

San Francisco may have given birth to progressive radio at KMPX-FM nine years ago, but radio in the Bay Area today seems virtually unchanged from the conservative, orthodox mode in which it was set when deejay Tom Donahue began broadcasting what became known as "underground" radio after midnight on the small foreign language station at the far end of the dial.

True, KSAN-FM, successor to the original KMPX, continues to thrive, on the verge of becoming a San Francisco institution in its seventh year of undeterred dominance. But KSAN is virtually the only radio station in the Bay Area to reflect or become involved with to any degree the local music scene.

"San Francisco radio is probably no different than anywhere else," said Bill Gavin of the Gavin Report tipsheet. KSAN general manager Jerry Graham, a relative newcomer to the Bay Area, echoed those sentiments.

"As far as I can see, San Francisco radio is no different from radio in most major cities," said Graham, former WNEW program director who still owns his own radio station (WGRG, Pittsfield, Mass.), which he built literally from the ground. Graham assumed his KSAN responsibilities last summer, replacing the late Tom Donahue, who brought underground radio to KSAN in 1968, following a strike at the original KMPX.

"What makes KSAN different," Graham continued, "I guess, is the past history. We've got tremendous tolerance from our listeners to go off in different directions."

If KSAN, as the undisputed boss of Bay Area progressive rock stations, does reflect something of the City's unique flavor in its free-wheeling, irreverent approach, most of the other stations in town offer nothing different than anywhere else, as Graham and Gavin noted.

KFRC, with its powerful signal, bare-bones playlist and yappy jocks, holds the same commanding position as northern California's number one Top 40 rocker it has enjoyed for the past half dozen years. The latest ARB book gave KFRC record-breaking cumulative ratings, the highest of any station west of the Mississippi for the first time in station history.

Over at KYA, the traditional competition for

Varied Radio Formats Spread Across Bay Area Vastness



KFRC photo

KFRC's Rich Shaw with see-through vault winner Paul Walters who collected \$10,000. At right, Bill Gavin, a radio industry legend.



Billboard photo by Jack McDonough

KFRC, confusion seems to reign on the AM side, while energy focuses on the renewed FM half, where former KMPX-KSAN disc jockey Bobby Cole recently took over as music director. He and KYA program director Mark Taylor do the only live shows on the FM currently, but Cole hopes to be full-time live by April.

Jim Gabbert, owner of K101, plans to split his AM and FM entirely once the FCC approves the application, now pending, for a power boost to the AM which will spell an end to its sundown days. Gabbert recently completed more than two years work, using his station to experiment, on quadrasonic broadcasting for the FCC, and has now begun work on a similar study on AM stereo. He also recently purchased a Honolulu progressive rock station (KIKI-AM).

While K101 continues to program an eccentric mix of Top 40 and MOR, KCBS-FM approaches the adult contemporary market with a less hit-oriented "soft rock" sound. Evaluating the station's impact, however, has always been hampered by diary confusion created with its sister station, KCBS-AM, the City's top-rated all-news station.

The AM side of adult radio is dominated by KSFO and KNBR, both of which emphasize broadcast personalities over music formats, although KSFO is often credited by local record company promotion representatives with broader taste in music than its MOR tag might indicate.

While no progressive rock station besides KSAN currently broadcasts from San Francisco, FM stations in the outlying areas—both San Jose and Marin counties—are beginning to have their influence felt.

In Marin, across the Golden Gate Bridge, KTIM has gone from a distinctly provincial FM station to a thoroughly professional, sprightly radio station, operating both on FM and an AM sundowner. An application to boost the AM power rating to 5,000 watts is pending, which would make a large difference for KTIM.

Currently, the station's signal is only heard best in Marin and parts of the East Bay. San Francisco coverage is spotty, although KTIM slips into some bayside areas of San Francisco with greater strength than in-town FMs.

According to station manager Clint Weyrauch, the station is making money for the first time in five years. Weyrauch says the station is "not even conscious of ratings at this point . . . we're a small station, but we seem to move lots of people."

This may be true, but, according to Michael Killmartin—who, as promotion head for Eric-Mainland distributors, oversees a dozen labels in the Bay Area—"you can't sell a matchstick's worth of albums unless KSAN plays it."

In San Jose, KOME and KSJO vie for the progressive market against some surprisingly strong college competition (KFJC at Foothill Junior College, and KZSU at Stanford, especially). KSJO recently converted to the "Earth Rock" format that worked well for KSFM-FM near Sacramento, including hiring program director Don Wright and music director Burt Baumgartner from KSFM.

KOME-FM in San Jose has risen rapidly from a shabby-sounding, free-form station to the South Bay's leading progressive rocker with a boogie-in-

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