemporary radio, said: "A lot of time was spent getting some warmth back into the jocks. Getting them to throw off the straitjacket of the format a little more."

Jay Cook, the programer of WFIL(AM) Philadelphia, expressed the same thought, although from a different angle, as he talked about hiring several new people for air-slots last year. "It's unfortunate that a while ago we, all programers, were

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