

listenership over the past decade to their better-sounding FM competition, and it is hoped, as KHJ's Bob Kanner said, that AM stereo will "stem the tide." The shift to AM stereo will not only put AM broadcasters on a technical parity with FM, the AM stereo broadcasters felt, but also encourage manufacturers to make high-fidelity AM sets. The reason AM "sounds as muddy as it does," said Kanner, is due solely to the low quality receivers. "Only the audiophile will be able to tell the difference between AM stereo and FM stereo if the receivers are made properly," he said.

High-fidelity AM receivers will "revolutionize" AM radio, agreed KTSA's Lee Randall, and their production will also be in the best interest of receiver manufacturers. "Someone is going to produce a high-fidelity receiver and that's the one who will make a lot of money."

Not all the pioneer AM stereo broadcasters were completely committed to the Kahn system. Charles DeBare, president, ABC-owned AM stations, said the only reason WLS went on with the Kahn system was that the Kahn exciter is the only one available and type accepted. ABC "is not pushing one system over another," he said. "If another system ultimately proves superior to Kahn's," he said, "we would go with it."

DeBare's comments were echoed by Kanner and Harrison Klein, director of radio engineering, Group W. Kanner said he still hasn't had a chance to test the Harris system. If another Los Angeles station goes on with Harris and it sounds better, he said, KHJ will switch. Although Group W will soon have three stations—KDKA, WBZ and WOWO—broadcasting at least occasionally with Kahn's exciter, Klein said that Group W will not commit to one until it has tested them all. (KDKA's premiere stereo broadcast lasted only 10 minutes, Klein said, because the station has to undergo some "technical fine adjustments" before it can make the permanent switch to stereo.)

On the other hand, some of the stations said that their use of the Kahn system was indeed an endorsement of the Kahn technology. Dom Fioravanti, vice president, general sales manager, WNBC, said NBC's adoption of the Kahn system—WNBC will go stereo within two weeks and the other NBC AM's will follow—was based on the belief that the Kahn system was technically superior to the rest in terms of distortion and protection of the monaural coverage area. KTSA's Randall said his station is "strongly committed" to Kahn and expressed the hope that other stations would adopt the Kahn system. Although KMBZ's Lockman wants other stations in his market to follow his lead, he said he can't call them up and encourage them for fear of antitrust retaliation. (The National Association of Broadcasters has advised its members not to get together and agree on a system because of the antitrust implications.) Bruce Holberg of WFIL, which plans to go stereo with Kahn this week or

next, would also like other Philadelphia stations to follow WFIL's lead, but so as not to lose the promotional edge hoped that they "would wait a respectable period of time."

Regardless of how strongly they felt about the Kahn system becoming the standard, the broadcasters were pleased with its performance. WLS's John Gehron said the station has experienced no reduction in coverage or quality of the mono signal. "We did a lot of testing," he said, "and we are very pleased with the results." To hear the stereo, Gehron said, the station set up the separated mono radios. "It sounds great," he said. The quality isn't there yet because of the limited frequency response and distortion of the sets, he said, "but the stereo effect—the separation—is, and that's very important."

Not only has KMBZ gotten word back from its listeners that the two-radio receiver "sounds tremendous," said Lockman, but it has also received unexpected calls about improved mono reception.

The broadcasters have different ideas about how to promote AM stereo. Because no receivers are yet available, some stations were taking a low-key approach, telling their listeners that they were in the stereo mode and leaving it at that. Kanner said KHJ is not even mentioning the two-

radio reception to prevent listeners from getting the wrong idea about what AM stereo sound can and should be.

Other stations, despite the lack of receivers, have decided to promote their novel capability heavily. KMBZ's Lockman said the station reminds its listeners repeatedly that it is broadcasting in stereo and explains four times an hour how to set up the two-radio receiver. KTSA's engineers were working on prototype receivers, Randall said, so that the station can demonstrate stereo at locations throughout San Antonio. To kill two birds, Randall said some of the demos could be set up on the premises of advertisers.

If Harris receives its type acceptance shortly, the country will be faced with the prospect of multiple stereo systems, creating confusion in the minds of receiver manufacturers, broadcasters and the public. How it will all shake out is anybody's guess. What is certain is that broadcasting will see a lot more firsts in the coming months. So far, KDKA is the first AM stereo station, KTSA is the first regular AM stereo station and on Sept. 5 KSL says it will become the first AM station to broadcast in stereo a live musical event: the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on the 50th anniversary of KSL's affiliation with CBS and CBS's carriage of the choir. □

\$110 million deal for Miami independent

Taft pays \$70 million plus WGR-TV Buffalo for WCIX-TV

The largest price ever paid for an independent television station was announced last week when Taft Broadcasting reached an agreement in principle to buy WCIX-TV Miami from General Cinema Corp. in exchange for WGR-TV Buffalo, N.Y., plus \$70 million.

The parties declined to put a value on WGR-TV, but estimates put it around \$40 million. Taft acquired WGR-TV when it bought the Transcontinent TV Corp. group of two AM's, two FM's and three TV's in 1964 for \$26.9 million. Taft currently owns six AM's, six FM's and seven TV's and is awaiting FCC approval to sell KQV(AM) Pittsburgh for \$2 million. Among its seven TV stations, Taft owns the maximum five VHF's allowed under FCC rules, and must give up one before acquiring another.

GCC Communications, the broadcasting subsidiary of General Cinema Corp., also owns WIFL(FM) Philadelphia and 80% of WHUE-AM-FM Boston. Alexander Tanger, GCC Communications president, owns the other 20% of WHUE-AM-FM. Early this year GCC Communications also sold WEFM(FM) Chicago for \$9.2 million to Richard Marriott and family. General Cinema Corp. owns a chain of movie theaters and is a leading independent soft drink bottler. Although WCIX-TV has been on the air since 1967, GCC Communications did not acquire positive control until

1972, after gradually buying up stock in exchange for working capital it provided to the previous owners, according to GCC's Tanger.

J. Atwood Ives, senior vice president for finance at parent General Cinema Corp., would not comment on when the decision was reached to put WCIX-TV up for sale, other than to say consideration had been given "for some time."

Charles S. Mechem Jr., chairman of Taft, said he would not comment on arrangements because the deal was only a "preliminary agreement" and a definitive agreement had not yet been settled. Mechem added that they would be moving towards a definitive agreement "very promptly."

Besides being the highest price ever paid for an independent station, WCIX-TV also marks the second highest price paid for a TV station of any kind when WGR-TV's estimated worth is figured in to the price. Metromedia this year closed its purchase of ABC affiliate WCVB-TV Boston for \$220 million, as well as selling KMBC-TV Kansas City, an ABC affiliate, to the Hearst Corp. for \$79 million.

WCIX-TV is on channel 6 with 77.6 kw visual, 13.2 kw aural, and antenna 1,449 feet above average terrain. WGR-TV is an NBC affiliate on channel 2 with 100 kw visual, 20 kw aural, and antenna 1,050 feet above average terrain.

Brokers were Howard Stark of New York representing the seller and R.C. Crisler & Co. representing the buyer. □