

Sebastian Vows 'No More Bubblegum' In KHJ Shift

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"It's a day to day thing," continues Sebastian, "and the changes are coming slowly but surely. I came in with the attitude that KHJ has always been one of America's best radio stations and it has many good points to it."

"But we needed to modernize programming techniques and take advantage of the position already existing here. KHJ is still the number one cumulative station in Los Angeles, so more people sample the station than any other. Apparently there were reasons in the programming as to why people were tuning out in an unusually short period of time."

Sebastian speculates that some of the "negatives" the station had slipped into which may have been responsible for KHJ's ratings sag recently were too much bubblegum music being played, the lack of a consistent and concise format, too much DJ talk, and a loss of contemporary news presentation that may also have been in incorrect time slots. News is now presented 15 minutes prior to the hour and runs 10 minutes during morning and evening drive time.

"I think the morning news show with Dave Cook, Bob Morrison and Mary Lyon is very entertaining and hip now," Sebastian adds, referring to the new three-person news team approach. No news is programmed during non-drive time hours.

The new program director also feels that the station's image was one of playing too many commercials.

Tries To Regain L.A. AM Rock Crown

The station is now playing fewer commercials and spreading them out.

Already, the station is running promo spots to alert listeners to its more "listenable" format and will also run tv and billboard spots to that effect.

The station's demographics remain the same—targeting at the 12-34 age group.

Sebastian has also made personnel changes, eliminating the music librarian and music director.

"More importantly," he adds, "we've changed the approach of some of the existing personnel and modernized their approach. And people have reacted positively. Some have been around a long time and it's difficult. Some have gone 180 degrees around."

Modernization refers to more streamlined and concise announcing, elaborates Sebastian, and includes vocabulary changes.

In another restructuring move, Sebastian has eliminated general meetings with record company representatives at certain specified days and times and will schedule individual meetings week round.

"It's going to be more wide open to fit their schedules and mine," he says.

His first week as program director, Sebastian added nine new songs while eliminating some songs the station had been playing. Added

were Paul Davis' "I Go Crazy," Stevie Wonder's "As," Samantha Sang's "Emotion" and Billy Joel's "Just The Way You Are."

"That was unusual, though," remarks Sebastian, "and that won't

"We'll judge each individual songs on its own merits as to whether the audience will perceive it as a hip, entertaining song or a tune for nine-year-olds."

Sebastian adds that he will rely



Billboard photo by Bonnie Tiegel

Studio Chat: John Sebastian, right, KHJ's program director, confers with Bobby Ocean, afternoon air personality in the control room.

happen very often. But I felt there were several songs the station should have been playing but were not."

Sebastian feels that there are a number of artists who might fall into the bubblegum category as well as songs.

"Any artist, however," he is quick to point out, "can come up with a song that we would play. Any of the artists I've stopped playing could get played right away if I felt the song was right."

also on "gut feeling" as well as research input for his programming selections.

"A sheet of paper won't tell us what to do exactly," he points out. "Call out research is not the end all, and I will weigh all types of input."

"Our research will be continually evolving until we are thoroughly familiar with the market and I anticipate the research to be as modern and scientific as anywhere in the country."

The 30-song playlist will remain tight and while Sebastian would not detail his playlist formula for competitive reasons, he did say the list would change daily and that songs will be added and dropped on a varying basis.

Sebastian predicts there might be even more changes later on, possible major changes, as the research wears on.

Station "positives," according to Sebastian, include air personalities Charlie Tuna and M.G. Kelly, production man Bobby Ocean, general manager Tim Sullivan, promotion director Larry White, researcher Casey, the sales staff, chief engineer Bob Kanner and news director Dave Cook.

"We also have announcers here," he adds, "with great future potential and it's very rare for a program director to detail people like that surrounding him."

"I think we have some of the most talented people in radio here at KHJ, which leads me to believe that any problems that were existing were in programming and basic programming philosophies."

"There are nearly 70 stations in Los Angeles, 20 of them doing rock," concludes Sebastian, "and if you make a mistake there are lots of places for listeners to go to for music."

"We are going to bring KHJ back to a position of dominance and take a potentially great radio station and make it great again."

WNEW-AM Stands Pat On MOR

By DICK NUSSER

NEW YORK—Although Mel Karmazin is now running both WNEW's FM and AM operations here, he isn't planning to tinker with the latter's traditional MOR format.

Karmazin, recently named to replace William Dalton as vice president and general manager of the Metromedia-owned AM outlet, has held the same post on the FM side for three years.

Karmazin says he has no plans for further personnel shifts and firmly believes WNEW-AM will continue to be aimed at the 35 and up age bracket.

So far, the AM outlet has seen the departure of morning man Gene Klaven, a 25-year veteran of WNEW who has since moved to the afternoon drive time slot at WOR-AM here, which is talk-oriented. Klaven was replaced by Jay Lawrence at WNEW-AM. Dalton remains with Metromedia in another capacity.

"Gene had different beliefs about the sort of music we were programming," Karmazin explains. "We also

felt he wasn't giving listeners enough service in the way of weather and traffic reports and time checks."

"There really isn't a station here in New York programming good music for the 35-plus audience except us," Karmazin maintains. "Most of it is background music, news or talk. We feel we have a void to fill here."

Karmazin sees WNEW-AM competing with WPAT, WRFM and to some extent, WOR and WCBS, which is all news, for the 35-plus demographic crowd.

"Our emphasis continues to be on music and service features," he notes. "And personalities."

Karmazin plans an advertising and promotion campaign pegged around the slogan "How Can You Live In New York Without WNEW?" with an emphasis on listener involvement. Station currently is running a contest where listeners submit entries for the worst pot hole in Gotham's streets and DJ Ted Williams offers what Karmazin calls "goofy prizes."

WNEW-AM's program director is Dean Tyler, formerly from Phila-

delphia's WIP. Music director is Jeff Meizzi, who came over from New York's WNBC-AM six months ago.

The format at WNEW-AM is reflected in the list of artists currently being programmed there. These include Glenn Campbell, Barbra Streisand, Frank Sinatra, Neil Diamond, Fifth Dimension, James Taylor, Linda Ronstadt, Paul Anka, Ray Charles, Chicago, The Carpenters, Jim Croce, Nat King Cole, Captain & Tennille, Shirley Bassey, Bette Midler, Carole King and others.

In addition to music, WNEW-AM has traditionally featured Knicks basketball and Rangers hockey broadcasts and there are strong indications the station will add a soccer team to the roster.

Air personalities include Lawrence, 6-10 a.m. (formerly of KLAC, Los Angeles); William E. Williams, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; Bob Fitzsimmons, 1-4 p.m.; Ted Brown, 4-8 p.m. and Jonathan Schwartz in the evening and on Sunday. Bob Jones is at the mike during the station's venerable "Milkman's Matinee" broadcast that occupies the wee small hours.

COMPETES IN BAY AREA

LP-Oriented KTIM Scores ARB Upset

By JACK McDONOUGH

SAN RAFAEL, Calif.—KTIM here has parlayed an open approach to programming into an October ARB showing that is the best in its history. Music director Tony Berardini says "quarter hours, cumes and audience share were all up. In some time periods we were up 200% and in just about every category we showed a large increase. We're strongest in men 18-34 but we also gained in women in this book."

The figures are made more impressive by the fact that KTIM, an album-oriented station, has neither a strong signal nor a promotion budget and is competing against San Francisco stations like KSAN, KMEL and KYA-FM (Y 93) which have both.

KSAN, for example is more than 30,000 watts and KMEL has 69,000. KTIM, by contrast, has 2,200. "We don't get into San Francisco unless the wind is blowing right," says Ber-

ardini. "We rely totally on the music because that's all we've got. Yet in some categories we were doing half of what those other stations were doing."

Program director Clint Weyrauch, who has been with KTIM for seven years and who was instrumental in turning the station from a money-losing MOR format to the now-profitable rock programming, points out that the ARB book covers the entire San Francisco/San Jose metropolitan area and emphasizes that "the fact that we showed up so well in the entire metro area means we must be doing very strong in our own North Bay area, where almost all our listeners are concentrated."

Berardini says that a principal reason for the current KTIM success is that "KTIM has become known to the labels as one of the few stations where you can get an honest shot on a record." (Continued on page 27)



"We need the live shot too... really performing is important."

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