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## ADULT CONTEMPORARY

## EAST HIGHLIGHTS

## Patience And Marketing Propel Variety 96

"It's imperative that station ownership understand AC takes time to develop," says PD **Bruce Gilbert**, who transformed **Hearst's WHTX/Pittsburgh** to **Bright AC WVTY (Variety 96)** nearly two and a half years ago.

"We're fortunate because our company and [GM] **Jim Carter** have stuck with us. Ownership must be patient and willing to spend money to market the product. We've been consistent and stable and able to market our music image. We believe in 'Variety' and think it's a great name, but we constantly have to stress what it means. First and foremost, that's what we sold our audience."

### Ratings Boosts

Variety 96 was second among the market's three ACs among 25-54s last summer, with little more than one share separating it from **WLTJ** and **WSHH**. But in this book, **WVTY**, which plays hits of the '70s, '80s, and '90s, tacked on nearly three shares to attain a significant demo advantage over its format rivals. The **Alan Burns**-consulted station zoomed from sixth to third overall among 25-54s.

More impressive, though, are **WVTY's** massive summer-summer 18-34 gains. The station doubled last year's share to achieve double digits and finish second in the demo. There's a considerable distance, however, between **WVTY** and top-ranked **AOR WDVE**.

**WVTY's** excellent showing in the younger demo is a function of the marketplace. "Demographically, Pittsburgh is an old town," Gilbert points out. "The Country stations [WDSY, WQKB, WXR, and WEEP], [Gold] WWSW, and [Full-Service] **KDKA** target 25-54's upper end.

"But only a few stations compete for 18-34s and 25-34s. We're not brain surgeons or rocket scientists, but we know it's important to find a niche and superserve it. We homed in on 25-34 females and took advantage of a good competitive situation. There are some really good stations here, and we're proud to be a major factor."

### Uptempo Difference

Gilbert believes **WVTY** is distinct from **WLTJ** and **WSHH** because they "have their own mission and do what they do very well. But we're the only one actively playing currents — and we're certainly the most uptempo of Pittsburgh's three ACs. This helped bring us some 18-34s.

"**WLTJ** and **WSHH** have done well on the 'light' side. On a scale of one to five, their average is probably 2.3; ours is closer to 3.0. In AC, that's an important difference, and stations should go where their competition isn't."



Bruce Gilbert

**Take each book for what it is — historical information.**

**WVTY**, Gilbert adds, is artist-driven. "It's important that we talk about superstars like **Michael Bolton**, **Rod Stewart**, **Phil Collins**, **Elton John**, and **Whitney Houston**, because they provide our quintessential sound. When they re-

lease new records, we feel it's our duty to play them."

### Top Of Mind

Television was **WVTY's** only marketing vehicle. "We did a promotion in which we gave away 50 cruises and followed it up with TV marketing. Those combined areas helped us cut through and create top-of-mind awareness." **WVTY** intends to continue using TV in 1994.

Earlier this year, **WVTY** launched several programming features, including "No Repeat Workdays," an all-request lunch hour, and "Pittsburgh After Dark," which airs love songs nightly from 10-midnight. Notes Gilbert, "These have been good tools for us. In addition to being pleased with the response, we're happy to have different 'hooks' that give people ways to remember us."

### Fall Strategy

Gilbert is both upbeat and philosophical about **WVTY's** tremendous summer showing: "Summer is usually a down time for AC, but we're thankful and happy to have had consistent growth. You take each book for what it is — historical information. We don't feel like we've arrived or have all the answers for every question, but we're progressing, and we hope this is the start of great things."

## Eastern Summer Stories

Leading 25-54 ACs from every summer-rated Arbitron East market are noted below.

In addition to market leaders, metro ACs posting summer-summer 25-54 gains are also listed. In all cases, 25-54 market leaders appear first. Summer-summer 25-54 fluctuation and 25-54 market rank/number of rated signals follow calls/market.

Mkt		Fluct	Rkt/Sg
#1	<b>WLTW/New York</b>	-0.8	#2/49
#1	<b>WPLJ/New York</b>	+1.6	#3/49
#5	<b>WYXR/Philadelphia</b>	-0.2	#5/32
#7	<b>WRQX/Washington</b>	+0.3	#5/39
#9	<b>WMJX/Boston</b>	+0.9	#1/37
#9	<b>WBMX/Boston</b>	+1.7	#4/37
#14	<b>WALK-FM/Nassau</b>	+1.2	#1/42
#14	<b>WKJY/Nassau</b>	+0.6	#9/42
#14	<b>WMJC/Nassau</b>	+0.1	#18/42
#19	<b>WLIF/Baltimore</b>	-0.5	#4/38
#20	<b>WVTY/Pittsburgh</b>	+2.8	#3/30
#20	<b>WSHH/Pittsburgh</b>	+1.0	#7/30
#31	<b>WWLI/Providence</b>	+1.4	#1/47
#31	<b>WSNE/Providence</b>	+1.0	#4/47
#40	<b>WRCH/Hartford</b>	+1.9	#2/31
#40	<b>WZMX/Hartford</b>	+1.0	#5/31
#41	<b>WJYE/Buffalo</b>	+2.0	#3/22
#41	<b>WBUF/Buffalo</b>	+1.8	#7/22
#46	<b>WVOR/Rochester</b>	+0.2	#3/19
#46	<b>WRMM-FM/Rochester</b>	+0.6	#6/19
#54	<b>WKLH/Albany</b>	-0.3	#4/31
#54	<b>WROW-FM/Albany</b>	+0.8	#5/31
#62	<b>WMGS/Wilkes Barre</b>	+6.0	#2/39
#62	<b>WHLM/Wilkes Barre</b>	+0.6	#9/39
#64	<b>WLEV/Allentown</b>	+0.5	#1/39
#69	<b>WYYY/Syracuse</b>	+0.9	#1/26
#73	<b>WHYN-FM/Springfield</b>	+2.0	#2/26
#74	<b>WRVV/Harrisburg</b>	-1.8	#1/29
#101	<b>WARM-FM/York, PA</b>	-6.0	#2/29

## Wilkes Barre Strategy Sessions Work Magic As WMGS Doubles Shares

It's been exactly one year since **WMGS/Wilkes Barre GM Jim Loftus** left a 10-year career in Philadelphia radio to helm the **Susquehanna Gold-Based AC**.

In that year, "Magic 93" has exactly doubled its 18-34 share and more than doubled its 25-54 and 35-64 shares. Among 39 rated signals, it ranked third 18-34 and tied **Country WGGY** for second among 35-64s.

**WMGS** trailed only **CHR WKRZ** among 25-54s, marking the frequency's highest showing in that demo in its 46-year history.

"We're grateful," says Loftus, who's also GM of co-owned **WARM (AM)** and **WBHT**. "With AC's relatively stable audience, it takes longer for hard work to pay off, but it also takes longer for mistakes to appear."

The real surprises were among 18-34s. "Northeast Pennsylvania is traditionally recognized as an 'old' community, and Magic had been strong 35-64 for a long time. Being third 18-34 wasn't a total shock, but it was a pleasant surprise."

### Fruitful Facelifts

Loftus began gearing up for this year's summer and fall books in



Jim Loftus

May by taking part in strategic planning sessions. "They were long, intense, and difficult, but fruitful. We locked ourselves in a room for several days and conducted a [thorough] station examination to see what we might be doing wrong. We focused on promotions, music, rotations, and positioning statements."

Prior to the May meetings, **WMGS** had used several different

on-air slogans, but afterwards, Loftus notes, "We zeroed in on 'The Best Variety Of Soft Rock.' **Susquehanna's** had great success with 'Soft Rock' in Cincinnati [at **AC WRRM**] and in York, PA [at **AC WARM-FM**]. For some reason, that slogan hadn't been used at **WMGS**."

The strategic sessions also yielded a musical shift, as **WMGS** evolved from **Bright AC** to a more Gold-based posture. "The music's more focused, and we improved our music software. The change wasn't drastic, but in AC, subtle changes can make a world of difference with **TSL**."

### Competition Dwindles

On March 1, **WMGS's** most significant AC challenger, **WGBI-FM**, exited the format to become **Country WGGY**. "Interestingly, we have more audience now than last summer's [combined] figures of **WMGS** and **WGBI-FM**," comments Loftus. "We expanded the universe." (This summer, **WMGS** topped last year's combined **WMGS** and **WGBI-FM** 25-54 totals by 1.7 shares.)

Three other AC competitors — **WHLM**, **WWSH**, and **WWDL** — remain active in the five-county metro: "WHLM is Hot AC; [50,000-watt Soft AC] **WWSH** is licensed to Hazelton, but it's a metro station; and [Mainstream AC] **Class A WWDL** is licensed to Scranton and has been in the format for 20 years."

### Diverse Metro

**Arbitron's** actual listing for the metro is **Wilkes Barre-Scranton**, with the latter being slightly northeast of the former. Signals and power are a big factor in market No. 62.

"In the newspaper business, **Wilkes Barre** and **Scranton** are truly two different cities," explains Loftus, who also teaches radio sales at Temple University. "Radio and TV have made this one market, but not many radio stations serve the entire metro. Only three 50,000-watt FMs are licensed to **Wilkes Barre** or **Scranton**. **WARM (AM)** is the only AM that covers the metro, and **WMGS** is heard from **Allentown** to **Binghamton [NY]**."