

RADIO REVIEW

# Requiem for a Heavyweight

NEW YORK—This is not so much a station review, actually, as it is the obituary of a radio format. It's an axiom that nobody is indispensable to a radio station, but that axiom fell to pieces in the case of Murray (the K) Kaufman and WOR-FM. When WOR-FM lost Kaufman, the station lost its image, its drive, its whole raison d'être. Imaginative, exciting programming went down the drain. Tedium came in.

It's also true that losing Bill (Rosko) Mercer, who resigned a few days later on-the-air in an attack at the programming consultant who'd taken over the station (the consultancy also precipitated the change in format), also hurt. But undoubtedly it was Murray the K who was the station. Only Kaufman had the perception and knowledge to select the best of the cuts of the albums now being turned out by many progressive rock groups. These were being okay'd in listening sessions and making the playlist and played extensively on his own show. This did not include everything by the Beatles . . . only their best musical works . . . and only the best of the Doors, Country Joe and the Fish, the Cream, Donovan, Tim Hardin. Only the cuts that were shaping music.

To illustrate the drama of the role this station was playing, one record man came back from England with an unusual record he'd heard and liked. He sent the record to WOR-FM and Kaufman because he felt no one else would play it. He had no connection with the record, there was no profit incentive. Thus, WOR-FM became the first station in the U. S. to play "Whiter Shade of Pale," by the Procol Harum. I'd like to believe that it was played for the quality of the music rather than the hit-potential of the record. The list of records that the station used to play strictly on their musical merit was extensive. Most of these were longer cuts from albums that rock stations wouldn't play.

The first sense of change came when memos came down from upstairs not to play certain cuts. Then the deejays were kicked out of the listening sessions and not allowed to have a say in the records on the playlist. The playlist was a flock of singles—all the hits. Only an occasional new record was programmed and this by an established artist. Kaufman protested. He protested himself out of a job.

Fans also protested the treatment of Kaufman; he had an intellectual approach toward the music that was interesting and absorbing. He had the highest rated FM show in New York—a 4 share on one ratings survey, a 3 the next. This was higher than many AM shows and a fantastic

FM rating for New York. More important, his audience was not composed of dial turners, such as listen to rock 'n' roll stations. People who listened to Kaufman's show—largely young adults and adults and especially college students—stayed. They were there every night.

Even more, fans protested the new programming. So much so, that a memo came down from upstairs to play three LP cuts an hour. But, unfortunately, the album cuts were not the right album cuts.

Since Kaufman left the station, the programming has been stagnant and insipid. This was not a slow development; it happened suddenly . . . ostensibly the moment Kaufman left the air. Obviously, there's no one qualified to pick "tomorrow's music . . . progressive rock." No one knows what's happening musically. Worse, the station and its management could care less about progressive rock. From a progressive rock album station, the image of WOR-FM has changed to just another rocker. From aiming its programming at young adults and the people who've grown up with rock 'n' roll since 1955, the station is going for teeny boppers.

The psychology behind this is more commercial than might be believed. A teeny-bopper station would pull audience away from WMCA and WABC, the city's two rockers, and make WOR (the AM talk-format operation) show up even better in audience rating surveys. WOR-FM had, perhaps, created its own audience more than luring them from WABC and WMCA.

At any rate, the station is playing the hits, the biggest hits mostly, and playing them over and over and oldies over and over until it sounds like an imitation of a rocker. And not a good imitation at that. Both Newsweek and Home Furnishings Daily have taken note of the changes. Not happily, either.

More than one radio man has termed the recent programming change "stupid," believing that WOR-FM had achieved something totally unique in radio and had found a programming gap in the market. A gap that needed to be filled. One radio man, sadly shaking his head, referred to WOR-FM as now the fifth rocker in the market (there's only WABC and WMCA ahead of it). Whether fifth . . . or even by some miracle it became first . . . one thinks of the old Kaufmanish WOR-FM and what it was and, even more, what it could have eventually grown to be (had all of the other deejays been as astute as Kaufman and Rosko) and you cannot help thinking that something good was killed and what has replaced it is far, far short of being nearly as good. **CLAUDE HALL**

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

# WABC's Leonard 'Turned On'

NEW YORK — The Hot 100 deejay of today not only has to be aware of the history of pop music, but "do his homework and find out what a Ravi Shankar is . . . or what psychedelic music is all about," said Chuck Leonard, air personality on WABC here.

In some respects, psychedelic music is very good, he said. In many cases, however, record companies are "throwing in noise."

In spite of "noise," a lot of good things are being done today in the record business, Leonard felt. He spoke of Teddy Randazzo as one producer who brought strings and other good-music things into the pop field . . . made this type background popular on commercial records.

"I find that a lot of adults today, who turned away from rock 'n' roll years ago, have slowly began to realize that many of the pop music artists coming out on records today are the same ones who would have gone into jazz or classical music in years past. But today these artists have found they can express themselves equally well in pop music . . . and make money at it," he said.

"The pop music field is the better for it."

### More Honest

Today's songs have a much more honest basis, he felt, than the love ballads of yore. "Songs are covering everything from religious to reality." He referred to the latest records of Chad Mitchell, saying Mitchell was now "out of sight." This type of record would probably not be played on his AM shows (on WABC 11-midnight weekdays and 5-10 p.m. Sunday), but might be played on FM (he's on WABC-FM each Saturday 8-9 p.m.). On AM, said Leonard, "you cater to the listener. You don't dictate to him what he should like." But WABC-FM has turned over each Saturday night to a different kind of bag and Leonard, on his hour show, plays such things as "hip Sinatra, of which there's not that much around, and the records that are a little too far out for Easy Listening stations, but too tame for the rockers." On this show, he blends such artists as Lou Rawls and Aretha Franklin and Chad Mitchell with Peggy Lee.

Leonard majored in journalism at the University of Illinois,

but became interested in the radio-TV setup on campus and worked on the campus radio station—UPGU—as program director. He also worked at Champagne, Ill. After college, he worked in a training program for reporters at the Washington Evening Star and remembers doing a lot of obituaries. But along during the nine months he was at the Washington Evening Star, he began working as a part-time deejay on WEBB in Baltimore and soon was making more money from his radio job than his newspaper job. He eventually was doing the morning show at WEBB. In June 1965, he left to join WWRL in New York and left the r&b-format WWRL in September 1965 to join Hot 100-formatted WABC, one of the most powerful stations in the nation.

Leonard feels that it's difficult to put a label on pop music today. "What's happened is that producers and artists have pulled the labels off the bottles and poured everything into one bottle. Psychedelic music is happening, r&b is happening, Latin rhythms are in-

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# GIANT EASTON LAUNCHES WEEKLY SEG ON KGW-TV

PORTLAND, Ore.—Lynn Easton, former lead singer for the Kingsmen and author of their "Jolly Green Giant" hit record of a few years ago, has bowed a weekly bandstand-type TV show on KGW-TV here. The Saturday afternoon show is called "this is IT," lower cased just like it reads.

Easton hosts more than 75 local high school students each week, spinning records for dancing. The first show Oct. 14 featured interviews with two of the Kingsmen and a live performance of "Stay," by Lanny Hunt and the Uniques. Easton, now with the advertising firm of Keith R. Petzold, Inc., also interviews teens on the show. A feature of each show is movies taken on a different school campus each week.

# Rosko Mercer to Do DJ Show With WNEW-FM

NEW YORK — Bill (Rosko) Mercer, former all-night personality with WOR-FM who resigned a couple of weeks ago, has been hired by WNEW-FM for a progressive rock show and will handle a seven-days-a-week stint 7-midnight. George Duncan, station manager of WNEW-FM, said the decision for the change in programming and image of WNEW-FM was "made strictly on Rosko's availability." WNEW-FM is building for the future, he said. The

station programs Easy Listening music.

WNEW-FM was the first all-girl station in New York. The girls are being retained for the daytime operations of the station. Duncan said he saw no reason why the combination of girls daytime and Rosko nighttime shouldn't work. He said Rosko would play "meaningful" music. "Our music has progressed in this direction for some while. Rosko's availability only pushed up our timetable for the change."

# Cleveland Hot 100 Outlets Go Literary in Promotions

CLEVELAND—Hot 100 stations here are promoting themselves and deejays through book covers. WHK will distribute 1,000 free book covers to major Cleveland schools this week. The paper covers not only feature pictures of the station's six disk jockeys, but a cutout section for bookmarks. WIXY's 13x20 inch covers, distributed by Kenny King Restaurants, has a space for a class schedule, doodling, and a list of the WIXY promotions — Chicken Man, Football Scoreboard, news question of the hour, the WIXY six-pack of songs.

WIXY's big promotion last

semester, the Spirit Contest, with prizes and celebrity hop signatures, will be topped this fall with a weekly Computer Dance set-up at the high schools.

WHK is clicking in the classroom with, among other things, a Wake-Up Service with calls in the morning by disk jockey Johnny Michaels and a rah-rah time with school cheerleaders coming down to record their yells. Wildest school promotion belongs to deejays Charlie Brown and Irv Harrigan of WKYC. They agreed to dye for teens, changing their hair color to match the school colors of the school with the most petitions.

# Chrysler Behind Series

HOUSTON — The Chrysler Corp. is providing financial backing for more than 200 videotaped country TV shows.

The 30-minute shows, taped in color, are being done at the studios of KHTV-TV. Four different acts are headlining the shows, Ferlin Husky, Johnny

Wright and Kitty Wells, Sheb Wooley, and Lonzo and Oscar with the Homesteaders. Additionally, most of the top names in country music are guesting on the programs.

According to information received, each of the acts is cutting a series of 52 shows, 13 of which have been completed. Chrysler is paying all production costs. The series is to be syndicated in markets around the nation, with sponsorship by local Chrysler, Dodge and Plymouth dealers. Exact details of the distribution have not been announced. Company officials are working with booking agencies in Nashville and elsewhere lining up talent who are appearing in the Houston area.

## KSEW Bows Sheet

SITKA, Alaska — KSEW, which programs Hot 100 music, is bowing a free songsheet for teens here. The publication would also feature articles on music, artists, and records, reports Joe Cucchiari.

# WLOS, FM'er to 8-Hr. Hot 100

ASHEVILLE, N. C.—WLOS and WLOS-TV, which have been featuring an Easy Listening format, have gone Hot 100 8-midnight each evening, said production manager Bill Stroupe. Eddie Ray, a new man on the staff, hosts the show. "This is a request program centered around the top 40 and includes new singles and cuts from rock 'n' roll albums," Stroupe said, adding that the show has brought unexpected response from young FM listeners as well as the AM'ers. The daytime programming of the station remains Easy Listening.