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They're No. 1!

Rock's 12+ winners share their secrets

Over the last two weeks we've looked at the fall 2004 ratings score card for Active and Rock in men 18-34 and 25-54. Both formats remain strong in these core demos, and last fall's ratings spawned a few 12+ winners as well. This is news we need to celebrate.

It's no secret that the last six months have been particularly unkind to the Rock formats nationally. Major Rock stations like KLOL/Houston, KSJO/San Jose and WZTA/Miami flipped formats, and there are persistent rumors that more Rockers will go away by the end of this year.

While Rock radio has its challenges to deal with in the future, this week we hear from four stations that can only be considered winners. One Active Rock station — KHTQ/Spokane — and three Rockers — KLAQ/El Paso; KZOZ/San Luis Obispo, CA; and WTOS/Augusta, ME — scored No. 1 12+ rankings in fall '04. How did they do it? Let's let their programmers tell the story.

Barry Bennett

PD, KHTQ (Rock 94 1/2)/Spokane

I'm relatively new to the programming side of Rock 94 1/2. When I moved up from music duties I was lucky to inherit the work of a great programming team and an airstaff made up of the most experienced, hard-working and talented individuals in the Northwest.



The Spokane market has the same regional styles and ideas that helped propel Seattle into rock infamy. I'm fortunate enough to work for a company, Morgan Murphy, that's willing to go the extra mile in giving the audience what it wants.

The biggest thing that sets us apart from the rest of the market is our focus on talent and being local. We have more than a century of experience on the air. Each team member understands what it takes to win and gives 100% on a daily basis.

Gary Allen and Tripp Rogers make up *The Twice as Much Rock Morning Show*. Gary is a market veteran with over 20 years of experience doing wakeups in Spokane. His knowledge of the lifestyle and area, combined with an in-your-face music approach, has proven to be a ratings winner even against heritage and top-notch syndicated morning programs.

In addition to his morning duties, Rogers hosts *Local 9-4-5*, a nightly local-music show-

case. Tripp is on the street in every sense of the words. He serves as an invaluable tie between the station and an extremely large and diverse Spokane rock scene.

Geoff Scott has consistently been the No. 1-rated afternoon drive talent in Spokane. His production and imaging talents have also been an incredible asset in keeping the station positioned and sounding fresh — a contribution that is crucial, considering that we are the most active station in the market promotionally.

Beavis, a.k.a. Kris Siebers, will be taking over nights when I move to middays. The Beav is another outstanding air talent, plus he's responsible for the station's technical issues, website, text messaging and online research. Beavis' computer experience is an asset to programming and keeps us among the leaders in implementing and utilizing cutting-edge marketing and research technologies.

Krazy Aunt Karla recently assumed the 10pm-2am slot and is another market veteran and true rock information source. She also hosts a one-minute "Rock Quickie" that runs multiple times throughout the day.

Courtney Nelson

PD, KLAQ/El Paso

For 26 years KLAQ has been a station that El Paso has been drawn to because of what we do and how we do it. The station itself is a personality. Coming out on top in fall '04, I feel we sweated everything.

With direct competitors on either side of us, we wanted to raise the standards for ourselves and bring our "A game" and nothing less. Imaging was updated, thanks to Production Director Johnnie Walker; the music was examined with research and our consultant, Pat Welsh, at Pollack Media; and our street presence was improved. With the exceptional talent and resources we had, it was just a matter of pointing it and pressing "Go."

The KLAQ Morning Show of Buzz Adams, Teresa Provencio, Duke Keith and Mando Medina has been a consistent leader in the mar-



Courtney Nelson

ket for many years. Midday jock/MD Glenn Garza, afternoon driver Kat Tyler and the rest of the staff know how to execute and entertain without being too hip for the room.

We wanted to superserve our listeners, offering everything entertainment: mornings, music, personalities and promotions. In this world of "What are you doing for me next?" we wanted to give the listener a reason to stay when the button was pushed for 95.5 FM.

Regent's Bill Stakelin and Terry Jacobs supported our many promotional events, which included the KLAQ BBQ, with Tantric and UPO. KLAQ's birthday month of Rocktober kicked off with the opening of our Haunted Warehouse. We also had various TSL-driven promotions, like "Rockin' at Work": Win in Rocktober, and you're qualified to go to the Dallas Cowboys' Thanksgiving game with the morning show. Rocktober finished with our 19th annual Halloween parade.

We were involved in the community. Our "Million Minute March" collected phone cards for local troops stationed around the world, mainly in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have a total so far of 679,444 minutes. The proceeds of the best of *The KLAQ Morning Show* CD, *Real El Paso Heroes*, went to the March.

And then there was our Thanksgiving-weekend A-to-Z feature, when we played all our titles from A to Z.

KLAQ has the blessing and curse that is heritage. It's easy to sit back and put it on cruise control. We know that we have to earn everything we get every day, so we do it right. Regent RVP Mike Grimsley gives our GM, Brad Dubow, and us the latitude to do what needs to be done to win in the market. KLAQ has a tremendous group of individuals who make the station a great place to work.

David Atwood

PD, KZOZ/San Luis Obispo, CA

What we've done here reinforces the basic elements any good station needs to deliver in the ratings: a solid music foundation, a quality morning show, fun promotions and exciting imaging. Our team kept moving forward to get the right pieces of the puzzle in place to meet our vision of what the station should sound like.

When I started at KZOZ two years ago, I came in and blew up the music library and started working from the bottom up. KZOZ had been the heritage Rock station here for nearly 20 years but seemed to have given up that foundation in reaction to the new Active Rocker across town [KURQ]. I knew that two Rock stations could survive in this market if we better defined our musical branding.

With the help of Jacobs Media, we worked together to define the sound of KZOZ. We needed to get back to reacting to the listeners instead of hoping they'd accept what we deemed was good for them. KZOZ has proven that you can play Led Zeppelin and Velvet Revolver in the same hour as long as they are properly positioned and delivered to the listener with respect. I believe it's important to win the trust of your audience.

With both Bob & Tom and Mark & Brian in our area, we knew the challenges facing us in developing a new morning show. When we



David Atwood

first brought in *The Pete & Joe Show*, our goal was to create the No. 1 local morning show in town. I'm so proud of the time and effort these two guys put in every single day. It's really a huge feather in their caps that they are able to compete with the big dogs of syndication with their budgets and resources.

Obviously, the heavy localization is a huge advantage, but we wanted local without sounding like a small-market morning show. That means high-quality production elements and creative, funny bits. Occasionally, we have some heavyweight guests, but we continue to entrench ourselves in the community by hitting the streets on a regular basis and staying on top of any local stories of interest.

I spent close to 12 months trying to find the right person to handle our imaging. I can't emphasize enough how important this is, especially for a station in a small market that's trying to sound major-market. Our promos and sweepers are tight, fun and dripping with attitude. It was important to us to get the little things right. You can't start shooting three-pointers until you're good at hitting free throws. If you can't execute the simple concepts, how can you expect to take your station to a higher level?

Steve Smith

PD, WTOS/Augusta, ME

Recently, I was reading in these very pages "The Seven Deadly Sins of a Morning Show" (3/4). Our 13-year morning show on WTOS, Tom O & Mr. Mike, regularly commits five of seven. They throw everything, including the kitchen sink, into a break. A break this morning included the Red Sox, a tax cap, the flu, naked pyramids and rabbit feces. We've never been very good at following the rules. I wonder how much that has to do with our being No. 1?

Years ago the owners of a small store in our metro posted a sign on their radio: "Under no circumstances is this radio to be tuned to WTOS." Of course, the radio always ended up on 'TOS, and our listeners would steal the sign as fast as the owners replaced it. The owners of the store finally gave up.

For a station that gets a lot of requests for "The Ballad of Curtis Loew" as well as "Cowboys From Hell," a classic library with Active-leaning currents and recurrents works for us. Our request shows are a big part of what we do: *The Workforce Lunch* with Jessie, *Rush Hour* with Chris Rush and *Roll Your Own* with The Reverend. It's here that our listeners have decided on a group of songs that are heritage 'TOS tracks and have requested them over and over again for years.

Could that be why we are No. 1? Has Soulhat's "Bonecrusher" finally gained mainstream acceptance? It's nice to be No. 1, but WTOS will always mean more to us and to our listeners than a diary entry. It's better that way. Oh, and if anybody ever figures out why we're finally No. 1, be sure to let us know.



Steve Smith



Barry Bennett