

Jacobs On An Upbeat At Honolulu KKUA-AM

By DON WELLER

HONOLULU—Ask former KHJ-AM and KGB-AM program director Ron Jacobs which high priority items occupy his present life in Hawaii, and he says, rather poker-faced: "Does anyone reading Billboard, nationally or internationally, know of the whereabouts of, or have access to, a tall Hawaiian Soda Co. inside screw closure bimal bottle, circa 1900?"

Ron Jacobs collects Hawaiian soda bottles. He also holds down the morning slot at KKUA-AM. Over the last two years, he's made incredible inroads with the morning radio market; he's gained rating points in each Arbitron survey to the extent that he's eaten into his closest competitor's (Hal "Aku" Lewis) following.

He's brought his successful promotion, "Homegrown" from San Diego to Hawaii. He's also done radio documentaries (the latest being an updating of the Elvis Presley Story, with Jerry Hopkins) and has participated in more than 10 television projects. All in less than two years.

Like him or dislike him, one has to agree that his public image is anything but benign. In the short time he's been here on home turf, Jacobs has managed to inject a new breath of life into the whole radio market.

He left the mainland after fabulously successful jobs with KHJ in Los Angeles and KGB in San Diego, arriving here in December 1975.

As Jacobs recalls, "I left L.A. because it became apparent, living 10 years on the Mainland, that Hawaii has got the other 49 States licked, especially the indigenous music and the natural climate."

"I'm now in the best place I've ever been. I enjoy what I'm doing more than I ever have. I mean, to do what I do and make a buck is really neat. Hawaii has a special rhythm of its own, a rhythm that comes out of the ocean and is reflected in the local music. It's an emotional thing."

Upon arriving here, Jacobs' first goal was to get better situated and integrated into the culture. But gradually the radio bug began to bite. After meeting a few people and talking with local radio people, he

signed a contract with Jock Fearnhead, owner of KKUA, to begin the 6 a.m.-10 a.m. shift July 4, 1976.

"I first wanted to go with KKUA because that's where I left off before going to the Mainland," Jacobs recalls.

After a successful year with KKUA, Jacobs renegotiated a new financially rewarding multi-year contract.

Fearnhead notes: "For me, it's like being reunited with an old friend. But believe me, he's the most difficult person you can possibly work with. He'll drive you up the wall because—and this is the main point—he's so exacting in his work. He's a complete professional."

Just following Jacobs around can be an exhausting enterprise. When he's not doing his radio show or working on other media projects, he's busy with his Hawaii soda bottle collection. He calls it a hobby. Close friends call it an obsession.

Jacobs playfully defends himself: "Sure I spend lots of time on the soda bottles. I mean, what's a hobby for? I'm basically interested in antique Hawaiian soda bottles, the best of which ceased to be made by 1926."

The "Homegrown" promotion has its roots with a Buffalo Springfield songwriting contest while he was at KHJ; then it began to take its present form when Jacobs moved to KGB.

The promotion meant exposure of new talent in the local community by people sending in their own music and judges choosing the 12 best songs to make up an LP featuring local talent.

As a result of his sincere endeavor to integrate local music into a rock-pop Top 40 format, and because of his bringing Hawaii music to many listeners unfamiliar with that type of music, Jacobs was honored by the 1978 State Legislature in a formal declaration.

"I want to expose both Hawaiian music and contemporary issues as they relate to the 50th state," Jacobs explains, "because I think it's important for a disk jockey to do more than just make cynical remarks and the time and weather."



On Air: Ron Jacobs, KKUA Honolulu DJ, cues up a cart and checks a record cut as he prepares his morning show.

As time goes by, Jacobs seems to get further immersed in the Hawaiian culture while his interests and involvement in the Mainland music machine wanes.

About the only thing he misses about the Mainland is a big operating budget, he claims.

He muses: "In a market like this you have to hustle. There is no ultra huge budget situation. To make it in this market you can't make big power buys. You can't do dramatic things that are based on giant personnel moves. Of course, anyone who can make it in a small market I'd respect more than someone who makes it in a big market with a huge machine already established."

"One hit would do it," he explains. "That would trigger a fad and then everyone would be here like vultures. That one hit may happen. We do have diverse musical styles coming from here—from Bette Midler to Yvonne Elliman to Don Ho's 'Tiny Bubbles'."

Would Jacobs like to be program director of KKUA?

"No, thank you," he replies. "I did that sufficiently on the Mainland to feel that I know enough about it that it wouldn't represent a challenge. There's a lot of guys who should be given a shot. I already had mine."

What's it like to work for Jacobs?

Keala Kai, news director at KKUA, has been working for him since July 1976 when he went on the air. She says that working with Jacobs "is a good learning experience."

FCC Beef Fired By Free Radio Concert For Miami

By AGUSTIN GURZA

LOS ANGELES—A free-admission, radio-sponsored concert in Miami recently featuring top recording star Julio Iglesias has left—in the wake of its success—a bitter aftertaste in the form of a dispute with a veteran concert promoter who has challenged the station's right to stage such events.

Eddy Martinez, principal of Edimart Productions, filed a written complaint with the Federal Communications Commission just three days before the late-April Iglesias concert which was sponsored by station WCMQ-AM-FM, and which drew some 40,000 fans to Miami's Orange Bowl.

In his complaint letter, Martinez charged the station with unfair competition, claiming a competitive conflict between the free concert and another paid-entrance event the same date sponsored by Martinez featuring La Dimension Latina at the Miami Jai-Alai Fronton.

In contrast to the massive audience at the Iglesias show, the Dimension Latina dance drew a paltry 1,000 patrons, and Martinez says he lost \$2,000 on the affair.

The alleged publicity advantage of the radio station in promoting its own shows is the crux of Martinez's charge of unfair competition.

"The issue here," says Martinez attorney Franklin D. Kreutzer, "is whether or not free enterprise is going to be able to compete against the monopoly of the airwaves."

In his complaint letter, Martinez states that "Edimart Productions stands to lose thousands of dollars because of this unfair method of competition . . . (which) is clearly designed to benefit the station and take potential customers away from a private enterprise affair."

"Also," the letter continues, "the use of a well-known recording artist, previously under contract to Edimart Productions, indicates maliciousness and direct interference by WCMQ."

Herbert Dolgoff, WCMQ president, calls the Martinez charges "devoid of substance." He responded with his own letter to the FCC on May 15 in which he accuses Martinez of making "untrue and malicious statements."

Stephen Sewell, the FCC's chief of complaints in Washington, explains that the commission has "so far not said that it is improper or illegal" for a broadcaster to sponsor live talent events. Dolgoff points to this "common practice" among all types

(Continued on page 100)

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