



Radio: Its Relation To the Disk Industry In Mexico

By ENRIQUE ORTIZ

RADIO WAS ACTUALLY BORN IN MEXICO in the Northern city of Monterrey in 1921, but it wasn't until two years later at XEB in Mexico City that it actually took on a professional tone. Those two stations have grown to 548 AM and 101 FM outlets, according to last year's market survey by the National Agency for the Radio and Television Industry.

With every station, including tv, under the direct supervision and ownership of the government via lease deals, there are certain strict regulations in which they must abide. Permits run anywhere between 10 and 20 years, and according to a law passed recently every single outlet must turn over 12.5% free time. Latter is supervised by an organization called the Comision de Radiodifusion.

Actually, right here is where most importance is put. And reasonably so since there are 32 AMs, 23 FM's and six video channels in full time operation practically around the clock. Of the total, there is one AM and two FM's transmitting in English. There are also two cable-vision channels (7 and 10), actually transmissions from Texas border cities operating on about a 12-hour day.

Most of the stations throughout the republic base their programming on recorded disks, with a few transmitting solely on tape. A few carry soap operas; the majority carry hourly (some more frequently) news broadcasts and time checks. In all, it comes down to radio being the prime promotional avenue for the sale of records.

Social-economic classes are divided into three divisions: A-B amounting to 6%; C—28%; D—58%. In reality, of the 60,000,000 inhabitants, 40% listen regularly. Spot checks,

similar to the U.S.'s "pulse rating" have been made on a periodic basis to uphold this fact.

Although newspapers have strongly criticized the stations for favoring foreign music over national product, actually 50% transmit Spanish-language songs, with some 60 to 70% of those being Mexican-made platters. The rest transmit in English or another language, play classical and jazz, give the time, and broadcast the soap operas.

A further study of the outlying provinces shows a preference of airing Mexican records to the tune of 80 to 90%. Ranchera, the authentic folklore and regional melodies, are first choice. This includes the mariachi, norteno and whatever

other sounds are indigenous to the Mexicans (see story on ranchera). Following in order are modern music in Spanish, songs interpreted by native groups but hardly with any influence from the outside; tropical music; the English-language sound, starting to lose some importance even though there are still considerable catalogs around.

As Mexico City goes, so goes the rest of the country, with a majority of them now following suit with specialized programming of the modern Spanish music, tropical, ranchera, in English, etc. This makes it much easier for the record companies' promotion forces, who simply drop over a lesser amount of free copies to the stations.

In the Federal District, there are some 20-plus disk manufacturers who make it a daily habit of hitting the stations with new product. The one to five promotion men from each work in an extremely competitive fashion, visiting the stations in an exacting and enthusiastic manner. The most common method is doling out some 300 copies of the same release to the stations, trying to get the quickest response from the audience via phone-patches. There sometimes are giveaways for the first-callers, consequently they get quick results and reactions from the young public.

In the interior, it works a little differently. There aren't that many stops to make since a large majority are on a network basis. It is estimated that there are some 20% who control about 90% in the different parts of the country. The promotion of the records is broken down into four different approaches.

The first is direct to the key affiliate of the small network where the program director forwards them on to the sister stations in the chain. Another way is via the salesmen who call upon the outlets in his territory, as well as the stores. Then there would be a special campaign via the special promotion man making weekly calls to butter up the station personnel for maximum impact. And finally, manufacturers will just take a chance and bus or air-freight the sample copies to be played on the air for phone-in or mail-in reaction.

Generally, in the Federal District it takes between two weeks and a month before any final reaction—good or bad—is determined. Although, there are some that hit the airwaves for immediate reaction. In the interior, a reaction on a record is generally faster because of minimal distraction from other activities.

Duration of a hit in the big city often lasts from three to six months. It burns out in half that time in the interior. But one also has to take into account that sales in the Federal District account for 40% of the gross.

It is important to note that the "disk jockey" does not exist in Mexico. The announcer's sole purpose is to play the song, give the name, singer and composer without any additional comments. Any chatter he may offer is strictly for requests




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Servicios Graficos Angel de La Vega photo

On stage celebration of "Siempre En Domingo" homage to Cesar Costa for his 15th anniversary as a Mexican recording artist (looking at framed special disk). Show's host, Raul Velasco (in white suit), reads inscription, while Eduardo Baptista, grandson of the founder of Musart, holds the plaque. Other executives from one of the two pioneering labels look on.

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