

Labels Ease Record Policies With Classic Rockers

BY CRAIG ROSEN

LOS ANGELES Program directors at classic rock stations say their once-stormy relationship with the record industry is slowly improving. Stations that were once told they could buy records if they wanted to play them are now being pitched on some material, although those stations are far from record labels' top priorities.

Classic rock stations are generally playing a few more current records than they were several years ago. Still, their truce with the record companies seems to stem more from the format's staying power than a change in musical policies. But even a truce is a change from the days when labels assailed classic rock not only for avoiding currents but also for making mainstream album rockers less current. PDs at that time felt that the record industry was ignoring their impact on catalog sales or their support of heritage artists whose new music did fit their formats.

So while format pioneer Fred Jacobs, whose Detroit-based Media Strategies consults 11 classic rockers, still maintains that "the labels have systematically eliminated the classic stations from involvement" in the record industry, KCFX Kansas City, Mo., PD Doug Gondek speaks for many PDs when he says, "The first year with the format was incredibly difficult, but I think tempers have subsided since then."

Though many record people were hoping classic rock would eventually disappear, Jay Ziskrout, Arista's na-

tional director of rock promotion, now believes there will always be room for the format. "I don't know if we are working any more closely, but maybe there is more of a mutual acceptance of the roles we play in each

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other's bottom line."

So while Ziskrout says he "would never give preferential treatment [on promotions] to a classic rock station over a current-intensive top 40 or album rock station," he also says that Arista does service classic rock stations with records and that he expects them to pick up on the label's upcoming release by former Yes members, now known as Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman & Howe, as well as future releases by acts like the Grateful Dead.

Indeed, while the influence of classic rock stations on catalog material has generally failed to impress labels, the success of such acts as the Traveling Wilburys seems to have broken the ice. "I have found that record companies would like to get their new material by these heritage artists on the radio," says Tony Mathes, PD of WZGC "Z93" Atlanta. "It might not be their top priority, but I think classic rock stations can sell a lot of product for the record labels."

The advent of a chart in the format

also has helped the relationship. Since last August, the Friday Morning Quarterback's album rock tip-sheet has been tracking 30 stations for the format's top 30 current tracks and albums, which, Gondek says, "does seem to open dialog between record promotion people and radio stations."

Classic rock stations' currents still emphasize veteran artists, such as Steve Winwood, Eric Clapton, or Joe Cocker, over relatively new artists, such as Jeff Healey, Robert Cray, and others who have '60s/'70s influences, but not veteran status. "It is not the kind of format that would go out and rush for the Hothouse Flowers album," says Alex DeMers, who consults nine classic rock stations.

The number of currents played on classic rockers varies from station to

station. "We only have eight to 10 currents on our playlist and those are not what you would call out-of-the-box hits," says John Shomby, PD of KZPS Dallas. "When we first started we didn't play any [currents], but now with all the classic artists with new records like the Traveling Wilburys, David Crosby, or Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, you have to address it."

KZPS' evolution from no currents to about one rotation category's worth is fairly typical for the format—and about where most stations seem to be stopping. Jacobs says, "Most stations are continuing to take a conservative posture [toward currents]. Most of the stations' research has not showed a tremendous appetite for new music." He also warns that there is "only so far a station can

go before evolving into something else. When they say you never have to wait for a classic, you have to deliver."

KCFX, in fact, has trimmed its currents from one an hour to one every two hours. "We have a new rock-based top 40 in town, KXXR, which is very current, and the [album rocker], KYYS, has become more current [as a result]," says Gondek. "We felt that the 25-to-44-year-old audience wasn't being served as well and it was in our best interest to be less current."

So the classic rock/industry relationship is far from perfect. "We are still not extremely happy with them because they don't play a whole lot of currents and the few that they do play aren't exposed as much as we

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CRTC To Review FM Policy New Applications Put On Hold

HULL, Quebec A major review of Canadian FM radio policy will be conducted starting this fall, with a clear aim to streamline rules many broadcasters now say are more cumbersome and onerous than those for AM stations.

The federal broadcast regulator has also slammed the brakes on all applications after April 14 for new FM services in Canada. Such proposals are being put off until after the review is conducted. Existing applications will be dealt with.

Licenses for 162 FM stations are due for renewal in 1990. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the broadcast agency that will oversee the review, says it will extend for two years the majority of those licenses to allow them to consider new policies.

The only exceptions will be stations that have shorter-term renewal periods; they, along with student and community stations, will have their renewals considered as planned. There will still be processing of change-of-ownership applications.

"There have been many changes in the FM industry since the FM policy was last reviewed in 1975," says acting CRTC chairman Bud Sherman. "FM radio has grown tremendously in strength and sophistication since then. The review will allow the commission to take these changes into account and, at the same time, streamline the FM policy and keep only

what is essential to implement the goals of the Broadcasting Act."

But just how far the commission is willing to go to streamline the rules remains to be seen. Much of the FM policy was created to ensure that FM was different than AM; now, however, many feel the policy is there to preserve AM's viability in Canada.

FM stations can play only a maximum 49% hits and have limitations on song repetition and quotas of spoken-word programming, which effectively eliminate the top 40 format on FM. Like AM radio, FM also has Canadian content quotas—although less stringent in many cases than the 30% rules for AM.

But FM broadcasters believe their profitability has been curtailed by regulation. In many cases, they believe, the commission has enforced rules to ensure that FM doesn't swamp AM stations.

"The commission will also want to be satisfied that any policy revisions serve to ensure the continued viability of both AM and FM radio," the CRTC said in a public notice April 14 announcing the review.

The CRTC will issue a draft FM policy for public comment later this fall. A public hearing is planned for the summer of 1990 and a new policy no later than the end of 1990. FM stations on the two-year extension then will be expected to prepare for a renewal hearing in 1991.

KIRK LAPOINTE

L.A. Update: The Golden Year, 1983 WQUE's Gator: The Ultimate Fundraiser

NOTES FROM SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: After spending several days in Los Angeles, one's first impression of the local radio is that it sounds a lot like the mid-'80s, at least musically. KIIS-FM is playing "Situation" by Yaz and "I Melt With You" by Modern English. KPWR "Power 106" is among those stations playing the resurgent "Send Me An Angel" by Real Life. KQLZ "Pirate Radio" is also playing the latter song and a lot of other records you haven't heard in a while, among them "Love's Got A Line On You" by Scandal, "New Girl Now" by Honeymoon Suite, and "Rock The Casbah" by the Clash.

Being able to punch from one 1983 record to another is appropriate. 1983 was the last time L.A.'s music radio was thought of as a multiple-player race as opposed to centering on KIIS or, later, on the KPWR/KIIS battle. 1983 also saw the birth of WHTZ "Z100" New York. The morning after the L.A. ratings came out (see page 1), head pirate Scott Shannon was on the air bemoaning the 13th-place finish of KQLZ's predecessor, KIQQ, stopping just short of launching a Z100-style "worst to first" campaign (or at least a "not-that-great to first" campaign).

There are still elements of the deliberate outrage that KQLZ signed on with. Shannon's version of the "big switch" promotion is "flush and win," where listeners send the station they used to listen to down the toilet. (One of his recent callers was Magic Johnson, who has previously been associated with KIIS and its morning man, Rick Dees.) There are also, however, some surprisingly straight touches on KQLZ, which is now promising "more continuous music" and "the most music in the morning," both of which are somewhat more conventional selling propositions than "don't be a dickhead."

Keeping with the anatomical theme of the market, meanwhile, Power 106 has followed the lead of top 40 WYHY "Y107" Nashville by making good on its April Fools' Day free plastic surgery offer. Contestants are invited to explain in 600 words or less why they want to have a facelift, breast augmentation, liposuction, or nose job. Listeners will vote on which of three semifinalists receive \$2,500 for the operation of their choice.

Then there's KIIS-FM, closer now in the Arbitrons to Power 106 than it has been in some time. With KQLZ poised to raid teens and 18-24 males, KIIS seems to be most concerned with its adult females. So at night you can punch from "One" by Metallica on Pirate Radio to "Wind Beneath My Wings" or "A Shoulder To Cry On" on KIIS. Besides "Like A Prayer," the only linking element between KIIS and KQLZ is the use of modern rock crossovers—which seem a little discordant in either sta-

tion's music mix.

The national media's focus on the KIIS/KPWR/KQLZ war has diverted attention from the oldies FM battle between KRTH-FM and KODJ, but you'll see a lot of it on the streets here—especially on the bus cards. Six weeks after its sign-on, KODJ is an interesting accomplishment. Even more than WODS Boston, the station it was modeled on, KODJ seems to actually live up to the format's oft-stated goal of joining oldies with '80s formatics. That's a considerable achievement considering that KRTH-FM itself has almost none of the emotional baggage that often goes with the format.

Right now, the chief difference between KODJ and KRTH is that the latter acknowledges the '70s and '80s, whereas KODJ, like most CBS-FM oldies outlets, doesn't. KRTH-FM is the rare oldies outlet that will still play songs like "I've Got The Music In Me" by Kiki Dee—records that were

part of many 25-34-year-old listeners' lives. R&B/oldies AM KGFJ here goes even deeper, dropping in the likes of "I Spy For The FBI" by Jamo Thomas or "Dazz" by Brick, making it one of the few stations to maintain that sort of format locally for more than several months.

PROGRAMMING: WMRY St. Louis dropped its album rock format April 13 to become AC WSNL "Sunny 101." Former WASH-FM Washington, D.C., APD Johnny Quinn will step into the PD slot May 1; interim PD Jim Singer segues back to production director... After about a month as acting PD, Paul Porter is officially upped to PD at urban/AC WMMJ Washington, D.C. Porter is an alumnus of urban rival WKYS—as is Candy Shannon, who goes to area urban WHUR to join Gerry Bledsoe in mornings.

WCAU Philadelphia has changed from all-news to "Talkradio 1210"; Tony Bruno goes from sports to a.m. drive... KRQR San Francisco APD/MD John McCrae will be the new PD at album KDKB Phoenix as of May 1, filling a spot vacant since December... Reggie Fine is the new PD at KRNB "Hot 101" Memphis, reporting to OM Melvin Jones; he was previously APD at urban rival WHRK "K97." Meanwhile, former K97 PD Pam Wells returns to that station for middays.

Marty Thompson is the new PD at WPFB-FM Dayton, Ohio, which drops its traditional country/bluegrass format for up-tempo country as "Rebel 105.9." Thompson was previously PD of WPFB's adult standards AM. Before that, he was at WBVE Cincinnati, several of

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