CHR Rolls On, And On, And On

One of the hottest topics at the NAB/NRBA RCPC was CHR and its impact on music, the marketplace, and other formats. I was asked to moderate a great panel of programming experts: Q107/Washington’s Alan Burns, KKHH/Los Angeles’ Ed Scarborough, WHTT/Boston’s Rick Peters, Rob Balon & Associates President Rob Balon, KPKE/Denver’s Tim Fox, Cat Michaels of Z95 (WZUU)/Milwaukee, WKT/Wilwaukee’s Dallas Cole, and John Lander from KKBQ-AM & FM/Houston.

MVTV Presence

One of the first issues discussed was the significance of MVTV on CHR programming, and whether it should be looked upon as a threat or an ally. John said, “I don’t view MVTV as competition for us. I work with them as often as possible. Everyone knows about them and if anything, they help us stay on top of the trends.”

Rob also spoke in a positive manner about the video service. “If anything, we’ve found MVTV has helped to reinforce the positives of new records and artists. The only real negatives we see are the VJs themselves. Most music people think they come off phony.”

CHR Saturation

The topic of three, four, and more CHRs in a market came to the surface. There was some concern that due to overcrowing within CHR, the large share would be fragmented and the format pendulum might swing the other way again. However, a confident panel pointed out that FM helped in the supposed demise of CHR, as most of it was on AM; now, most of CHR is on FM. The format basics which used to work are still valid today. Most likely, the panel concluded, those sound principles will keep CHR strong for years.

Gary noted, “We can look for the survivors in the format to be those who not only do it correctly, but who also are committed to the format and to winning.” Most predicted that some of the latecomers to format would fall by the wayside as the opportunities to find a unique niche within CHR dwindle.

AM Stereo

Touching on the survival of AM CHRs (a topic which will be covered in depth next week in this column), panelists spoke of the disappointing profile that AM stereo receiver manufacturers have taken in helping to spread the word about AM stereo. Most agreed that a lot more needs to be done if AM stereo is to make an impact. Ed dismantled the new technology, saying, “You can put AM stereo on the same shelf as FM quad.” Rob sadly noted, “In our research, most people already think they have AM stereo.”

Personality Points

A popular trend is CHR today is to have a morning team. Is one necessary, and are all those voices possibly confusing for listeners?


Emotion Vs Science: Music Research

The battle continues: is music programming a science, or emotion, or a combination of both? Moderated by Doubleday VP/Programming Dave Martin, consultants Jon Coleman and Bob Harper locked horns with NKO’s VP/Programming Dave Roberts and 2100 New York PD Scott Shannon.

Jon stated, “When I first heard the title of this session, I had to say, quite frankly, that there isn’t a choice. We’ve all heard the arguments about research and its role in selecting music, and I’m tired of them. In 1984, we should be seeking ways of gaining new knowledge and information, not arguing over the past. We need to know how listeners respond to music.”

“The only music that should be played is what the audience likes and wants to hear. And the only way to do that is to gather information on the listener’s attitudes and opinions about their music. To guess about what they like is an obvious mistake. The problems inherent in emotional programming are far more dangerous than those in possible problems with researched programming.”

“Emotion and science are necessary,” countered Roberts. “We call it gut, and it’s a very important part of programming. I don’t believe you can put all of your faith in the numbers. They must be tempered with your gut. GMs stifle PDs, saying, ‘I paid for this research, so we’re going to use it.’ On the other hand, PDs who say, ‘Research is no good’ are a distortion. Your emotion is based on your experience and knowledge of the music, the artist, and the marketplace.”