In 1974, Kent Burkhart established himself and Lee Abrams as one of radio's first programming consulting firms, Burkhart/Abrams. The two had a profound effect on the radio industry over the next two decades.

The day after their first phone call, Kent Burkhart met Lee Abrams. Abrams was still in his teens. Burkhart wasn’t. It began in the early ‘70s with a handshake. By the end of the decade it was the largest and, from what I hear, still influential radio consultancy in the nation.

Burkhart/Abrams.

Bay City, TX is south of Houston. Burkhart was south of 14, and Johnny Long owned a radio station. “We went to him and said, ‘Listen, I’d like to play music for 15 minutes a day for all the kids,’” says Burkhart. “Sure. When do you want to be on?” Long replied. By the time Burkhart graduated high school in 1952, he had his jock chops down.

In 1956 Burkhart was 22, had been in radio for nine years and had already worked for Gordon McKelkon. He was about to come face to face with Todd Storz, the other Father of Top 40. There were major discussions in the Storz group about rock ‘n roll. “Todd wasn’t in favor of it,” Burkhart says. “How the hell do you ignore Elvis Presley?” They compromised by playing only the softer Elvis, but the cat was out of the bag.

In 1958 Story sent Burkhart to WQAM/Miami to clean up a payola mess. Then Burkhart bought KXTL/San Angelo, TX and learned how to do everything. Earl Fletcher, GM of KXOL/Ft. Worth, TX needed programming help. It wasn’t full-time, it was consulting for 200 a month, but Fletcher upped the ante by calling in markers with friends who had stations in Little Rock and Lake Charles, LA.

After eight months Burkhart realized he needed a real job. “In the spring of 1961, Barry Sherman, Esquire magazine’s radio guy, told me Esquire was going to build a radio magazine,” he says. The first station was WQXU/Atlanta, and it was in trouble.

Burkhart cleaned up ‘QXL, and things were on a roll. John Smart, Esquire’s Chairmen of the Board, heard a Preparedness Report on the air. Within 24 hours the station was on the block. New owners came in, fired the GM and gave Burkhart six months to prove he could be a large-market guy. During his tenure, WQXU’s ratings doubled. When the company expanded, Burkhart was named President of Pacific and Southern Broadcasting.

Fast-forward. The chairman of the parent company wanted a New York City presence. Burkhart told him the station he’d selected had a lousy nighttime signal. When the station started hemorrhaging red ink, Mr. Chairman blamed Burkhart. “The day I was jobless,” Burkhart says.

Now we’re back to the birth of Burkhart/Abrams, and Burkhart gives the impression that that’s what he holds most dear. “I couldn’t have asked for anything better in my life,” he says.

**R&R Year-End Charts Debut**

There were three formats in R&R’s first year-end recap: Rock (now CHR), Pop (now AC) and Country. Much like the rest of the ‘70s, 1974’s charts were powered by what seemed like an endless list of one-hit wonders — Terry Jacks, Carl Douglas, Blue Swede. Paper Lace and Billy Swan are but a few examples.

But some very successful recording legends also had a big year in 1974. Elton John, for example, reached the top 10 four times. Stevie Wonder, Barry White, John Denver and Olivia Newton-John also had a multiple hits.

Thirty-one songs topped R&R’s Country chart in 1974, and Conway Twitty had three of them: “There’s a Honey Tonk Angel (Who’ll Take Me Back In),” “I’m Not Through Loving You Yet” and “I See the Want To in Your Eyes.” Charlie Rich was anything but behind closed doors in ’74. He tasted six top 15 hits that year.

Classic Rock staples that fell in ’74 included “Sweet Home Alabama” by Lynyrd Skynyrd, “I Shot the Sheriff” by Eric Clapton, “You Ain’t Seen Nothing Yet” and “Takein’ Care of Business” by Bachman-Turner Overdrive, “Can’t Get Enough” by Bob Company, “Radar Love” by Golden Earring and Grand Funk’s cover of Little Eva’s “The Loco-Motion,” which was the No. 2 song at Rock.

Another notable entry from ’74: “Rock the Boat” by Hans Corporation, which has been credited with starting the disco craze that would dominate much of the mid- to late ’70s.

![1974 R&R Year-End Charts Debut](https://example.com/1974_rnr_year_end_charts)

**Records**

- Neil Bogart back in business with Casablanca Records, Harold Chait to A&M VP/Promo, Gil Beltar new MSN President, Billy Bass becomes Manager/Art’n Album Promotions at RCA, Dick Wexler becomes Capitol, VP/Promo, Marc Nathanson Art’n Album Promo Director at Reprise Records, Bill Pflrodrescher 25th Century Asst. Nat’l Promo Director at RCA, Joe Galante Management/Ad at RCA, Al Coury Sr. VP/AS&P and Promo, Dan Zimmerman Sr. VP/Marketing, Bruce Vendell Nat’l Promo Manager at Capital, Laurie Newmark DisCret Nat’l Promo Director, Clive Davis Bell Records President, Al Teller to UA President, Rick Blackroom Exec, VP/GM Monument, Tom Coss RCA Division VP/Promo, Ray Anderson to UA as VP/Promo, Don Whittman Nat’l Promo Manager/Syngles at RCA, Dick Kline Atlantic VP/Promo, Ron Alexander VP/GM Epic, Vince Tarfali Nat’l Pop Promo at Atlantic, Tony Martelli new VP/East Coast Operations at ABC.

**In Memoriam**


**Country**

- Cal Smith Country Bumpkin
- Billy "Crash" Craddock Puts It In
- Hank Snow
- Billy Swan I Can Help
- Olivia Newton-John If You Love Me (Let Me Know)
- Conway Twitty There’s A Honey Tonk Angel
- Tanya Tucker Would You Lay With Me (In A Field Of Stone)
- Mickey Gilley Room Full of Roses
- Conway Twitty I See The Want To In Your Eyes
- Don Williams I Wouldn’t Want To Live If You Didn’t Love Me

**Rock**

- Terry Jacks Seasons In The Sun
- Grand Funk The Loco-Motion
- Olivia Newton-John If You Love Me (Let Me Know)
- John Denver’s Song
- Roberta Flack Feel Like Makin’ Love
- Elton John Bennie And The Jets
- Dolly Parton’s Coat
- Gordon Lightfoot Sundown
- Huey Lewis Corporation Rock The Boat
- Wings Band On The Run
- Paul Anka (You’re) Having My Baby
- Bob Donaldson The Heywoods Billy Don’t Be A Hero

**Pop**

- Maria Muldaur Midnight At The Oasis
- Harry Chapin Cats In The Cradle
- Olivia Newton-John If You Love Me (Let Me Know)
- Anne Murray You Won’t See Me
- John Denver’s Song
- Roberta Flack Feel Like Makin’ Love
- Dave Loggins Please Come To Boston
- Paul Anka You’re Having My Baby
- Marvin Hamlisch The Entertainer
- Bobby Vinton My Melody Of Love

**Kent Burkhart; He Did It All**