

**On The Air**



Forty Years That Shaped the Sound of America

A Gavin History of Radio  
Since the Birth of Rock & Roll

When George Lucas, working on *American Graffiti*, cast Wolfman Jack as a disc jockey, the director was calling on his own teenaged memories of a manic voice in the night. He chose wisely. The Wolfman — real name Robert Smith — came from country and from R&B, the music that gave birth to rock and roll. He could do Top 40, but chose not to follow any formats. He was free-form before free-form. In the 1973 movie or on the radio over three decades, Wolfman Jack personified the energy of radio. Have mercy, Baby!



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**GAVIN**

PART ONE:

THE EVE

*The magic of radio; the challenge of television;  
the first stirrings of a revolution*

**Your Hit Parade: Radio On the Eve of Rock and Roll**

*By Gerald Nachman*

**Enter Television**

*By Pete Fornatale and Joshua Mills*

**Growing Up With Alan Freed**

*By Roger Steffens*

# Your Hit Parade: Radio On the Eve of Rock and Roll



By Gerald Nachman

Unlike most of radio's glitzier musical variety shows, *Your Hit Parade's* format was simplicity itself—a ranking for the week's top ten songs sung by a rotating cast of regulars. The program had a rigorously spare approach—no patter, no sketches, nothing except the week's hits. The show was led for several years by Frank Sinatra, augmented by swoons and whoops from studio bobbysoxers.

Radio, and mainly *Your Hit Parade*, took Sinatra from big-band star to superstar. The other voices on the show included Bea Wain, Buddy Clark, Ginny Sims, Dinah Shore, Martha Tilton, Dick Haymes, Johnny Mercer, Eileen Wilson, Georgia Gibbs, Lanny Ross, Doris Day, Andy Russell, plus two rookies who made the transition to TV — Dorothy Collins and Snooky Lanson.

*Your Hit Parade*, which ran 24 years in all, was on radio from 1934 to 1959 and hit its peak of popularity during the war, when listeners sat around radios on Saturday nights cheering for their favorite songs to win, place, or show. The show's most exciting moment was the announcement of the "Number One *Hit Parade* song of the week," introduced with fanfare, drum roll, and vocal flourish by announcer Andre Baruch. There was a little tingle as the top song on the charts was named, followed by a groan if it turned out to be the same song as the previous 14 weeks.

Long before the onslaught of Top 40 formats, the *Hit Parade* was the sole oracle of pop music trends, the *Cash Box* and *Billboard* of

the airwaves—a kind of weekly Grammy awards. At first, the songs were the stars; singers, who earn \$100 a show, weren't originally credited. How songs were surveyed and selected was a secret highly guarded by the agency that ran the show, BBD&O, which insisted its system was beyond reproach and, as Baruch stated smartly each week, was the result of a tally of sheet music sales, listeners requests and jukebox selections "coast to coast." In fact, it was fairly random, an allegedly "scientific" sampling put together by hundreds of so-called "song scouts" across the country who talked to DJs, band leaders, and record and sheet-music sales clerks and then reported the week's best-selling tunes. The show, in turn, boosted record and jukebox sales so that the show's hits became in effect self-perpetuating.

The war was a boon to radio performers—especially girl singers like Stafford, Dinah Shore, Kay Armen, Georgia Gibbs, Connee Boswell, Joan Edwards, and Jane Froman—who began touring camps and canteens, meeting their male fans face to face en masse for the first time, and recording transcriptions for overseas broadcasts (the famous "V-discs"). CBS's Frank Stanton boasted, "Radio fare has not been rationed. Radio is one product that can be produced for the armed forces without depriving the civilian." On wartime music shows like *Mail Call* and *Command Performance*, however, no song requests were allowed, for fear they might be an enemy code.

The big band shows created overnight hits, not to mention “singing sensations” (Bonnie Baker, Lee Wiley, Martha Tilton, Ramona, Helen Ward, Helen O’Connell, et al.), dance crazes, catchphrases, and sign-offs like conductor Ben Bernie’s “Yowsa, yowsa, yowsa” and his closing, “Good night, lads and lassies, cheerio, a bit of a pip-pip and pleasant dre-e-e-eeams.” In no time, everybody was jumping on the big bandwagon—guys like Paul Tremaine, whose orchestra serenaded listeners from somewhere in radio cyberspace called “Lonely Acres,” a serene paradise located in Young’s Chinese restaurant.

Band remotes heightened radio’s long distance appeal, as a far-off voice cooed, “And now from the Tulip Room atop the Sheraton Hotel in Topeka, Kansas, it’s Jack Culpepper and His Topeka Top Hatters.” Suddenly you were out there in Kansas, fox trotting.

Although music filled radio’s air, the lyrics to songs gave network censors a whole new cesspool of innuendo to splash in. Most songs were innocuous enough, but the more sophisticated lyricist—Cole Porter, Lorenz Hart, Noel Coward, Ira Gershwin—kept network vice presidents up nights parsing double entendres.

In his monumental compendium *The American Language*, H.L. Mencken noted: “The radio is almost as prudish as Hollywood. Late in 1934 its (executives) actually forbade the verb ‘to do’ in songs, feeling that it

was a bit too suggestive.” In this case, of course, they were probably right: Porter wasn’t just suggesting fornication; he was all but describing it, using “love” as a euphemism for sex in songs like “Let’s Do It,” the *Lady Chatterly’s Lover* of radio. Sheet music publishers began printing two sets of lyrics, one for radio and one for cabarets, records, and parlors. After that, almost any song with the verb “do” in the title—“Do It Again,” “You Do Something to Me,” “Do, Do, Do”—was outlawed. The first song actually censored on the radio was

“Little Red Riding Hood,” specifically for the possibly salacious line: “How could Red Riding Hood have been so very good and still keep the wolf from the door?”

If entire songs weren’t banned, certain suspicious phrases were cleaned up for the air. A line in Porter’s “Get Out of Town” was changed from “When you are near, close to me, dear, we touch too much” to “When you are near, close to me, dear, the spell’s too much.” Likewise, “I get no kick from cocaine” in “I Get a Kick Out of You” was switched to the less scannable “perfume from Spain,” and four of his naughtier works were deemed impossible to launder at all: “Love For Sale,” “Miss Otis Regrets,” “You’ve Got That Thing,” and “Mrs. Lowesborough-Goody.” Larry Hart’s “Have You Met Miss Jones” didn’t make it on the air because of some imagined sexual connotation. Even the tender “These Foolish Things” had its lyrics altered from “gardenia perfume lingering on a pillow” to the awkward, decidedly unsensual “a seaplane rising from an ocean billow,” and “silk stockings thrown aside” were exchanged for “a glove you threw aside.” A comic novelty song called “Keep Your Undershirt On” was also nixed, and “Body and Soul” was banned from Boston and NBC, but some stations played it after a line was changed from “My life, a hell you’re making” to “My life, a wreck you’re making.” When Bea Lillie sang “Miss Otis Regrets,” she had to leave out the line, “Down lover’s lane she strayed.”

The word “bed” was taboo, forcing the writer of



LOWER LEFT: Duke Ellington plays DJ. ABOVE: shows like Command Performance may have been on radio, but the performers didn’t care. They dressed to be seen.



“Radio is the business of responding to listeners when they like something. That’s how radio finds out. They’ll put someone on the radio, and if the response is good, they know they’ve got something.”  
—Phil Quartararo



“Through the years, American pop music radio was so diverse. You could have a ‘North to Alaska’ by Johnny Horton, and Percy Faith instrumentals, and Nat ‘King’ Cole and Frank Sinatra and Frankie Avalon and ‘Hello Dolly’ with Satchmo. Music was music, and if it appealed to a lot of people, it got played.” — Pat Boone, 1997

“Let’s Turn Out the Lights and Go to Bed” to sanitize it to “Let’s Turn Out the Lights and Go to Sleep.” Even a Negro spiritual, “Satan, I Give You My Children,” needed laundering, but even after it was changed to “O Lord, I Give You My Children,” the hymn was banned. Children, it seems, suggested procreation, which radio refused to condone.

In the 1930’s, each record had to be identified as a recording (that is, an “electrical transcription,” or “ET”), which carried a stigma for networks that prided themselves on being live; delayed re-broadcasts were rare. All that changed in the ‘40, when the FCC relaxed rules on announced transcriptions, which caused ASCAP to boycott stations; the only music that listeners heard that year was in the public domain.

The war relaxed the rules further when so-called “V-discs” carried shows to armed forces overseas, but there remained such a taboo against “canned” radio shows—networks, performers, and ad agencies all recognized that a theatrical immediacy (a live show with a live audience) was a prized element of radio’s appeal — that some artists stopped recording and others recorded under *noms de wax*: Benny Goodman became “Bill Dodge,” Tommy Dorsey was “Harvey Tweed,” Fats Waller turned into “Flip Wallace,” and the opera singer Jan Peerce recorded as “Randolph Jockey.”

All of which paved the way for disc jockeys, who became the scourge of post-war radio. Small stations began clandestinely interspersing live music with records (despite the label warning “Not licensed for

radio broadcasting”), or playing old records after it was ruled in 1940 that if a broadcaster bought a record he was free to play it without paying royalties. Stations even tried to palm off records as live orchestras, and one Paterson, New Jersey, DJ had a fictitious chat with Paul Whiteman before playing a Whiteman disc. Out of all this came, in ‘42, the musicians union strike, and a dispute with ASCAP that drove all music off the air—replaced by

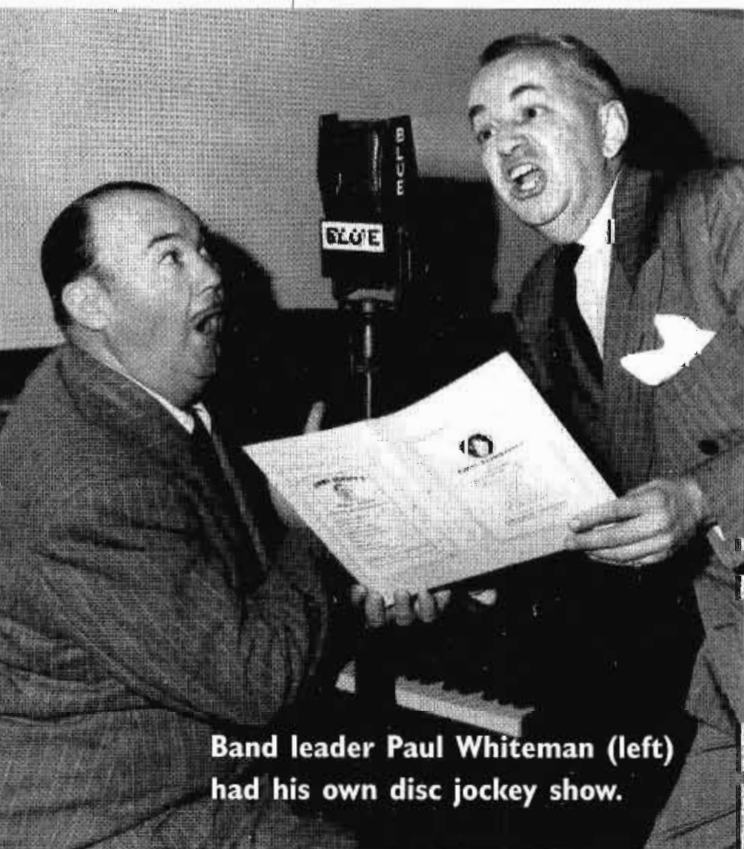
Stephen Foster and a cappella singers humming *ooo-ahh* accompaniments—which led to Broadcast Music, Inc., or BMI, (ASCAP’s rival for rights and royalties.) Martin Block on New York’s WNEW led the way in the late 1940s and ‘50s as the informed host of *Make Believe Ballroom*, which had begun in ‘41 as a musical interlude between reports from the Lindbergh trial; Block filled the “live music” void with smart, vivid patter as he spun platters by a variety of bands and vocalists; a moonlight counterpart on WNEW, *The Milkman’s Matinee*, was an all-night jukebox manned by Stan Shaw.

Around the country, inexpensive make-believe ballrooms—basically do-it-yourself remotes—sprang up, with hepcats like Peter Potter and Al Jarvis in Los Angeles, Jack Sterling and John Gambling in New York, the young Steve Allen in Phoenix, a female phenomenon in Chicago named Halloween Martin, and Frank

“Cole Porter wasn’t just suggesting fornication; he was all but describing it, using ‘love’ as a euphemism for sex.”

Cope in San Francisco (whose *Alarm Klok Klub* from 5 to 8 a.m. ran an astonishing 30 years without rewinding) became personality DJs with rabid local followings, able to tap into their own audience’s regional tastes. Even ex-“live” musicians defected and became network or syndicated DJs: Rudy Vallee, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, and Paul Whiteman spun backstage stories better than most of their peers, who were uncomfortable behind a turntable; only *The Paul Whiteman Club* in 1947 had a decent run, fleshed out with guest celebrities, and remained on the air 25 years. The key was not necessarily the songs any more, but the DJ’s ability to sell the songs to the listener, until gradually the songs became almost backup music for the host’s banter. Now, every DJ had control over his own private hit parade. ☞

From Gerald Nachman’s new book, *Raised On Radio*, about the lore and legacy of radio’s greatest shows, to be published in fall of 1998 by Pantheon Books. An ASCAP Deems Taylor Award winner, Nachman has written for the *New York Daily News* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, where he reviewed theater, films and cabaret and wrote an entertainment column.



Band leader Paul Whiteman (left) had his own disc jockey show.



# Enter Television



By Pete Fornatale & Joshua Mills

A typical weekday evening in 1947: The family is gathered in the living room, Dad in the rocker, Mother in the armchair, the kids sprawled on the floor in front of the radio. It's 7 p.m., time for CBS Radio's *Mystery of The Week*. At 7:30, the dial is turned to ABC, and the familiar background music of *The Green Hornet* fills the room. At 8:00, on NBC, a new star Milton Berle, hosts a variety show. At 8:30, the family has to choose among *The Falcon*, *A Date With Judy*, or *America's Town Meeting*.

So it went across America. Radio dominated the evening in nearly every home. The most popular entertainment in the world was a twist of the dial away, and free. It was the Golden Age of Radio.

But that age was ending. Although 1946 and 1947 were profitable years for radio, at the highest levels - the networks - plans were being made to use radio's profits to build the television industry. In June 1946, the NBC research department prepared a memo that predicted an \$8 million loss from television in the next four years. It suggested that radio should be made to finance that loss and estimated that \$3.5 million in federal taxes could be saved by applying radio profits to television development costs. In effect, the radio networks would be made to finance their own burial.

The following year, NBC chairman David Sarnoff urged radio affiliates to get into television. Many of them heeded his advice and applied for construction permits from the Federal

Communications Commission (FCC). So 1948 emerged as a year of transition. The number of cities with television stations grew from eight to 23, and the number of stations on the air from 17 to 41. Production and sales of television sets also grew, but the FCC applied the brakes. On September 29, 1948, it ordered a freeze of all pending television licenses while it studied the likely impact of the new medium. The freeze was extended because of the Korean War, and lasted until June 1, 1952. Nonetheless, large-scale television programming began in 1948. The national political conventions were televised, and variety shows like *Toast of the Town* (hosted by Ed Sullivan) and *Texaco Star Theater* (with Milton Berle) debuted. Initially, radio held its own, despite the excitement over television. Because of the freeze, many cities had no television. While New York and Los Angeles had seven stations each, cities as large as Houston, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and Kansas City had only one station. This shortage of television outlets kept national advertisers dependent on radio. Network advertising declined, but not drastically.

1948: \$134 million  
 1949: \$129 million  
 1950: \$125 million  
 1951: \$114 million  
 1952: \$103 million

The erosion in national advertising was to some extent offset by



a growth in regional and local advertising, so that overall industry revenues rose between 1948 (\$417 million) and 1952 (\$473 million). The handwriting was on the wall, nonetheless, for any radio network executive who looked at television's figures. The infant industry had network advertising worth \$2.5 million in 1948. By 1953 it had leaped to \$172 million!

The trends did not permeate the radio networks' programming departments, however. On the one hand, no funds were allocated from above to develop new programs. On the other hand, too many executives could not believe the Golden Age was over. So radio tried to meet the challenge of television with programming that was remarkably similar to that of the mid-1930's. A dozen network shows had been on the air for more than 20 years, and 108 had been on for more than ten. Programmers thought that the continuity was a virtue. Many of them had been in radio since its inception, and they had seen the great Depression and World War II come and go, each leaving radio stronger. Why, then, should they fear television? They thought they had the strongest mass medium in America—and in 1947 they were right. They

Pioneer DJ Martin Block.



failed, however, to understand either the potential of the television or the excitement it aroused.

Radio had gained strength during the Depression because many people already had home sets, and listening to the radio cost them little, indeed less than buying the newspaper each day. Radio grew during the war because it could provide bulletins and dramatic reports more quickly than newspapers, which were also handicapped by a shortage of newsprint. With the end of the war, radio's promise seemed enormous. In

*Even as the enfant terrible (television) muscled into the spotlight, the seeds of the new radio had been planted. It was simply a matter of time.*

1946 alone, 500 new stations went on the air, and in 1947, 400 more.

When the war ended, the large broadcast corporations were ready to develop and market television. A strong economic outlook, a strong demand for consumer goods, and the return from the armed forces of scientists and trained electronics personnel assured television's success. The radio picture was less clear. Throughout the glory years, the industry leaders had been the networks. Now those networks were committed to promoting television at the expense of their own radio operations. They saw that the public, especially the middle class, which could afford sets, was showing an enormous enthusiasm for television. When Milton Berle, one of television's first stars, began his Tuesday 8 p.m. show on NBC, New York City theater and restaurant owners noticed a dip in business. (Twenty-five years earlier, the new medium, radio, had produced a similar phenomenon with its most popular shows.) The public went TV happy, and so did many sponsors.

Network radio began to take a beating. Morale plummeted, and many employees feared the future. With diminished revenue, the networks were not able to bid effectively against television for talent. The dual impact resulted in a stampede of radio personnel into television.

The defections, and their impact on morale, made it even more difficult for network radio to wage the good fight. Front-line officers were not attuned to



**"Corporate radio should take a lesson from what cable television did to the networks. If you ignore the audience long enough, it'll go away." — Raechel Donahue**



Disc jockeys, made prominent by radio, became stars.

potential revenue and led to warfare with affiliate stations.

The affiliates were fighting battles on several fronts: They had to contend not only with television but the enormous proliferation of independent stations that had been licensed after the war. (As the war ended, fewer than 1,000 AM stations were on the air. By 1953 there were 2,391.) This meant many more stations were dividing the audience and the advertising pie. The radio networks, through trial-and-error, tried to cope by cutting corners. They simulcast the audio portions of some television shows (usually by former radio stars, like Jack Benny), or they taped the audio and broadcast it at different times. Increasingly, where once they had used live performers, radio turned to records and to disc jockeys who introduced the recorded songs. Some were big names: Frank Sinatra and Paul



Pete Fornatale, one of the pioneers of free-form radio, has worked on WXRK (K-Rock) and WNEW-FM from 1969 to 1989. After seven years at WXRK (K-Rock), he returned to WNEW, where he does the late evening shift. His latest book is *All You Need Is Love...and 99 Other Life Lessons From Classic Rock Songs*, co-written with Bill Ayres of WPLJ-FM and scheduled for publication by Fireside/Simon & Schuster in November, 1998.




Joshua Mills covered the Woodstock Festival (the original one) for the Associated Press. He also wrote for *Esquire*, *Playboy*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *Village Voice*, among others, had a pop music column in the *New York Daily News*, and worked as an editor at *Newsday* and the *New York Times*. He is an associate professor at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University.

how conditions had changed, or were inexperienced. Some were bitter and wouldn't have anything to do with people who expressed the slightest interest in television. The networks flailed about. They tried cutting rates to lure the advertisers back. But the rate reduction cut their

Whiteman in 1951, and later Tennessee Ernie Ford and Amos 'n' Andy.

By 1954 many of the top-name shows from the Golden Age had been switched to television. The affiliate stations began to give up the fight. Why beat their heads against the networks, they reasoned, when they could draw more local advertising while playing records suited to their local audiences, following the lead of independent stations. The defections began. As they lost affiliates, the networks became weaker still. But the prophets who thought that the fascination of watching pictures at home would kill radio entirely proved shortsighted indeed.

The four-year freeze on television licenses provided a transitional period: TV laid grand plans and radio, consciously and unconsciously, learned to cope. Eventually, as television blossomed economically, pioneers of a new radio were blazing trails. Television did indeed lower the boom on network radio. It replaced radio in the living room as the conduit of evening entertainment. With the end of radio's prime-time dominance came a staggering loss of prestige and morale to those in the industry.



"What we have to do as an industry is be smart enough to realize that we have to adapt to where the consumer wants the music to go. In music, people will eventually tire of the same thing repeatedly. While there's a compelling need to stay fresh, you don't have to completely abandon the traditional values of music."  
— Ed Benson

Even as the *enfant terrible* muscled into the spotlight, the seeds of the new radio had been planted. Socially, culturally, and technologically the remedies for its ailments were at hand. It was simply a matter of time. Many of those who had labored through the Golden Age and reaped its rewards felt they did not have that time, and they jumped ship for television, went into other lines of work, or retired. And a new generation came forth and flourished. ☞

# Growing Up With Alan Freed



By Roger Steffens

It's early fall, 1954, and I'm 12 years old and miserable. In bed with a heavy cold, I turn to the radio for sustenance, spinning the dial listening for something more compelling than Teresa Brewer and Vaughn Monroe. It's a big 1948 beige Bendix table model with a light-up dial and brown knobs, and I have to hide it under the covers late at night, with the sound all the way down, so my parents will think I'm asleep.

Suddenly, my searching is arrested by an ear-splitting howl, an upscaling bloodhound wail, counterpointed by a deep baritone voice blaring "Ho! Ho! Ho!" over an insistent bluesy beat.

What the hell is this?

It is, in fact, the night I discover the King of the Moondoggers, the King of Rock and Roll himself, DJ Alan Freed. Manic, engaged, singing along with Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters, or B.B. "Blues Boy" King, beating a phone book and ringing a cowbell to frenetic sax instrumentals by Syl Austin, Sam "The Man" Taylor and Big Al Sears—Freed is unlike anyone I've ever heard in my young suburban New Jersey life.

In short order, my life begins to revolve around Freed's twice nightly broadcasts over WINS in New York. He's on for the kids from 7 to 9 p.m., then again on an all-request show for the older hipsters from 11 to 1 a.m. He opens the door to another universe coexisting in the shadows of the laundered life of the '50s, the soul-satisfying black musical experience. My parents think I've

lost my mind when I tell them that when I grow up I want to be Alan Freed.

How utterly irresistible is the *Rock 'n' Roll Dance Party* with Freed at its nightly helm, inviting us all into his "rock 'n' roll kingdom," a mythic place where we discover a nascent fellowship of youngsters who might as well be from another planet, as far as our elders are concerned. In our shared awakening can be found the seeds of the '60s civil rights movement.

I soon discover that others in my sixth grade class have found Freed too, and we begin to compare our reactions to the latest releases by the Charms, the Moonglows, the Nutmegs, the Five Satins, the Three Chuckles, the Robins, Nolan Strong and the Diablos. I drop out of Little League because Freed's late Saturday morning top 25 rock and roll hits show is broadcast the same time as our games. It's my first conscious preference of art over athletics.

Within weeks, Freed is the biggest thing



Author Steffens saved newspaper articles about his hero.

in the history of New York radio. Three stations change their formats to rock and roll, hoping to cash in on what is widely perceived as “just a fad.” But we kids know different, and Freed is the uncle we all wish we had, the older person who really understands us. He reads dedications from “the kids in the projects” and talks constantly about his wife “Jackie and all the little Freeds,” as if we were all family.

In late 1957, I tell my mother I’m going to take a bus to Hackensack to see a movie. She’s forbidden me to attend any of Freed’s wildly controversial live shows because she’s certain that I’ll be mugged. I hop a bus to the city, where I keep a secret rendezvous in the Port Authority Bus Terminal with several classmates. We rush excitedly over to Times Square to join a three block-long line around the Times Square Paramount Theater where Freed is presenting his *Christmas Jubilee of Stars*—Fats Domino, Buddy Holly & the Crickets, Jerry Lee Lewis, the teenage Everly Brothers—16 acts in all, plus a movie, for \$2.50.

The following summer, we begin to hang out at WINS, hoping to catch a glimpse of Freed, and we often encounter him on the street. He is abruptly gracious, and signs autographs for us. Every time I see him, he is carrying several 45s in his hand, and I begin to think of it as his trademark. We speak of the slagging of rock and roll by Walter Winchell and Frank Sinatra, who have painted our music as a tool of the Communists—

or the devil. Freed predicts that 20 years from now we’ll be singing songs by Frankie Lymon, the Flamingos, and the Penguins, and we know in our hearts he is right.

In 1958 I started watching Freed on Channel 5 in the late afternoon, with his teenage dance party program, *The Big Beat*. Here we get to actually see him as he talks to Buddy Holly about plane crashes, and brings on ex-



Even while being booked at a police station, Freed, with WINS PD Mel Leeds and Peter Tripp of WMGM, were in a disc-jocular mood.

con Little Willie John to sing “Fever,” eschewing Peggy Lee and the white-bread travesties of others like Pat Boone. It would prove to be his undoing.

On November 24, 1959, the *New York Mirror* headlines “Freed Out in TV Squeeze.” The payola scandals erupt big time, and it is the saddest day of my childhood. I cry long into the night, as WABC (where he had moved the previous year following a riot at a show he



Rock and roll fans are barely barricaded in front of the New York Paramount in 1957.

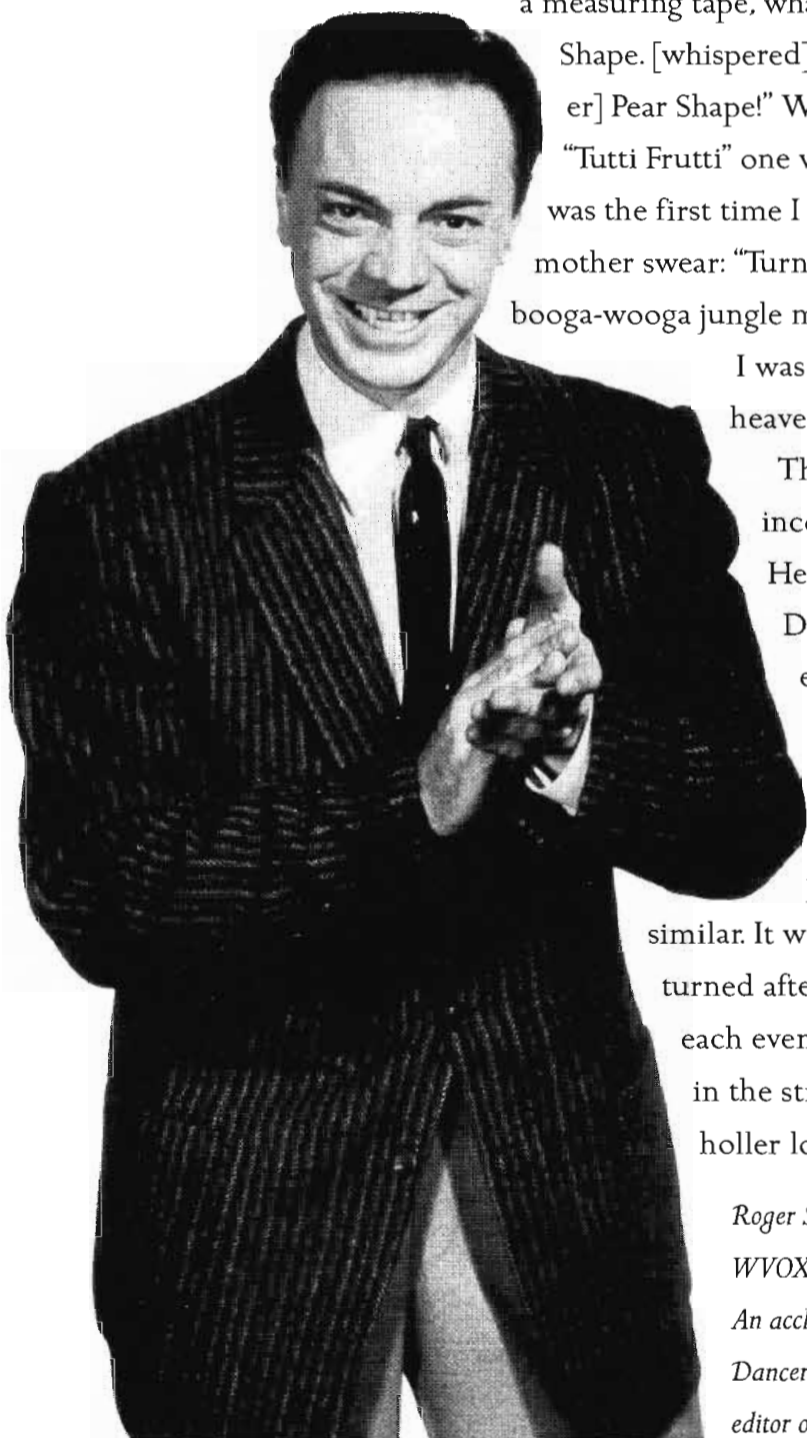
presented in Boston), and WNEW-TV drop him. We all feel it is because he won’t play the soulless major label artists whose cover versions of rock hits are sad facsimiles of the all-night-long down-and-dirty real thing. Freed, we know, just plays the songs he really likes, and, in the process, developed a whole generation’s distaste for the ersatz. No wonder they got rid of him.



“The most important thing is the artists and the songs they write. They put their whole souls into writing those songs.”  
—Howie Klein

There are others who had almost as strong an effect on the radio dial of the time. I remember fighting each morning with my mother over control of the radio. She was stuck in a WWI mode with “Rambling John Gambling” on WOR, whose idea of great music was “I’ve Got Sixpence (Jolly Jolly Sixpence).” I insisted on tuning to the far right side of the dial, to “Pear Shape” Jack Walker, whose rhyming patter went: “You put the J with the A and the C with the K, write on a postcard what you want him to play, go around the middle with

*His “rock ‘n’ roll kingdom” (is) a mythic place where we discover a nascent fellowship of youngsters who might as well be from another planet, as far as our elders are concerned.*



a measuring tape, whaddya got? Pear Shape. [whispered] Pear Shape? [louder] Pear Shape!” When he played “Tutti Frutti” one winter morning, it was the first time I ever heard my mother swear: “Turn off that goddamn booga-wooga jungle music!”

I was in hormonal heaven.

Then there was the incomparable Jocko Henderson on W-A-D-O Radio, twelve-eighty-oh on your radio. He was a close friend of Freed’s, and their playlists were very similar. It was to him that we turned after Freed signed off each evening. “Way up here in the stratosphere, gotta holler loud and clear,” he

*Roger Steffens is an actor, author, archivist, and lecturer whose radio career began on WVOX in Westchester, New York in 1961 and included ten years on KCRW in Los Angeles. An acclaimed expert on the life of Bob Marley, he is the co-author of *Bob Marley: Spirit Dancer* (Norton) and the forthcoming autobiography of Bunny Wailer. He is the founding editor of *The Beat* magazine.*

began his show. “E-tiddly-ock, oh, this is the Jock and I’m back on the scene with my record machine, sayin’ ooh-pop-a-do and how do you do? Ready for your race into outer space?” His live shows were in Harlem’s Apollo, and he even had a dance party show on Channel 13 opposite Freed’s (an unfortunate and impossible choice for us), with regular features like “Bermuda Shorts Day.”

Radio after Freed’s downfall was never the same for me. Perhaps it was the fact that I was growing up, heading off for college in 1960, and had less time for it. But the feelings of unity and mutual community that Freed had inspired in us were fading out like the do-wop vocal groups that helped spawn them. The medium was transmuting into commercial pop and “Good Guys” radio, with interchangeable presenters with dollar signs in their eyes.

In 1996, I was invited to be the first speaker at the new Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, built in Cleveland—home of Alan Freed’s first big radio success. Before my talk, I toured the room devoted to Freed’s history and an adjoining chamber where ranks of classic radios were on display. My heart leaped when I spied, ensconced behind glass, the exact same Bendix radio, right down to the brown knobs, on which I had surreptitiously listened to the King of the Moondogger all those years ago. At the end of my lecture, I made a formal presentation to the Hall’s radio archives of early broadcast tapes I had made of Freed’s programs, holding a microphone in front of the Bendix’s grilled speakers. All the major musical threads in my life came together at that moment, and my cheek was moist as I walked offstage. Funny how things said 40 years ago can stay with you forever. Radio has a way of doing that. ☺



“I knew I was a professional songwriter the first time I ever heard a song of mine on the air!”  
— Barbara Duron

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*Philip A. Jones, BMI Board Chairman, is a lifelong broadcaster and has just completed a term as Chairman of the Joint Board of the NAB. His career began at KCMO-FM in 1966 and he was most recently President of the Meredith Corporation Broadcasting Group.*

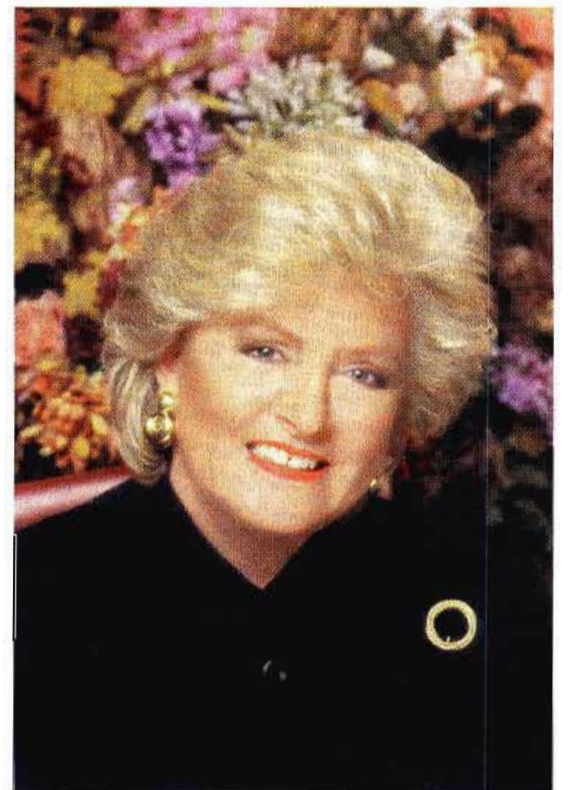
# BMI & Radio

## *A History of Innovation*

opportunities for the use of music have arisen, BMI has established the means to monitor and compensate for them:

- BMI was first to pay royalties for music on FM radio
- BMI pioneered the use of computers to manage repertoire
- BMI was first to monitor and pay royalties for airplay on college radio, adding 1,000 educationally affiliated stations to its logging system
- BMI was the first performing rights organization with its own internet domain, [bmi.com](http://bmi.com), and, as you read this, is making its full song repertoire available on that World Wide Web site
- BMI was first to reach agreement for licensing music use on the internet
- BMI's groundbreaking MusicBot™ is now providing the industry's most acclaimed set of digital tools for tracking and managing information on the use of music in cyberspace. It is in use for royalty administration by BMI in the U.S. and is licensed to foreign copyright societies for use in their markets.

publishers of music they represent are compensated for performances around the world. While approximately 25 percent of BMI's revenues come from foreign society payments, these reciprocal agreements also bring the best music from around the globe to broadcasters here in the U.S.



*Frances W. Preston, BMI President and Chief Executive Officer, began her career at WSM Nashville and built BMI's repertoire in rock, country, R&B, and gospel into an American music powerhouse.*

America's radio broadcasters have created an enduring legacy of entertainment, information and public service that has enriched society and made a magnificent contribution to world culture.

BMI, founded in 1940 by the radio industry, is proud to have played an important role in this process. Today's broadcasters can take great pride in BMI's critical role in providing opportunity and income to the songwriters of R&B, Country, Gospel, Jazz, and Rock & Roll - music that was ignored, even condemned, for decades. The courage and foresight of radio broadcasters in supporting the creators of these musical genres, through BMI, is a major chapter in radio's history.

While Bill Gavin was creating his own legend in radio, BMI was developing a reputation for leadership in quality and efficiency — not only in America, but throughout the developed world.

BMI pioneered the "open door" practice to all writers and publishers, effectively ending the exclusive membership practices of the then-existing copyright society. BMI has devised and routinely updated its monitoring procedures for logging the use of music. As new technologies have been devised and, in turn, new

*"Radio and the music industry have had a symbiotic relationship from the onset..."*

BMI recognizes that music is a global phenomenon. It has made reciprocal agreements with more than 40 foreign societies to ensure that the writers and

"Radio and the music industry have had a symbiotic relationship from the onset," said BMI President and CEO Frances W. Preston. "So it should be no surprise that BMI has been able to combine the vision and business sense of today's broadcasters with the excitement, innovation and quality of America's best songwriters and composers. We have truly forged a winning combination, one that will continue to bring great music to the public for generations to come."

# Serving the Radio Industry Since the 1940's

## Song Identification in the 1940's



*BMI researchers checked radio airplay lists for songwriter and publisher information in the 1940's.*

# Song Identification in the New Millennium

Host Name	Site Summary	Number of Media Files
www.cashnet.com	(Site Summary)	10953
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	7763
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	1403
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	1273
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	1234
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	1198
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	1115
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	665
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	611
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	601
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	549
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	531
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	514
www.radio.com	(Site Summary)	492

*BMI's MusicBot™ searches the entire World Wide Web each month, compiling a comprehensive list of websites and music files, enabling an automated digital licensing process.*





1958:

Mercury Records goes for adds  
on "Chantilly Lace" by the Big Bopper...

It was just the beginning.

Celebrating 40 years of Gavin.

Congratulations

The Mercury Records logo is presented in a stylized, cursive script. The letters are three-dimensional and appear to be made of a reflective, metallic material, possibly gold or copper, with bright highlights and shadows that give them a sense of depth. The logo is centered within a large, golden diamond shape that also has a metallic, reflective texture. The diamond is set against a dark, almost black background, which makes the golden elements stand out prominently.

PART TWO:

# THE TOP 40

*On the air and behind the scenes with Top 40's  
pioneers, programmers and performers*

**A Lucky Man: The Bill Gavin Story**

*By Bob Hamilton*

**From 'Dance Time' to Boss Radio**

*By Ron Jacobs*

**Radio Heaven**

*By Kim Fowley*

**A Good Cause...**

*By Gary Owens*

**The Birth of Top 40 Radio**

*By Ben Fong-Torres*

**The McLendon Papers**

*By Eric Norberg*

**The Real The Real Don Steele**

*By Ian Whitcomb*

**The Hits Between the Hits: The History of Jingles**

*By Don Worsham*

**Golden Voices**

*By Ben Fong-Torres*

**The Top 40 of Top 40**

*By Ben Fong-Torres*

# A Lucky Man: The Bill Gavin Story



By Bob Hamilton

“Mr. Gavin, I don’t care if you are a teacher, I think you are a terrible snob.” She was 14 then, and he was 18. She was a freshman in high school and he was her teacher. It was the first of millions of conversations they would have from that moment through the rest of their lives.

For Bill and Janet Gavin, the scene was shifted from that Elmwood, Wisconsin classroom in 1952 to two desks facing each other in a spacious, well-lit office overlooking San Francisco from One Embarcadero Center. Sitting together in 1975 and looking back on that early incident, Janet comments about Bill’s snobbery, substantiating that “he was,” and Bill laughs, and agrees, “I was.”

Bill reflected on their lives which have paralleled radio industry development since Bill’s aspirations to become a lawyer faded into what he called the “fascination and miracle” of radio.

“My earliest recollection of radio,” he said, “was a recreation of the 1921 World Series game broadcast over a St. Paul station between the Yankees and the Giants. The fascinating thing about radio was to tune in at night and see how far away you could get a station.”

Bill, who was born October 6, 1907 in Chetek, Wisconsin, listened to pipe organ music, baseball games, and other events and programs over such stations as KMOX, WSB, KSL, and WSL.

“I can’t leave early radio,” he added, “without recalling the thrill it was to listen to the Dempsey-Firpo fight. When Firpo knocked Dempsey out of the ring and the sportswriters helped him back in

and he came back and knocked Firpo out, it was just about as thrilling (maybe more so) to hear it on the radio as it was to have been there in person.” When speaking of radio, the word “miracle” was often used in those days. When Bill’s folks moved to San Francisco and Bill followed to finish his education at Berkeley, he began to feel himself moving toward becoming part of the “miracle.”

KPO in San Francisco, 1929, was the beginning of it all. Bill, an excellent baritone singer, went to the station and won a job as a vocalist after doing an audition. “I don’t remember what I sang,” he said. “Probably ‘Old Man River.’”

As the years progressed, Bill worked in such places as the Fox Theater, Warner Bros. movies, and the popular network radio show, *Captain Dobsy’s Shell Ship of Joy*, as part of a glee club, trio, quartet or soloist. He learned vocal arranging as well, and finally began to feel: “Here is a career.”

There was a heat wave in the midwest in 1935, when Bill began to send wires to Janet. She had a teaching career in Minnesota. “It’s cool in San Francisco,” he informed her. They were married that year in Glide Memorial Church. Bill notes, “I never knew if it was because of me or the weather.”

Shortly after their marriage, Bill’s glee club was fired at the Golden Gate Theater. Fortunately for him, the Blenders, a quartet at the theater, lost their baritone and Bill got the job, “wearing a white cowboy outfit,” he recalled, and singing “I’m headin’ for the

last round-up; home on the range.”

With the Blenders, Bill toured the West Coast for some time playing clubs, conventions and whatever they could get. “We had an engagement for several weeks playing at the old Embassy Club down on Fisherman’s Wharf. I saved up all the tips I got there to help pay for the baby that was on the way at the time.”

With the baby, Bill decided he’d had enough traveling around. While playing in Seattle he went to KOMO and “asked if they needed a singer-arranger. They said no, they didn’t, but they’d like to have me around. They needed an announcer.” Bill was hired and worked at both KOMO and KJR. One was a red network and the other blue. Shortly thereafter he became a producer and writer for the stations and got his own daily 15-minute show for a coffee company. “I’d sit at the piano and play and sing and do commercials for them.”

When World War II started, Bill and family moved back to San Francisco. Bill worked for the Office of War Information from 1942 to 1946, and had a 15-minute show on KQW (now KCBS). He was also the Vice President of the national American Federation of Radio Artists (AFRA) board. While at a national convention in New York, Bill received a telegram from KPO (later to become KNBC and, finally, KNBR) inviting him to return to the station where he had begun his radio career. He signed up for a 15-minute daily show that would run from 1947 to 1951. While at KPO, he wrote and produced as well, spending a good deal of time writing jingles for advertising clients. One of them was the Lucky Lager brewing company. Their campaign was “It’s Lucky When You Live in California,” and Bill’s music for that jingle established his relationship with McCann-Erickson, Lucky’s advertising agency.

With the advent of television, radio began to change. The agency for Burgermeister Beer came up with the idea of a half-hour show that would play the “most popular phonograph records of the day.” Bill noted that they “wanted to do it in a manner that would not be interfered with by anybody in the brewery’s board of directors or the agency or anybody at the station. In other words, get an objective basis for controlling the

records played, so it would not be anybody’s opinion. So we worked out a system.”

In 1951, *Billboard* magazine listed their “Honor Roll of Hits,” the Top 30 best-selling single records in the



country. Bill used the list as his basis for a half hour show on KNBC, and no one expected what happened. He remembers, “We would follow some of the network shows that would finish up at 9:30. Hooper was

*“I couldn’t understand rock and roll when it started, what it was all about, why they would play some horrible, out-of-tune stuff when you couldn’t understand the words, and the voices weren’t good...”*

the big audience measurement (company) then, and they would show *The Telephone Hour* with a 25 percent share of the audience. We’d come on with the *Burgie Music Box*, and they’d show us with a 35 to 40 percent share of the audience.”

*Lucky Lager Dance Time* then was running from 10 to 12 midnight every night on KGO and was picked up by several other stations in the west. With an agency change for Burgermeister, McCann-Erickson, impressed by Bill’s ratings, hired him to program *Lucky Lager Dance Time*. Within six months, Bill had switched



“Radio is excitement; the music must match the objective of what radio supposedly is - or should be.”  
— Bill Gavin

from the *Billboard* charts to a compilation of the Lucky Ten from all 48 of their affiliated stations. The stations sent their charts to Bill each week, and he compiled a top 50 and played them on his show.

From this, Bill observed that “there were things happening in the East and the South that we out in the West were behind on. I had an idea that I would like to get in touch with some radio people back there to see if we could exchange information on what I was getting along with their markets. It happens that there was an independent record promotion lady in the office. She had a mailing list of stations in those areas and gave me a copy of it.”

Bill wrote to the stations. He got affirmative responses from such people as Jack Lacey at WINS in New York, Bob Clayton at WHDH in Boston, Buddy Deane at WITH in Baltimore, Paul Drew at WGST in Atlanta, and Pete Myers from WHK in Cleveland. About this time, Bill was approached by stations that were interested in adopting his show format for entire broadcast days. It began with Joe Campbell from KJOY in Stockton, California. An inspired Bill Gavin worked out a controlled frequency music format, playing A-B-C-D (and sometimes “even X & Y”) records in rotation.



**“There are no color barriers or sound barriers to the music that people like. Integration in music, as anywhere, involves an acceptance of differences.”**  
— Bill Gavin

“I would like to think that I pioneered the controlled frequency of play which now practically every music news station does,” said Bill. “I’ve always thought that you don’t dilute your programming by having a long list of new records to add. I could have 16 new records every week, but we only played one an hour.”

Bill began to set up a programming service for several stations, including KCBQ in San Diego and KYA in San Francisco. As part of the service, Bill sent out three publications a week. “They were not printed, they were simply typed up, and carbon copies were sent out.”

The publications were called *Bill Gavin’s Record Report*.

Finally, when Bill decided to send the information to his eastern correspondents as well, he began to mimeograph it. This was in 1958. Record people began hearing about the *Report* and asked to be placed on the mailing list. Bill agreed, but said that they would have to pay for it. He pulled a rate of \$30 a quarter out of the air. “Actually, the record promotion people were my best ambassadors,” he recalled. “They go from one place to another and tell people that they ought to get this.”

Bill Gavin’s very first *Record Report* was for Tuesday, May 20, 1958. It was three pages (printed on light blue paper) and listed such items as “Best of the New Ones,” “I Also Like,” “Still No Word On

## From ‘Dance Time’ to Boss Radio: The Common Thread Was Gavin

By Ron Jacobs

The time was 1958. In those days, the trades consisted of *Billboard* and *Cashbox*. Soon, Bill Gavin would issue his own chart, which many of us purists considered to be the most accurate among the trades, because of Gavin’s impeccable record of credibility. Obviously, a record company couldn’t influence a chart listing in a magazine that accepted no ads. If Gavin said it was a hit, it was a hit. If it was a pick, chances were that it would be a hit.

As a result of a bunch of fortuitous circumstances, I found myself Program Director of Honolulu’s fourth-oldest radio station in 1958. I was 19, and the station was KPOA, founded by World War II veterans who went on to

become honchos in the CIA. We were on the cusp of Top 40, still doing “block programming.” Some of the time KPOA played Hawaiian and pre-rock pop music.

The exception: Tom Moffatt, the first rock jock in Hawaii. We’d been a team at KHVH, Henry J. Kaiser’s station, where we’d scored high ratings with a faked “rivalry” act. On his popular night time show, Moffatt would play early rock and roll hits and tunes like “In the Still Of the Night.”

Besides Moffatt’s, the best show on KPOA in 1958 was Lucky Lager Dance Time. It was sponsored by the most popular beer in the 12 western states (plus us Hawaiians, still being taxed without representation.)

This was a three-hour show that

was planned down to the second. It even had a script, which I received each week from Lucky’s ad agency in San Francisco. Every record was scheduled in an exact position, in sets of three. And then a Lucky Lager commercial. Read as written, no ad-libbing. Play the damn records and read the damn copy straight, or there would be hell to pay from the (drum roll) National Sponsor On A One Year Contract!!!

We were instructed to play the records in order, no substitutions, certify that everything went down as scheduled or turn in a detailed explanation to the show’s producer and music director. Some guy named Bill Gavin.

No simple chore for me, working in a place the record compa-

nies and distributors regarded as only one notch on the food chain from the bottom—which was Guam. Sometimes, records arrived in Hawaii after they had hit Number One and were on the way down. I was supposed to implement this devilish scheme nightly or suffer the consequences of losing our only National Sponsor On A One Year Contract. And my job.

Who was this Nazi who would blow me out of radio before I turned 20? As soon as I realized it was impossible to ever play more than 90 percent of the titles called for—at best—I realized I couldn’t put it off. With great trepidation, I phoned the ad agency where this maniacal Bill Gavin was located. He came on the line.

“Mr. G-gavin, this is Ron Jacobs

(but staying with), "Good Action Reports On," and the "Ten Best For Programming."

The first issue also contained a letter to all PD's and MD's which said, in part, "Information in the *Reports* is based on weekly reports of record sales in over 200 stores in the Western States, distributor reports, and telephone and audience mail reports from four stations operating on my 'feedback' system." The letter offered to send



the *Report* in exchange for their weekly lists and was signed by Bill Gavin of the McCann-Erickson agency.

With an added emphasis on teens in the popular music of the day, Lucky Lager reluctantly canceled its show. Bill was still running his program service and decided to try to keep this sheet going as well. This was 1960, and Janet com-

*"I think the first year (1959), he fired me every other week, and I quit the others." — Janet Gavin*

mented, "At that time we could count all our stations without running out of toes. It was a long haul."

Bill added, "I had wondered whether the record companies that were subscribing to the *Report* were doing it as a means of good public relations with somebody programming 48 stations, and when I was doing this, how many of them would cancel. Only one did."

Bill looked over at Janet and commented, "I could never have done it without you, Janet."

#### **Bill Gavin on rock and roll:**

"I couldn't understand rock and roll when it started, what it was all about, why they would play some horrible out-of-tune stuff when you couldn't understand the words and the voices weren't good. I had been brought up as a legit musician and there were certain elements of vocal quality you had to have in order to be in the profession. I told the president of Lucky Lager, who was a great fan of popular music, 'Elvis had a new record out called "Heartbreak Hotel," but we're not playing it. I don't think it's suit-

and I'm calling from K-p-P-O-A in, uh,

Honolulu. Sir."

An avuncular voice replied, "Hi, Ron. How's it in paradise?"

"Well, sir, you see, about that Rosemary Clooney song you had at number eight last night, well, uh, the Columbia distributor here hasn't gotten it yet, and I tried calling the record company in New York and they said they would get back to me and I haven't heard from them, well, actually I called Los Angeles first and they said to call New York and, uh, I guess they don't know about the time difference and anyway we can't get the record in from Wallich's Music City in L.A. in time for tonight even if we sent someone over to get the record and mail it Special Delivery because that takes usually two days to get here from the States, uh, mainland and you have Rosemary Clooney scheduled again for tonight and I don't know

if I should just skip it, or play her last song, or play another female vocal and if I do, uh, should it be a ballad like that one or would something up-tempo be O.K..."

"Ron? Do you have any Doris Day or Patti Page records on hand, something you like?"

"Well, sure, I can find something, but I thought that we were, uh, you know, supposed to follow the format..."

"Ron?"

"Yes, Mr. Gavin?"

"How's your weather today? You're so lucky to live in Hawaii. 'Lucky.'" He chuckled. "How about that?"

Bill Gavin understood our KPOA problem and never once asked for an explanation if we departed from his play list.

Along with the radio consultant Mike Joseph and the manager-promoter-showman, Col. Tom Parker, Bill Gavin would be a mentor for life.

When Bill Drake asked me to become PD at KHJ in 1965, when we launched "Boss Radio," the first thing he said to me was, "Check with Betty (Breneman, our music director) and make sure we're on the list for *Gavin*." I can personally assure you that Drake relied more on Bill Gavin's sheet than the rest of the trades combined.

Bill Gavin was the first to predict that Drake and Morgan and Steele and me and the rest would be successful in "Boss Angeles."

In 1969, I left radio for a bit to co-found Watermark with Tom Rounds. At Watermark, I did a series of albums called *Cruisin'*, recreating radio shows with major disc jockeys. Knowing nothing about jocks east of San Bernardino, I sent a researcher to *Billboard* in L.A. to tabulate DJ mentions in their "Vox Jox" column. Then I called Bill Gavin and, based on some of his input, did a bit of juggling to strengthen the lineup.

My FCC license is dated December 23, 1953. From that time on, I never met a radio man with more warmth, a man more generous with his vast knowledge of our business, or a man with the incomparable integrity of Bill Gavin. They don't make 'em like that anymore. ☺

*Ron Jacobs, a native of Hawaii, is best known as the first Program Director of "Boss Radio" KHJ in Los Angeles. He is also remembered for his pioneer work at KGB-San Diego and for a series of syndicated specials he produced with Bill Drake, including The History of Rock and Roll. He co-founded Watermark, the originator of the countdown show hosted by Casey Kasem. Having recently returned to Hawaii, Jacobs was working on his memoirs when radio called again. He now anchors a morning drive magazine show on KCCN in Honolulu.*

# Radio Heaven

By Kim Fowley

**N**EW ORLEANS: It's late winter 1998 and I am exiled in a city with incomplete radio adventures.

Back in 1957 and even later in 1958 there was one man with a show that played everything that was good, great and excellent. No matter what it was, who sang and/or played it, no matter how tiny the record company.

Was it really a two-to-three hour block on the radio every school night? Monday through Friday? Yes!

*Lucky Lager Dance Time*, programmed by Bill Gavin, was the event. As important as *American Bandstand*, The Alan Freed show, Wolfman Jack, WLAC/Nashville or any of the clear channel radio shows of the late 1950's.

L.A. had Art Laboe (from Scrivner's Drive In), Hunter Hancock (KGFJ), and Earl McDaniel on KPOP. Dick "Huggy Boy" Hugg came later with his dedication format on various East L.A. Spanish stations.

But it was *Lucky Lager Dance Time* on KMPC-AM, Los Angeles, that taught me how to make records.

Here's a recollection of the hot wax on the show during the golden era of rock & roll:

Records by both Louis Lymon and The Teen Cords and by Patti Page, "Alone" by the Shepherd Sisters, "Book of Love" by the Monotones, "And That Reminds Me" by Della Reese, and "The Wayward Wind" by Gogi Grant.

The other kids at University High School paid attention, too. They were Jan and Dean, Bruce Johnston (The Beach Boys), Dick and Deedee, Nancy Sinatra, Ryan O'Neal, James Brolin, Henry Vestine (Canned Heat), Sandy "Teen Beat" Nelson, and Sandra Dee.

In 1960, "Alley Oop" by the Hollywood Argyles reached Number One in *Billboard*. Dante and the Evergreens also recorded the song--and charted. Both versions featured ex-students of University High. I worked with the Argyles, and Don Drowdy was part of Dante and The Evergreens.

We all listened to *Lucky Lager Dance Time* because they played everything good, great and excellent.

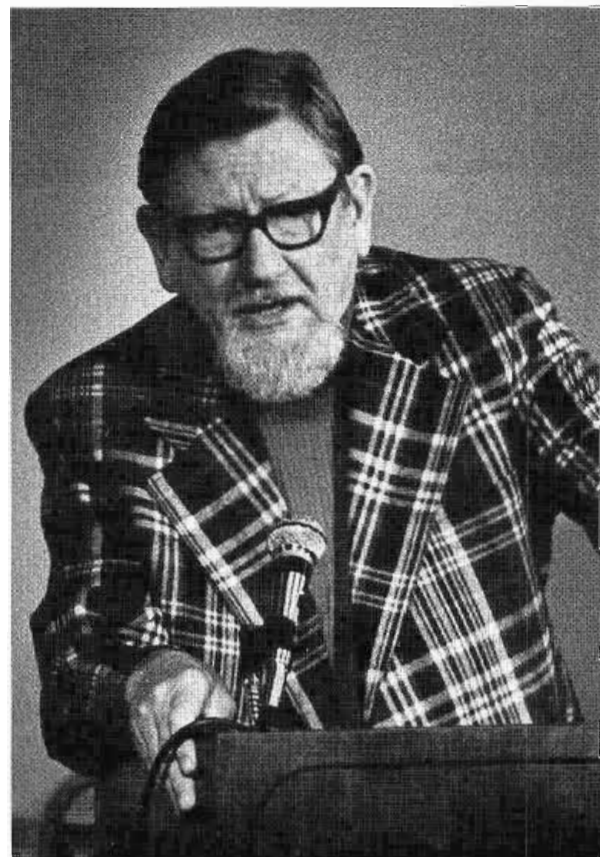
Now, radio exists to sell time. Radio plays music between commercial messages. Radio is run by consultants, committees and ears much older than the target audience.

But, once upon a time music was the passion and radio was the action. Passion and Action had a baby and it was called *Lucky Lager Dance Time*.

In the Silver Sixties I met Bill Gavin and his wife Janet. I thanked them for showing us what the music was and what the music meant. I knew they understood. Because all the kids on the street understood before the music died and radio turned away.

Remember, dear reader, The Great Pop Music of the 20th Century always sounded better on the radio or on a jukebox than it ever did on the Internet or MTV. ☺

Kim Fowley produced Helen Reddy, Gene Vincent, The Germs, Slade, The Seeds and The Runaways. He has co-written songs by Kiss, The Byrds, Sonic Youth and Stars on 45's. He recently placed a song on the Soundtrack of "The Butcher Boy" (Directed by Neil Jordan) Geffen Pictures, released by Warner Brothers. He also co-produced "Washington Scandals and Dessert Thunder" starring Slick Willie and The Arkansas Frogs on St. Roch Records.



able.' He said, 'The people like it, you better play it.' He never knew Elvis' name, he always called him 'Elvin.' Parents thought it was a terrible thing to hear the sound of this horrible music. It was undermining the morals of their children, I gradually, through a long, difficult process of education, developed at first a tolerance and then an appreciation of some of the things that were going on, and at the same time realized what a sterile area pop music had been for years. It's no wonder that when something came along with some guts and feeling to it that young people responded."

## Bill Gavin on the reasons for founding his publication:

"A programmer in Baltimore or Atlanta is really more interested in something new that is happening in Detroit or



"Bill, so dignified he made Eric Severeid look like Sid Vicious, once said, 'Is that a Buddah record in your pile, Tony? I'm getting some nice response from "Tear the Roof Off the Sucka!"' — Tony Richland

Houston that might be a key to him to confirm his opinion on a new record; much more interested in that than having somebody tell him what the hits are. He knows what the hits are, what's selling in his market. He wants to be right on a *new* record. He has a flood of new records coming in every week, promotion men battering him to play this and play that. He's getting all sorts of information, a lot of it phony. In those days, they were at the mercy of the promotion people to provide them information. Some promotion men were famous exaggerators. There was one, I remember, with whom you always divided any sales figures he gave you by three—and *then* it was probably inflated. It was a means of getting some factual infor-

mation from other radio people. It was the first opportunity they had had.

#### On controversial song lyrics:

"I have always tried to evaluate controversial lyrics on the basis, not of what I thought about them personally necessarily, but on what impact they would have on a station's well being; its stature in the community. I have always maintained that a radio station as a business institution cannot afford to present the kind of musical environment in which local advertisers do not want to place their commercials. This has happened in the past. Pretty generally, as in the case of the Donna Summer record ["Love to Love You Baby"], I had expected to get reports earlier that there

## Pat O'Day on a Typical Chat with Bill Gavin

*He's the Space Needle of Seattle radio. From the late Fifties well into the Seventies, he was as steady a presence as could be found on the air over the Pacific Northwest. He was both a solid air personality and a clear-visioned program director at KJR (not to mention his work as a major concert promoter). As a programmer, he decreed that the foremost purpose of radio was to entertain, and that, no matter the format, a station should strive, as it had since the first dramas and comedies, to help listeners create a "theater of the mind." While working closely with his air staff, he also paid close attention to the station's main ingredient: music. In this endeavor, one of his favorite partners was Bill Gavin in San Francisco.*

Bill and I were on the phone two or three times a week, and had a close relationship. I found myself fortunate because I was the Program Director and Music Director, and I was on the air with the station that totally dominated the whole Northwest. My whole attitude was that music was our product, and music was the real thing we had to deliver. So we always had a very broad playlist and tried to break records.

I remember it like it was yesterday. Here would be a typical conversation:

"How's Janet?"

"She's fine."

"Good. I got three things, Bill, that you need to be aware of what's happening here. Now, this is in the last

four or five days.

I got this thing that I talked to Tom Moffatt about, and we were listening to this thing called "Woolly Bully," it's on MGM by Sam the Sham. And then we ran a little thing last

night about ten o'clock. I had the jock put it on, we did a telephone thing on it immediately. And we've got some unbelievable numbers on that. Like we had 27 love it and two didn't like it, and nobody neutral. So check around the country. See if anybody's having any luck with that one. And I'm getting negatives on the new Sonny and Cher. We all thought it sounded good, but they may have..."

You know, that's what a conversation would be like. And then Bill would say, "Okay, I just talked to Denver, and they said that Patsy Cline looks like it could cross over there. The country station was playing it, but they were getting calls and they've been playing it."

So, it was just an exchange of everything going on. ☺



"When a record was a Bill Gavin pick, everybody listened to it again." — Elma Greer, KSFO, 1972



were listener complaints. It was several weeks before they started to come in. After I picked up sufficient evidence of listener complaints, and particularly from parents on how they were ashamed to have the radio on with their children listening and having this record come on. I made an announcement that I believed this would be harmful to a station to play it and I would no longer list it.

#### On record promotion people:

"There will be some information from the promotion men that we want to pass along to our readers. The MCA man was in with an Elton John album, and he said here's a cut from the album that I thought you'd want to know about, and we're releasing it for the rating period. We carried that information in last week's publication. Little things like that. It's helpful to know that artist is coming with a new record. The

main function that it serves the broadcaster is as a liaison with the world of music in general, to bring information, to be a kind of a window on the world of music where the radio programmer lives."

#### Janet and Bill, on working together:

*Janet:* "I think the first year (1959) he fired me every other week and I quit the others. Actually it's been quite exciting, but it is rough on a relationship."

*Bill:* "You figure the average (husband and wife) grow up in two different worlds...I don't know how much we talk about the business, but we talk about it not as a business but as part of our lives. She and I have the same friends in radio, and it doesn't separate between business and social. I consider myself very fortunate to be able to work together."

Bill and Janet have four grown children and eight grandchildren. ☺



"It's safe to say that Bill Gavin coined and gave meaning to the phrase 'tip sheet.' The nationwide credibility Bill had with the leading Top 40's across America was without parallel in his day...You could be assured of major instant airplay with a Bill Gavin Personal Pick. To Bill's everlasting credit, he realized his ears were his assets, and because of his sense of integrity, everyone knew his recommendations came from the heart." — Bruce Hinton, MCA Nashville

#### Editor's Epilogue

Bob Hamilton published his profile of the Gavins in 1975. By that time, the *Gavin Report* was beginning to expand its staff beyond four (Bill, Janet, Betty Hollars, the R&B editor, and Diane Rufer, who handled circulation). New editors joined to chart and cover Top 40 and a "non-rock" category that Bill named "adult contemporary."

In 1977, Janet Gavin died. Bill took over her duties as head of the Country music department, and continued to add staff members. As the publication grew, it had to change from its modest stapled, legal sheets and into a booklet form.

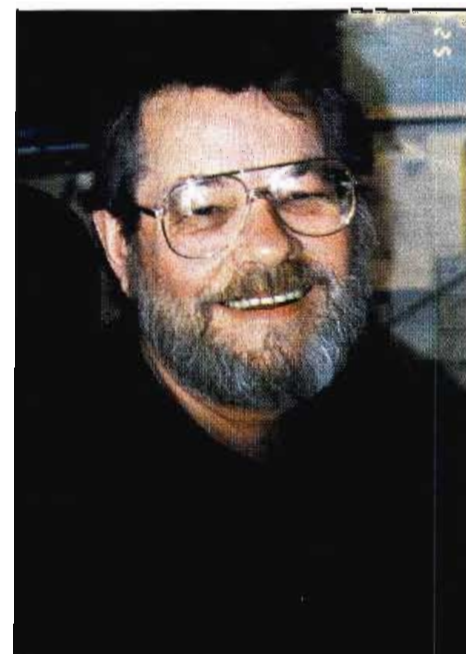
In 1979, Bill married Josette Horst, a member of one of Janet's favorite organizations, the American Association of University Women. Bill considered himself twice-blessed.

In the early Eighties, with young radio pros Ron Fell, Dave Sholin, and Peter Standish working as Managing Editor, Top 40 Editor, and "Alternative Action" reporter, Bill Gavin decided that it was time to pass his torch. In 1983, he

transferred ownership of his publication to seven of his staff. The new ownership, led by Ron, took the *Gavin Report* into a new age, with a magazine format, advertising, and new offices—and with Bill Gavin on board as "consultant, advisor, and friend."

That's what he was to the day of his death, on January 17, 1985. While the radio and recording industries mourned a beloved leader, the magazine carried on, working to uphold its founder's values.

In 1992, in the interest of continued growth, the owners agreed to sell the magazine to the United Newspapers Group, now known as United News & Media. Since then, the publication, its title trimmed to *Gavin*, has become the foundation of a wide range of media services for the industry Bill Gavin loved so much. Whether in the form of magazines, including the new *Gavin GM*, or the various seminars under the *Gavin* banner, or on-line and multimedia marketing services, *Gavin* remains true to what Bill Gavin sought to accomplish: to



help radio to do the best job possible.

As CEO David Dalton noted, soon after assuming leadership of the publication: "Fundamentally, and straightforwardly, we want to provide a first class magazine and information forum which influences people through its accuracy, integrity, quality, and honesty. Above all, *Gavin's* power will remain the credibility, sincerity and sheer enthusiasm of the people who work here."

Those are words that could well have been penned, some forty years before, by one Bill Gavin.—BEN FONG-TORRES

# The Birth of Top 40 Radio



By Ben Fong-Torres

**A**ll right baby, this is Russ Knight, the Weird Beard, the savior of Dallas radio, let me save you with music until midnight! Well I tell you, somebody's gotta come up here before midnight, honey, one of those Dallas good-lookin' girls and pull my Weird Beard tambourine. We got Billy, Roy, Dale, Trigger, the Dallas Salvation Army, ha! From 11-90 at the harmonic tone. (Quack!) A little music from Big D, a lot of Weird Beard dances goin' around, the Blackbottom, we got a brand new dance from Joey Dee and the Peppermint Twist and it goes like this!

Top 40 radio was born in a bar in Omaha, Nebraska. Or it was born in Texas, where Gordon McLendon put the format, with splashy promotional pizzazz, onto his stations in Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston. Some say the format took real shape with the likes of Bill Gavin, the first radio programming consultant to weave playlist reports from stations around the country to form a chart, and to advise programmers on record rotation.

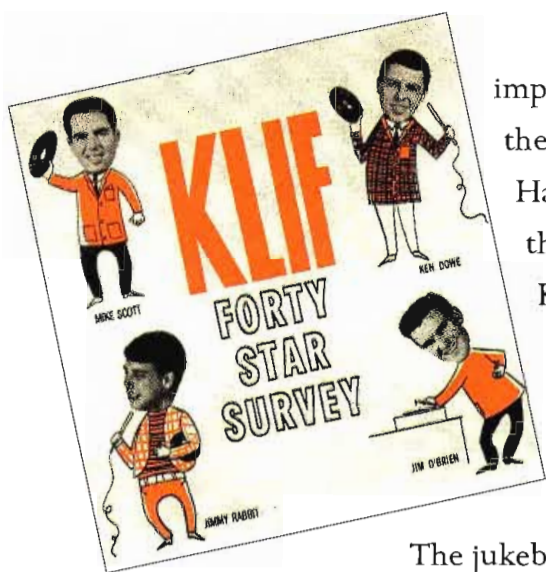
Most radio and pop historians, however, point to that tavern in Omaha, on the Missouri River along the eastern edge of Nebraska. Here, Todd Storz, not yet 30 in 1955, operated KOWH, a daytime AM station that he and his father purchased for \$75,000 in 1949. Dad had chipped in \$30,000; Todd, \$20,000, and the remainder came from loans. By 1956, the Storzes' Mid-Continent Company had collected four other stations: WTIX in New Orleans (\$25,000), WHB in Kansas City (\$400,000), WDGY in Minneapolis (\$334,000), and WQAM in Miami (\$850,000).

Son and Dad could afford the steeper prices because KOWH had shot from last to first place among Omaha's seven radio stations within two years. Todd was a failed disc jockey—legend has it that he was fired for responding to a complaint about his music selection by telling the listener, on the air: "Ma'am, on your radio you will find a switch which will easily turn the set off"—who got into sales before buying the station. In the fashion of the day, KOWH tried to be all things to all people, airing a wide range of specialty music shows. Storz knocked off classical, country, and other programs and focused on pop tunes aimed at homemakers. The ratings soared.

Within a few years—the exact year is a point of debate, but has generally settled into the range between 1953 and 1955—Storz had discovered the concept that would be known as Top 40.

Storz was sitting with his program director, Bill Stewart, in a tavern on 16th Street, across from the station. The sun had gone down, KOWH had signed off, and, while the two men were talking shop (and, incidentally, waiting for one of the waitresses, a girl friend of Storz's, to get off work), noticed that customers repeatedly played a few songs on the jukebox, over the course of four or five hours. Even after most of the customers had left, they saw a waitress punching up the same songs yet again. When they asked why, she replied, simply: "I like 'em."

That evening, Storz and Stewart had been talking about the



impact of television on radio, and about what they might do to improve KOWH's ratings. Having been Number One for several years, the station now faced a stiff challenge from KOIL, whose owner, Don Burden, had an ear for talent. His disc jockeys over the years would include Gary Owens, Bobby Dale, Dr. Don Rose, and the Real Don Steele.

The jukebox activity triggered an idea. Stewart went to the box and, with the waitress' help, wrote down the titles of the records they'd been hearing all evening. With Storz's blessing, Stewart applied the jukebox theory to KOWH. The most popular songs would get more repeated plays; since the less popular records, although available in the box, had received nary a nickel, the size of the playlist would be trimmed—to about 30 records, Stewart

recalled. "We got the station turned around."

Stewart applied the policy to WTIX, and when Gordon McLendon, operating three powerful stations in Texas, picked up the idea and, according to some reports, gave it the "Top 40" handle, radio had its first and most enduring music format.

Stewart said the historic jukebox brainstorm happened in 1955. However, Storz is known to have come up with a program called *Top 40 at 1450* at his New Orleans station, WTIX—in 1953. That was reportedly in response to a DJ, Bob Howard, who'd begun playing *The Top 20 at 1280* at rival station WDSU. Another account dates Top 40 back to Storz and his father's first programming changes at KOWH, when they narrowed the station's music to the popular records of the day. Storz, in 1950, was simply extending programs like *Your Hit Parade* and *Lucky Lager Dance Time* to the full broadcast day, with disc jockeys.

Meantime, McLendon is reported to have been toying with variations of Top 40 in 1953, when, according to *Sponsor* magazine in 1962, KLIF "burst into national prominence with its formula of music and news plus razzle-dazzle promotion." By 1954, KLIF's lineup includ-

ed one Bill Stewart, who, fellow DJ Don Keyes recalled "really tightened the playlist. That's when we really went Top 40—hard Top 40." Before Stewart's arrival, Keyes said, "it was kinda loosey-goosey." Disc jockeys played what they wanted. "And Bill came in and firmed up that music policy, and away we went."

And where had Stewart come from? Omaha. It's likely that the Storz-Stewart discovery of jukebox plays took place early in 1953, and that, no matter the actual date, Storz was the first broadcaster owner to green-light Top 40.

DJ Lan Roberts worked at McLendon's KLIF in Dallas, and then for Todd Storz at WTIX in New Orleans. "As far as the Top 40 playlist is concerned, Storz was a little

*Even after most of the customers had left, they saw the waitress punching up the same songs again. When they asked why, she replied, simply: "I like 'em."...The jukebox activity triggered an idea.*

more innovative than McLendon was," he says.

"McLendon relied more on personalities than music."

Dick Clark thinks of Storz as the inventor of Top 40. "Todd Storz was the genius behind it, saying, 'Hey, people go into a saloon and they play the same 40 records over and over again,'" Clark told me. "Alan Freed at the same time was discovering in Cleveland that they liked black-oriented records. So it was all seat-of-the-pants knowledge, grapevine knowledge. You picked what you thought was going to be a hit."

That was the musical side of Top 40. Its other great pioneer, Gordon McLendon, had no knowledge of—or perceptible interest in—rock and roll. It was even worse than that. As his biographer, Ronald Garay, wrote, "Gordon's son Bart even said that his father 'knew nothing at all about music and cared nothing at all about music.' And there is no record of Gordon ever speaking favorably about rock and roll."

But Top 40 never had a more effective champion.

Gordon McLendon was 83 years old when he burst onto the radio scene in Dallas. Or so he said. In 1947, when he began doing recreations of football games on the station he owned, KLIF, he introduced himself to



"I believed in power and thought I had it. I thought I owned CBS. I didn't. I was merely a high-paid employee." — Walter Yetnikoff, 1997

listeners as “Gordon McLendon, the Old Scotchman, 83 years old this very day!”

Actually, that very day, he was 26. The nickname was, in part, a nod to his sportscasting idol, Red Barber (“the Old Redhead”) and a way to be popular with as many people as possible. “I tried to think of some nickname that everyone would like, and I am Scottish,” he told the *Los Angeles Times*. I thought: Which of the races have no enemies? The Scots don’t!”

When he began getting marriage proposals from 75 year-old women, and, more importantly, when his vivid recreations of football and baseball games led to the creation of his own radio network, McLendon knew that, in radio, creativity ruled.

He’d been kick-started in the industry by his father, a real estate magnate who helped him acquire his first station, in Palestine, Texas, in 1946, and would work alongside him in what became the McLendon Corporation, handling business details. But it was Gordon who was the undisputed front man, who worked the floor.

“Gordon,” Gary Owens has said, “was the Orson Welles of radio.” “Everybody thought he had the best ideas,” says Neil McIntyre. “McLendon,” says Lan Roberts, “was the genius of the whole thing, and everybody had respect for him.”

“Very few things that Gordon McLendon would do or attempt to do ever would be considered ordinary,” wrote Garay, who studied a massive collection of papers McLendon left to Texas Tech University for his book, *Gordon McLendon: The Maverick of Radio*. “His greatest joy would come from charting new territory, in doing what others had not done, and in challenging what most thought to be impossible.”

But for all of his experimentations and risk-taking, McLendon had the basics of radio down pat. His formula for success was simplicity itself, and by no means exclusive to his chosen profession: Give the people what they want. It would be echoed through the years, by station owners and managers, consultants and programmers. As McLendon put it, in a memo:

“Time and again—without exception—successful broadcast operators have proved that in order to survive and prosper financially, any radio station must provide a programming service of utility to a meaningful segment of the potential listening audience.

Neither sales nor general administration nor engineer-

*“It’s debatable that Top 40 radio would have become the viable medium that it is without (Bill Stewart’s) contribution to it.” — Claude Hall*

ing comes first. Programming does.”

Years after he’d established his stations as among the nation’s most influential, he noted: “The music and news format we use is much like soap. We all can buy the same records, play them on the same type of turntable, and we can all hire someone to talk. The difference in radio is like the difference in soap—it depends on who puts on the best wrapper.”

Despite his obvious genius and talent, and perhaps because of his guts, McLendon sometimes failed to fit the right “programming service” to the right audience. That was the case with his all-news experiment, WNUS, in Chicago, and with his all-want ads format, on an L.A. station, KADS. And while he had a resounding success with KABL, a cleverly marketed “beautiful music” station in Oakland (which he successfully put across as a San Francisco station), he could not duplicate the format in a slightly different market: Buffalo.

But McLendon’s work in Top 40 radio secured his permanent position among the giants of the industry. Michael Spears, who was DJ Hal Martin at KLIF in the ‘60s, recalls a sign on the station’s front door reading, “America’s Most Imitated Radio Station.” Gordon could have hung a sign around his neck proclaiming himself the country’s most imitated radio executive.

Todd Storz is often cited as the more promotion-minded; that may be because of a 1956 *Time* magazine article that tore into Storz for his penchant for contests and stunts. *Time* said that Storz’s “low estimate of listeners’ intelligence is tempered only by his high regard for their cupidity.” And that was only the first sentence. While grudgingly noting the financial success of the Storz’s stations—in six years, a \$50,000 investment had become a network worth \$2.5 million—the unbylined *Time* reporter scoffed at the Top 40 format and the way “Storz shovels out jackpots in a succession of quizzes, guessing games and treasure hunts that occasionally tie up traffic when the search is on.”

McLendon was left untrashed. But the Texan could



**“The strategy for competition will be the same as I’ve employed all my years in this business. You put together the best team of people you can, and you sign the best talent you can. It sounds like a simplistic equation, but guess what - it’s one that works.”**  
—Al Teller

concoct giveaways and marathons with the best of them. He learned of the value of promotion, he once said, from C.E. Hooper, who operated the dominant audience rating service of the time.

“He said, “Gordon, I’ve listened to it, and you’re doing everything right but one thing ... you’ve got to promote. You’ve got to have a lot of promotions on the air.”

To revisit a few of McLendon’s programming and promotional innovations is to discover ideas that would surface again and again, in the Sixties, and later—sometimes credited to whichever radio professional had been smart enough to study the Old Scotsman.

There is the simple matter of aggressive, high-quality local news coverage and the clever placement of newscasts at 20 minutes past or before the hour, to counter those stations that place their news on the hour and/or half-hour. Bill Drake and Gene Chenault did it at their RKO stations, and they called it “20/20 News.” McLendon, however, came up with those concepts at KLIF in the late Fifties.

There is the promotional stunt called “the millionaire,” often with a station’s call letter attached—i.e., the famous “KYNO Millionaire” introduced by—once again—Drake, at his stepping stone station in Fresno, California. The apparently wealthy person would simply hand out cash on the streets on behalf of the station being promoted. McLendon, it turns out, came up with the stunt in Dallas. The man would stand on a street corner and hand out as much as \$20 to passers by and draw newspaper and television coverage—only to reveal, live on TV, that he was the new morning DJ on KLIF.

And then there’s the device that centers on the idea, “Did you hear what ... said this morning?” The DJ, word has it, said something that got him in trouble; he may even have been suspended or fined. I don’t know what he said, but I’m going to tune in tomorrow.

That concept can also be traced to McLendon. When a news crew covering an armed robbery one night in 1954 interviewed the victim, he forgot to edit himself, and a few four-letter words hit the air. KLIF got all of six phone calls, but that was enough to give Bill Stewart, McLendon’s programming right-hand man, an idea. Soon, KLIF had an ad in the local papers:

**OOPS, SORRY..**

KLIF wishes to offer this apology for the unfortunate language used on an interview during an on-the-

scene broadcast of an armed robbery Friday night at 8:44 p.m. To all of the many people who called the station, KLIF would like to say that we’re sorry. But in covering news on the scene as we do, the remarks of a witness, who may be in a highly emotional state, can not be governed. However, in all humility—KLIF tenders this apology.

“All of the many people...” ... “...covering news on the scene as we do...” It was brilliant advertising, it was effective, and, by sheer coincidence, over the next few weeks, on-air boo-boos took place at other McLendon stations, and they, too, found the need to offer sincere and public apologies.

Bill Stewart has been mentioned as an integral part of both McLendon’s and Storz’s operations, but, in the view of some industry veterans, he’s never been mentioned enough.

“It’s debatable that Top 40 radio would have become the viable medium that it is without his contribution to it,” says Claude Hall, the former *Billboard* radio columnist. He noted that McLendon himself credited Stewart with the success of KLIF. Stewart, Hall writes, “was the first real program director in modern radio as we know it.”

When Ken Dowe, a long-time lieutenant of McLendon’s, names his two main mentors, they are the Old Scotsman—and Bill Stewart. “Bill Stewart doesn’t get nearly enough credit,” he says, “simply because there were not enough people who knew how important he was in the background.”

“Todd’s real contribution was the music rotation,” says Dowe, “and Bill Stewart was probably as responsible as Gordon for helping to invent a lot of the crazy promotions, and then Todd just picked up on what he had done.”

Larry Kent worked under Stewart as Program Director at KTSA in San Antonio. “It was Bill,” he says, “who gave some structure and sizzle to the first primitive Top 40 formats by creating rotations, consistent playlists, and promotions and contests which added fun and excitement that matched the music.”

Stewart, says Kent, was a soft-spoken sort, but when it came to radio, he was intense.

Once, Kent recalls, his phone rang at 3 a.m. It was Stewart, with a most logical question: “Did you just hear what the all-night guy said?”



“Radio has become much more responsive to listeners, and gives it to them the way they want it. Its a content war now, as to who’s got the best ideas and how they get presented.”  
—Josh Feigenbaum

By dint of his duties with both Storz and McLendon, Bill Stewart was the Johnny Appleseed of the Top 40 format. Between him, other pioneers, and all the copycats, the concept spread quickly around the country and overseas.

Make no mistake; it was a concept. As loose as it may have sounded in the early going, at certain stations, its original architects knew what Top 40 radio should be, beyond playing the hits.

Edd Routt went to work for McLendon soon after interviewing him about his first radio station, in Palestine, Texas. Routt has written several books about radio. In one, he listed the format's main ingredients. Top 40, he wrote, "consisted principally of music, light chatter, and news. Promotions in which money, merchandise, and services were awarded listeners were a vital part of the overall plan. Disc jockeys were selected for their sexiness, their voice, their ability to communicate excitement. Basic service consisted of time and temperature checks. Any idea of doing anything more than entertain the listener was out of the question."

Notice that nowhere in that description is there a mention of a target audience, or of

*"His greatest joy would come from charting new territory, in doing what others had not done, and in challenging what most thought to be impossible." — Ronald Garay, about Gordon McLendon*

young people, the first to attach themselves to Top 40, and to make it a success.

As Bill Gavin noted, "The advent of Top 40 in the early '50s didn't immediately orient itself to the teens. Perry Como and Patti Page had their regular share of hits. And, after the rock idiom became well-established for several years, the 18-to-24 year-old group still could dig the pop tunes." ☞



*Ben Fong-Torres, a former Senior Editor at Rolling Stone, has written for numerous magazines, including Esquire, GQ, Playboy, and Musician; wrote a radio column in the San Francisco Chronicle, and served as Gavin's Managing Editor from 1993 through 1997, when he left to write his forthcoming book, The Hits Just Keep On Coming: The History of Top 40 Radio.*



Beyond his remarkable, Hall of Fame accomplishments in radio and television, Gary Owens is a high-profile figure in the world of cartoons. He has provided myriad voices for some 3,000 animated cartoons, including Mickey Mouse, Garfield and Friends, Felix the Cat, and Roger Ramjet. Owens, who has served as MC at Gavin Seminars, is also a skilled cartoonist. "I started in radio at 16 and television at 17," he recalls, "and I was selling cartoons to magazines from age 12 on." Here, Gary pen-and-inks a tribute to Gavin's 40th anniversary.



# Genius at Work: The McLendon Papers



By Eric Norberg

**G**ordon McLendon did not invent Top 40 radio. But McLendon, operating a chain of stations in Texas, is credited with adding key elements that made Top 40 a credible format. His formula, including personality disc jockeys, aggressive local news, revolutionary jingles, and inventive contests and promotions, drew imitators across the country and changed the sound of radio far beyond Top 40.

As his McLendon Broadcasting chain grew, “The Old Scotsman,” as he nicknamed himself in his days as a young sportscaster, invented the “all-news” and “beautiful music” formats. He tried, and failed, with a Los Angeles station devoted to classified ads.

Through all his ups and downs, McLendon wrote and kept his memos and letters, ultimately donating them to a Texas university. In 1985, I received copies of material he wrote regarding his station, KABL in Oakland, Calif., and shared them in my column in *Gavin*. Although KABL was not a Top 40 station, McLendon’s strategies are nonetheless illuminating for programmers of all formats. I am pleased, once again, to offer excerpts from these papers.

First of all, it’s clear that McLendon and his executives had very precise ideas of how a station should sound. They not only outlined the format in memos 15 or more pages long, but they indexed them for ready reference. In 1959, McLendon bought KROW in Oakland, at about the same time that Crowell-Collier was programming a very good copy of “McLendon Top 40” at KFWB in Los Angeles, and was starting up a replica in Oakland, on KEWB. The industry expected a battle royal. Although all he had done up

to that point had been Top 40, McLendon recognized that it would be unprofitable to compete directly with his own format, so, for his newly-renamed KABL, McLendon faked out the industry by inventing the “beautiful music” format.

A soft music format did not preclude interest-provoking promotions. One of the attention-getting promotions KABL initiated was drawn right from McLendon’s Top 40 bag of tricks: “Exotics.” To quote from the notebook:

*“Along with station promos, exotics are your major cause of listener talk. These should be scheduled at least once every three hours throughout the day. The best exotics seem to be those which seem to be completely incongruous with the area, i.e., advertising the Brooklyn Ferry in San Francisco. Good sources for exotics are distant areas, selling products not normally sold in this area, advertising something completely foreign to the general thought, etc. All exotics should be ‘played’ perfectly straight...They should never be done live; all should be perfectly produced, and recorded. They have a tendency to annoy many people and you will receive quite a few complaints. Ignore them. Exotic commercials are almost the backbone of this type of operation. It is believed they are second only to the actual music policy in KABL’s success.”*

KABL, the first-ever “beautiful music” station, used the equivalent of jingles—but for this format McLendon utilized the sound of someone gently doing runs up and down a harp. The notebook defines very exactly the use of the harp effect:

*“NEVER let harp run more than four or five seconds before coming in*



with live announcement. After statement, vary the following: (a) Fade harp completely out during last word and bring next selection in fast, or (b) Bring harp back up at conclusion and segue next selection from there." The harp effect was used in conjunction with all announcements, and into and out of all spot breaks. KABL clustered three spots each quarter-hour break point, and was the first station I know of to use this technique to be able to do music sweeps (each about 12 minutes long).

The idea has become a staple of modern radio.

A few days before KABL's debut, McLendon outlined how the station would be introduced on Friday May 8, 1959 by a rebroadcast of his own call of the famous Giants-Dodgers 1951 National League playoff game which the Giants won with Bobby Thompson's unforgettable home run.

(McLendon had his own sport re-creation play-by-play network into the early '50s.)

Of course, sports editors of the local newspapers were alerted

ahead of time. Then, the game would be followed by the playing, for two days, non-stop, of a terrible rock tune called "Gila Monster," followed by a day of playing "Auld Lang Syne."

The new format began Monday, May 11, 1959, at noon with a statement by McLendon on the air, a 100% billboard showing, and a squad of models visiting agencies, radio-TV editors, and newspaper columnists. To garner additional publicity, the models were called in to do a promotional picket line starting Thursday, May 14. Additional promotional activities included delivering presents to advertisers of Cracker Jacks, hot dogs, tabasco sauce, bottles of Old Crow (the station's call letters had been KROW), a bird in a gilded cage, and sending "jumping bean letters." Contests on the air included "mystery voices" and "mystery telephone numbers," describing a famous person in song, ghost stories at Halloween, winning the use of a \$100,000 diamond bracelet for one month, a citizen of the week, personalized public service announcements, giving

away an island, and an Easter Egg hunt.

The station was also distinguished by thematic, mood-setting, poetic mini-essays. Here is the script for one:

"From the beginning, men have sensed at once that there is something different about San Francisco. The Indians believed that, unlike the rest of the world, it was formed in a single cataclysmic moment when the sun rose blood-red over the Berkeley hills and the earth rumbled and shook...and the mountains split asunder, forming the golden gate, and the impatient, waiting seas charged through the pass to create the inland ocean that is the Bay of San Francisco. Something *different*."

Other promos dealt with both well-known and obscure elements of the area's history.

McLendon took a rather bland and featureless music concept (mostly instrumental mood music and standards), packaged it with striking formattics, and then

*KABL, the first-ever "beautiful music" station, used the equivalent of jingles but for this format, McLendon utilized the sound of someone gently doing runs up and down a harp.*

created its own personality with a combination of audacious promotions and promos which caught the feeling of the area and its history. His success was founded on original, out-of-the-mainstream thought, built with inventive promotion, and maintained with impeccable attention to detail, leaving nothing to chance, on the air or off.


To illustrate further McLendon's format ideas, let me quote portions of the notebook headed "the KABL hour":

"Follow music list EXACTLY. In the event not enough time is available for four selections (between spot clus-



UPPER LEFT:

McLendon recreates ballgames as "The Old Scotsman." His dictum: "Keep emphasis on local news."



"I know technology will and must change, and programming for the largest common denominator has to take place, but we must have a creative environment. The folk artists of the '60s and '70s poets and renaissance people like Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Bruce Springsteen wouldn't have a chance today. We mustn't let technology stand in the way of such talent."  
— Clive Davis, 1995



*"General style: Announcers must create an effect of dignity, preciseness, and above all correctness in enunciation and pronunciation. The effect must be obtained without giving delivery an affected sound. The announcer must deliver copy as though that was the way he spoke normally."*

*ters), always drop selection #3...It is important that the first selection following the hour and half-hour cluster be a big production-type number. The first selection following the 1/4 and 3/4 hour clusters can be more the full orchestration type, i.e., quieter. This is further discussed under 'music policy'. Production must be as tight as humanly possible. As in any other format station, dead air must be eliminated. Every second saved in talk means that much more music on the air. You should continually strive to shorten everything in order to keep a maximum of music on the air."*

*"All flow period information should contain call letters, and the use of 'K-A-B-L' and 'Cable' should be approximately equal. In order to keep your sound fresh and alive, continual change is absolutely necessary. This goes for per-tune intros, features, station promos, program intros, etc."*

*"General style: Announcers must create an effect of dignity, preciseness, and above all correctness in enunciation and pronunciation. The effect must be obtained without giving delivery an affected sound. The announcer must deliver copy as though that was the way he spoke normally. In order to affect tight production, the announcer must always audition the last few bars of music and record commercials. There is to be NO DEAD AIR. NEVER read a piece of copy that you have not checked out before it goes on the air. If there is any doubt about pronunciation, check in advance. Know in advance what you are going to say before you open your mike. Never ad lib. News should be handled directly and precisely with a slightly faster pace than normal delivery for commercials, etc. Punctuate each news story with a chime. Keep them short; read in advance; and strike unnecessary words. Keep emphasis on local news. Insert call letters where possible. Make your reading extremely authoritative. Check the wire at least twice each half-hour for bulletins and other important items."*

The format has a special section on how

to handle bulletins and how to handle time checks and weather, in morning drive and at other times. Also how to pull the music, how to keep the log, what material to check before going on the air. There are even

general admonitions, such as "never discuss station affairs outside the radio station; do not take any phone calls while you are on the air unless they are on the unlisted station line; be on the lookout for new ideas all the time...when you come up with what you believe is a good one, write it out and submit it to the PD...a station like this demands new ideas and fresh copy all the time."

Nothing is overlooked. That's the way to write a format.

And that's the way Gordon McLendon became a legend. ☺



**"Evolution and change have been the key to alternative radio's survival, and certainly to its success. Change is viewed at first as a big negative, but in the end, change brings progress." — Steve Tipp**



*Eric Norberg began in radio in Monterey, California in 1961, later doing news and programming in Sacramento, Los Angeles, and Portland. He developed the "ReFocus" (tm) audience-response system used in his Adult Contemporary Music Research Letter. A former Gavin columnist, the Portland-based Norberg is the author of *Radio Programming Tactics and Strategy* (Focal Press, 1996) and can be reached at (800) 929-5119 or at [mikey@teleport.com](mailto:mikey@teleport.com).*

# The Real The Real Don Steele



By Ian Whitcomb

**D**on Steele greeted the idea of adding “The Real” to his radio name with a string of expletives. Once it caught on, however, he adopted it like a son. In fact, he had his name legally changed to The Real Don Steele.

The RDS kicked off “Boss Radio” in May, 1965 and proved himself the quintessential afternoon drive Top 40 DJ. He was very public, with a TV dance show, syndicated radio show, and film roles, but he did very few interviews in which he really revealed himself, his widow, Shaune McNamara Steele, says. One of them was with Ian Whitcomb, the British pop artist (“You Turn Me On,” 1965).

Whitcomb interviewed him in Nicodell’s Bar, just around the corner from the KHJ studios on Melrose Avenue, one day in 1970. “Don had just come off his afternoon shift, and we were drinking bourbons,” Whitcomb recalled. “He has hawk-like features, quite a bit of early-Beatle hair, and shades.”

*Ian: How would you describe your thing?*

Don: It’s hard to verbalize. I’m a hard sell announcer.

*I ask you that because talking to Ted (Atkins, KHJ Program Director) just now; he said that KHJ may sound very improvised but they’re very aware of detail. I was listening to your catch phrases which are very good but I don’t know what they means. I thought, “Does Don prepare these?”*

I have a phonetic hang up. Maybe why I’m liked is because I’m funny, but what makes me funny is not that I am telling joke, per se. I dig sound. You don’t have to know what they mean.

Preferably if it has not a double meaning but a quadruple meaning.

*Can you give us an example?*

‘It ain’t that bad if you fry it right.’ “I actually did hear it. I was sitting in a bar near some fellows and they were talking about cat-fish or something. He was the typical beer-drinking, scratching, hard-hat and he said, “It ain’t that bad if you fry it right,” and I said, “Hey, I like that!”

*Do they ever actually mean anything, though?*

I think it sounds GO!

*But what does it mean?*

I think it means a lot of things. How about LIFE? How about having to EAT SHIT? Having to PAY YOUR DUES?

*Do you ever feel repressed on the air? Would you like to express your opinion on world problems?*

No feckin’ way! I think I’m still coming on as a human being. I like a little magic; I like a little showbiz. The majority listening to me on the radio - they don’t see me. They just hear a ZOOOOW coming at them out of that radio. There surely is a term for it—a spoonerism or something.

*Could it be “aphorism;” a wise saying?*

OK ... I said once, on the air after one of my IDs, “Hey, that’s a spoonerism” after I’d been a bit disoriented and I was jerking along and I knew I got about eight more measures. So I said, “Wait, now, wait! That’s not a spoonerism.” And I described what a spoonerism

is: when you take something, turn it around and do it backwards. I said that at approximately 3.01. At 5:35 some housewife with two children had been driving all the way since, called to say I was a dirty man. And I didn't even intend to be dirty, because I could get much dirtier, you know. With much more *finesse*.

*I know you're a pro. I can hear you're a pro. I've known that for years—but still, it must be quite hard to keep that hard-selling going.*

I feel I have done a day's work after doing only three hours on the air.

*What do you do afterwards?*

I come in here, have a drink, and come down.

*So what sort of thing do you do?*

I like girls.

*You have the image of being a high-speed BANG BANG BANG screamer disc jockey. Is that really you? Is that your personality?*

Yeah.

*Where'd you come from?*

Here. Born and raised about two and a half miles from here.

*And Don Steele's your real name?*

It is my real name.

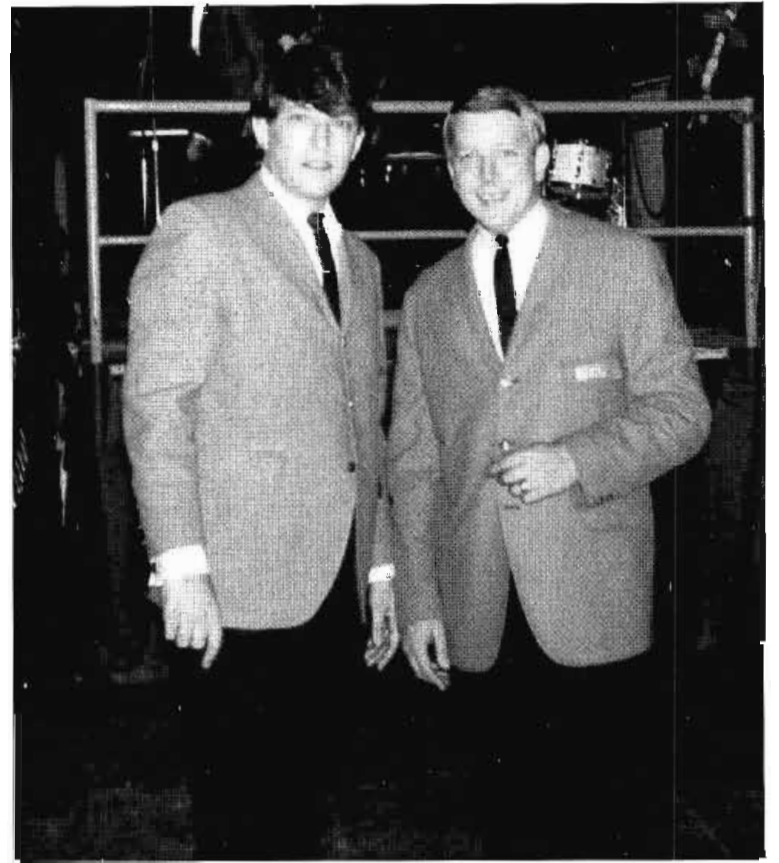
*Why are you called "the Real Don Steele?"*

That's a radio story: In Omaha .... working there as Don Steele. (*He sings:*) "Be aware, I'll be there..." So: I'd been there pushing a year which is a *loooooong*, mother-fuckin' time to be in Omaha, Nebraska, my friend. A nice place to fly over. The program director, he called me up. By this time I'm totally disgusted; I want to get out of the goddamn town, was drugged with the station, drugged with the management, drugged with the city—by this time it had gotten to me. The PD calls me up and says, "Why don't you call yourself the 'REAL Don Steele?'" I looked at the receiver and thought, "You rotten, stupid, son-of-a bitch asshole motherfucker." He wasn't asking me if I wanted to call myself that. But I thought: "Right, I'll take your dumb order, you dummy."

Well, all of a sudden people on the street no longer called me "Bob Steele" (the B picture Western star). They called me "The REAL DON STEELE." A phonetic thing; people react to certain words.

*Why did they like this phrase?*

Tell me why they liked "Tina Delgado is ALIVE, ALIVE!!!" I used that in Portland, Oregon and soon it



**"Boss Jocks" and soul brothers: The Real Don Steele with Robert W. Morgan.**

was all over town like "Kilroy was here." Dumb thing. I don't have any idea why. I know it was a hit; I could feel it was a hit.

*Have you ever thought about these things?*

I don't know if "Roberto Delgado is alive, alive" would have been as heavy.

*Do you look upon the printed word with respect?*

Of course! And the printed word will always be there because that's permanent. You can get aesthetic, but I look upon it commercially: that's why advertisers prefer buying newspaper space—although radio time makes them more money—because they can hold it in their hand—whereas a radio spot is gone. You can keep your newspaper ad in your wallet and show your wife.

*Do you read books at all?*

Very little, which is nothing I'm proud of.

*Have you got any outside interests?*

None, unfortunately.

*Fishing, perhaps?*

No.

*Collect stamps?*

No, no, no. I guess I'm pretty shallow. You see, it's so hard to make it (*very slowly spoken*) I really think my life is getting more narrow all the time. But my cop-out is that I couldn't allow any side thing because I had to be Number One.

I had this fixation, or hang-up—and I made it. But in doing so I had to build up this armor. I'm thinking



**"Radio is a people business. Our intangible product is only as good as the women and men who create the elusive thing we refer to as 'the sound'."**  
—John Bradley



**Bill Drake, the consultant who hired Steele for KHJ, joins him at his Hollywood Walk of Fame ceremony**

about gittin' where I'm gittin', gittin' where I'm gittin', gittin' where I'm gittin'. Now I'm looking back and I'm seeing what I've done for myself.

*And what have you done for yourself?*

I'm like one little laser beam, cutting through a lot of shit. I'm very good at what I do. I am a specialist. I've honed it and polished it and soon I'll be out of it, like a moonshot man with moonshots.

*Did you lose many friends on the way?*

No, I didn't *make* any.

*Do you have a lot of close friends?*

No. Do you? I got a guy who I went to high school with, who's a cop, of all

things. A very close friend: I can depend on him, no strings attached. Morgan (Robert W. Morgan, a fellow disc jockey on KHJ) is a friend, because we grew up together in our careers. And I grew up with this cop in our youths. I worked with Morgan—helping each other—for seven years, which is a super long time in radio, like 25 years with the telephone company.

*Have you looked into the future?*

I want to be successful. I've had to be narrow like that laser beam but at least I can be giggly, unlike the people I grew up with. They're old. Now, I don't want to be a perennial youth freak, but...

*How old are you?*

I'm 17, baby, forever! I see them working there and, well, I'm glad I dropped out of college.

*You wouldn't have liked to have had a regular job? Wife and kids and settle down?*

I don't think I could have handled it. When I got out of the service there were two things open to me: I'd either rob banks or be a radio announcer.

*Seriously?*

I'm talking seriously. I thought, "The work's easy. No sweat." I didn't know then how hard it is, how dedicated you have to be. But I'm glad I did it.

*You might have been a "Wild One?"*

Not a wild one. I wasn't gonna run around with machine guns. I wanted the easy money....easy (he stretches the word through closed teeth). Easy, baby. But now—it's the job, not the money.

*Are you politically aligned? Are you left-winged or right-winged?*

I will tell you honestly: I am for things that are good for me, and against things that are bad for me.

*So you're for yourself?*

See what I mean about print? That looks terrible. I'm not really that.

*Perhaps you could put it some other way.*

I wish I could give some glib answer here, but this is where I usually get fucked in interviews.

*I get the impression that you're very weary of the Press, that you've been distorted by them.*

I was totally destroyed by the *Herald Examiner*. I wasn't that bad; I was just saying "I'm the best"; I said I was the highest paid—in *this* tone of voice. All right, there comes the spread: they got a picture of me looking like Hitler, very cocky, and a quote under the picture, "I'm the highest-rated disc jockey in the city bar none!" You know, 'bar none' isn't an expression I use. Made me look like Mr. Ego-Maniac. Which I am, but not really.

*Were you brought up in a middle class home?* **The Real Don Steele**

My mother was a band booker and a pianist. She used to take me on gigs - me and Judy Garland. My dad was a truck driver. I used to play trumpet, but I was never that good. I had it here (*points to stomach*)—but I couldn't get it through my axe. I didn't want to play trumpet all the time. I wanted to be Number One—whatever ego-hangups that shows, I'm not afraid to say it.

*There's nothing to be ashamed of.*

What I'm going to have on my gravestone is this: EGO IS NOT A FOUR LETTER WORD. ☺



"Every decade had its musical messiah. In the '50s Elvis broke big. The Beatles became a milestone in the '60s. The '70s boomed with disco and a host of messiahnettes, and in the '80s it was Michael Jackson's *Thriller* that broke new ground. To date the '90s hasn't produced a real messiah."  
—Macey Lipman



*Ian Whitcomb had several hit records in the mid-Sixties, the most prominent being 1965's "You Turn Me On." Born in Surrey, England, Whitcomb soon turned to writing; to chronicling music history, beginning with the highly acclaimed *After the Ball*. Other books include *Tin Pan Alley*, *Irving Berlin and Ragtime America*, and *Lotusland*, set in Southern California, where Whitcomb lives. The above is reprinted with his kind permission.*

# The Hits Between the Hits: The Early History of Radio Jingles



By Don Worsham

In the early Fifties, as radio stations fought not only each other, but also that big new kid in every town—television—their images were shaped in no small part by the short, unique custom songs that sang their call letters.

So strong were those songs that they are a part of our musical memories alongside the records we heard. The musical call letter images were ID “jingles” and the call letter melody, the “logo.”

I grew up in Indianapolis in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. The radio next to my bed at night was full of the sounds of local stations, but my favorite ones could only be received after sunset. At night I could hear New York, Buffalo, St. Louis, Dallas, Boston, Oklahoma City and parts unknown. The most exciting stations were the ones with the best DJs and jingles. In years to come, I would learn that more work went into creating the jingles than any of the hit songs the stations played. Each jingle was a model of musical perfection designed to be heard hundreds of times, yet be exciting to hear each time.

It all began, as did so much having to do with radio, with Gordon McLendon, who started KLIF radio in Dallas in 1947. Gordon, with the help of his father, B.R. McLendon, had purchased a half interest in KNET radio in Palestine, Texas in 1946. There, the younger McLendon learned the importance of creativity in radio, and, within two years, he’d created his own network: Liberty

Broadcasting System.

At KLIF, the spark of the future radio ID industry was struck when Bill Meeks joined as Music Director. McLendon wanted to produce two live music shows, and he placed Meeks in charge. Meeks put together a vocal group, “The Circle 5 Ranch Hands.”

“KLIF-1190”...These call letters were first sung on the air on November 11, 1947, by Meeks and his staff musicians. They were, incredibly enough, a stalling device.

As Bill Meeks recounts, he started using pre-recorded singing station IDs because “We needed time to switch musicians and set up for the next program. The limited space at KLIF did not permit two programs to be prepared for air at once.” The recorded ID provided the time to clear out the studio so that the next program’s performers could get into place.

To stimulate ad sales, McLendon moved his point man, Meeks, into the sales department. Meeks began producing the musical background for a commercial on tape, playing it for the client, suggesting suitable lyrics for the advertising message, and then having vocals recorded at KLIF to create the finished spot.

By 1951, Liberty was providing 16 hours a day of programming to its affiliates. McLendon continued to face new challenges. In the early Fifties, when ratings services surveyed listeners, most still



*At night I could hear New York, Buffalo, St. Louis, Dallas, Boston, Oklahoma City, and parts unknown. The most exciting stations were the ones with the best DJs and jingles. I would learn that more work went into creating the jingles than any of the hit songs the stations played.*

answered with the name of a program. Since most programs were provided by the networks, independent stations were seldom mentioned. This put KLIF at a big disadvantage, and McLendon was eager for a higher profile. Unable to afford advertising in newspapers, he decided to use KLIF itself, by way of imaging jingles. Since no other Dallas stations were using them, KLIF easily stood out.

With his success at KLIF, Bill Meeks went out on his own in the spring of 1951 and formed PAMS (Production Advertising Marketing Service), which would become the premier jingles company. Meeks used the same vocal group he had at KLIF.

PAMS offered the same singing station breaks



**A jingle session for KLIF in Dallas.**

Meeks had written for KLIF to other stations. By doing so, PAMS pioneered the syndication of radio jingles, made possible by re-using pre-produced musical backgrounds.

In 1951, KLIF hired Tom Merriman to arrange music for the bands which performed on KLIF and Liberty. Merriman, a dance band aficionado, was a music-

arranging wizard. But, despite the talent he'd attracted, McLendon couldn't spread KLIF's success throughout the network, and, in 1952, Liberty Broadcasting System shut down. Now, affiliate stations had to increase local program-

ming. At KLIF, McLendon

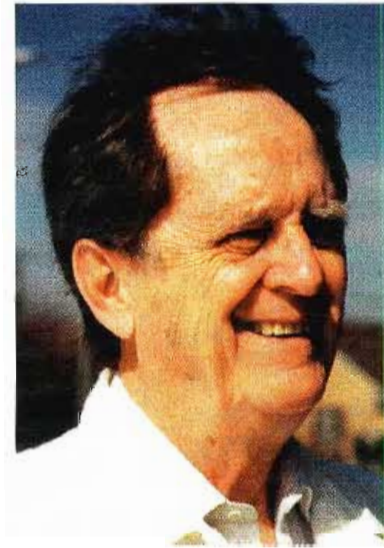
saw an opportunity to

experiment with some new ideas. He introduced DJs, contests and promotions, along with jingles by Merriman.

As those jingles became increasingly elaborate, they began getting heard by stations across the country. As Merriman recalls: "We did those first jingles, and Gordon said, 'So and so wants some of those jingles...he likes them. Could you do some more?' So I would do another set." Merriman filled those orders using the basic KLIF instrumental jingle tracks and adding vocals for McLendon's customers. The early Merriman package contained 15 to 18 cuts.

With all of the tinkering and experimenting which characterized the evolution of Top 40, Bill Meeks and Tom Merriman's jingles became the wild card in the format, the sound that could be used to identify and promote as well as to shape the very character of the station. They conveyed energy, excitement, and uniqueness—the keys that Storz and McLendon and Todd Storz found to be so important in their concept of radio.

In 1955, Merriman formed the Commercial Recording Corporation (CRC) with Charlie Meeks, a brother of Bill's who'd also worked at KLIF, and another producer. PAMS suddenly had some formidable competition. But, driven by rock and roll, radio grew in



**Bill Meeks, jingles pioneer.**



**"What's changed in the game is mass inventory. The inventory of radio station sales is being pushed into fewer hands, and....this will probably drive the cost of advertising spots higher and allow more stations to be profitable."**  
—Allan Chlowitz

popularity, and so did, in PAMS. CRC struck gold in 1957 with its Series #3, the first known package geared to the Top 40 format. With the Triangle Stations, led by WFIL in Philadelphia, as its client, CRC went all out, supplementing its Dallas musicians with session players from Los Angeles.

The package was sung with four voices, doubled or "stacked" to add a thicker, richer sound. Arrangements featured full brass and reed arrangements in Merriman's dance band style. The package contained both image cuts for station promotion and cuts intended to work as formattics. DJ intros were included, as well as cuts for time, temp, sports, and news.

CRC Series #3 would become the biggest-selling package of the time; it was a must for Top 40 stations,



In Los Angeles, KFWB, "Color Radio" from the beginning of 1958 under the guidance of former McLendon staffer Chuck Blore, tapped the services of Bob Sande and Larry Green for a series of classic, influential jingles.

In 1958, Jim Wells and Jack Alexander left PAMS to start Futursonic in Big D, and in 1959, another producer joined the ranks of PAMS, CRC and Futursonic. John Pepper, a successful Memphis broadcaster, opened Pepper Sound Studios.

In 1968, Merriman and radio programmer Jim Long formed TM Productions (now part of TM Century Inc.). TM (famed for its "shotgun" jingle in the early Seventies) continues as an industry leader today, along with JAM Creative Productions, Thompson Creative, and Ben Freedman Productions, all in Dallas. JAM cofounder Jonathan Wolfert can also be credited with reviving PAMS, which had suspended operations in the late '70s, its master tapes auctioned off by the IRS. In 1990, Wolfert, a former employee of PAMS, purchased the company and its copyrights. Now, along with Ken R, Inc. of

Toledo, Ohio, which acquired many of the master tapes, Wolfert offers re-sings and collections of classic PAMS jingles, along with JAM's own library of 250 syndicated packages.

Jingles, classic and contemporary, are alive and well. ☺

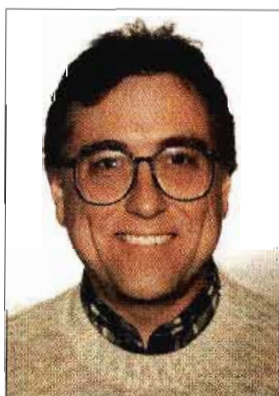


**Bill Meeks' first jingles were made with the Circle 5 Ranch Hands, who'd been hired to sing on two live music programs on KLIF.**

and emerging powerhouses like WKBW Buffalo and WMEX in Boston employed it.

Over at PAMS, Bill Meeks was also about to create new station ID series for his clients. At the end of 1957, the wave of Top 40 stations continued to grow, attracting even more jingles producers.

In New York, commercial jingle innovators Eric Siday and Ginger Johnson were joined by Music Makers and the Jingle Mill.



*Don Worsham is working on a book, *The Hits Between the Hits*, which, he says, "is intended to honor the individuals and companies whose creative artistry is represented by the radio musical ID jingle. This edited excerpt is used with the permission of Don Worsham and the Media Preservation Foundation. Copyright 1998, all rights reserved.*



**"A lot of concepts we tried in the '70s we're trying today. We're looking for the same great song and finding the artists we think are special."  
—Mike Curb**

# 40 Years of Golden Voices



By Ben Fong-Torres

When I joined *Gavin* as Managing Editor in 1993, the magazine had a staff of 32. When I met Bill Gavin for a profile for *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1972, the staff was a little smaller. As in four. It was Bill and Janet Gavin, with Betty Hollars handling R&B reports and another woman helping with book-keeping and circulation. But it didn't matter whether *Gavin* was a mimeographed newsletter put out by half a handful of people or a full-fledged magazine operated by a London-based media giant. Bill Gavin and *Gavin* have been major influences in my career as a radio-loving music journalist. Or am I a music-loving radio journalist? No matter. Even before I knew how to spell "career," I'd been under Mr. Gavin's musical spell. I would learn this only on that day I met with him in 1972 and discovered that he'd been the programmer behind the two radio shows that introduced me to pop music: *The Burgie Music Box* and *Lucky Lager Dance Time*, which I began listening to when I was seven or eight years old, living in Chinatown, Oakland, California.

In 1953, Top 40 was busy being born in other parts of the country, but we wouldn't get "Wonderful KOB" for another three years. On other spots on the AM dial, R&B music could be heard, but our family radio seemed capable of receiving only the network affiliates or *The Chinese Hour*.



**"Top 40 shouldn't embrace all music. They should do their homework, listen, and understand what's a hit from the Top 40 viewpoint." —Bill Richards**

The first pop stars I knew of, then, were Joni James and Teresa Brewer; Tony Bennett and Perry Como. As the music began to shift and shake, with the arrival of rock and roll, so, too, did *Lucky Lager Dance Time*. As Kim Fowley writes elsewhere, the show was where the action and the passion was.

In high school, in college, and at *Rolling Stone*, I was known as a Top 40 fanatic, the kid who could answer any question, trivial to earth-shaking, on any DJ or hit record. As a teenager, I got a summer gig at KEWB in 1961 and became friends with Gary Owens. As Commissioner of Assemblies at Oakland High, I booked disc jockeys every chance I got. Michael

Jackson, now better known as the Los Angeles talk show host, was just one of several celebrity guests at Oakland High assemblies. Over the years, I'd meet a few other favorites, including Russ "The Moose" Syracuse and Tommy Saunders of KYA, but, once settled in at *Rolling Stone*, I had to shelve my love of Top 40 and switch over to FM, where the music was free-form—that is, free of playlists—and the DJs were loose, mellow, and, above all, hip.

I never lost my passion for Top 40, though, and when I finally hooked up with *Gavin* in the early '90s, it was a homecoming, of sorts. One of my first features was on the state of the Top 40 radio. For that piece, I got a crash course on the format and the



seemingly endless roller coaster ride it'd been on for nearly four decades. Since that time, I've met many more of the radio professionals who pioneered and executed some of the best of pop music radio, some by phone for articles; others in person, at such events as the annual Gavin Seminar.

But I never got to know as many radio giants as I did while working on *The Hits Just Keep On Coming: The History of Top 40*. That book, which is scheduled for publication in Fall of 1998, turned out to be a ticket into some of the greatest radio stations of the last four decades, by way of the recollections of their programmers and disc jockeys. Early on, I called, on noted friends of *Gavin*, including the original PD of "Boss Radio," Ron Jacobs, and longtime programmer Paul Drew.

One person invariably led to a half-dozen others, and the list of potential interviews soon grew into a wealth of impossible dreams. In the time allotted to book research, I did manage to speak to 70-something people.

More than once, as I literally stumbled into legendary radio figures, from Arnie "Woo Woo" Ginsberg to Robert W. Morgan, I expressed private thanks to Bill Gavin. Without him, there may not have been the opportunity to meet these people; to let them tell their stories and help chronicle the most significant format in radio history. Without him and *Lucky Lager Dance Time*, who knows? I may never have become interested enough in music and in radio to combine them into a career.

The book and this publication, then, have been twin pleasures for me to write and edit, respectively, as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Mr. Gavin's radio vision. To bring the two projects together, here is a sampling of my visits with some of the people who are part of *The Hits Just Keep On Coming*.

## Joe Niagara on the 'Rockin' Bird's' First Flights



*Joe Niagara is one of the legends of Philadelphia radio. Philadelphia, of course, is one of the legends among radio markets, breaking records left and right beginning in the mid-Fifties, when Bob Horn, then Dick Clark anchored American Bandstand, and when disc jockeys like Tom Donahue, Bobby Mitchell, and Niagara ruled at WIBG ("Wibbage Radio") and broke records alongside Georgie ("The Man With the Goods") Woods and "Jocko" Henderson at WDAS. The "Rockin' Bird" continues to spin oldies on WPEN in Philly. Here, he takes us back a few years and tells how the hits were made...and played.*

My introduction to this thing called Rock and Roll was 1956. I was with WIBG in Philadelphia. At the time we were playing what was then termed "middle of the road." Doris Day, Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, and occasional big band, etc. etc. I was doing 7 pm to midnight. And I was hearing about this thing called rock and roll. Rhythm and blues was another name for it. And I heard how successful this sound was with this guy, Alan Freed, in Cleveland. And slowly but surely some of the record promotion people that would come into Philly out of places like New York would drop off some of these records that I had never heard of. And I started to listen to people like an unknown kid named Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and the list goes on and on.

And I said to myself, "Let me see what happens here if I work just one or two of these in to see what the reaction would be like." And sure enough I drop in a Chuck Berry, drop in the Penguins, Ruth Brown, in between all these other middle of the road people. And the phone didn't stop.

Young people were calling, 14, 15, 16 years old. "Who is that?"

Where can I buy that record?" And I figured

maybe I better increase this kind of play. Of course, at night you were able to get away with a lot of things you couldn't get away with in daytime. So I started to slip more and more of these unknown people into the format—and I shouldn't even say "format" because we *had* no format.

I almost stopped playing the middle of the road and went more and more with R&B, rock and roll, etc., and started to make and break various artists and records.

There was an unknown kid named Conway Twitty. And I heard this thing, "It's Only Make Believe." And I said, "You know, this has an Elvis sound to it. It might happen." And sure enough I started to lay on it—BOOM! The thing exploded. And this happened with quite a few others. A record distributor brought a thing in called "Summertime." It was by Sam Cooke, and I listened. I said, "Ehh, it's nice." I said, "What's on the other side?" He said, "Forget it. It doesn't mean anything. Lay on this one, I know it's going to be a hit." I played it a couple of times, frankly without a heck of a lot of reaction, and then I flipped it and listened to the other side. And I said, "Hey, baby. This could be a hit." And sure enough I started to play it. And BOOM! A genuine monster. In fact Dick Clark called and said, "What is this thing—Sam somebody or other?" I said, "Sam Cooke?" He says, "Yeah." I said, "It's called 'You Send Me.'" And of course he started to lay on it nationally, and from there on in it made number one. And this happened with so many records. ☺

*"I started to lay on it — BOOM!  
The thing exploded!"*

# Dick Clark on AM and FM

Dick Clark got his start on the radio, but was never a Top 40 disc jockey. By the time the format came into being, he was already a television star, hosting *American Bandstand* and having the kind of impact on the radio and music industries that MTV would have a quarter-century later. But Clark, not one to miss many opportunities, did return to radio, by way of syndicated countdown and feature shows. When he's not busy producing television specials like the *American Music Awards* and the *Golden Globes*, or opening *Bandstand* restaurants and record labels, or writing books (Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* is his latest, co-written with Fred Bronson), he can still be heard on radio.

You got to know about FM quite early too, because that was your first job offer.

Yeah, and I used to plead with my father, who was the manager of an AM/FM station, to let people who listen to FM hear popular music, and the theory in those days to which you subscribed was that it was only for classics.

Yeah, it was classical music but they did have odd things like the Rural Radio Network, which was farmers reports and weather forecasts.

Virtually nobody listened to FM. That was an investment in the future. It was a 100,000 watt station, which in those days was quite unusual, and my grandmother was the only one who had an FM radio because the family gave it to her so she could listen to

her classical music.

In your book you described how you set up an FM receiver for your Mom so she could hear your first time on radio. Do you remember that?

You'd be surprised. I remember it better than when I told it the first time.

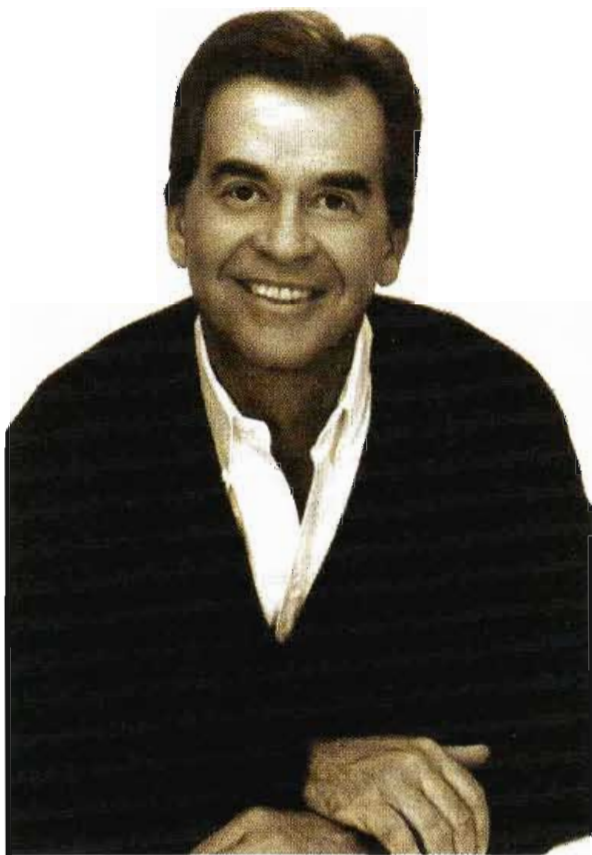
By the time Top 40 was officially born, by 1956 or '57, you were already on television, so you never did a lot of format Top 40, did you?

Never. The closest thing I ever got to it was the guy I worked for in Syracuse, Sherm Marshall at WLIF, that I believe was the true first Top 40 radio station, formed by McLendon and what was the other guy's name? Todd Storz. Sherm Marshall knew that people listened to repetitious music much like a jukebox. Those were our instructions. There

weren't any real hard rules, but we knew we had to play with a limited play list.

Did you enjoy radio, or were you always kind of thinking of other forms of radio or the infant television industry?

I always loved the job of announcing, and prior to this (interview), I did one of the radio shows I do and it's one of the highlights of the day. I get to go up, and I know how to do it, I have my own technique, you can either like it or not like it, but it's my technique and I do the copy in a way that I hope people don't think I'm reading, so I'm enjoying myself. ☺



"Stations need to put some of their songs in the freezer for a couple of months, then bring them out when they'll sound fresh again." —John Martin

## Top 40 Through the Years

<p><b>1935</b> Your Hit Parade debuts on the NBC Radio network, with live performances of the most popular songs of the week, as determined by sales of sheet music, records,</p>	<p>jukeboxes, and radio airplay. Among the singers through the years: Frank Sinatra and Doris Day. <b>July 23, 1941</b> The term "disc jockey" appears in <i>Variety</i>, replacing</p>	<p>"record jockey." <b>August 1, 1941</b> <i>Lucky Lager Dance Time</i> debuts on KFAC in Los Angeles, offering a nightly pro-</p> 	<p>gram of hit records and a "Lucky Ten" countdown show on Saturdays. <b>1949</b> KOWH, in Omaha, Nebraska, introduces a playlist format of popular records.</p>	<p><b>1951</b> Alan Freed joins WJW in Cleveland and, after noticing a number of white teenagers buying R&amp;B records in a local shop, begins his late-night <i>Moondog Rock n' Roll Party</i>, bringing</p>	<p>black music to a largely white audience. <b>1953:</b> Bob Howard of WDSU in New Orleans plays <i>The Top 20</i> at 1280.</p> 
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# Joey Reynolds on Shoe Biz in Buffalo

*Joey Reynolds was one of the biggest radio personalities in America in the late Fifties. Just ask him. He was also the role model for Howard Stern, he says, with his big mouth and frank talk, heard on "the big KB," WKBW in Buffalo, and on powerful stations in Cleveland, Detroit, and Miami. Gavin honored him, along with B. Mitch Reed, as DJ of the Year for 1963. Reynolds now hosts a nationally syndicated all-night talk show out of WOR in New York.*

I worked at WKBW in Buffalo and I had these huge ratings for several years, and I also had a television show which Tony (Mammarella) negotiated for me. Tony was essentially a TV guy and then, after things went sour at WKBW, where I got fired, Tony

stupid. So I went to the guys and asked them for money, and I kept irritating them, and finally when they had this telethon, Forrest Tucker was on it along with Frank Gorshin, and I got wind that they were being paid \$10,000 to do the telethon. Back



**"Radio looks great. With CDs and DMX and all these threatening media, we find that they haven't pinched our butt, let alone knocked us out." —Matt Hudson**

*"They were paying me \$300 a week, and I was the Number One disc jockey in America."*

put my butt in Cleveland, and I worked for Norm Wayne, who started his empire.

He, in conjunction with American Greeting Cards, started his first Top 40 station there, WIXY. And then after such a really fast success there, I mean, it had happened so quick, I got an offer from ABC, and Tony had already been tied into ABC, so he put me on WXYZ in Detroit, which is owned by ABC.

(In Buffalo), they were not willing to pay me. They were paying me \$300 a week, and I was the Number One disc jockey in America, and I had also a one hour television show on Saturdays with 18 spots sold out, and they gave me \$350 so it was like

in those days, we didn't know that—we were giving our bowling money to these things; we didn't know that there were fees involved. We didn't know there was a company out of Pittsburgh that set up telethons and lived off this stuff.

So I brought it on the air and that maddened everybody. And the source of my aggravation was because I wasn't making enough money and I was trying to berate them for the ten grand they were paying these bonies and I'm doing it for free. And everybody else is being duped. These days it would be a front page story, back then they just wanted it to go away and they just told me I was through. They threw my ass out then I said, "I don't work for you" to Bob King, who was the manager of the TV station, and he said, "Well then your boss is fired." So I went into my office and got my shoes and I nailed them to his door. I left a note: "Fill these, you asshole." And that was the end of it. ☺

1954:

*WINS in New York lures Freed out of Cleveland, where he'd been staging wildly popular R&B concerts. Freed takes WINS to the top of the ratings and sets up shop at the*

*Paramount Theater in Brooklyn.*

January 1955:

*Freed's first New York shows are called Alan Freed's Rock n' Roll Party. Freed claims to have coined the term he was playing,*

*although "rocking and rolling" was known in R&B records to mean having sex.*

1955

*Todd Storz purchases KOWH. While at a previous station, WTX in New Orleans, he'd heard*

*Bob Howard, and came up with his own program, Top 40 at*



*1450. Now, in Omaha, he and his assistant, Bill Stewart, turn the show into a format. Gordon McLendon, owner of KLIF-Dallas*

*and a friend of Storz,*

*builds on the idea, adding zany promotional stunts and emphasizing local news and sports. Along with music director Bill Meeks, McLendon*

*introduces station call letter jingles at KLIF.*

1955

*Bill Gavin, previously programmer of the Burgie Music Box show on KNBC in San Francisco, begins programming Lucky Lager Dance Time,*

## Joe Smith on Promotion, Payola, and Col. Parker

To most radio and recording industry professionals, Joe Smith is known as (1) the affable executive who ran Warner Bros. Records with Mo Ostin, Elektra-Asylum Records, and Capitol Records, and (2) the Don Rickles of the industry, a roastmaster ever ready with an unkind word for everyone.

But Smith has a third identity: He used to be “Jose” Smith on WMEX in Boston in the mid-Fifties. Even when he went west, he did weekends on KFWB while climbing the ranks of the record industry. He climbed as high as anyone could go. But he didn’t do too badly, either, on the air.

At nights I used to ring cowbells and slam telephone books and holler and I was Jose, and I was kind of a wacko character.

I’d heard Alan Freed; we used to call each other and talk about records. And we had like an informal wing that we could book acts together. We’d go after an act and book him for five shows. Buddy Deane in Baltimore, Milt Grant in Washington; (Dick) Clark or Georgie Woods in Philly, Alan in New York, Mickey Shore in Detroit, and George Lorenz in Buffalo.

I used to ask Dick Clark to tell me when they’re were going to do a big number on a new record, because everybody sent them records before we got them. And you get a thing like “The Stroll” that he was featuring, because it was a great visual dance number, and we didn’t have the record, so I’d tape it off the air and play it on the radio.

Boston was regarded as a great breaking

city. Cleveland was one; Philadelphia.

About five cities where the music publishers had promotion people, and they used to travel, and all the record labels had national and regional promotion people. And it was the time of independent distribution, too, because all the hot labels did not have their own distribution. Everybody except the four majors banded together with the distributors, and the distributors, along with the owners of the labels—the Chesses and the Imperials and the Veejays and the Atlantics and their distributors, famous guys like Milt Salstone in Chicago, Amos Heilecker—they made the record business. They were gutsy, they spent their last dime, they were payola guys, they would cut deals with record stores, and they were beatin’ the hell out of the majors.

These independent distributors and labels used to woo the disc jockeys. We were all tied up with them and they would do numbers for us, you know, so it was a hot, hot time. And then Top 40 took a lot of that out of it. When Todd Storz and McLendon started Top 40, that took a lot of the juice out of it, because very few DJs were able to program their own shows.

In Boston, I was one of the first to do oldies. People thought I was crazy, playing records from...a year and a half back. But I said, you don’t understand. If you’re 13, that’s a significant part of your life. I had one



night I did oldies; one night requests, and god, we got mail. And one night (we’d do) the “Artist of the Week” or something like that. If you sent me a self-addressed stamped envelope you could get a picture of that artist.

I’d call the record company and they’d send me thousands of pictures. Then I put on Presley. The Post Office said they were dropping off enormous amounts of mail. RCA said they couldn’t do anything with pictures until they got the approval of Col. Parker. I called Tom Parker and he said, “I’m so happy, so thrilled you’re doing that, and I got a great picture, and it’ll cost you only three for a quarter.” I said, “What? You don’t understand. I probably got 35,000 requests.” He said, “Well, I’m sure those kids will love this.”

So I finally got someone at RCA to send me a picture and I had cheap copies made and had to take the office (business) class at four high schools just to do it, to open the mail, put a picture in and send it back. ☺

now being heard on 48 stations in eleven western states.

1956

With McLendon, Storz, and Gerald Bartell (operating out of WOKY in Milwaukee) leading the way, and with

Elvis Presley having made his explosive series of appearances on television, Top 40



becomes a popular format.

1958

Bill Gavin combines information from his Lucky Lager Dance Time and other radio sources and creates Bill Gavin’s Record Report.

1958

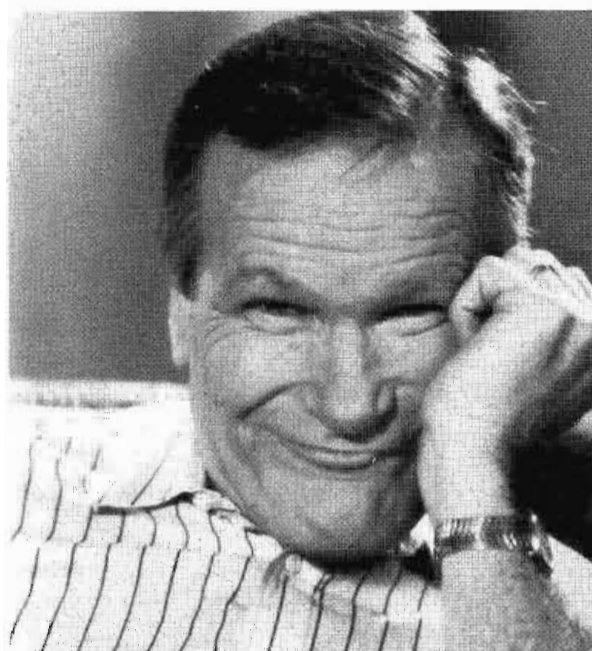
At the first Todd Storz DJ convention in Kansas City, Mitch Miller, Columbia Records’ head of A&R, an inventive but conservative producer, vilifies rock and roll and castigates Top 40

stations for surrendering their air time to “bobby soxers and baby sitters.” After the bearded Miller, who’d just issued his first sing-along albums, takes his seat, Chuck Blore, another pioneer of Top 40 (he created

the widely-imitated “Color Radio” sound at KFWB-Los Angeles in 1958) rises to the defense of those in radio who choose to play what people want to hear, no matter “the prophets of doom, bearded or otherwise.”

# Chuck Blore: How He Painted 'Color Radio'

*A certified creative genius, Chuck Blore created "Color Radio." Oh, OK—there was a table model radio in the early Fifties that called itself the "color radio," but Blore affixed the tag to KFWB in Los Angeles and created one of the most copied Top 40 sounds of all time. He put KFWB ("Channel 98") on the air in early 1958, then did the same for Crowell-Collier's other acquisitions, KEWB in Oakland, Calif. and KDWB in Minneapolis. Combining personality disc jockeys with swinging, state-of-the-art jingles, innovative promotions, plentiful community tie-ins, and slogans ("My Mommy Listens to KFWB") that took his stations beyond teendom, Blore zoomed to Number One in all three markets, then packed it up in 1963 to try his hand at advertising. Thirty-five years later, his agency is still going strong.*



had the remarkable successes that a lot of people had were Todd Storz and Gordon. I took Todd's musical idea of playing ten in a row and Gordon's idea of local news. And what I added to that was this entertainment factor, which I always thought was a big

deal. So the show biz...like our jingles were sometimes two minutes long.

Basically what I would do is sit there all day and try to think this stuff up. Then when Crowell-Collier became a group of stations, I would have meetings with the PDs every three months where we would cook up the next three months' worth of stuff.

I think one of the big differences between KFWB and the other stations was the preparation time I demanded from the DJs. They had to prepare an hour for every hour they were going to be on the air. What that means is about six minutes' worth of what they were going to say, which is about the time they had. They had to devote an hour to thinking it up. And it had to be prepared before it began, because many many times I'd grab a guy going on the air and say, "Let me see your stuff." And if he didn't have it, it was his ass.

*You came up with the idea of "My Mommy Listens to..."*

That was a specific problem we had. When KFWB became such a huge success, the advertising agencies



**"The greatest advice I ever got from my mom that I impart to young artists starting out is this: Never let them tell you who you are." — Wynonna, 1997**

It was Thanksgiving in '57 I came to KFWB, and in those three months we put the whole thing together, and then January 1st, 1958, we kicked off "Color Radio." Back in those days, the big rating services were Hooper and Pulse. And so in three months we were Number One in Hooper, and in five months we were Number One in Pulse, and we stayed that way for five years until I left. We had an average 34 share in a 60-station market. It was amazing. It was fantastic. You couldn't walk down the street without hearing the radio station.

It was a combination of the time, what the station was. And the two things that really happened was NASA invented the transistor at the same time that rock and roll music was born. And those two things together...and that was it. I think the difference I made, the difference between KFWB and any other station when I took it over, because the only two people that

**1959**  
The second Storz DJ gathering, in Miami Beach...*"Bozze, Broads and Bribes"*

**1960**  
*Payola*, long suspected in the radio industry, is investigated by Congress by the House

**Legislative Oversight Subcommittee.**

**1961**  
WABC: With consultant Mike Joseph having laid the groundwork, and with Sam Holman in place as Program Director, the ABC station begins

battle with WINS, home of Murray the K and a Top 40 station since 1957; WMCA, home of the



*"Good Guys,"* and WMGM, where Peter Tripp ruled until the payola hearings sent him packing. WABC, later programmed by Rick Sklar, will take Manhattan by the mid-Sixties and become one of the

most powerful stations in the country. Meantime, ABC's Chicago station becomes a powerhouse, with Dick "the Screamer" Biondi ruling from 9 p.m. to midnight. By 1965, the station's star is

Larry Lujack.  
**1965**  
A disc jockey and program director, Bill Drake, succeeds with his programming ideas at California stations in Fresno (KYNO) and San Diego (KGB), and is hired by RKO

were not buying into it. They said, "This is just rock and roll, and it's nothing but kids and teenagers." So I said, "Well, how are we going to tell them that not only the kids, but their parents are listening, too?" And that line was born from that. And it was strictly aimed at the advertising agencies in LA.

Was there any concern that the teenagers or pre-teens might say, "Oh, that's kind of a turn-off. This is a station my parents can listen to also"?

I don't think that kind of thinking existed then. I knew we had those teenagers locked up, and they knew it was their station. One of the proudest parts of my history is when a young honor student was killed by a kid who was high on heroin—heroin which he had bought right on the school yard. And a group of kids from this Lakewood High School came to KFWB saying, "You're the only one that we can turn to." And it was so much a part of their life and they said, "You know who we are and you know what we are, and we need help because we've got to get the dope out of the school." And so we formed something called the "Student Crusade Against Narcotics", and ended up taking busloads of kids to Sacramento to talk to Congress. And they got the laws changed. That's my proudest moment. ☺

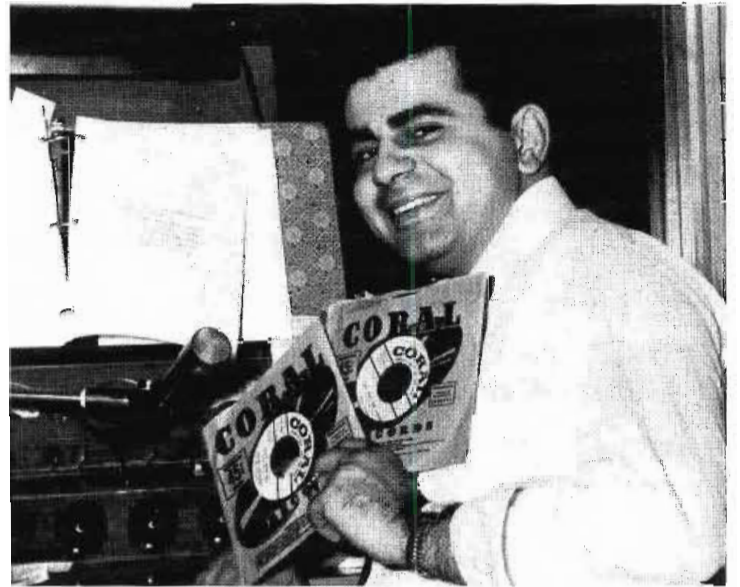


"We used to make records, and it was like, 'God, that's not really us.' Now, they're getting closer to us, but they're also getting closer toward being records." — Jerry Garcia, 1989.

# Casey Kasem

## on Talking Music with Bill Gavin

*When I first heard Casey Kasem, he wasn't doing any countdowns, and he wasn't telling little stories about the musicians whose records he was playing. He was, like so many Top 40 nighttime disc jockeys, talking fast, spinning the hits, reading dedications, and goofing around with characters and wild tracks, some of them taken from Stan Freberg albums—a shrill "That's right!" and "You catch on fast!"*



*That was at KEWB in Oakland, where, it turns out, his admirers included none other than Bill Gavin. Since Kasem is the master of the anecdote, let's put Casey at the mike:*

When I was in Oakland, it was between 1960 and '63, Bill used to call me up at least twice a week to ask me what I liked, because I was the librarian there and I had a DJ show. And I listened to everything. In my little apartment, the kitchen table had maybe twelve stacks on it. It would have up and coming R&Bs, up and coming pop, crossover possibilities for country. I would listen to both sides of just about every record that came in. And I would tell record

promoters, "If you've got a hit and you want to call me at three in the morning, call me and get it over here as fast as possible." I think that I was really on top of music and I could pick hit records. And Bill knew that, so he'd call me up and ask me what I liked. And then he'd invite me over to his house with the family for a couple of dinners. And then one day he pulled me aside and he said, "Casey, you know I'm getting old." He said, "I'm looking for a partner. I think you'd be ideal." I said, "Bill, if I didn't want to be an actor more than anything else in the world, I'd probably say, 'What a great opportunity.' But I've always wanted to be an actor, and not necessarily be in the business, and so I want to go to LA and give it a shot." So that's why I never did it.

Was KEWB a reporter to Gavin?

General to transform KHJ-Los Angeles into a Top 40 station. He and program director Ron Jacobs produce "Boss Radio." The formula is replicated at KFRC in San Francisco,



WRKO in Boston, CKLW in Windsor, Ontario (also serving Detroit), and WHBQ in Memphis, and competing stations are soon copying the Drake format.

1967

Free form is born on the FM dial, on KMPX in San Francisco, WOR-FM in New York, and at such college stations as WTBS in Cambridge, Massachusetts and

1968

WFUV at Fordham University in New York. While free form, later called "progressive rock radio," spreads and causes consternation to Top 40, it's shut down on WOR-FM, which

RKO turns over to Bill Drake, who installs an oldies format. Meantime, a format originally called "chicken rock," later renamed by Gavin as "adult contemporary," begins to take away more of Top 40's listeners.

1970

Advertisers are falling in love with the baby boomer generation, and 25-49 becomes the most sought-after demo (short for "demographic"). Through much of the 70s, Top

At that time, yeah, I guess I was the reporter. I remember one time I called him up, I think it was ten o'clock at night. I heard a record that blew me away. I said, "Bill, you gotta tell me if this record is saying something in it that's got a bad word in it." And I think I played it for him on the telephone. I said, "Listen to it. I don't want to play it if there's a bad word here." And it was "Turn on Your Love Light" by Bobby Blue Bland.

And he said, "No, it sounds okay to me, Casey." And we both listened very carefully, because I thought he was saying, "I wanna lay", and he was saying "I wanna

*"In my little apartment, the kitchen table had maybe 12 stacks on it...I would listen to both sides of just about every record that came in."*

light." We passed it, and I played it, and it became a hit—but everybody played it.

But those were the kind of things that I would do. I would get excited about a record and he'd call and I'd tell him which one I thought was going to be a hit. I remember I did miss on one up there. They brought me the Tokens record, "The Lion Sleeps Tonight." I said, "That's a stiff if I've ever heard one," and in one week I think it went to Number Two. ☺

## Cousin Brucie on His Beef with the Wolfman

*Cousin Brucie—real name Bruce Morrow—was an unlikely New York radio star, with his high, hyperactive voice, his rushed delivery, and his down-home, country-boy nickname.*

*But this native of Brooklyn knew what he was doing, and his smarts carried him through several of the greatest radio stations in the New York landscape. He's still on the air, on WCBS-FM—not that he needs to work. Years ago, he began buying radio stations, building his stable to 92 outlets in small and medium markets. His Multimarket Radio merged with SFX, which in turn was acquired by the Texas-based corporate-buyout spe-*

*cialist, Hicks, Muse, Tate & Furst. "So you're talking to a very happy man now," he says.*

*Just don't bring up Wolfman Jack.*

Talk about ABC, "Always Be Cheap," they were trying to grab guys who had contracts, like

Dan Ingram, myself, and Herb Oscar Anderson, and they said, privately, at the end of each contract, that they would like to base our compensation—this not too many people know—on rating points. In other words, there would be a base, and then if the ratings went up, compensation would go up. And if ratings went down, so be it. Well, here's after 13 years of building a giant. [In 1973,] it wasn't the legend that it was, but it was a giant and it was the station



everybody emulated and everybody wanted to get on. That was the top of your career; you wanted to be on WABC, if you were a radio guy.

This offended me terribly. I had another couple of months to run on my present contract. Then WNBC brings in Wolfman Jack. I didn't know anything about him. I saw him in the movie, I'd heard him on the air and I knew he wasn't a New York guy. It just wasn't a New York act. I knew the people at NBC, they tapped me a couple of times, they said, "Hey, when you're ready, we'd love to talk to you." At this time, they were trying to build a radio station.

[Wolfman Jack] came in and they did a campaign, "Cousin Brucie's Days Are Numbered." I have tombstones that they put out. They did this every day in the newspaper—"Only 18 Days Left!" And

40 has to fight for its share of the advertising revenue pie.

1972

Buzz Bennett, highly regarded programmer, takes over KCBQ in San Diego and takes on



Drake's KGB and combines extra-short jingles ("shotgun jingles"), endless contests, and in-depth research of listeners to beat

Drake at his own game. Bennett calls his formula

"Money, music, and magic."

Throughout the decade, Top 40 increases its presence on the FM band, where, increasingly, the younger demos are to be found.

1978

Disco music is the rage,

and when some stations, beginning with WKTU in New York, switch to dance music as a format, radio is further fragmented, as disco leads to a mix of Urban and Top 40.

1983

Top 40 comes back.

Album falls for corporate rock; disco dies, and MTV has recharged pop music by showcasing whoever gives the channel videos; many are newer artists from overseas. Another factor: Mike Joseph's "Hot

Hits" format, a reworking of Drake's dictum of playing the hits, relying not on call-outs but retail sales and requests. Morning shows, especially the "zoos" pioneered at KKBQ-Houston and WRBQ-

under these it would say, "Wolfman Jack is on the prowl."

And they issued maybe ten thousand of these paper weight-sized tombstones (engraved): "Cousin Brucie is going to be buried by Wolfman Jack." Well, they sent this out to the agencies and newspaper people and caused a big furor. NBC had a seven-foot tombstone constructed, and they left it on the stairs at ABC on Avenue of the Americas at six in the morning.

Wolfman comes into town, and nothing's happening. Rating period comes out, and you can check the ratings, he didn't do anything, even though his book claims he did very well. Six weeks into his tenure there, Pat Whitley, the program director at WNBC, and Perry Bascomb, the General Manager/Vice President, met with me in a restaurant that was out of the way, because once you're under contract and someone tries to steal you, there and you can be sued. We met, made a terrific deal. They wanted to get rid of Wolfman and put me on that evening in the evening slot. I told him, "I'm going to get out of my contract." I went back to Rick Sklar and said, "Rick, let me out of my contract and I'll talk with you about the new deal." The general manager was thrilled, Rick was thrilled. Two days later, I had my lawyers send him a letter that I was leaving, and I signed with NBC.

Now, Wolfman writes a book years later. In his book he notes that he wanted to leave, which was not true, and that he then got me a great deal at triple my salary. I hear this on the air. My lawyer calls me and says,

*"My lawyer calls me... 'you'd better listen to Imus. He has Wolfman Jack on the air.'"*

"You'd better listen to Imus. He has Wolfman Jack on the air."


He was doing a book promo, he was all over the country doing this. And I was getting really furious because it is a complete lie. I never knew the man, he

had nothing to do with me getting the job. So anyway, I call Imus and tell him I want to go on the air, and Imus is a friend of mine, we worked together at NBC. I go on the air and I tell the true story, at which time Perry Bascomb comes on the air and completely corroborates everything I said.

Three weeks later we have a Rock and Roll Radio Greats Reunion which we do every once in a while on CBS-FM, and they invite the old timers back. Well, Wolfman's invited to come on, we're broadcasting, I'm doing my show from the Museum of Television and Radio, and here comes Wolfman down the aisle, and I figured, well, he'd apologize, because we'd had a ballyhoo on television and radio about this war between the two of us.

He hugged me, and then he went on the air and he proceeded to tell the story of how he got me my job. I freaked out. I mean I was inconsolable for days on my own radio station. And then the guy up and dies.

... And that's how it ended. I'm still pissed at him, and he's dead. ☹



**"I consider football as much an art form as music is. Creativity is critical, but there's got to be continuity to it, and also being able to orchestrate it, and then there's the final product. From the thought of creating something to the point that it's a beautifully orchestrated piece of music, there's a parallel." — Bill Walsh, 1994.**

Tampa, lead Top 40's return to ratings respectability, as Scott Shannon moves from Florida to New York



City and, with Ross Brittain, make Z-100 king of the heap, A-Number One, while, in Los Angeles, Rick Dees takes KIIS-FM to double-digit ratings.

October 1984: The "P" word surfaces again in a Los Angeles

Times report on payola and independent record promotion. And again in 1986...

1993: Top 40 is hyphenated with Rock, Alternative, Pirate, and other tags. Mainstream Top 40 is declared dead, as the

industry notes a steep decline in the number of stations identifying themselves as Top 40. In 1992, 578 stations had employed the label. Now, only 441 do.

1997: Like a radio version of some teen scream-flick

monster, Top 40 is b-a-a-a-ck. Propelled by a new wave of pop artists, chief among them Spice Girls and Hanson, the format regains its health. As consultant Guy Zapoleon notes, through all the

changes over four decades, "Top 40 is the only format that I know of that reflects the best of all the genres of music today. It's the ultimate variety format, plus all the basics of the great radio of the past."



## Ron Jacobs on Fighting the Good Fight

*Think of Ron Jacobs as a drill sergeant and a football coach, add more than a bit of gruff, and you've got his style. Combine that with a flair for radio promotion, for whipping up or reinventing endless streams of contests, an unerring ear for who and what works on Top 40 radio, and a determination to thrash all comers, and you've got the real boss of "Boss Radio." Bill Drake came up with the blueprints, and Drake hired the two invaluable anchors—The Real Don Steele and Robert W. Morgan—but, many observers and participants say, KHJ could not have happened without this native of Hawaii.*

*"The collaboration between Drake and myself was terrific. He was very conservative; I was very extreme; we talked three times a day minimum and we always ended up in the middle. I'd want to play Hendrix; he'd want to play Tom Jones."*



**"If radio persists in its perceived direction you'll get formula records; you'll give your listeners everything they've heard before."—Clive Davis**

I had visited Los Angeles in 1958, driving around starry eyed, listening to KFWB. I thought KFWB was coming from radio heaven—all these distinct personalities: B. Mitchel Reed, Joe Yocam, Elliot Field, and so on, and this great news department, and these jingles. They pretty much dominated radio in L.A. The personalities were built on Bill Ballance, and he would, in the terms of KHJ, ramble. Their jingles were of the Dallas school and they'd go on for 45 seconds.

What KHJ was all about was streamlining it down to the essentials and shifting the music and talk ratio; building up an overall station image. Drake had his own concept. What Drake was into was absolute starkness, and what I was into was flamboyant kind of things, and the collaboration between Drake and myself was terrific. He was very conservative, I was very extreme; we talked three times a day minimum and we always ended up in the middle. I'd want to play Hendrix; he'd want to play Tom Jones. Drake would come up with these overall ideas and I would implement them.

We took this very ornate KFWB, which was very good for its time, and streamlined it, so that the personality was legislated into it. Morgan had jived with

listeners on the phone; Steele came with this thing I didn't understand, but things can work repetitively—"Tina Delgado is alive!" Sam Riddle and Roger Christian already had a following in the market. Sam came with a TV show.



Everybody had their own thing. And we never stopped running promotions and contests.

Martoni's was the scene where the record promoters and the disc jockeys went through their little ritual, which goes on in every city, where the record promoters wine and dine and lay the disc jockeys who had nothing to say about what they played on the air! But because it had come from the tradition when the promoters did get to the jocks, they kept doing it.

Morgan and I wouldn't stop till we won. I was relating psychologically to the Rams, who when I arrived were a piece of shit. Everything I did was a goddam metaphor for football. We're on the 20 yard line; I don't give a f—— if we've come 80 yards; we've got 20 yards before you can even smile. I don't give a shit what ten of you are doing if the eleventh guy drops the f——' ball!

After the Clay-Liston fight (May 25, 1965), Morgan and I walked to Martoni's. We almost got into a food fight. We sat down in a booth; these other guys—Charlie O'Donnell and "Emperor" Bob Hudson (of KRLA) sat down opposite us. KRLA was hot shit, and they figured we're all part of the disc jockey fraternity, and the rivalry ends when your shift is over. But they were dealing with me and Morgan. We're 24 hours a day. We don't turn it off. You're on the other side? Fuckin' eat shit and die. They say dadadada, we pulled our "We're gonna kick your ass" thing, and the next thing, people are pulling us apart; one guy's got a sugar holder in his hand, I'm holding a ketchup bottle, ready to crack the guy in the face. ☞

## Mike Joseph on Playlists and Hot Hits

*In an industry that ought to be called Xerox—there's so much copying going on—Mike Joseph refuses to admit to lifting anything from anyone else. That's partly because he was among the first programmers ever to offer his services as a consultant. That was back around 1956, Joseph believes, and he's never stopped. From programming such spectacular successes as WKBW in Buffalo and WABC in New York to all the stations in subsequent decades that have employed one or another version of his "Hot Hits" concept, Joseph has left deep imprints in the format. Through Top 40's ups and downs, he remains a firm believer that Top 40 rules—if only it continues to play the hits.*

I believe I was the first one to really cut down the playlist. I took it from 40 down to 30 and even 20. And I was also the first one to play LP cuts, by major artists. In the middle '50s I was playing Belafonte, I was playing Presley. I was playing all the superstars who had multi-million dollar LPs. And many of the cuts came out of the LPs, so I got a head start on everyone else. Very very tight presentation, production techniques. Very strong personalities, and sooner or later most of them became superstars. We emphasized personality, but the station came first.

*As you probably know a lot of folks have given Bill Drake the credit for tightening the play list in 1965 at Boss Radio. Others have said that at KYA when he was the morning jock and PD, (owner) Clint Churchill had clamped down on the list from 60 to 30.*

You know how Clint got that? I consulted WKBW, which Clint owned. Clint hired me for KB. That was my format. I had 20 records on KB. That was my sound. I mean Drake came along in '65 and he got it from Churchill. He got a lot of things from Churchill...And I'm not afraid to talk about this because it's true, and Ron Jacobs can verify it. They used my techniques. On WKBW I spent six months there, and hired his whole damn staff including Dick Biondi and Art Roberts, and Ron Jacobs got it from KPOA. Which means I did it in 1957 because KPOA played 30 records.

*You saw Top 40 go on a roller coaster ride over the years, and you have been credited for a resurgence of energy in Top 40 in the '70s with "Hot Hits." Was that something that was just basic to you, or was that something new? You always*

*said, "Just play the hits."*

That was something basic with me. I used the same philosophy, the same formattics, the same basics that I had used...Actually, the Hot Hits format I did on ZOO

*"I didn't call it Hot Hits. But it was 30 records and it was that format very very tight, very very fast moving, very very fresh."*

in Milwaukee in 1972, '73. And Les Garland was one of my jocks then. Only I didn't call it Hot Hits. But it was 30 records and it was that format, — very very tight, very very fast moving, very very fresh, because, as I was telling someone today, people don't realize that I don't hold

onto records that are falling. I play only the major hits and fast risers, which is one of the things that makes my format. In Providence, PRO FM had a head start on me eight (share points) to zero. I went in to WPJB between '73 and '75, and did the job on them. And that was the embryo of the Hot Hits format.

I think what's happening (today), I think a lot of these guys are waking up to the fact that what they've been doing the past two, three, four years has failed. And they quit doing it. So they've come back to practicality and the logic of playing the hits and they've quit blaming the record companies. I mean, the music was always bad. Come on, how many hits did we have all those years? A half a dozen in each market?

That's why only one of a hundred records is a hit. I think a lot of them have come back to their senses and have gotten back to the basics. ☺



**"Radio is still our main way of introducing our music to the public. Every station, no matter how small the market is, whatever happens is a microcosm of what could happen all over the rest of the country. So any station that plays any new music is a testing ground for us, and tells us more than any other medium as to how a record may do." — Ahmet Ertegun, 1996.**



## Bill Drake

### on Copying & being Copied



*Bill Drake is either (1) the radio genius who gave Top 40 a much-needed jump-start in the mid-'60s with his streamlined "Boss Radio" format or (2) the guy who stripped the personality out of radio and ruined it*

*for several generations.*

*Either way, there's no denying that his formula, introduced at KYNO in Fresno, Calif. and at KGB in San Diego before KHJ exploded with it in mid-1965, had the greatest impact on Top 40 since Chuck Blore. It was also the most imitated, as programmers taped KHJ and other RKO stations consulted by Drake and partner Gene Chenault.*

*Drake found it all pretty amusing.*

*What was your response to being copied? You know, Chuck Blore was copied a lot in his generation and was kind of annoyed by it. What was your own feeling when you heard of other stations trying to copy you?*

Well, that's a part of the business. I think that when putting together my design and contests, promotions and approach and everything else, we've all been known to borrow a bit of this and a bit of that from other stations. I mean, that's what it was all about. That's how the evolution occurred.

*Although it might add to the stature of your company's name, the fact is if the copying is done poorly and the Drake name is attached to it, then it doesn't do you any good.*

Well, some of them didn't sound exactly like it. One thing that was so funny was a guy that would come in and listen and tape and it was so stupid—they'd go back and put the jingles going into the commercial slots instead of in front of the records (following the spots). We used to think that was hilarious. They would list all of the ingredients that we had, and then they'd put them all in the wrong place! ☺

## Rick Dees

### on Going From Memphis to LA

*Before KIIS-FM in Los Angeles, Rick Dees was in Memphis, where he recorded the immortal "Disco Duck." And before Memphis there was WSGN in Birmingham, Alabama. When a friend at WMPS in Memphis alerted him to an opening, Dees spoke to the station manager.*

I talked to a guy named Roy Mack. I was making like peanuts in Birmingham. He said, "Look, we'll pay you peanuts, too." I said, "Well, wait a minute. Why would I go from peanuts to peanuts?" He said, "Look, in Memphis, you can go and make appearances that you would never be able to make in Birmingham. This city is alive with music and entertainment. You'll get out and do a lot of stuff, I'm sure, because you're an outgoing type of guy." And so I said, "What would the starting salary be for morning drive in a city with almost a million people?" And he said, "Well, first of all, it's 800,000 people and growing, but you're right. We'll pay you \$15,000."

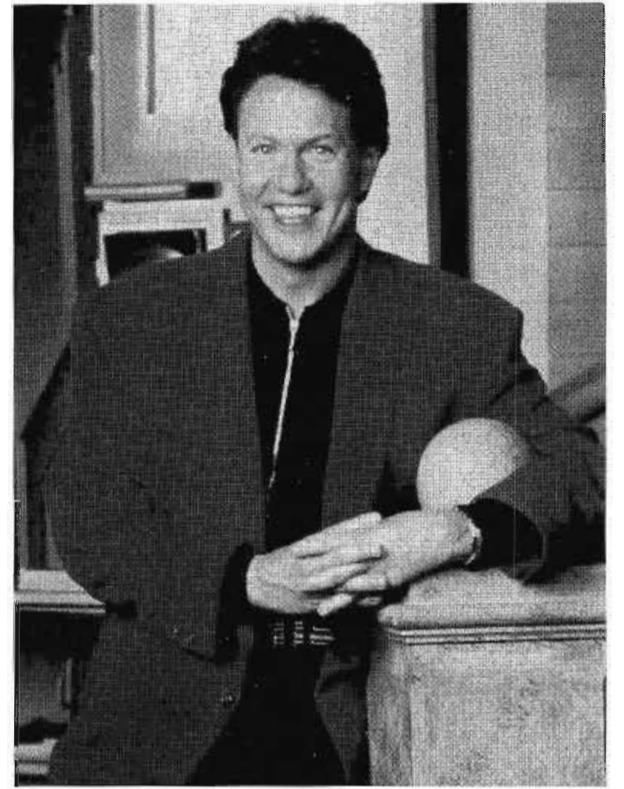
*What year was this?*

This was last year. No, no. It was 1974. I just said, "I can't do that," and he said, "Okay, I tell you what. We'll make it \$16,000."

So when I got to Memphis, I think they had cut it back to \$15,000 because they knew that I was making—are you ready for this?—my first morning show in Birmingham, Alabama, I made \$9,000.

And then the first year on the air in Memphis, you know me, I love to market. Every night I went out somewhere and I charged \$100 bucks and I'd do a deal, a performance for seven hours if they wanted me to for \$100. TGIFridays. The place across the street, Honeywell's. I had six gigs a week. So the first year I was there I made \$50,000 outside the studio. The second year I made \$125,000 just doing appearances.

*Weren't people getting tired of you being*



*there every night?*

You know what it does, they keep on seeing you, so if they've got an Arbitron diary, that's all they think about. It got to the point where, in a church pulpit sometimes

the thing hanging down from the pulpit said, "This week we've got the pancake supper, Rick Dees performing." In front of the churches! And that's the way I built the base.

I was still doing kind of a hybrid style of radio people I'd heard, and a man named Art Wonder, who was the National Program Director, cornered me

and said, "I don't know how to tell you this, but you're so funny when you talk to the sales people and everything, I mean, you're telling these jokes and stories and doing these characters and everything. Why don't you do that on the air? And why don't you take some telephone calls and put these people on? You're trying to be Bill Drake. Just be Rick Dees."

*What did he mean by "you're trying to be Bill Drake"?*

Well, Bill Drake is one of the masters of all time, and he created a format which is



**"Great companies are not built by committee." — Rupert Murdoch, Gavin Seminar, 1996.**

basically play those hits, get into them, get out of them. Do the three major elements, do the time, the call letters, and your name. Over and over again. You know what? Drake is right, but what Bill also didn't say was, "So many of you guys in radio are so awful I have to control you this way. Because if you go on and on, you don't know how to do a monologue for three or four minutes, or you don't know how to have a beginning, a middle, and an end." [Art] didn't say exactly how to do it, but he said, "You have to do it or you're fired." I said, "I gotcha."

I went up to like a 20-some share, I had the deed to the city in my back pocket, I couldn't even touch my wallet when I went into a restaurant. It was just heaven. And I got to Los Angeles, and failed. Came in here, went on KHJ, which by that time was an AM station, it was the Karen Ann Quinlan of radio, it was plugged in but nothing was going on.

*All the giants were gone when you got there, but you knew the heritage of the station...*

I had tapes when I was at WTOB in Winston-Salem, I was 19 years old. A guy was on the air named Wild Willie Edwards, and his wife Deanna was a flight attendant for Piedmont Airlines, and they had a flight that went to Los Angeles, and we got her to take my little tape recorder and tape KHJ. So she would bring back tapes of Robert W. Morgan and Charlie Tuna, and we would just marvel at how wonderfully produced their shows were. They were some of the greats. I just can't rave about them any more.

*But KHJ was comatose by the time you got there.*

They still sounded great, and had some really good people on the air. Bobby Ocean was on the air...I was doing morning drive, I couldn't believe it. I went out to an appearance the third week I was here. I didn't realize how rough it was in this city and all, but I went out to Whittier High School, and

the school mascot came out, and it was a parole officer. Went to another school, they listened to KMET and they said, "You suck! You suck!"

*Fortunately for you, KHJ changed formats.*

They changed to country and let me go. So for almost a year I was begging for work. I was begging to be on the air. Nobody would take me. I went out to Drake-Chenault and they said, "Well, we have a couple of recorded shows. If you come on, we can pay \$28,000 a year." And I was just getting ready to take that job, and KIIS came along. They weren't sure whether to try Top 40 or adult contemporary. I told

them, I think it would be much better if you at least tried Top 40, and then if it doesn't work, you can go A/C. And so we went on, went Top 40, they had a 1.9 share. We were kicking ass in the morning. Everybody was having so much fun, and Wally Clark came in, and he is a marketing genius, so he said, "Let's just turn up the heat some more. We're not going to go A/C, we're going to go pure Top 40." And the next book, three share. Next book, 3.8, (then) 4.7, 6.5, 7.5, 8, 8.5, 9.3, then a 10 share with a 12 in the morning.

In Los Angeles, that was something that was just unheard of. ☺

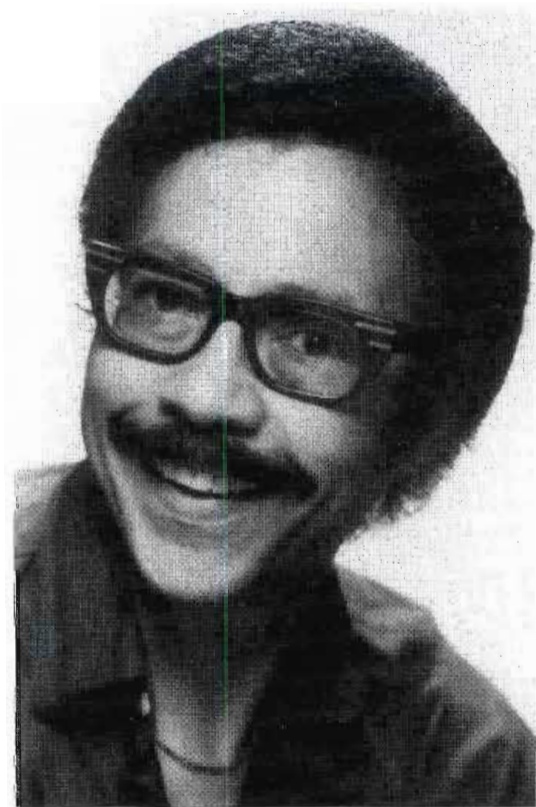
## Chuck Leonard on Doing Double Duty

*The year was 1968, and Chuck Leonard was on WABC, one of the most powerful Top 40 stations in the country. He was also one of the first black disc jockeys hired for a major market Top 40 station. (The first is believed to be Larry McCormick, at KFWB in 1964. Leonard joined WABC in 1965.) Leonard is still on the air in New York City, at WQEW, at WBLS on weekends, and, occasionally, on WCBS-FM. His multiple microphones reminded me of the classic Dan Aykroyd skit on Saturday Night Live, in which he sat at two microphones and alternated between hyped-up Top 40 jock and laid-back FM hipster. Leonard said he pretty much did that in 1968.*

When I was with ABC, a guy who's dead now, Bobaloo, Robert Schwartzman, put together a format for what is now WPLJ, which was then 95 and a half. WABC/FM Radio Free East Village, and we were dealing with Jimi Hendrix, Buffy Ste. Marie, the Mothers of Invention, the Grateful Dead, although the Dead had more following than they had music. Bobaloo did the daytime and I did the evening, which for me meant that I went to work at WABC/FM at six o'clock, and I worked until ten, doing basically alternative rock. And I did it under the name of C. Wesley Leonard II. And then at ten o'clock the newscast would come on, and I would run around the corridor because at ten o'clock my show started on WABC. So I went from [*quietly*] "This is C. Wesley Leonard II, on Radio Free East Village, 95 and a half, WABC/FM, I'll see you tomorrow," and I'd zip around the corner and say, [*loudly*] "Hey! Chuck Leonard here at 77 WABC." It was like [George Carlin's] "Wonderful WINO."

Here you are 30 years later still running around.

Still doing it, and you know what? I still have the energy. I'm still in my fifties, I have a daughter who still has to finish high school and go to college, and I can't get tired. ☺



## Frank Terry on the \$10,000 Tradeout

Frank Terry, who was by Ron Jacobs' side during the fabled Fresno wars between Jacobs' KMAK and Drake's KYNO in the early Sixties, worked at KHJ as one of the original Boss Jocks, then moved to San Francisco for a long stand at sister KFRC. There, he managed to have a few good times. Sitting recently at Enrico's in North Beach with former KFRC newsman John Catchings, Terry recalled the time General Manager John Rath scored a tradeout.

Terry: A guy who was opening maybe the first disco in the world, called the Ricksha Bistro on Grant Avenue in Chinatown, wanted to buy time or work out a trade. So John decided this would be a nice thing for the jocks, and he arranged a trade for the jocks to have a place to go after their shift to have a drink and relax a little bit. And it was a \$10,000 trade. He told us about it, and we all said, "Hey, Hallelujah!"

So each one of us, after we finished our shift, filtered over to this place. It was right up the street from the station. We go in there and it's really a nice place. They've got a full stocked bar, they served elegant dinners in there. And they had nice women. They had a disco deal with a turntable and some drums up there and a microphone and all that. Well, one thing led to another. We just started carrying on and eating these—I remember these elaborate ducks—some kind

of duck he had that cost like \$125 a piece. We're ordering them for people who we don't even know. "Give those people over there a duck." They had the best booze. And pretty soon we're running the disco deal and talking on the microphone and playing the drums and going out and getting people off the street. "Come on in, have a drink."

We wiped the whole ten grand out in one night.

Catchings: We got this memo from John Rath. He was outraged that we blew it out in one night. Howard Clark was on the air and we were signing his name to the tab. So John sent a memo out the next day telling us that we were going to have to pay back some of the money. What happened was we went over the trade, and so he wanted us to pay the difference.

Terry: He was a nice man. He just wanted us to have a place to go and relax after our shift. And we did. For one night. ☺



"Syndication is a tough question. I don't want to put people out of work, but there are people out of work, who are absolutely pathetic, who have nothing to offer, who are just wacky, and it needs to end." —Eric Muller aka Mancow

## Johnny Holliday On Joe Eszterhas' Radio Instincts

When word first leaked that Joe Eszterhas had written a screenplay about a disc jockey in Cleveland in the Fifties, the assumption was that it'd be based on Alan Freed.

Surprise.

Soon after *Telling Lies in America*, an evocative little film about...well, about lying, came out, Johnny Holliday, who lives and works in Washington, D.C., got a clipping of the *New York Times*' review from a friend, who jotted a note: "The only thing he didn't do is mention you by name." Holliday, who specialized in spouting alliterative clichés in a happy, hyped-up, harefooted style, worked at WHK in Cleveland, from 1959 to 1964, then moved on to WINS in

New York and KYA in San Francisco before fleeing back east to join ABC Sports (where he is today). He is so immersed in jockeydom (of the sporting kind) that he didn't even know who Joe Eszterhas was.

After seeing the clipping, he recalled that a public radio special on the 75th anniversary of WHK



had included Eszterhas, "who told about how he raced home every day to listen to me, and what an influence I was on his childhood."

Intrigued, Holliday tracked Eszterhas down. "His manager sends word: 'Well, fax me your name, your phone number, what questions you'd like to ask Mr. Eszterhas. I

can't promise he'll get back to you, but we'll do our best.' So I fax him this letter. I say, 'Dear Joe. I am still every teen queen's dream. I'm still serving up the cream of the top bop crop. I'm elbow deep in the ballad bowl. Fender bender, bumper jumpin', chrome cracking my way home every day in the boulevard of broken taillights.'

"Four days later, I'm at ABC, and I've got a call. It's Joe Eszterhas. So I pick up the phone and Joe says, 'I cannot believe I'm talking to you.' We talked for 40 minutes."

The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* reporter-turned *Rolling Stone* writer-turned notorious Hollywood scriptwriter [*Basic Instincts*;

*"I say, 'Dear Joe. I am still every teen queen's dream...I'm elbow deep in the ballad bowl.'"*

*Showgirls*] told Holliday, "You came to my school, you had a record hop. I came that close to actually reaching out and touching you." He remembered Holliday's WHK basketball team, the Radio Wonders, which played games to raise money for charities. [Holliday formed a similar team in San Francisco.] "I think the night you played at our school, you got a brain concussion," Joe continued. "You got hit in the head."

Holliday did some theater acting on the side. Joe recalled: "You were out of work for three weeks, and they were concerned about you opening in *Finian's Rainbow*, and I had tickets, and I was so concerned.' I said, 'How could you remember that?'" A few nights later, Holliday got it, along with an autographed poster of the movie.

Eszterhas asked an amazed Holliday whether he'd seen *Telling Lies in America*. When the announcer admitted that he hadn't, Joe promised to send a copy.

"I watched the movie," he says, "and I was dying laughing with my wife. I said, 'Man, this is exactly like it was.'" ☺

## Shana on Being a Big 610 Woman

*Few disc jockeys, male or female, can claim as big a leap as Margaret Reichl took. She was barely out of college in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and working at a daytimer in Wichita, Kansas, where her DJ job included cleaning the studios and emptying the trash.*

*Next stop: KFRC-San Francisco, powerhouse home of "The Big 6-10 Men" in the early Seventies.*

*It happened in part because RKO General was getting a jump on anticipated Federal equal employment opportunity laws and chose KFRC as*

*the first of its stations to employ a female DJ; in part because Reichl was ready. At her audition, she impressed PD*

*Michael Spears, who renamed her Shana, and she was off to a career that took her to Los Angeles, to KHJ, KLOS, and, currently, KPPC. She also teaches broadcasting to high school and college students.*

I made a call to Gavin when I was in Wichita—I had to get out of there, I couldn't take it any more. The timing was just amazing. I talked to Janet Gavin and she said, "That's really strange, because we just got a call from a station in San Francisco saying they were looking for a female in Top 40."

Three days later I was at that waterfront restaurant in Sausalito watching the sailboat races in August with Michael Spears, and got the job that weekend.

I get along with guys really well, and at KFRC, I guess they sensed that easiness. They could goof around me; they didn't have to treat me differently; I think they respected me for my situation and what I

was doing. But I was never one to flirt or use somebody because they were a guy and I didn't think I could do it myself or whatever, so we had a real good relation-



ship. I blended in like one of the guys. So they kind of took me under their wings because I was so young. I have nothing but great memories of it.

I wasn't hit on by anybody—well, once in awhile, you know!—but I could take the jokes and the radio kind of goofing that you do. I was comfortable.

KFRC was very fast paced. I still can't believe I could do that at 3 in the morning. But I was so totally into it. I was working with people I totally adored. Chuck Buell, Michael Spears, who hired me, was Hal Martin on CKLW and I was a teenager and a fan of his; so I was so excited to be there, and

the music was so wonderful, and there was a lot of R&B in San Francisco, and I was into it. KFRC had a wonderful energy; it was an exciting place to work. It came out naturally. I wasn't screaming, I was just moving with the music and having a ball. ☺



**"Radio's become so homogenized, and I think the public wants more variety. You can afford more variety when you're dealing with artists who are songwriters, because they have a tendency to be a little more personal about the material."**  
—Kashif

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## CONGRATULATES GAVIN ON 40 YEARS OF SUCCESS

### THANK YOU FOR GIVING US 30 YEARS OF #1 HITS



1969 - Hank Williams Jr. &  
The Mike Curb Congregation  
"All For The Love Of Sunshine"  
No. 1 for 2 weeks



1971 - Sammy Davis, Jr. with  
The Mike Curb Congregation  
"The Candy Man"  
No. 1 for 3 weeks



1970 - The Osmonds  
"One Bad Apple"  
No. 1 for 5 weeks



1972 - Donny Osmond  
"Go Away Little Girl"  
No. 1 for 3 weeks



1973 - Marie Osmond  
"Paper Roses"  
No. 1 for 2 weeks



1974 - Donny & Marie  
"I'm Leaving It (All) Up To You"  
No. 1



1975 - The Four Seasons  
"December 1963  
(Oh What A Night)"  
No. 1 for 3 weeks



1976 - The Bellamy Brothers  
"Let Your Love Flow"  
No. 1



1977 - Shawn Cassidy  
"Da Do Ron Ron"  
No. 1



1978 - Debby Boone  
"You Light Up My Life"  
No. 1 for 10 weeks



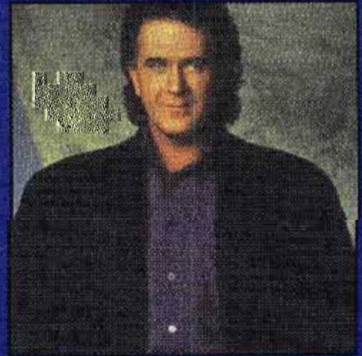
1979 - Exile  
"Kiss You All Over"  
No. 1 for 4 weeks



1980 - Maureen McGovern  
"Different Worlds"  
No. 1 for 2 weeks



1981 - Hank Williams Jr.  
"All My Rowdy Friends"  
And 10 other No. 1 records



1982 - T. G. Sheppard  
"Finally"  
And 14 other No. 1 records



1983 - Real Life  
"Send Me An Angel"  
35 weeks on Charts



1984 - The Judds  
"Grandpa"  
And 14 other No. 1 records



1985 - Sawyer Brown  
"Step That Step"  
And 3 other No. 1 records



1986 - Marie Osmond & Dan Seals  
"Meet Me In Montana"  
No. 1



1987 - Lyle Lovett  
"Cowboy Man"  
Grammy Award - Best Pop Male Vocalist



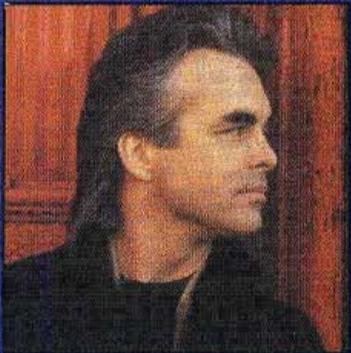
1988 - Desert Rose Band  
"He's Back And I'm Blue"  
No. 1



1989 - Delbert McClinton  
Grammy Award Winner



1990 - Righteous Brothers  
"Unchained Melody"  
Platinum Single and Album - No. 1



1991 - Hal Ketchum  
"Past The Point Of Rescue"  
"Small Town Saturday Night"  
No. 1 Airplay Record of the Year



1992 - Wynonna  
"Wynonna"  
Triple Platinum. 3 No. 1 singles -  
No. 1 for 8 weeks



1993 - Ray Stevens  
"Comedy Video Classics"  
No. 1 Video of the Year



1994 - Tim McGraw  
"Not A Moment Too Soon"  
Certified Triple Platinum  
No. 1 Pop 200 Album  
No. 1 Single - "Don't Take The Girl"  
No. 1 Country Album for  
Entire Year  
Over 25 weeks - No. 1 Album  
on the Album Chart



1995 - Jeff Carson  
"The Car"  
No. 1



1996 - LeAnn Rimes  
"Blue"  
No. 1 album for 30 weeks



1997 - David Kersh  
"If I Never Stop Loving You"  
No. 1



1998 - Jo Dee Messina  
"Bye Bye"  
No. 1

THANK YOU,

Mike Curly

CURB  
RECORDS



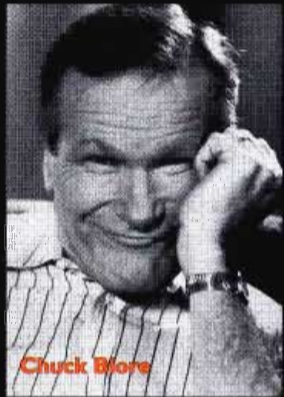
# Top 40's Top 40



Buzz Bennett



Dick Biondi



Chuck Blore



Betty Breneman



Dick Clark



Buddy Deane

**BUZZ BENNETT:** This highly-regarded programming consultant began as a “teen assistant” to Buddy Deane in Baltimore, was a DJ and PD while still in his teens, and scored in New Orleans, New York, and San Diego. Today, he dispenses wisdom on the Internet.

**DICK BIONDI:** The fast-talking wild man of Chicago radio, first at WLS, then at WCFL, Biondi came out of the vibrant Buffalo radio scene of the late Fifties. Fired for playing an Elvis Presley record, he never looked back.

**CHUCK BLORE:** Out of the McLendon school, Blore mixed personalities, contemporary jingles, and creative promotions at KFWB-Los Angeles in the late Fifties, and everywhere, programmers went full-Blore.

It's features like this that make an editor wish that the format had been called the Top 50, the Top 60, or the Top 100. Forty spots aren't enough to pay tribute to all the format's great pioneers and performers. Still, with help from the readers of *Gavin*, we've come up with a list sure to stir memories as well as debates. One note: While some radio stars who preceded Top 40 made the list, many of those who, along with Alan Freed and Jocko Henderson, paved the way for Top 40 with their R&B shows, are not. But Jack “The Rapper” Gibson, Al Benson, Hunter Hancock, “Jumpin’ George” Oxford, Pete “Mad Daddy” Myers, Zenas “Daddy” Sears, Porky Chedwick, “Hound Dog” Lorenz, Tommy “Dr. Jive” Smalls, and their brethren are remembered with affection.

**BETTY BRENEMAN:** Working as music director at KHJ in L.A., she survived its takeover by the “Boss Radio” crew and became MD for the entire RKO chain under the Drake-Chenault consultancy. Now operates the Breneman Review.

**DICK CLARK:** He began in Philadelphia radio but made his mark as host of American Bandstand, where he wielded power far greater than any radio DJ. He brushed off payola charges, expanded his empire, and

the Baltimore airwaves, he ruled on WITH radio and WJZ-TV with a dance show so popular that it kept American Bandstand out of the city. He and his show inspired the move *Hairspray*.

**RICK DEES:** Riding out of Memphis, Dees, who had the novelty hit, “Disco Duck,” in 1976, created a morning show on KIIS that's kept the station—and Top 40—dominant in L.A. since 1981. He also hosts a syndicated countdown show.

stayed forever young.

**YVONNE DANIELS:** A true pioneer, this long-time jazz DJ (and daughter of singer Billy Daniels) broke both gender and color barriers in 1973, when she joined WLS for overnights, thus becoming the first female Top 40 DJ.

**BUDDY DEANE:** King of



Rick Dees



Ron Jacobs



Bill Drake



Paul Drew



Alan Freed



Bill Gavin

**BILL DRAKE:** Originally a disc jockey out of Atlanta, he began programming radio at KYA-San Francisco, then hooked up with station owner Gene Chenault at KYNO-Fresno; then at KHJ-Los Angeles. And the rest is...Boss.

albums while teamed with Ron Landry. Many others, including The Real Don Steele and Gene Nelson, copped Hudson's "emperor" shtick.

**RON JACOBS:** Born and raised in Hawaii, he waged small-town battle against Bill

early Fifties, but became a star on WIBG, where he spent 17 years. He MC'd shows with the Beatles and the Stones.

**LARRY LUJACK:** The self-described "Super Jock" (that's the name of his autobiography) dominated Chicago radio in the



Mike Joseph



Chuck Leonard



Don MacKinnon



Bill Meeks



Casey Kasem



Hy Lit

**PAUL DREW:** Beginning as a disc jockey, he found his niche as a program director, working under former fellow DJ Bill Drake and ultimately succeeding him as National PD for the RKO chain. He continues as a radio "advisor."

**ALAN FREED:** From Akron, Ohio, to Cleveland to New York, he popularized the phrase, "rock and roll," and championed R&B acts on the air and in concert. Though beaten down by the payola hearings, he's still the king.

**BILL GAVIN:** Programming the Lucky Lager Dance Time show in the Fifties, he networked with affiliate stations and created the Gavin Report, giving Top 40 its first reliable tipsheet; the foundation for the first Top 40 surveys.

**JOCKO HENDERSON:** Sure, Bill Lee, George McFly and others do great rhymes, but the pioneers date back 40 years, to the likes of "Mad Daddy" Myers, Porky Chedwick and Jocko, flying his rocket ship over Philly, Baltimore, and New York.

**EMPEROR BOB HUDSON:** A morning star in L.A. radio, Hudson had several hit comedy

Drake in Fresno, Calif., then teamed with him to create "Boss Radio" at KHJ, mixing creativity, drive, and DJ talent with Drake's cut-the-clutter formattics.

**MIKE JOSEPH:** Arguably the first Top 40 consultant, Joseph grew to prominence in New York, where he worked with WABC in the early Sixties. His "Hot Hits" concept clicked in the Eighties, and his mantra remains, "Play the hits."

**CASEY KASEM:** Originally an aspiring actor and a fast-talking DJ, he parlayed a shtick—telling stories about the artists whose music he was playing—into a career, as host of the biggest Top 40 countdown show in the world.

**CHUCK LEONARD:** One of the first black DJs in Top 40 (Larry McCormick joined KFVB-Los Angeles in 1964), Leonard was hired at WABC-New York in 1965, after only five weeks in town on WWRL. He stayed for 14 years and remains on the air in New York City.

**HY LIT:** One of the most popular DJs ever in Philadelphia radio, "Hyski," as he was known, had been on the air since the

Sixties and Seventies, at both WLS and rival WCFL.

**DON MACKINNON:** Despite a career shortened by a fatal auto accident, the quick-witted MacKinnon is regarded by peers, including Gary Owens, Chuck Blore, and Robert W. Morgan, as the best DJ ever, for his work on KFVB in L.A. in the mid-Sixties.

**GORDON MCLENDON:** With Todd Storz and Bill Stewart, an acknowledged pioneer of the Top 40 format. His specialty: promotion and pizzaz. He also blazed trails in sports, all-news, and "beautiful music" programming.

**BILL MEEKS:** Hired by Gordon McLendon to produce local music acts on KLIF in Dallas, Meeks created station ID and promotional jingles that became the industry standard, and founded PAMS, spreading jingles nationwide.

**ROBERT W. MORGAN:** He lived for the mornings, which he turned into good mornings wherever he worked. With his dry wit and smooth voice, he hit heights at KHJ and KMPC in Los Angeles, where he has a star on the Walk of Fame.



Gordon McLendon



Joe Niagara



Robert W. Morgan



"Cousin Bruce" Morrow



Gary Owens



Dr. Don Rose

**"COUSIN BRUCIE" MORROW:** How to succeed in New York, where Alan Freed and Murray the K have gone before? Make yourself a "cousin" to your listeners. Thus, Brooklyn-born Bruce Morrow ruled nights on WABC in the Sixties.

**MURRAY THE K.:** From his entrance into New

the most powerful radio force in town, helping launch Johnnie Ray and Elvis Presley, among others.

**B. MITCHEL REED:** A jazz DJ when Top 40 came along, "the Beamer" was open and practical enough to embrace it, fast-talk-

the record side, he returned to Z100 as PD and DJ, and he now programs WPLJ.

**RICK SKLAR:** He parlayed a flair for promotion into jobs as program director for New York stations WINS, WMGM, and WABC, where his DJ staff of "All-Americans" dominated the airwaves



Pat O'Day



Scott Shannon



Joey Reynolds



Bill Randle



B. Mitchel Reed



Steve Rivers

York radio, at WINS in 1961, he did it all: a wild nighttime show that clicked with the kids; concerts in Brooklyn and Harlem; status as the "fifth Beatle," and even his own language: "Measurry."

**JOE NIAGARA:** This "Rockin' Bird" began in Philadelphia radio in 1947, long before rock and roll. He embraced the new music and blended both rock and R&B into his shows on WIBG, where he was Number One in his time slot for a decade.

**PAT O'DAY:** The sultan of Seattle Top 40 radio, O'Day ruled the airwaves beginning in the Fifties, programmed the powerhouse KJR into the Seventies, and produced rock concerts in the Pacific Northwest and beyond.

**GARY OWENS:** Possessed of a full and mellifluous voice, he put it to use with the silliest material he could conjure, and became a role model for a generation of deejays. He found equal success on TV, cartoons, and commercials.

**BILL RANDLE:** Before Alan Freed made it to Cleveland, there was Bill Randle, and after Freed left for New York, Randle remained

ing his way to stardom on KFWB in Los Angeles, then on WMCA in New York. He later helped pioneer free-form FM rock at KMET-Los Angeles.

**JOEY REYNOLDS:** His manic humor was first noticed in Buffalo, where he ruled the herd at WKBW. He's had successful stops in Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Miami, and now hosts an all-night talk show from WOR in New York.

**STEVE RIVERS:** If Top 40 was in trouble in the Eighties, Steve Rivers wasn't part of the problem. He offered solutions at KMEL-San Francisco and KIIS-Los Angeles on his way to Boston's WXKS and to the VP of Programming chair at Chancellor.

**DR. DON ROSE:** In Atlanta and Philadelphia, he developed a blend of corny one-liners and classic radio sound effects—bells, whistles, and horns—and invaded San Francisco's KFRC in 1973. He ruled the market for most of his 15 years there.

**SCOTT SHANNON:** He's known as one of the pioneers of the "Morning Zoo" concept, which he anchored at Q105 in Tampa, then at Z100 in New York. After five years on

through the mid-Seventies.

**THE REAL DON STEELE:** Widely considered the greatest of all Top 40 DJs, he combined high energy, fast talk, hip jargon, and catch phrases ("Tina Delgado is alive, alive!") to become the boss of all Boss Jocks, on KHJ and elsewhere.

**TODD STORZ:** At KOWH in Omaha, Neb. And WTIJ in New Orleans, he and program director Bill Stewart came upon and executed Top 40. Storz staged DJ conventions, including the infamous Miami Beach gathering in 1959.

**BILL STEWART:** Relegated to sidekick status in the story of Top 40's creation, Stewart was an inventive program director who worked alongside both Todd Storz and Gordon McLendon and dreamed up promotions and contests still being used today.

**WOLFMAN JACK:** He never worked Top 40, but his singular style had a tremendous impact on other DJs and on legions of fans, including George Lucas, who cast him in *American Graffiti*. He also hosted NBC's *The Midnight Special*.



Rick Sklar



Murray The K



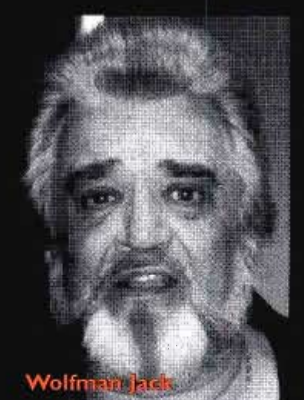
Larry Lujack



Real Don Steele

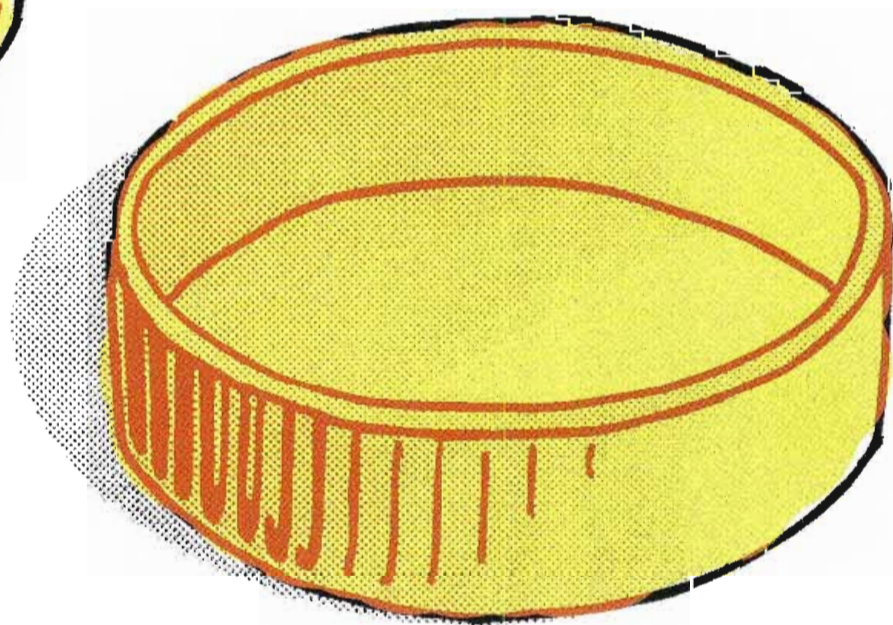


Jocko Henderson



Wolfman Jack

THE PERFECT GIFT FOR A 40-YEAR OLD.

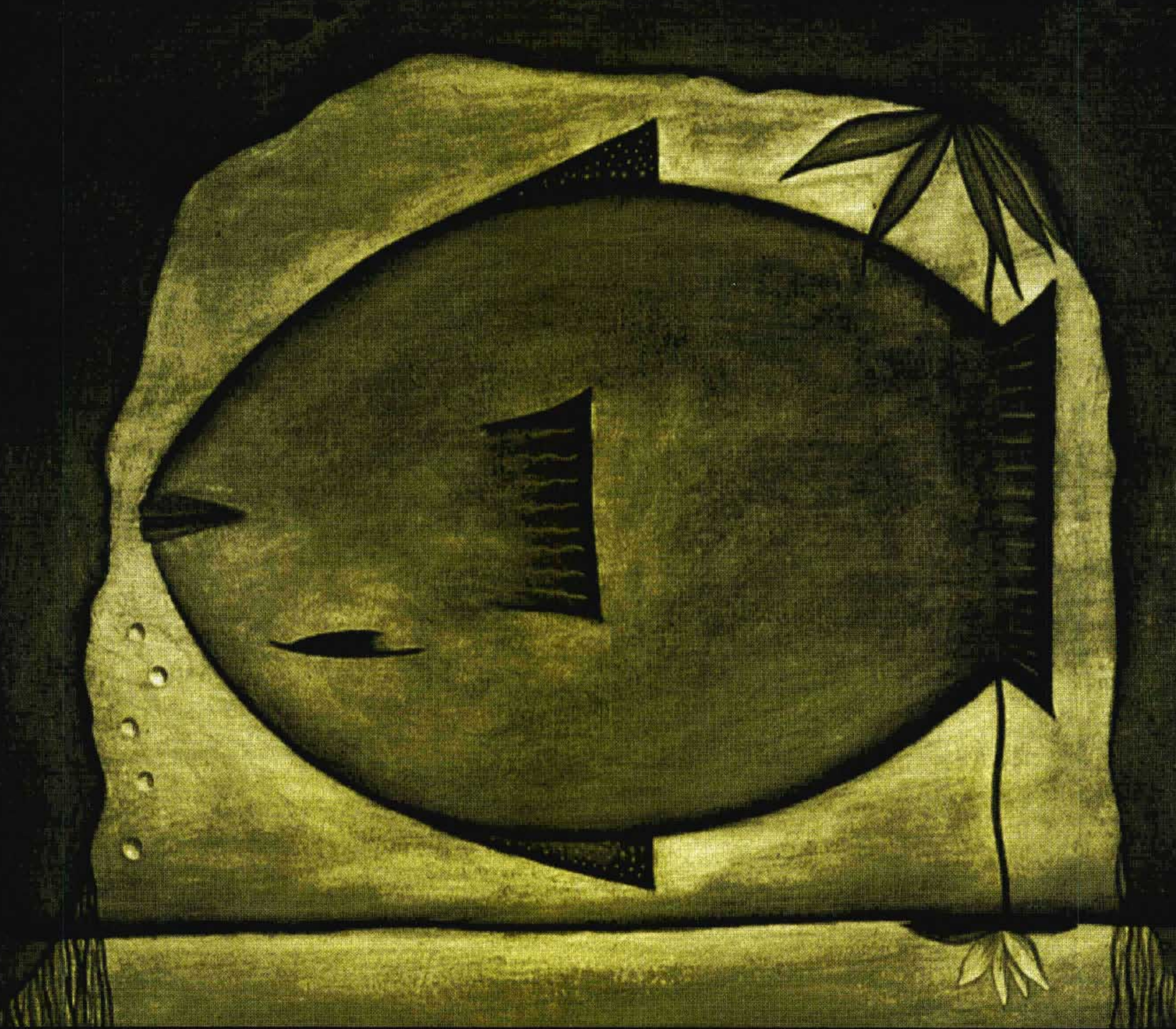


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PART THREE:

# THE FORMATS

*Radio moves far beyond the middle of the road*

**How Non-Rock Became Adult Contemporary**

*By Donna Brake*

**40 Years of Black Radio: Soul & Inspiration**

*By Janine Coveney*

**There Will Always Be Jazz**

*By Philip Elwood*

**Country Comforts**

*By Ben Fong-Torres*

**Rock On!**

*By Steven Stolder*

**B**irthdays and anniversaries are the kind of benchmark events that are often marked with talk of things to come, goals left to achieve. These celebrations - especially the big ones - also provide the perfect occasion to look back and examine where we've come from and what we've learned on the journey.

As we light the candles on Gavin's 40th birthday cake and celebrate the first four decades of rock and roll radio, it's also appropriate to examine a major radio format that's not only played a significant role in Gavin's rich past, but also contributed significantly to the evolution of radio. That format is Adult Contemporary.

Ask a hundred people a question and you'll get a hundred different answers. Ask a hundred radio people a question, and you'll get

alternative to the hyper "Boss Jocks" on the AM dial. These were folks who liked the notion that they were on the cutting edge, or hipper, somehow, just by listening to FM radio.

It's hard for anyone younger than 30 to imagine a time when music ruled the AM airways, and FM was primarily for underground rocker types or beautiful music (also known as "easy listening") listeners, but that was the case. As FM's appeal broadened and became more accessible to the masses, Adult Contemporary began to flourish - especially among baby Boomers. A/C listeners were drawn to FM's rich sound and low commercial loads, and they appreciated the deeper music catalog and variety. A/C broadcasters encouraged air personalities to adopt a revolutionary (not to mention cost-effective) "just-shut-up-and-play-the-music" approach and

# Adult Contemporary: A Past With a Future

By Donna Brake

a thousand answers. But when it comes to the origin of A/C, virtually everyone in the industry acknowledges that the term was coined by Bill Gavin. The handle was an immediate hit, sticking like glue. Not that other terms and labels weren't thrown out there. (Does anyone remember Pop Adult?) In true Darwinian fashion, A/C has adapted and endured, showing amazing staying power. You can hang "Hot" in front of it - or "Modern," or "Gold-based," or "Mainstream" - but the essence of Adult Contemporary remains.

As a radio format, A/C appealed to the young adult who was bored or otherwise disenchanted with Top 40, but who was too hip for the AM dial's MOR stations, with Andy Williams, Perry Como, and Pat Boone in their stable of core artists. It quickly shaped up as a gold and recurrent-based format that emphasized hits by adult-oriented artists, while avoiding disposable teeny-bopper tunes.

## No Static At All: FM

**N**ot surprisingly, A/C's real boom came with the arrival of FM radio on the pop culture landscape. Boasting an increased sound fidelity and signal strength, the FM band would provide budding A/C programmers with a great opportunity to reach the increasing number of young, and maturing, adults who were flocking to FM radio in search of a musical



"I'll tell you a really big secret. I don't like singing live and I never have. I don't like to travel. If I didn't have to get out of the studio, I never would do anything but make music." — Linda Ronstadt, 1995.

proudly promoted this aspect on the air. In fact, the phrase "light rock, less talk," which still define the airwaves of many A/C stations, is a direct descendant of this early A/C mantra.

## Chicken Rock to 'Chick Rock'

**A**/C took advantage of its FM home by emphasizing music in heavy doses and embracing certain performers as core artists. The format borrowed adult-appealing hitmakers such as Barry Manilow, Neil Diamond, Barbra Streisand, the Carpenters, Olivia Newton John, and the Bee Gees from Top 40 radio. Format programmers also recognized the adult appeal of AOR staples the Eagles, Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt, Rod Stewart and Elton John and began adding their softer hit singles to A/C's diverse playlists.

With more and more FM stations competing for listeners' attention, radio audiences were naturally becoming more fragmented - a situation that played into the hands of A/C programmers. Thanks to its piecemeal approach of borrowing adult-appealing music from other formats, A/C radio was delivering an audience every sales department could love: adults 25-54, with the emphasis on the increasingly popular 25-54 year old woman.

To compete with these contemporary FM stations, heritage full-service AM stations began to skew their music to appeal to a

younger audience. These stations, once the prototype for successful adult radio, were scrambling to compete with the upstart FM A/C stations, which were spending far less money in virtually every area of operation.

Eventually, the faltering AM giants would give up the battle of trying to compete with FMs as a music source while, ironically, the FMs, which were built on a solid music foundation, began to develop more as full service outlets.

Meanwhile, another significant evolutionary change was happening on the FM side of the dial that would also strengthen the A/C format. Beautiful music stations once dominant players in adult broadcasting, began to see younger adult shares erode as A/C stations began to steal their bread and butter dayparts, including the crucial at-work audience. Major radio chains around the country began switching from Beautiful Music to A/C to remain competitive.

AOR stations began to lose female shares too, as they discovered that this format many irreverently referred to as "Chicken Rock" was, in fact, "Chick Rock." Yep, Bill Gavin's Adult Contemporary format was here to stay.

### The AM/FM Combo, Please

With the under-35 demo tuned in almost exclusively to FM, alert programmers began adding more service elements to their A/C stations. This is particularly true among stations which had AM heritage counterparts. After all, the news, traffic and sales departments were already deep with talented personnel. It was no big deal to tag on the FM. Owners began to combo up the AM and FMs and found they could still offer clients the 25-54 adult audience with the stations combined.

For a while in the early '80s, some industry trade publications acknowledged the differences between FM Adult Contemporary stations (ratings leaders, particularly among adults 25-34) and AM Full Service stations (stations which still played music at least 12 hours a day and maintained impressive 25-54 adult numbers), by publishing a separate chart for each format. This lasted until the AM stations eventually dropped music completely from their programming.

A generation after young adults of the '70s rejected existing formats to help create Adult Contemporary, '90s adults likewise began tuning their dials away from mainstream A/C, Top 40 and AOR. As a result, Hot A/C was born. Another hybrid, another schism, another fork in the road.

Hot A/C is similar to A/C in that it is gold- and recurrent-based. Like Top 40, it rotates currents heavily. Like A/C, its target audience is female. As mainstream A/C stations began skewing to the older end of 25-54, Hot A/Cs began seeking out the 18-34 year

*"You can hang 'Hot' or 'Mainstream' in front of it, but the essence of Adult Contemporary remains."*

old adult woman. Musically, Hot A/C borrows heavily from rock and alternative radio but is not album-oriented or current-based. As the format continues to evolve, it also looks to Top 40 and, to a lesser degree, A/C radio for music.

And evolving it is. Hot A/C has already spawned the Modern A/C sub-format, which has even less in common with traditional Adult Contemporary radio. But listen closely and you can hear A/C deep in the mix.

Adult Contemporary has always been a broad term (no Bette Midler jokes, please) to define a number of adult formats, and in this era of consolidation there are more A/C varieties than ever. In fact, we can thank consolidation for providing a security blanket for A/Cs of all stripes. In many markets, consolidation has eliminated the pesky direct competitor, enabling programmers to fine tune their mainstream, Hot, Modern, Urban and you-name-it A/C stations to perfectly complement each to get the most out of the potential listening audience.

Should we be surprised or alarmed at the changes in A/Cs past and the implications those changes hold for the future? Not at all. By definition the format label Adult Contemporary implies constant change. To stay "contemporary," adult music and the approach to delivering the music must change to accommodate the shifting tastes and lifestyles of the adults who make up target demos.

In today's world, and by the broadest definition, the Adult Contemporary formats could include mainstream A/C, Hot A/C (or Adult Top 40), Modern A/C, NAC, Smooth Jazz, Urban A/C, even some Classic Hits formats which rely heavily on A/C hits from the '70s and '80s.

These formats are the natural offspring of the mass appeal A/C stations that first developed in the mid '70s - the stations Bill Gavin first proclaimed Adult Contemporary. What's more, as long as baby boomers (and their kids) refuse to grow old, the more A/C splinter formats we will hear in the days, weeks, months and years to come. ☺

*Donna Brake is President of the A/C music marketing firm Donna Brake Promotion. Her extensive A/C career includes experience as a PD, MD, air talent, A/C format editor and in record promotion. Her company is currently breaking new A/C ground on the Internet with a website devoted exclusively to A/C Radio ([www.acradio.com](http://www.acradio.com)).*



**"I'm glad to know radio stations are playing me again, but what took them so long, goddammit!" — Barry Manilow, 1997**



Since 1958, when Bill Gavin established *the Gavin Report* as a reflection of the music industry, technology has affected both the politics of making records and the business of commercial radio. Whereas most industries can look back and laugh at the make-do simplicity of earlier times, it seems that in 1998, as we look back, black radio would like nothing less than to return to the halcyon days of broadcasting as they were 40 years ago.

One need only to look around today's radio marketplace to discern the reasons. Where radio was developed as a mass media outlet designed to entertain and inform, operated and staffed by people who were dedicated to broadcasting and to their communities, radio is now a chain of high-efficiency factories that fills the air-

Memphis station WDIA, this year celebrating its 50th anniversary, was legendary for serving its community; so was Philadelphia's WDAS, Chicago's WVON, Kansas City's KPRS, Cleveland's WABQ, and New York's WWRL—stations that not only played the hottest soul "sides," but also had the hippest, slickest-talking announcers. Names like "Jockey" Jack Gibson, Chuck "The Nighthawk" Smith, Hal Jackson, Rufus Thomas, Eddie O'Jay, Georgie Woods, and many more lit up the airwaves with their smooth raps and distinct style. And it was the DJs themselves who picked the records, voiced unique and indelible intros and product pitches, informed the community of "Negro" events, news, and issues, and made the deals with local promotion men to co-promote shows at the concert hall or theater in their part of the infamous chitlin' circuit.

# 40 Years of Black Radio: Soul and Inspiration

By Janine Coveney

waves with sound, cranked out at a profit for the largely non-broadcast-centered conglomerates that own the stations. Radio is certainly still an effective tool and provides musical entertainment for scores of satisfied listeners with creative and varied programming. But for black radio, this change to a more bottom-line-oriented operation has sucked out its very "soul." As James Brown would have said, urban radio stations of today are "Talkin' loud and sayin' nothin'"—at least as compared to the glory days of radio in the '50s and '60s.

For the growing community of African Americans in this country's urban sectors, and even in some rural areas, radio was a lifeline. At the end of the '50s, America was still heavily segregated, Jim Crow laws were still in effect, and civil rights for people of color did not exist. As small community signals were given over to local "Negro" records and even radio announcers, the connection grew ever more vital. "Black radio became an instrument for the black community—we became the person they listened to, and they believed us," said pioneering black announcer Jack Gibson in an interview with KDKO Denver. "They didn't believe what the white folks told them, because they couldn't see them [in their neighborhoods]. But they could see us as soon as we got off the air, walking down the streets."



"This should be our shining moment. (Instead), we're talking about 'east coast-west coast.' We're not working together as a hip-hop nation." — Keith Clinkscales, VIBE, Gavin Seminar, 1996.

These booming AM stations spoke to the black communities in their own voices about their own needs, and they played the most exciting new artists from the Mississippi blues belt to the New Orleans swamps, the sophisticated Chicago blues, and Memphis soul. Personality jocks played the greatest records, reflecting the innovation of soul, blues, jump, swing, and even rock and roll.

Early on, black music was largely produced by independent labels, and the first black promotion men traveled the country, meeting with key jocks to peddle records. Sometimes the artists promoted their own records, as Chicago native and hitmaker Gene Chandler remembered. "I went to so many radio stations I could be driving through the South in the '60s and I would hear a station, and I would stop, call the station, and jocks would be totally shocked when I'd walk in."

Radio was particularly crucial in the '60s to the burgeoning Civil Rights and Black Power movements. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speeches were broadcast on the radio; Malcolm X also took to the airwaves, not only in New York, but in some of the cities that he visited as part of his ministry. Radio informed the public about the historic 1963 March on Washington and helped organize and finance the attendance of local residents. WDAS-Philadelphia's longtime

Program Director, Joe “Butterball” Tamburro, says his station was involved with the NAACP and the Congress Of Racial Equality, and rallied listeners to help the NAACP desegregate a local college. “Dr. King had risen in his power, and Malcolm X was in our community often,” he recalled. “They used to strategize at our station, they’d be using our facility for meetings. Malcolm was at our station just three days before he was assassinated.”

It was also by way of radio that James Brown addressed angry and grieving residents in Memphis and Atlanta after the assassination of Dr. King, asking people to keep the peace.

Sparked by FM and a booming music industry, radio grew in the ‘70s and gained maturity and sophistication in the ‘80s, as consultants and research becoming basic tools for targeting audiences, boosting ratings, and increasing ad revenue.

Formats blossomed like wildflowers, borrowing freely from each other. Of course, it could be said that Top 40, which helped turn radio into a science, was the first borrower: of the energy, the youth orientation, and, certainly, the music of R&B radio.

Through the years, Top 40 would contribute some programming formatics to urban radio. But in the ‘60s, black radio had to find its own directions. Even with its broad music base and long musical tradition, its listeners—primarily African-Americans—were still not viewed by the advertising world as the optimum target market.

R&B radio evolved into “urban,” inviting more non-black listeners to partake in a fresh new radio style. Certainly in the ‘70s, many African-American-oriented stations played records that might have initially fallen outside of the confines of their format. At WBLS in New York in the late ‘70s, Frankie Crocker offered his listeners everything from James Brown to Elton John; from Sam & Dave to Hall & Oates.

By the mid-‘80s, more and more stations that did not necessarily target or identify themselves with the black community were adding R&B-oriented hits. The “churban” phenomenon had been born, as a hybrid of “contemporary hits” radio, or Top 40, and urban. So had the concept of “more music, less talk.” And traditional black radio stations, used to playing a variety of music and letting its jocks talk to listeners, found itself losing shares to a quicker, dirtier format that banged the hottest

music all day, with strictly-scheduled commercial breaks and with barely any chatter. To remain competitive, black radio—that is, those radio stations that targeted the black community—soon adopted the formatics and philosophies of Top 40 programming.

Today’s landscape of black radio stations looks very different than it did 40 years ago. Few black radio stations are owned by African-Americans. The format has very few nationally known DJs at individual stations; the only big stars are those who are widely syndicated. The musical variety once available in programming on one station is gone, in favor of a tighter playlist of contemporary charting tracks. And the format has splintered, with the late ‘80s evolution of “adult R&B” and “black A/C,” including the “Quiet Storm” and various oldies menus. The sub-formats offer a smoother, more sophisticated counterpoint to mainstream R&B’s hot, young, hip-hop-leaning mix.

Black-oriented radio today commands better advertising rates and more respect from major group owners who see it as a ratings earner. But competing entertainment and news options (by way of everything from print to the Internet), the format’s music-intensive focus and strict formatics, and its operation by non-black entities have irreparably altered black radio’s role as a media powerhouse, a lifeline to the communities it serves. ☺

*Janine Coveney is Editor/New Mainstream for Gavin. She has previously been Managing Editor at R&B Monitor, R&B music editor at Billboard, and Careers Editor at Essence. Her career includes a stints as product manager for Arista Records and West Coast publicist for Jam & Lewis’ now-defunct Perspective Records. A native of the South Bronx, N.Y., Coveney currently resides in Los Angeles.*

### Radio Wonders



“One particular story about the “wonders of radio” for me would be the Fugees’ ‘Killing Me Softly.’ A song that was never intended to be a single but would help drive their album *The Score* to Number One on numerous charts. This song was purely driven by radio due to the fact that multi-formats basically got the album and while we serviced ‘Fu-gee-la’ and ‘Ready or Not,’ everyone was calling for ‘Killing Me Softly.’ It was like a brush fire.

“The Fugees would go on to receive two Grammys later that year - Best Live Performance By a Group or Duo and Best Rap Album. I like to think this was due in large part to the demand for a particular song by radio audiences.”

—Chris Schwartz, CEO Ruffhouse Records

Since the dawn of the commercial record industry in the mid-1890's, the capability of a phonograph recording to capture the way something is performed rather than what is being performed has been recognized as its unique role in documenting American vernacular speech, song and music.

It is difficult for us a century later to imagine the effect on say, the Iowa housewife, when hearing - for the first time - famed black vaudevillian Bert Williams sing "Nobody," or "He's a Cousin of Mine" on 1906 recordings after she had learned the songs earlier from sheet music.

A few years ago, when Wynton Marsalis was preparing to record a few selections drawn from the repertoire of famous turn-of-the-century concert cornetists (like Herbert L. Clarke, Bohumir Kryl

not surprising to find that such early experimental radio pioneers as Elman Myers in New York and "Doc" Herrold in San Jose, California, were playing records regularly on the air by 1910-11. Myers, considered the first disc jockey, was playing records 18 hours a day, regularly, and Thomas Clark, in Detroit, was broadcasting recorded music via radio signals into Lake Erie steamer telephones in the same years.

Records, including the early "jazz" discs, seem to have constituted a major part of early (experimental) radio programming right into the 1920s, when radio research and technological improvements brought relatively powerful transmitters into the stations, and radio sets with speakers into American living rooms.

The radio era was, thus, heralded in by music from records,

# There Will Always be Jazz With or Without Radio

By Philip Elwood

and others) he expressed astonishment at the difference between the compositions' published scores and the cornetists' own recorded versions. "Those cats ad-libbed on their own tunes," he said.

The contemplation of all this leads one to consider whether jazz (or "jass" or "jas" — all of which were used on early record labels) would have ever been noticed had not the Dixieland Jazz Band recorded, both for Victor and Columbia in 1917 — thus exposing to all America, for the first time, an informal, semi-improvised sort of "one-step ragtime" which caught the fancy of the young, dancing crowd in the early months of U.S. participation in World War I.

For better or for worse, it was those Dixieland Jazz band recordings that defined the term and music; for years, bands, musicians and record labels used the terms "Dixieland" and "jazz" synonymously — thus starting a dispute (often with racial implications) over the definition and identification of jazz which continues to this day. And who among those of us who are involved in the radio and/or the record establishment has not been frustrated by the constantly expanding categorization of the music we play, talk and write about?

Since records were selling by the millions annually by 1910, it is



**"The wheat fields that nourish the core, the power, and the soul of our great American music are being destroyed. The great music artists of America and their art forms are being sentenced to solitary confinement in a 'format' created by a consultant, advising a client (radio) on how to maximize ad revenues."**  
— Joe Sample, 1996

tinny though it sounded. And there are many indications that, as dozens of stations a year across the country were licensed to broadcast, and home radios continued to improve in quality of reception, popular music from recordings, including, by 1923, discs from the newly established "Music for the Negro Race" (later, "race music") and "Country Music and Western Music" catalogs.

There was considerable resistance in the mid-'20s on the part of record companies (which meant, primarily, Victor, Columbia, Brunswick and Okeh) to the competition radio was offering to record sales, but by 1927, when recordings "went electric" and movies became talkies, the battleground started clearing. Victor was bought by RCA, Brunswick became part of the Warner Bros. films, and Columbia bought Okeh. Only RCA Victor survived the Depression.

Record production hit bottom in 1933 as radio broadcasting grew into its golden era. But along the way, non-network stations (and they predominated) survived nicely by playing records, using ET's (Electrical Transcriptions) and emphasizing local coverage. There were black radio stations and a number of black record-spinners prior to 1930, including the fascinating "first black jock" Jack L. Cooper of WSBC in Chicago,

whose career extended into the 1950s and, according to *Variety* in 1947, brought him a gross income of \$185,000.

During the 1940's and, especially, into the 50s, the disc jockey became the emblem of radio, and many a jock was a jazz-type. Martin Block's *Make Believe Ballroom*, Fred Robbins' *Swing Class*, Al Collins' *Jazzbo Jamboree in the Purple Grotto* (all out of New York) and Peter Potter's *Symphony of Swing* shows from L.A. were typical.

By the early '50s, pop music was changing. But it wasn't just the music. The old 78 revolutions-per-minute records, began to give way to 45 r.p.m. singles and 33 r.p.m. albums, mastered on tape. Pop tunes survived and flourished on the seven-inch 45's with the big holes in the middle, geared for mobile teenagers. Jazz, now taped in long, five- to ten-minute tracks, would find its primary home on the long-playing (LP) form.

On the radio in the '50s, jazz was in a quandary. Tape-recorded mastering encouraged modern jazzmen to open up their performances, to make LPs with ten or 12 minute tracks, sometimes longer. Jazz record labels (including Blue Note, Prestige, and Riverside) naturally wanted some air time, but AM radio, with its increasingly formatted pop-music, DJ shows (and the rock revolution a-coming) wanted nothing to do with jazz.

Jazz of the '50s was an unknown to the typical teenaged listener, and became more obscure by the '60s, even to most older jazz fans. Its lengthy LP renditions were losers in the commercial radio sense. On the other hand, the increasingly available and popular FM reception mode, with higher fidelity and (at the time) plenty of air time to spare, proved to be a haven for classical, folk, experimental music, and jazz.

However, except for listener-supported, subscription, or NPR stations, there was little interest in jazz. "Not commercial enough; who listens to that stuff," was a typical comment from potential sponsors of jazz shows. I went on the air with my first weekly jazz shows on Pacifica Radio's flagship station, KPFA-FM, in Berkeley, in 1952; in 1954 my *Jazz Review* show (two hours a week airing new releases) became a station staple, lasting 40 years. I did about 1700 programs—providing my own records, handling my own production—and, quite willingly, getting no pay.

Now, as the century ends, all of us involved in this wonder-world of computerized, digitally-edited music—and at the same time trying to keep up with live performances as well as radio production—find ourselves virtually back at square one.

Radio stations are committed to carefully-researched, rigidly-controlled formats, all aimed at specific slices of the demographic pie. All records are selected for the DJ, and, excepting certain day-parts, personality is a lost art.

As with music in general and radio in particular, jazz is fragmented. But, after categorical divisions and subdivisions (classic, Smooth, fusion, electric/experimental, and so forth), jazz still finds itself, in record establishment circles, the wallflower, the bridesmaid, the groomsman, ever-waiting.

Jazz radio stations seem to survive only as non-commercial entities. Jazz recordings — often using the term too loosely for die-hard jazz enthusiasts — are more and more overly produced CDs featuring prominent soloists with pickup ensembles. To many, the tragedy is that '90s jazz recordings, regardless of what type of jazz, don't have the spontaneity or the collective improvisation that for decades defined the musical form.

On the other hand, and definitely up-beat, is the fact that there continues to be support for jazz on the radio dial, and there are still plenty of jazz musicians of all styles with devoted followers.

And as the famed jazz record producer Orrin Keepnews said at a Monterey Jazz Festival panel discussion a few years ago, "Jazz can't die. Jazz is a spirit, a free spirit; it may change, it always is changing, but as long as there are young, free-spirited jazz musicians coming up (and there always will be) there will always be jazz." ☞

*Philip Elwood, who has been the popular music and jazz critic at the San Francisco Examiner for some 30 years, has helped spread jazz and blues music on radio air-waves since the '40s, with programs on KSFO-San Francisco, KRE-Berkeley, and KLX-Oakland. He produced and hosted a show on KPFA-Berkeley from 1952 to 1995, and his programming was also head on WBAI-New York and other stations. Elwood, a native of Berkeley, has also served as a music advisor to National Public Radio and American Public Radio, and has taught courses on American history and popular music history at various universities.*

### Faith Restored



"I'm a music addict and a record junkie, because of radio. My knowledge of music was formed by the Chicago dial of my youth: WFMT's *Midnight Special*, the all-woman staff and the jazz of WSDM; the R&B powerhouses, WVON, WJPC; and of course, the legendary Top 40s WLS and WCFL. And at night, WLAC (God bless you, John R.) and the *Grand Ole Opry* blasting out of Tennessee. All of these stations had their hits, a hit meaning something that first, your gut, and then your audience told you was working.

"Sometimes, radio makes me feel like there are more music analysts than music lovers. And then, as I spin the dial in whatever place I'm in, here comes a frequency that restores my faith in radio's ability to spread the word and the song like nothing else. Then I re-connect with the Chicago kid surfing all those years ago." — Chuck Mitchell, President, Verve Records

As it's been for every form of music with the possible exception of classical country music goes through up and downswings. As we approach the end of the '90s, country radio is taking note of declining ratings, a slippage that comes at the same time that several of its biggest stars, including Garth Brooks, Shania Twain, Faith Hill, and LeAnn Rimes, have managed to cross over into pop radio into Adult Contemporary and Top 40 territory.

Of course, country music was a regular occupant of Top 40 charts in that format's early years, and the crossover trick has been pulled by Dolly Parton, the late Eddie Rabbitt, Kenny Rogers, and that dynamic duo, Willie Nelson and Julio Iglesias, in more recent decades.

On any given night, Garth, Clint, Wynonna, Patty, Dwight, or Lorrie are likely to be guesting on the late-night circuit.

Television, along with film and the mainstream print media, is catching onto something that radio, the trade press, and country media have known for years. Country has become today's pop music.

While other music forms and their formats have fragmented, country has gotten it together.

Brooks, the hottest symbol of country's across-the-board popularity, is generous with credits for his success. "Radio," he says, "has been the base of everything for me. I've always looked at radio and the artist like teammates. Everyone says we create the music, but if the music ain't heard, what good is it?"

Beyond impressive record sales figures, there's the latest count

# Country Comforts

## 'Today's Pop Music'

By Ben Fong-Torres

On its own, country radio has roller coasted through lean and large years. It's hampered by media stereotyping of the music and its makers; it's helped either by the sheer force of a superstar Hello, Dolly! or a movie (like *Urban Cowboy*) or a war (in the Gulf) that stirs patriotic and country music fervor.

One indication of the herky-jerky ride is the accompanying Country Time Line, which chronicles the early years of the music and its relationship to radio.

More recently, *Gavin* reported on country music when it soared to new heights in the early '90s.

As the magazine noted in 1993:

It's everywhere.

Late night, there's Vince Gill on *The Tonight Show*, drawing screams as he sings a knowing "Nothing Like a Woman."

Prime time, there's Mary Chapin Carpenter, sitting with Katie Couric, giving as good as she gets.

Mornings, there's John Michael Montgomery getting the new-hunk spotlight on Regis & Kathie Lee.

When television needs a drawing card, it's as likely to get on the line to Nashville as it is to Hollywood. When Jay Leno had to go up against the Letterman-on-CBS juggernaut, his weapons for their first night of head-to-huge-jaw battle included Garth Brooks.



**(Radio's) bottom line and our bottom line are different. Their way of staying afloat is to sell advertising, and ours is to sell records. The two are not really in direct correlation, yet we both need each other to keep float. I don't think radio's ever going to change dramatically. I'm not an expert on radio; just a listener.**  
— Vince Gill, 1993

of country radio stations.

According to the Country Music Association, 2,402 of the 10,000 radio stations in the U.S. identify themselves as country. That's up from 2,086 in 1989. Country has pushed past Adult Contemporary and News/Talk, with Top 40 and album radio trailing. Now, country radio is experimenting with such variations as oldies and "Young" or "New Country," although, as consultant Rusty Walker says, "What we used to call 'new country' is mainstream."

Country's performance is equally impressive in the ratings. Not only did it capture or remain Number One in markets where country would be expected to Houston, Dallas, Oklahoma City and Kansas City among them but it also topped the fields in Baltimore, Tampa, San Diego, Denver, and even the grunge capital, Seattle. "What state is country in?" asks Walker. "It's in a state of Nirvana."

Long before it reached that state, it was being charted by the *Gavin Report*.

Bill and Janet Gavin were fans of the music, and Bill attended the first convention of the CMA in Nashville in 1958.

Although their publication was founded on pop, rock, and R&B music, they began covering country stations in 1967, with

Janet as editor.

Over the years, she received assistance from Bill, from Elma Greer, the music librarian at KSFO in San Francisco, and, in 1976, from a DJ who'd go on to become king of the country count-downs, Bob Kingsley.

Kingsley had begun reporting to *Gavin* since 1973, when he was doing a free-form country program at KFI in Los Angeles. A few years later, Bill Gavin called. "He told me that Janet had gotten sick and that she insisted that I sit in for her," Kingsley remembered.

"So from October '76 until the holidays, I flew up from L.A. to San Francisco every week, took the reports, and wrote items for the 'Country Club' section." Janet Gavin, said Kingsley, "felt the heart and soul of country music, and always had its best interests at heart. She was tireless in making sure people reported, and she

**It's a Sleeper**

"I've been a fan of *Gavin* for over half my life. Every promotion man could only hope that he had the "Sleeper of the Week." *Gavin* continues the tradition of excellence that Bill and Janet always strived for." — Ed Mascolo, Senior VP Promotion, River North Records



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# A Time Line:

## The Early Years of Country & Radio

*Nearly a quarter of the more than 10,000 commercial radio stations in the United States identify their format as country. That's because it plain works. From Seattle to Tampa and, as consultant Rusty Walker said, from "cradle to grave," country music draws—and keeps—listeners.*

*But the road to success has been 75 years long, and as winding and bumpy as you'd expect.*

*Here are some of the highlights of the early history of radio's relationship with what used to be called "hillbilly" or "country and western" music.*

**1922**

WSB in Atlanta, the first high-powered radio station in the South, goes on the air in September and soon begins featuring folk performers and string bands. A few months before, KDKA, the original commercial radio station in Pittsburgh, had broadcast a performance by Berg's String Entertainers.

**1923**

In Fort Worth, Tex., WBAP produces a square dance music program featuring a string band. In later years, the show is credited as the first of the radio barn dances.

**1924**

In Chicago, WLS debuts its National Barn Dance, which will become a model for dozens of stations for several decades.

**1927**

In Nashville, the WSM Barn Dance, created by George D. Hay, the station's Program Director in 1925, becomes The Grand Ole Opry, which will be broadcast live from various studios until 1935, when it moves to a local theater.

The barn dance concept—live broadcasts of folk and hillbilly music—spreads, keeping country healthy in the midst of the Great Depression. Stations that will stage similar programs—or promote

country and western in other ways—include WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia (Jamboree U.S.A.), WLW in Cincinnati (Boone County Jamboree), KMBC in Kansas City, KMOX in St. Louis, WHO in Des Moines, KWKH in Shreveport,

La., WRVA in Richmond, KRLD in Dallas, WROL in Knoxville, and WOAI in San Antonio.

WLS' National Barn Dance ensemble includes Gene Autry, who'd been "Oklahoma's Singing Cowboy" on KVOO in Tulsa; the Girls of the Golden West, and singing sensation Lulu Belle, who is twice voted the most popular female radio entertainer in the country, and crosses over to television and movies.

**1932**

WLS moves its Barn Dance, now being aired on the NBC network on 50 stations coast to coast, from a theater it'd built in its studios to the Eighth Street Theatre, where it would stay for 25 years.

1936

Young Hank Williams begins performing on WSFA in Montgomery, Alabama.

1938

The Carter Family (A.P., Sara and Maybelle), a staple in the South, move to Del Rio, Texas, to appear on XERA, a 500,000-watt monster in that Mexican-American border town. The "border blaster," the most prominent of several "X-stations," reached past California into Canada, and the Carters became the first country ensemble to become full-fledged stars, alongside Jimmie Rodgers, "The Singing Brakeman." Near the end of his short life, in 1932, Rodgers appeared regularly on KMAC in San Antonio. "America's Blue Yodeler" died the next year. "In the dissemination of country music throughout the United States," wrote Bill Malone in *Country Music USA*, "nothing was of more importance than the powerful Mexican border stations."

1939

NBC puts a half hour of the Opry on



Hank Williams

its 26-station network. With WSM's 50,000-watt signal, the show reached listeners from the Atlantic to the Rockies and had been drawing some 300,000 fan letters a year. Early on, however, WSM treated the Opry like a poor cousin. John Rumble of the Country Music Foundation: "WSM originally strived to be high-toned. The idea of a bunch of hillbillies didn't quite jell with the management's image of Nashville as part of the genteel New South."

1939

Sexual innuendoes in country and western lyrics are a concern. *Billboard*, listing best-selling records, notes that "double-meaning records are

purposely omitted from this column."

1943

The Opry moves into Ryman Auditorium in downtown Nashville, where it will remain until 1974, when it relocates to Opryland U.S.A.

The '40s, according to Michael Mason's *The Country Music Book*, "marked country music's emergence as a truly national phenomenon." Opry and barn dance shows spread to Boston, Philadelphia, and Cleveland. Bluegrass, western swing, and honky-tonk emerge, and movies feature singing cowboys.

1948

The Louisiana Hayride is created by KWKH-Shreveport, as competition for the Opry. Hank Williams

followed Bill's doctrine to make sure everything was kept legit."

Today, *Gavin* has a full country music office in Nashville, with Jamie Matteson charting mainstream country and Chris Marino overseeing the left-of-the-stream sounds *Gavin* called Americana when it inaugurated the chart in 1995.

Doing his syndicated American Country Countdown, Kingsley feels the music's see-saw profile in the American consciousness and its heights and depths in musical quality.

"The Urban Cowboy phenomenon of 1980 came close to killing country music," he said. "You had a lot of pop acts doing country music, and, as the people in Nashville began to see what kind of money a soundtrack could make, they started chasing the dollar. In the process, the basic 'roots' feel of country dissipated greatly." Fiddles all but disappeared.

Then came what became known as New Traditionalists, led by the likes of Rodney Crowell and Emmylou Harris, whom Kingsley credits with saving country. "Artists like Randy Travis, Ricky Skaggs, and George Strait embraced the roots and mixed it with a new sound."

Some of those artists not to mention legends like George Jones, Merle Haggard, and Waylon Jennings are having a hard time getting onto country radio, finding greater acceptance on oldies and Americana stations. But the music, country programmer Lee



*Lucky Dog Records Salutes  
Gavin on  
280 Dog Years!*

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introduces “Lovesick Blues” on the show.

1954

Elvis Presley gets his first airplay on Dewey Phillips’ show on WHBQ in Memphis. The record: “That’s All Right, Mama.” With help from WHHM, which played the flip side, “Blue Moon of Kentucky,” “That’s All Right” becomes the Number One country record in Memphis.

That year, Elvis appears on the Opry, and is advised to go back to truck driving. In October, he becomes a regular on the Louisiana

Hayride, until late 1955.

1958

Beset by the onslaught of rock and roll and Top 40 radio, country goes into a decline. The Country Music Disc Jockey Association dissolves after four years, and in its place comes the Country Music Association. The CMA champions country music on the radio.

Although country artists and records do cross over to Top 40—outstanding examples include Johnny Cash, Guy Mitchell, Sonny James, Patsy Cline, Jim Reeves, Conway

Twitty, Don Gibson, Johnny Horton, Marty Robbins, and the Everly Brothers—country-formatted stations are few.

As Edward Morris wrote in *Country: The Music and the Musicians*, “The CMA made its first tabulation of country music radio stations in 1961 and found that there were 81 playing the music full-time. By 1969, this number had risen to 606. It was an impressive and hard-earned gain, but it was only a small fraction of the expansion yet to come.”

Logan has said, is cyclical.

“At the beginning of every decade, country has enjoyed a renaissance,” he said in 1993. “In the ‘60s, it was crooners; in the ‘70s, the outlaws; in the ‘80s, *Urban Cowboy*. The difference between this and the previous waves is that this is based on the music, and not on a movie or a social trend.” Also, he noted, “other forms of music are not enjoying the peaks they’ve had in the past.” Music fans who didn’t care for rap or hard rock, or who found light rock or Quiet Storm fare too bland, went to country.

Five years later, industry insiders were saying that it was country that had peaked. But, as consultant Mike McVay noted, “It has peaked in a top three position” that is, former Number Ones were still drawing large shares of audiences “and I don’t see it dropping below that...country is still healthy, and it isn’t going away.” Or, as Bob Kingsley put it: “Like rock and roll, country music will never die. It is the one true American art form that traces its roots to our traditions, and it has a way of getting directly to people’s souls.” ☞

Paper This!

“Some of my best memories of the late ‘70s center around visits I made to Gavin in San Francisco as a part of my new country duties. Bill was always willing to listen to new product for its merit no matter what format it came from.



“I will never forget sitting on a CRS panel with Bill when a comment was made from the floor that ‘There is nothing wrong with paper adds.’ Gene Hughes and I had to physically hold Bill back. He jumped out of his seat and was going over the table we were at to do in the culprit. That kind of passion for upholding the credibility he believed in so much, instills me to this day.”

— Jack Lameier, Senior Vice President Epic, Nashville

Epic Nashville congratulates Gavin on “The Big 4-0”... Let the party begin!

epic nashville

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Charlie Pride with Janet Gavin, who was Gavin’s original country editor.



**Heroes**

“Radio’s been shot through my heart and soul since the age of 11, when I began discovering the great entertainers. The Greaseman on WAPE, Jacksonville...the Hossman and Spider Harrison on WLAC, Nashville...Jeff Davis at WLS-Chicago. Static didn’t hinder me from my desire to hear them, learn from them, and poach from them, so one day I could mount my own on-air attack, at an AM daytimer in Savannah.

“Time teaches lessons, and one I learned early on was that I wasn’t going to be like any of my heroes in terms of raw, smack-you-in-the-head-talent. I decided to become a coach, learning from new heroes like Smokey Rivers and Bill Pugh at WKDF and Bruce Sherman, Ted Cramer and Moon Mullins at WSM, Nashville before taking on programming at KRST Albuquerque KNCI/KRAK Sacramento and KYCY San Francisco. These people enriched my life, and if it weren’t for *Gavin*, I would have never gotten to know them before they became even more special to me, in ways I could have never predicted.” — Larry Pareigis, VP/National Promotion, Monument Records/Sony Music Nashville

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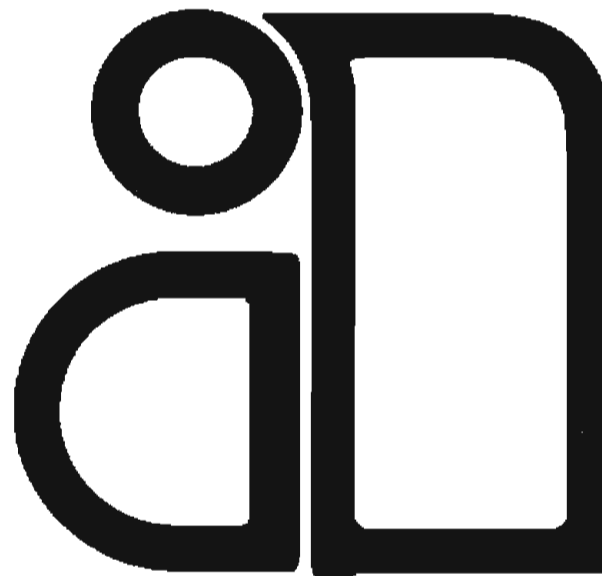
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# ASYLUM RECORDS

## CRAZY FOR COUNTRY



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Monte Warden  
Bryan White

Alternative rock has arguably been around as long as rock 'n' roll. As a commercial hierarchy was established in the '50s following the boom that was Elvis Presley, artists who didn't fit in the upper reaches of the market emerged. For every Chuck Berry who sussed out what the kids wanted to hear and perfected a sound suitable for radio airplay, there was a crazed kook such as rockabilly wild man Hasil Adkins ("Who?" is right) who clung purposefully to his idiosyncrasies, pink Cadillac be damned! Perhaps mavericks of Adkins' ilk were too strong-willed for mainstream success. Perhaps they were simply unappealing to the average fan. Perhaps both conditions were true. Perhaps that was the whole point: to stand as an alternative to popular tastes.

But while there have been small "a" alternative rockers dating

1988, four years before the floodgates opened for alternative bands. But then a lot of their kin never made it to payday.

If an alternative-rock touchstone is required, one need look no further than the Velvet Underground, which emerged from New York City in 1967 with one of the landmark debuts in rock history and shut down with little fanfare three years later. The attitude and ethos of Lou Reed and his cohorts—defiantly unpolished, clever, inscrutable, and insolent toward both straight culture and the counterculture—still largely defines the alternative aesthetic. The oft-stated observation that the Velvet Underground didn't sell many records, but everyone who bought one went out and started a band, has at times seemed almost quantifiable.

There were other late '60s and early '70s bands, who shared VU's

# Rock On

## The Alt Movement

By Steven Stolder

back to bobby socks, big "A" Alternative became a genre to reckon with in the early '90s when legions of insurgent bands, led by Nirvana, took command of the rock airwaves and sales charts. The term "alternative rock" was infused with irony as Nevermind climbed to the top of the charts and opened the doors for a new persuasion of performers. The tables were turned on hair-metal bands and middle-of-the-road rockers who'd learned to play by industry rules and, to that point, had been richly rewarded. Life would never be the same for the Warrants and Wingers of the world. Indeed, glam-metal rockers Poison racked up seven certified hits in a blazing two-year period ending in late 1990, only to find themselves viewed as overdressed, overteased overnight anachronisms before '91 was through.

By then, label A&R reps had ceased shopping for the next Guns N' Roses and set off for Seattle in search of flannel-clad prodigies. Long-suffering underground bands found it difficult to conceal their astonishment at being offered major-label deals, and new groups that reflected the post-Nirvana pathos were scooped up before they embarked on their formative van tours. It was the New Day Rising that one of the movement's avatars, Husker Du, had forecast seven years before "Smells Like Teen Spirit" charted. Of course, Hüsker Dü imploded in January of



**"Blue is my favorite color. I've always favored blue shirts...there's even a blue curtain on Cosmo's Factory. I like the color, but I try not to overdo it. I also like the key of E, but you've got to play in other keys, too."**

— John Fogerty, 1997

outsider outlook, including the MC5 and the Stooges. And a few proto-punk garage bands (? & the Mysterians, Blue Cheer) scored the odd Top 40 hit. Most such groups, however, mustered whatever broadcast exposure they could via underground radio, a late '60s phenomenon that provided a free-form outlet for the wealth of rock 'n' roll that wasn't welcome in the Top 40. With the advent of AOR in the '70s, however, playlists grew tighter and the left wing of popular music found itself on the outs once again as the airier likes of America and the Moody Blues flourished alongside destined-to-be-classic rockers Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, and the Who. Where could a band as provocative as the New York Dolls go in the age of Doobie Brothers ascendancy but down the toilet?

Disgust with middle-of-the-road dominance finally boiled over with the punk/New Wave mutiny spear-

headed by Patti Smith, the Ramones, and the Sex Pistols. The ruckus the class of '77 raised in the media, however, didn't translate commercially until piles of clips about pogo dancing and safety-pin fashions had yellowed with age. For most converts to punk, the opening salvo of the uprising sounded when *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols* shipped in late '77. That milestone album, however, couldn't crack the U.S. Top 100; meanwhile,

Kansas and Styx were in the Top 10.

By the early '80s, the new school had its own set of stars, many abetted in their search for an audience by MTV, a revolutionary new vehicle for promotion. The Police, the Pretenders, Blondie, the Cars, and the Talking Heads were among the somewhat more civil intruders who established an alternative beachhead at the dawn of the decade. And in the next wave were two bands that would set up encampments that endure: U2 and R.E.M.

While U2's debut album, *Boy*, arrived in 1980, the foursome's breakthrough didn't come until 1983's platinum-selling *War*. Ambitious and able to assimilate into the mainstream, U2 led the commercial post-punk charge. The Smiths, Depeche Mode, Siouxsie & the Banshees, and the Cure would travel a similar upward path and provide a talent foundation for the Modern Rock radio format trailblazed by Rick Carroll at KROQ in Los Angeles.

R.E.M., on the other hand, became the quintessential street-level alternative band by being embraced by (and nurturing) a subculture that patronized small clubs, read fan-published 'zines, and listened to college radio, pointedly eschewing concert halls, slick publications, and commercial radio. R.E.M. and allies such as the Replacements, Hüsker Dü, and the Violent Femmes got their starts on independent labels and attempted to build followings by more or less following a do-it-yourself (DIY) blueprint. As the '80s progressed, major labels gradually placed more stock in underground bands. First they mined college radio playlists for talent: By 1986, the Replacements had jumped from Twin/Tone to Sire, Hüsker Dü from SST to Warner Bros., and many of their indie brethren followed suit. The majors began developing savvy college radio promotions departments to advance their cutting-edge acquisitions. In 1987, R.E.M. notched its first hit single, "The One I Love."

But the big payoff was again delayed. The Replacements and Husker Du flailed before disbanding, as did many other erstwhile underground groups. The Red Hot Chili Peppers, the Pixies, and 10,000 Maniacs had far better luck crossing over, but it wasn't until Jane's Addiction organized a farewell tour/traveling rock festival in the summer of 1991 that the movement coalesced.

As the term "New Wave" fell out of favor around 1983, "alternative" gradually ascended as a catch-all term for the new music. Lollapalooza helped make the term commonplace, though it didn't exactly narrow its definition. The brainchild of Jane's Addiction frontman Perry Farrell, the road show brought together hardcore punk (Rollins Band), rap/metal (Ice-T and Body Count), industrial (Nine Inch Nails), hard rock (Living Colour), and goth rock (Siouxsie & the Banshees). What did one call such a diverse bill? Alternative, of course!

The tour was the hit of the summer season, and "alternative"

became the music industry's preferred buzzword. Dinosaur Jr., FIREHOSE, and Sonic Youth were leading lights in yet another generation of bands that made the leap from indie to major. *Goo*, Sonic Youth's 1990 debut for DGC, sold 250,000 copies, a surprisingly strong showing for an outfit with an affinity for odd tunings and song structures. If an art-damage troupe of Sonic Youth's rank could have a satisfactory experience with a major, then who couldn't? Or so reasoned the members of a young Seattle band on the Sub Pop roster called Nirvana. Kurt Cobain and company followed Sonic Youth to DGC, releasing its major-label debut in September of 1991, weeks after the inaugural Lollapalooza tour ended. Less than four months later *Nevermind* topped the album charts.

Black-sheep bands were the order of the day as record companies scrambled to find the next Nirvana. They found Soundgarden, Pearl Jam, and Stone Temple Pilots.

Cobain took his own life in 1994, but the revolution he'd launched continued full force. Green Day, the Offspring, and Smashing Pumpkins all registered mid-decade breakthroughs. Mainstream approval came at a high cost for some: It remains to be seen whether Soul Asylum, one of the key players in the Minneapolis sound of the '80s, will ever recover from having an AOR hit with "Runaway Train."

The alternative movement is by nature contrary and divisive, and it continues to fragment in the late '90s. Alternative stations play artists who follow in the tradition of Nirvana (Foo Fighters, Everclear, Pearl Jam) and bands of an entirely different pedigree (the jam-happy Dave Matthews Band, the straight-ahead Third Eye Blind, and Matchbox 20). Triple A accommodates performers of a politer stripe, such as songstress Paula Cole. College radio provides a refuge for a dizzying variety of new alt strains. Hip-hop had its early '90s alternative phase, marked by De La Soul and P.M. Dawn. Currently, a slew of alternative country bands, led by Wilco and Son Volt, toil away. Alternative now encompasses everything from the Beastie Boys to Fiona Apple, from Beck to the Butthole Surfers.

While the barriers have been removed for artists who would've seemed exotic in earlier times, today's commercially sanctioned cutting-edge artists have their own crosses to bear. The genre as a whole seems to be treading water.

In 1998, many long-time boosters of the movement find themselves surveying the scene and asking themselves the same question: Alternative to what? ☺

*Steven Stolder is a freelance writer whose work has appeared in Rolling Stone, Entertainment Weekly, the San Francisco Chronicle, and Request. A former editor of BAM, Stolder is currently Rock Editor at amazon.com in Seattle.*

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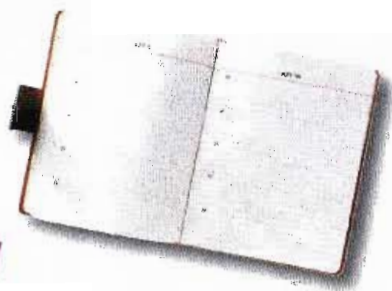
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*Chip Morgan operates pirate radio station (The Voice of New York) at 640kHz.*

**1969**

*Power increase to 67 watts...or so.*

**1972**

*Morgan takes first paid radio job at WMVI, Mechanicville, NY at age 18.*

**1978**

*Can't remember much about this period.*

**1988**

*CMBE formed to build radio stations in Western US.*

**1991**

*Projects spread nationwide.*

**1992**

*Worldwide work begins.*

**1993**

*Optimiser Antenna system introduced.*

**1996**

*RadioVision Systems announced.*

**1997**

*Real Coverage Mapping developed.*



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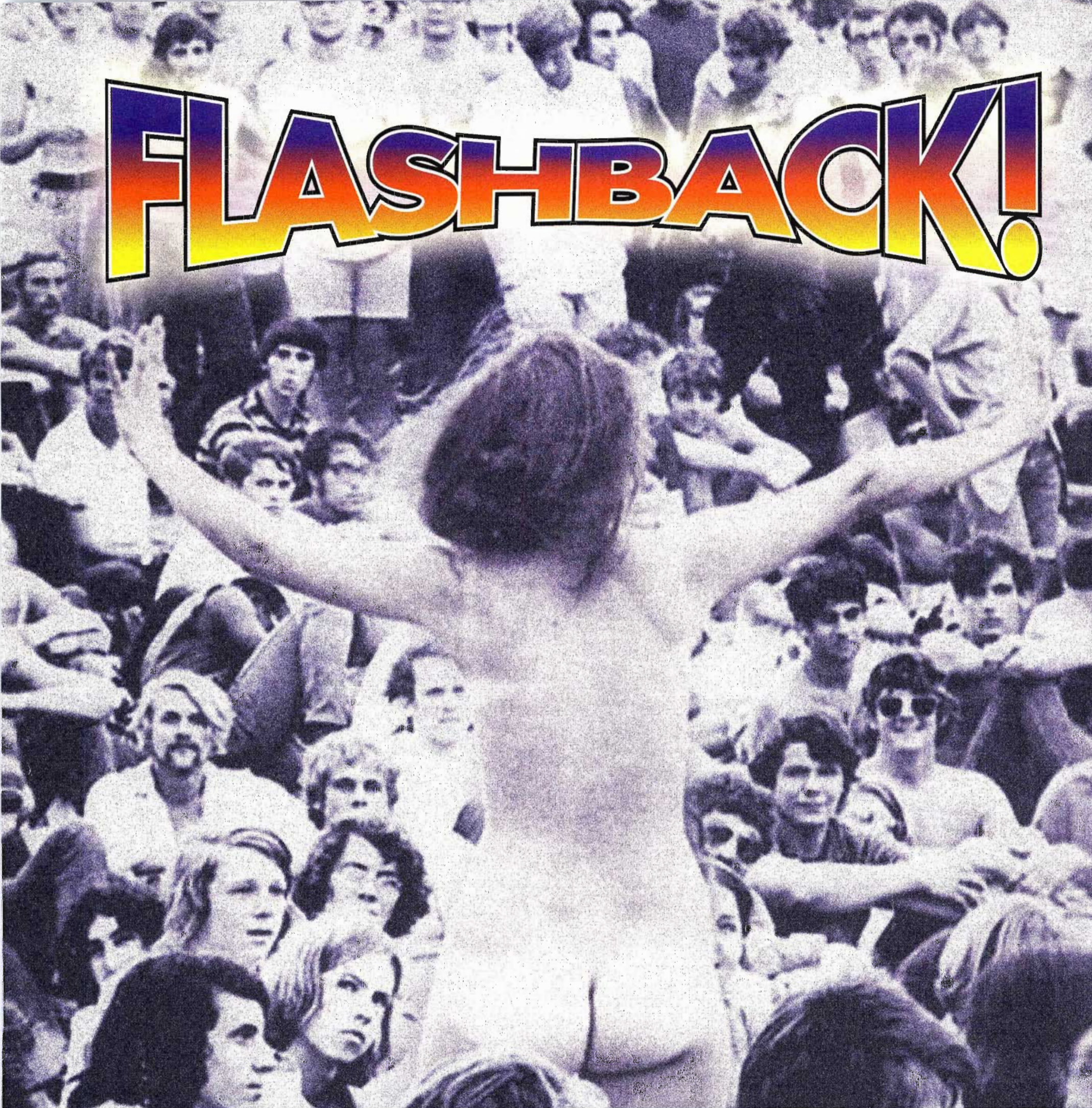
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PART FOUR:

# THE HORIZON

*A look and a listen into radio's future*

**Virtual Radio: Whither the Disc Jockey?**

*By Reed Bunzel*

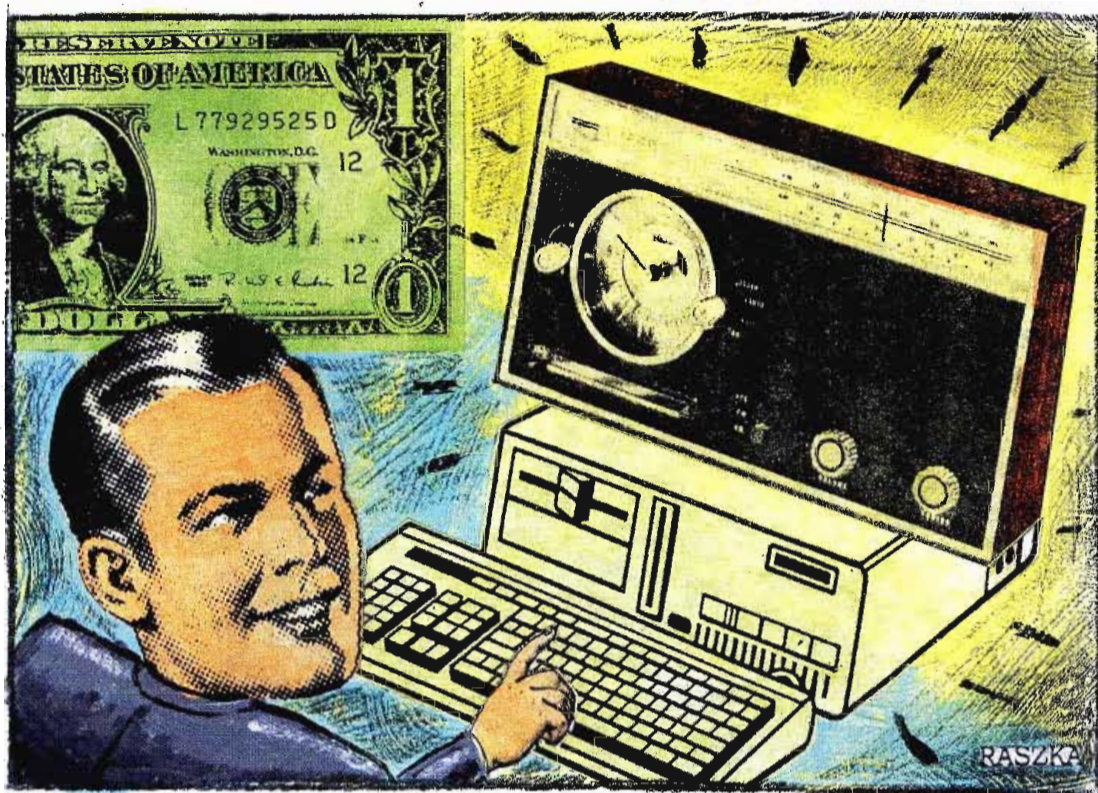
**Radio On the Eve of the Millennium**

*By Reed Bunzel*

**Technically Speaking: Radio in the Digital Age**

*By Tony Sanders*

# Radio, Interactivity, and the Internet



By Reed Bunzel

Over the last 40 years, radio's greatest strength has been its unique ability to connect with its listeners. From request lines to remote broadcasts to contests to community events, radio has enjoyed its role as the single most interactive force in today's vast competitive marketplace. No medium has been as closely tied with a listener's personal needs and desires since the juke box, the emulation of which has led to the Top 40 format and today's world of radio programming. Like the juke box, radio provides an almost instant gratification, an intimate bond unrivaled by television, cable, newspaper, or magazines.

Then along comes the Internet, and the term „interactive media“ is redefined completely. With just a computer, a modem, and a phone line, individuals are able to communicate with each other in a way never thought possible. E-mail, chat rooms, Web sites, audio streaming, and hyper links all have contributed to a new world order of connectivity. In many respects the Internet has reshaped concept of broadcasting to that of narrowcasting, essentially allowing people a far greater degree of creative control over the who, what, and when of their own media usage.

Is this a threat to radio? Quite possibly. With an estimated 300 million home pages accessible via the World Wide Web, the selection of „channels“ is virtually infinite. Internet users can browse the Web to identify those sites that provide them information, entertainment, communication, and retail opportunities that they

can't find anywhere else. Some analysts estimate that the Internet could draw upwards of \$8 billion in revenue from advertising alone by the year 2000; while other experts disagree on this figure, it can be reasonably assumed that the Web threatens to do to traditional media what the megastore did to main street. No wonder so many radio stations are so eager to create their own, unique web presence.

Estimates vary, but industry estimates show that some 2,000 radio stations maintain a Web site with some regularity. While many of these claim to be „on the Internet“ in order to „provide an interactive link with our listeners,“ you can be certain that the primary objective here is to generate revenue. Altruistic intentions aside, radio broadcasters are in business to make money, and the bottom line is what drives most (but certainly not all) managers and programmers to develop an Internet presence. Unfortunately, many radio people are slow to think outside the standard advertising paradigm, and thus believe that rather than being a „cash cow,“ the Internet is nothing more than plain bull.

Not necessarily. Money can be made via the Internet - if one is prepared to seek alternative sources for generating business. Rather than treat the Internet as simply another advertising medium, radio needs to become more innovative - and interactive - in its outlook. Some stations have done this by combining their Web activity with our their database marketing efforts, identifying core

listeners who also are high powered, active consumers. Despite widespread disdain for spam (junk e-mail), most radio listeners enjoy receiving e-mail from their favorite station (as long as they have consented to receive them). Database marketing via e-mail is cheap, it's instant and, if developed properly, can deliver great results.

Some stations have developed highly sophisticated non-spot sales departments, of which Internet marketing is a distinct element. By developing an array of alternative advertising vehicles including print, events, databases, and the Internet, they are able to provide „value-added“ benefits that stand-alone radio advertising might not be able to deliver. Live Web-casts of concerts or other programming that's available only to listeners in the e-mail



database can create a cache attractive to some station clients.

On-line marketing, pioneered by such entrepreneurial outfits as amazon.com

and CD Now, also has begun to demonstrate its considerable value to radio stations. By selling everything from T-shirts to caps to CDs and video games, stations are able to charge for products that they once gave away for free (or didn't offer at all) - and listeners are happy to part with the cash. An extension of this is a form of „per-inquiry“ advertising known as „e-packaging.“ Software companies and record labels have pioneered this on-line sales venue, which pays a commission to a host site for every product purchased via the host's Web site.

On a „business-to-business“ basis, the Internet also serves as a vast reference library full of material to ease the lives of virtually everyone at a radio station. Several



extensive Web sites, like the Radio Advertising Bureau's RadioLink (rab.com), are one-stop encyclopedias of sales and marketing information, while others like

dotmusic.com and rockmall.com are critical for show prep, programming, and marketing purposes. Still oth-

ers, like gavin.com and allaccess.com, provide a wide range of radio industry news.

Over the past couple of years several companies have emerged to provide content for stations that have neither the time, resources, nor inclination to build Web sites extensive enough to be considered an „Internet




destination.“ Besides creating dazzling home pages designed for listener appeal, they also can link a station's Web site to other Internet locales that have been identi-

fied as those that appeal to the demographics of that particular audience.

From a listener's point of view, Internet radio offers it all. Tightly niched music, play-by-play broadcasts, local and regional news - all available at the touch of a button or the click of a mouse. Of course, one of radio's greatest strengths is its portability, which is in direct conflict with the Internet's dependence on a phone line (at least until wireless modems become commonplace). Audio and video streaming of real-time digital signals continues to improve as compression technologies make it possible to cram more data into a smaller pipeline. Two years ago most Webcasts sounded much like sub-AM-grade audio, a far cry from today's near-FM (though far-from-CD) quality.

As Internet technology continues to expand and the Web firmly establishes itself as a mainstream medium, it should be noted that new technology requires new patterns of thinking. Yes, money can be made from the Internet...but it's been said that it will come in large quantities of small amounts, not from a small number of large sales. And radio does work, if it focuses on benefits rather than features. Give the Web user what he or she wants - provide a tangible benefit - and the dollars will follow. ☺

*Reed Bunzel is Editor-in-Chief of Gavin. He previously has served in various editorial capacities at several industry trade publications, including Broadcasting, Radio Ink, and Radio & Records. Additionally, he served as VP/Communications with the Radio Advertising Bureau, and was a editor and writer with the National Association of Broadcasters. Bunzel also is the author of several books, including a mystery novel titled "Pay for Play."*



**“Enjoy what you've got while you've got it, and don't be looking for a lot of money, because I don't think, with this quintopoly, duopoly, quatopoly stuff, that there's going to be a lot of money flying around.” — Jack Armstrong, DJ, Gavin Seminar 1997**

# Radio in the New Millennium



By Reed Bunzel

Without question, the single most important change in the radio industry in the last ten years has been the 1996 passage of the Telecommunications Act, which spurred rapid consolidation much like that seen in other industries. Among a host of moves designed to bring an increasingly complex and dynamic communications industry into a new millennium rife with business opportunities came the much-heralded provision that would permit almost limitless expansion of radio ownership both vertically and horizontally.

As we move toward that mystical year 2000, it could be said that telecommunications reform has elevated radio's stature not only as an attractive investment opportunity at both the institutional and public levels, but also as a primary marketing medium ready to compete with such stalwarts as newspaper and television. Wall Street has reacted with overwhelming enthusiasm to this change, and retailers along Main Street have begun to see how consolidation leads to more solid marketing opportunities.

The radio industry has evolved quickly as a handful of well-funded groups have gorged themselves on smaller companies that recognized that both the bar of competition, and cash-flow multiples, were being raised. What better time to turn over the playground to the big boys?

Of course, while group heads busied themselves with the art of acquisition and proclaiming a new age of empowered manage-

ment, station operators began to see consolidation as a test track upon which unproved ideas and strategic theory either could thrive and succeed...or crash and burn. With millions of dollars in debt and equity riding on every move, there's very little room for mistakes - and absolutely no margin for error.

Today's general manager is faced with a wide number of challenges, many of which weren't even imagined five years ago: Do you maintain separate or combined sales structures? How do you cope with competitive egos? How should space be allocated for maximum business efficiency? What program elements do you introduce to develop new non-advertising dollars? How much can you really increase cash flow? These are very real dilemmas, and each is critical to the successful operation of a market or group. The process largely is one of trial and error - often trial by fire.

Competition between radio groups has grown exponentially, and the sense of urgency to meet strategic goals has built to a frenzied pace as the number of tasks mount and the time in which to accomplish them shrinks. Nowhere is this intersection between time and task felt more than at the programming level. Through the pressures of consolidation, the creative process has been forced to merge with business priorities, resulting in a massive redefinition of the role of a station programmer.

Since most group managers have set great objectives for their properties, the performance expectations of programmers are

more dramatic than ever before. As a result, the level of expertise of people working in radio has increased tremendously. Ten years ago, many program directors might not have been tuned in to cutting edge marketing concepts, had the experience of managing a staff, or even known how to assemble a music library.

Not anymore. The professional level of today's broadcasters - programmers included has escalated dramatically as a result of consolidation and station clustering. In many cases, PDs are forced to emulate the Energizer bunny, constantly going and going and going. The ever-increasing crunch for time is aggravated by the addition of each new station in a cluster, as well as the burgeoning load of responsibilities assigned to the programming department. Each new property folded into a market group brings with it the equivalent of another full-time job, and the pressures are compounded when former competitors or rivals move in down the hall. These new dynamics can result in a high stress level and force people to re-learn old habit.

Initially, the merger of previously competitive (sometimes warring) cultures presents the greatest internal management challenge — and generates the greatest amount of stress. With so many stations being brought together, their within one building has led to an extraordinary amount of culture shock. As a result, it's crucial to find a cohesive standard of value and integrity as stations merge into clusters. Every company needs to define its own character and understand how it's going to be perceived by its listeners, its clients, and its community.

The manner in which companies merge stations and position formats within a market perhaps is the most critical issue on the table when a company's management team sits down to develop a market strategy. Each market, like each individual radio station, has its own specific nuances; what works in one market might not work in others. In fact, developing and executing a corporate strategy that maximizes a company's assets in a specific market has become the great balancing act of this decade.

The key to moving swiftly through this vulnerable period can be found in the group's internal communications. Each station in a group has its own economic role, and every individual at the cluster needs to know what's going on and understand his or her role within the organization. Every station can't be number one in the market, but every station should be viewed as

equally important to the overall goals of the group. Every person working at every station is collectively important to the family unit, but each one needs to play a different role. It's not realistic to expect each morning show to be number one; each station has to have a role, and everyone who works there needs to understand - and be comfortable - with their place in the universe.

Within this management and creative mix comes the task of trying to determine how to build a station cluster that best taps its programming resources — and delivers the greatest amount of dollars to the bottom line. Given the prices paid for many properties, the strategy involved in positioning each station in such a way that the sum becomes greater than the sum of the parts is critical to the group's overall market success. Groups must look beyond the "safety net" of identifying a cash cow that the other stations are designed to flank. The health of any radio group depends on individual success and performance of each of the stations, and autonomy is an important factor in allowing any station to flourish.

Over the next few years, we can expect to see consolidation proceed either through hands-off, autonomous management in individual markets, or a corporate-wide philosophy based on trying to achieve economies of scale by making everything within the market (if not the entire company) uniform. In either case, it's vital that radio operators never stop delivering on an expectation of excellence. ☺

## Who's In Charge

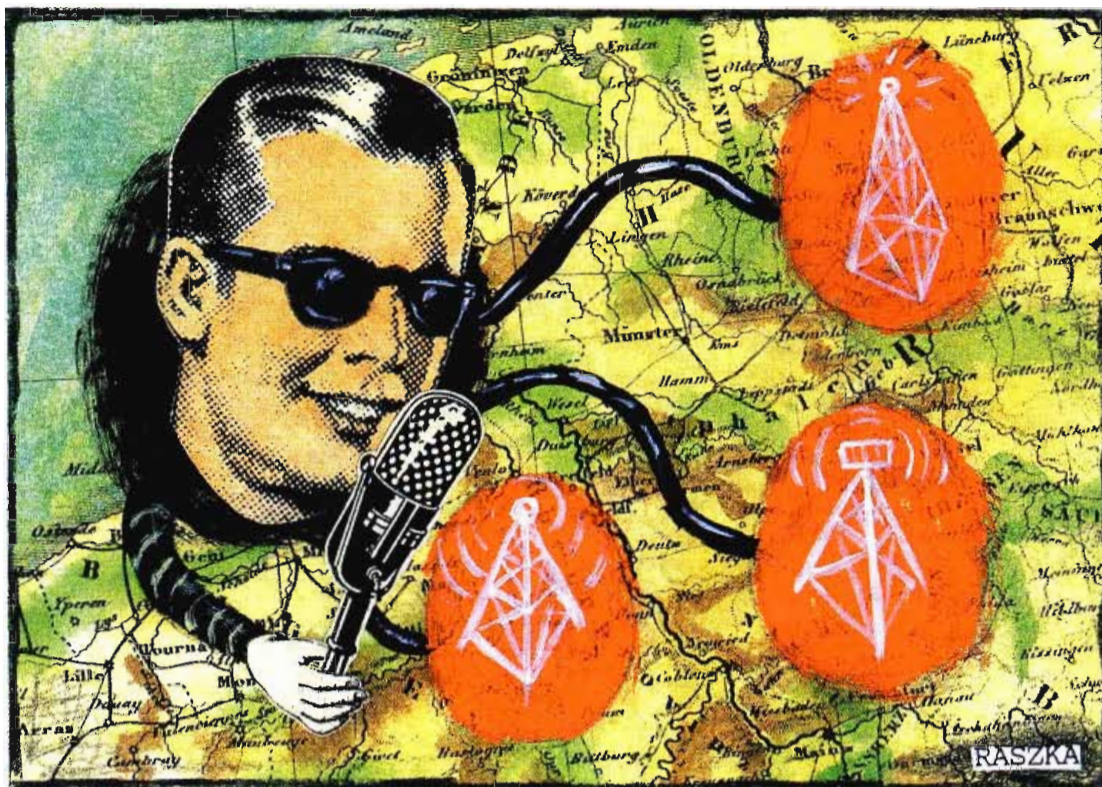
**With so many added responsibilities heaped onto the program director's job description, who has time to pick the music?**

**In many cases, program directors are spending less time on the music and delegating more of that responsibility to an assistant or to the music director. The PD still is responsible for the music product, but he or she is becoming less and less involved with the daily (or weekly) process of selecting it. While five years ago the PD spent approximately 30 percent of the average week fine-tuning the on-air sound, that number has dropped to only 10 or 15 percent today.**

**While the time poverty level continues to rise, programmers should not allow themselves to get distracted from the essential elements of their job. As the task of listening to and selecting the music increasingly falls on the music director, the role of "station audiophile" also is changing. More and more, the music director is an assistant PD, and the PD has to be able to trust this person's judgment and make a very collaborative decision on what music is going to be played. The music director is out there mining the information so the PD can integrate it with sales and call-out music research to make the best possible decision.**

**Ultimately it's a team programming effort.**

The Sound of the Future:  
 The Floppy Disc Jockey



By Tony Sanders

Since its inception, radio's primary strength has been the personal relationship it creates with its audience. From the medium's early days when families gathered in the living room to listen to dramas and comedies, to the ice cream parlors of the 1950s, to the car radios of today's rush hour, the one-on-one communication between radio and listeners has yielded a personal connection that no other medium can touch.

As technologies evolve and new media are developed, however, many people fear that radio's "connectivity" may be endangered. The influence of the local station, with its news, sports, and weather in many cases is being replaced by broadcasts fed from remote locations, signals that have been converted into digitized bits, and now even satellite-delivered programming that bypasses the community altogether. A number of critics are concerned that the forward march of technology is diluting the local flavor that for so long has been radio's mainstay, that the "digital age" is well on its way to replacing the "human touch."

All bytes aside, many aspects of these new technologies should be embraced, not feared. In fact, most of the technological innovations affecting radio as we move toward the year 2000 have been developing for decades, or at the very least since the start of the 1990s. The latest version of station automation holds the prospect of bringing major-market sound to small-market radio, while still having that smaller-market station sound like all its programming

originates locally. In-Band, On-Channel (IBOC) radio holds the prospect of airing CD-quality sound over both AM and FM, while satellite-based Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB), also known as Digital Audio Radio Systems (DARS) would offer the same CD-quality sound but through a new audio system. Radio Broadcast Data System (RBDS) offers tune-by-format radios that can also deliver short text-messages over the air, such as artist and song title information for the music that's currently playing. And, waiting in the wings, is the controversial proposal that the FCC permit development of a micro radio industry, with stations broadcasting at one watt or less on antennas 50-feet or shorter.

Station automation has been around for decades, but the opportunity to provide large-market sound to small-market radio has never been closer, thanks to technology like PCs, faxes, ISDN lines, and the Internet. One of the more recent developments-dubbed "virtual radio programming" or "hub-and-spoke"-blends the ability to supply major-market voice talent and programming remotely with the opportunity to automate some of the dayparts of smaller-market stations.

The idea is to provide a cost-effective way for group owners to have their larger-market talent provide the voice and/or programming for several different shows at their own smaller-market stations. Depending on how involved a group wants to get with computer equipment, faxes, phone lines and on-air breaks, one major-

market talent could conceivably provide programming for three or four stations per hour.

Employees at a small-market station can keep the major-market talent informed about the local weather, news, and community events by e-mail or fax transmissions. Armed with that information and an ISDN line, the talent at the major-market station can discuss that local news or weather and voice all the breaks and liners for the programming at the small-market station. Since all of that programming is stored on a PC, it can be downloaded to the station, which then fires off the on-air breaks, music, and spot ads at scheduled times.

The economics of this new programming tactic mean that a major-market talent is doing more work in a given hour, but is effectively replacing the air talent for two or three smaller-market stations. Group owners could see some direct payroll savings if a highly paid major-market talent also can perform the work done by his or her smaller-market equals. And with the bottom-line rationale of today's radio operators, the financial advantages outweigh the loss of localism.

The introduction of compact disks and digital audio technology has drawn criticism from many audiophiles that radio's sound is less than adequate. While FM stereo might please some ears, AM radio's transmissions can't hope to compete with the ever-changing expectations of a populace that wants the best of everything. Enter Digital Audio Broadcasting, which theoretically gives radio the technology to broadcast CD-quality sound. Under development now for close to a decade, DAB would shift radio transmissions from analog to digital signals - providing the bandwidth is available to make the switch. At issue is whether DAB would function best in a bandwidth separate from that currently used for radio broadcasting, or within the spectrum currently allocated by the FCC to radio broadcasters.

While the former system already has been adapted in some European countries, most U.S. radio operators believe that an "In-Band, On-Channel" (IBOC) system would be less disruptive economically. IBOC is being developed to preserve the status quo in radio, since the technology fits within the current AM and FM spec-

*"Automation has been around for decades, but the opportunity to provide large-market sound to small-market radio has never been closer, thanks to technology."*

trum. One major concern among existing broadcasters is that any switch to new spectrum would create new stations on different frequencies, thus increasing competitive pressures within the industry. IBOC, however, not only would not require new spectrum, but it would keep licenses in the hands of those who currently own them.

A parallel development is the planned introduction of satellite-delivered audio programming, otherwise known as Digital Audio Radio Service (DARS). Terrestrial broadcasters say this CD-sound from the sky could potentially deliver scores of new audio channels in every market; perhaps doubling the number of in-market competitors in some cases. In 1997 the FCC auctioned off two separate bandwidth segments in order to advance this new technology, which requires not only a system of orbiting satellites, but new radio receivers, as well. DARS proponents say that such a system will be up and running by the end of 1999; other industry analysts say a fully functional system won't be ready until after the turn of the millennium.

Both systems—IBOC and DAB—still face their own unique technical hurdles as they race toward launch dates around the turn of the century. USA Digital has been working on IBOC for years now, while Digital Radio Express arrived on the scene in late 1997; both proponents say they want to test their systems in 1998. If everything goes as planned—and there are still plenty of technical and economic hurdles to jump—an IBOC system could be ready for commercial roll-out by 2000. Just in time to compete with a scheduled roll-out of Satellite DAB.

Less disruptive to radio—but equally digitized—is Remote Broadcast Data Service, a technology that provides a simple text information over-the-air. Essentially, RBDS feeds updated text messages (up to 64 characters long) to radios equipped to pick up the systems signals. RBDS radios—currently standard in many U.S. and for-



**"The problem is not a shortage of laboratories for talent development. The problem is really the same problem we've always had: a shortage of real talent. I think the way radio is set up today, with better quality broadcasters and programmers, we have never had a cultural environment so conducive to developing talent."**  
— Randy Michaels,  
CEO, Jacor, 1998



eign luxury cars-receive data broadcast over at least one of an FM station's two subcarrier signals. Typically, this data includes an eight-character text field identifying the station transmitting the data-such as "The Edge" or "Q102"—along with that station's format.

Another 64-character text field is long enough to transmit artist and title information about a currently-playing song or other information during a spot advertisement. In early 1998, an international standard was established for European and US versions of the technology to allow any company to supply text data to an RBDS radio and have it received properly. Right now, an RBDS radio is standard equipment in some Cadillacs, as well as Porsches and Audis. In addition, RBDS radios are being manufactured for the automotive after-market, as well as for home and portable radios. As this technology has developed, costs have plummeted to the point where a radio station can now put up a static message, including call letters, format and fixed-text message, for as little as \$400.

As consolidation continues to favor large broadcast groups, the hue-and-cry for more local broadcasting heightens, and more and more renegades sign on with "pirate" radio stations. It's no surprise, then, that early in 1998 a petition for rule making was filed at the Federal Communications Commission for the creation of a

microradio broadcasting service. The petitioners hope to provide "a very localized and/or specialized broadcast service to the public" with stations designed to cover only a few square miles. Power would be limited to less than one watt, and antenna heights would be no more than 50 feet. Critics say this could lead to the FCC licensing as many as 15-20,000 microradio stations, which would do nothing but create new over-the-air interference on the FM band. These same critics argue that, ultimately, the Commission would be hard-pressed to keep the new microradio stations from pushing to increase power and signal reach and thereby causing even more FM-band congestion and interference.

All these new technologies aside, one simple fact remains: when you push the button, radio will still be there. The sound of a broadcaster's voice, the crack of a bat, the guitar riff or piano solo - wherever it comes from, however it is transmitted, radio in the year 2000 - and beyond - will provide the same information, the same entertainment, the same quality sound that people since the early days of this century have come to know and expect. Digital or analog, local or regional, land-based or satellite fed - connectivity is the key. ☺

*Tony Sanders has been covering the broadcasting industry since the early 1980s and has focused on the radio industry for the last eight years. A native of Washington, D.C. who has lived up and down the East Coast, he lives in D.C. now with his wife Holly and daughter Rachel. He graduated from St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland in 1979.*

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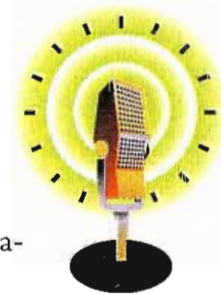
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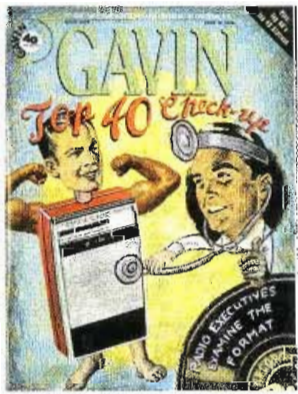
### Get Personal

"At the start of these 40 years, TV took over the living room. Then, miraculously, rock and roll took over music, and radio's visionaries saw the future. We were to be portable, personal. We evolved with the music and grew up with an American generation, going with them everywhere.



"Today, another new technology is connecting people with information, entertainment and each other. Radio must respond again with a resurgence of personal communication, connecting with listeners where they are. When we get personal, people can listen closely and respond powerfully. We can do it with music, we can do it with talk. We can do it close-up or from a distance. We can do it a town at a time, and for all the towns at once. Live or digital, local or networked, remember: radio is the original interactive, personal medium. Radio that wins connects with people, one at a time." — Edie Hilliard, President/General Manager, Broadcast Programming

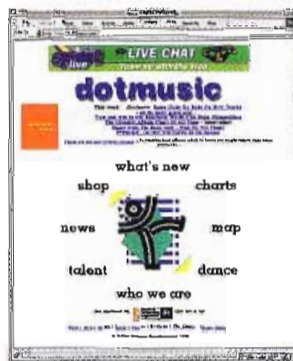
# ALL in the FAMILY



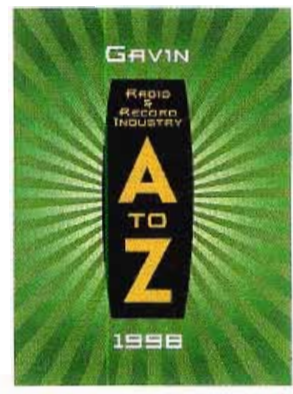
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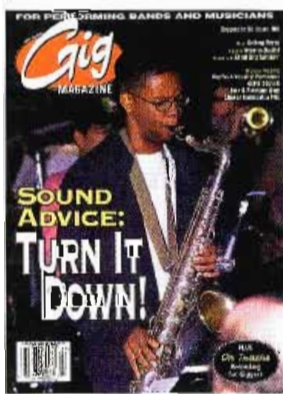
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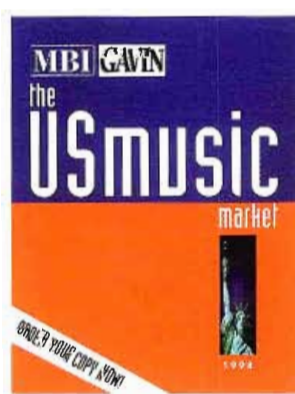
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# Signing Off

## *Some Final Thoughts and Toasts to 40 Years of Radio, Records, and Gavin*

### Two Big Splashes

“As it happens, 1998 not only marks the 40th anniversary of *Gavin*, but also the 50th anniversary of Atlantic Records. When Bill Gavin began preparing his first mimeographed sheets in 1958, Atlantic was ten years old. Among our biggest hits that year were such R&B/pop crossover successes as The Coasters’ ‘Yakety Yak,’ Clyde McPhatter’s ‘A Lover’s Question,’ and LaVern Baker’s ‘I Cried A Tear.’ Perhaps most appropriately, the year that Bill started his report



was the year that we made our first big move into the mainstream pop field, with Bobby Darin’s smash hit, ‘Splish Splash.’

“What set Atlantic apart from the beginning was that we were a label founded by real

music fans. What set the *Gavin Report* apart was that it was founded by a man who was a musician first—a true music lover who had great ears and brought an honest, no-nonsense quality to his work. Jerry Wexler and I supported Bill from the outset, as he pioneered ways of increasing the radio community’s awareness of what was going

on with our artists and our records. That same spirit lives on in the *Gavin* of today.”—Ahmet M. Ertegun, Co-Founder, Atlantic Records, Co-Chairman/Co-CEO, The Atlantic Group

### ‘Thrilling Times’

“Forty years ago, fueled by rock and roll, the music business, still in its relative infancy, was dominated by small independent record labels, not just in New York and Los Angeles but spread across the United States. Distribution was all but controlled by independents as well. It was very exciting time for American roots music, with rhythm and blues, country and western, rockabilly, and gospel all merged into rock and roll, which was constantly being redefined and holding total sway world wide.

“But the late 1950’s was also a wild period. Payola was rampant, and a number of senators and representatives on Capitol Hill were calling for a Congressional investigation.

“I was fortunate enough to experience these thrilling times as a fan and through my part-time job after school at *Billboard* magazine. *Billboard* and Bill Gavin were the two bastions of honesty and fair play I recall most.

“Bill never abused the increasing power he earned as the *Gavin Report* grew in stature. It is most heartening to see *Gavin*

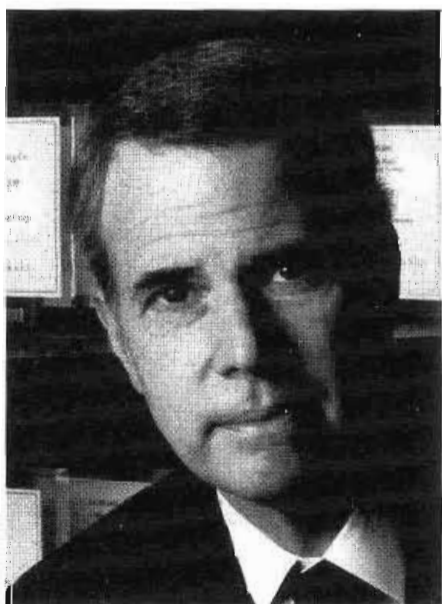
alive and well at 40 and still helping to pioneer new musical formats, like Americana.”—Seymour Stein, President, Sire Records Group

### ‘Things Were Simpler’

“My earliest memories of Bill Gavin take me back to the start of my career in Cleveland. I was made aware of Bill through a friend of mine, Neil McIntyre, who was the Music Director at WHK. Later, when I moved to Los Angeles, I had the pleasure of meeting Bill and occasionally spending time with him and his staff whenever I was in San Francisco. Those days recall a special time in our business, a time when things were simpler, when friendships and doing business went hand in hand. Bill’s honesty and dedication were a part of his unique style. The industry has certainly changed since those days, but Bill Gavin’s legacy remains.” — Tommy LiPuma, Chairman, GRP Recording Company

### ‘The Civility of It All’

“Bill Gavin, whom I met in the early ‘60s, was a real legend. Kind and thoughtful, he was held in the highest regard by programming people in a nascent industry with no



FM and with stations that routinely played more than 50 current records.

“My, how things have changed. Bill has passed from the scene, the radio business has become a multi-million dollar industry, with most

of the major stations in the country owned by about five guys.

“The legend of Bill Gavin lives on, but radio, we hardly know you anymore. How I long for the civility of it all.

“Here’s to another 40 years of *Gavin*.” — Gary Stevens, Managing Director, Gary Stevens & Co.

### Information, Please

“*Gavin* has proved an invaluable resource in keeping pace with — and staying ahead of — the tremendous changes radio has experienced during the past 40 years. Among the many areas where it continues to excel are in the depths of its marketplace reach and its extraordinary personnel. Information is the name of the game, and no publication has consistently provided more timely, reliable and pertinent news in this ever evolving business. The entire Warner Bros. Records family joins Phil Quartararo and myself in recognizing and congratulating *Gavin* for 40 years of a job well done.” — Russ Thyret, Chairman/CEO, Warner Bros. Records

### A Sense of Honor

“Having known, liked and admired Bill before he started *Gavin*, one knew that his sense of honor and his integrity would always speak for him and the *Report*. It is a pleasure to see the 40-year success of *Gavin*. Go for the next 40!” — Saul Zaentz, The Saul Zaentz Company/Fantasy Records

### ‘40 More’

“When I first started in the music business in California, the *Gavin Report* was the first report that I read each week, and I’m still studying *Gavin* in Nashville. Bill Gavin was the first to research early record trends, and he set a standard for the rest of the industry. In an industry where multinational corporations often dominate certain publications, *Gavin* has always kept a level playing field, making it possible for independent labels to compete with the majors. Our industry needs 40 more years of *Gavin*.”—Mike Curb, Curb Records

### The Glorious ‘70s

“I remember the music business in the ‘70s as a glorious time, filled with tremendous growth for both the record and radio industries. Radio was becoming more and more formatted, and the decision of what was added to the station fell into the hands

of one powerful person — the music/program director.

“Imagine our business without BDS or SoundScan! Of course, there was *Billboard*, but *Billboard* was used primarily for its information on sales, artists and managers. It was the *Gavin Report* that covered radio activity. The *Gavin Report* was our only resource which reflected what the programmers liked, and were close to adding.

“The respect and the credibility of the *Gavin Report* was uncommon in a business that reeked of hype and inflated statistics. Bill Gavin and his staff earned the industry’s trust that to this day is the trademark of the quality magazine that it has grown into.” — Bob Jamieson, President, RCA Records

### ‘No Filler’

“It was a Saturday afternoon in 1967. I was a 15 year-old in Los Angeles, California, and I remember my excitement as I went to visit my friend Jeff Prescott. His father, Norm, was a former disc jockey in Boston who subscribed to industry trade magazines, among them *The Gavin Report*. My weekly ritual would start on Wednesday night, when I faithfully listened to the hits being counted down, and finish with me poring over the trades, and comparing them to that week’s KHJ Top 30.

“What I loved about *Gavin*, in comparison to the other trades, was that there was no filler. It was totally dedicated to finding the nation’s biggest hits. This began my love affair with the hit music process. From this information, I compiled my national top 100 songs of all time, which got the attention of *Rolling Stone* magazine, and I fulfilled my dream of breaking into radio at KRTH.

“And it all started with those Saturday afternoons with Jeff Prescott, KHJ, and *Gavin*.” —Guy Zapoleon, Zapoleon Media Strategies

### Tricks ‘n’ Eats

“Starting as a local sales and promotion rep at CBS in the early ‘70s, I would take my single sleeves and, with a magic marker,

arm them early Monday morning with hit bounds, five-point jumps and chart debuts from the *Gavin Report* for my travels around Memphis, and later Miami, trying to trick programmers out of their precious airplay.

“The *Gavin* Seminars became a yearly ritual to visit San Francisco, eat some amazing food and schmooze the lobby for hours and hours. I can remember many banquet dinners, and my howling at the speeches and proudly creating a ruckus when my label was lucky enough to be recognized.

“*Gavin* is to the music business what Fenway Park is to baseball. A place that comforts you by reminding you of the way the game was intended to be played.” — Bill Bennett, President, Geffen/DGC Records

### Give Peace a Chance

“I first heard the name Bill Gavin in early 1969. I had just gotten a clerical job in the *Billboard* chart department. This was long before SoundScan. One of my jobs was to call Bill Gavin every week with our discussions so that he could factor the information into his tipsheet.

“Gavin was unfailingly friendly, especially given that I was a totally inexperienced teenager, but on one occasion he chastised me. I told him that we selected the single ‘Give Peace a Chance’ by John Lennon and the Plastic Ono Band as a Top 20 pick, and he sneered, “That song isn’t going to get any airplay. The first line of the lyrics are “Everybody’s talking about faggots.” Such was the generation divide. I nervously told him that we didn’t think it would matter whether or not it got airplay, it was John Lennon. He harrumphed, but I always felt that when the single shortly thereafter reached number 14, he spoke to me with slightly more respect.

“*Gavin*, now, as in previous decades, represents a bridge between established record companies and the widest possible range of new tributaries of music and music people. Long may you reign!” — Danny Goldberg, Chairman and CEO, Mercury Records Group

**Make It Happen**

"In September 1976, when I began my first label job at Monument Records, the radio and record business was much more free-wheeling and social. Today, the industry on both sides is a multi-million dollar business where there is very little time for anything but the business and meeting bottom line revenues.

"When I joined RCA Records in January 1979, I got my first real chance to do a record promotion. Joe Galante gave me the opportunity to call on secondary radio stations — by that I mean any country station who reported to a trade other than Billboard. Thus, I picked up some 75-100 *Gavin* and *R&R* stations. Five years later, I moved to MCA as their Senior Vice



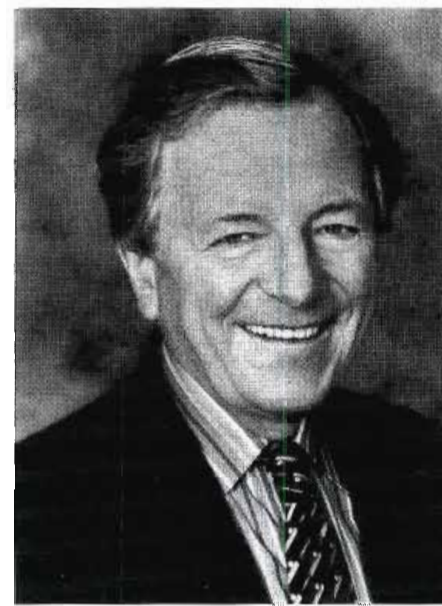
President of National Promotion, a post I held for 10 years. "Over these past 23 years, I have had the pleasure to be a part of the success of many artists. There have been major technological changes through the years that have affected the ways we do business. We are also much more budget conscious than we were in 1976, but one thing has not changed. Radio is still the number one way to expose new music to the consumer. There are some very passionate music people on all sides of this business, from labels to radio to retail to trades. When something really special comes along, everyone gets excited to make it happen. Through the years, we have had a lot of success with the folks at *Gavin*. For that, we say thank you.— Shelia Shipley Bidy, Senior Vice President and General Manager, Decca Records

**Look Ahead**

"Back in 1958, when a shiny console television had crept into most American living

rooms and the nation sat infatuated in the blue RCA glow, Bill Gavin decided to start a magazine about the medium he loved: radio. Around the same time, I also began my career in the radio representative business. And while neither Bill nor myself could see into the future, we shared a love for radio that led us to believe that somehow the medium would endure.

"The ensuing 40 years have proved us correct. Ironically, the outlook for new radio ventures is brighter than ever, despite a host of new technologies and competing media. Any tribute to the decades past begs for a corresponding look forward — and what a time it is for the future of our industry."—Ralph Guild, Chairman, Interep

**More Hair, Less Talk**

"As an overly aggressive local promotion man working for an independent distributor many years ago, I remember seeing this blue sheet sitting on the desk of my boss, the head of promotion. After taking the liberty to read it upside down, I decided to cold call Bill Gavin, introduce myself, and ask for some advice on getting ahead.

"He took my call. His suggestions were to be aggressive, honest, and most importantly, a self starter. He also said to remember that each radio station antenna is as important as the next. I soon became noticed by Columbia, where I was hired as a regional promotion person for Date Records.

"One of my first road trips took me to Pittsburgh. After a day of being turned down repeatedly on my Peaches and Herb record, I was exhausted and frustrated. From my hotel room the next morning, feeling somewhat refreshed and ready to



fight the battle once again, I looked out of my window and saw WIGS. I immediately got dressed and marched over to the station. The only problem was that WIGS was actually a wig shop, not a radio station. I was so embarrassed that I did my best to keep a straight face while thanking this gentle woman on my way out. I had one foot out the door when she casually mentioned that her husband happened to be the Program Director at WAMO.

"I left for WAMO and what do you know, they added my record, setting the stage for a big hit for Peaches and Herb. I called Bill and told him the story. He wrote about it in the *Report*, and the next day, the entire industry knew. Had Bill not given me that pep talk, who knows what would have happened to me. I might have just gone for one of those inexpensive wigs and gone home." — Ron Alexenburg, The National Record Company

### Opportunities

"As I am still somewhat youthful, I must admit I can only recall 20 of your 40 years! I do remember these well, however. Much time during my early days learning music promotion was spent reading the old blue stapled pages. They were always helpful to me in discovering new music.

"Most important, we as a company have been able to develop a great relationship over the years with the *Gavin* organization. I am proud that we have participated in your conventions, sponsored many of your events, and broken new ground together with the international conferences. All of our discussions have been about providing opportunities and hopefully making something better for the industry."—Jeff McClusky, Jeff McClusky & Associates

### Generation Next

"I recently had the opportunity to address a class of students majoring in the music industry at USC. These students have aspirations in many different areas of the music industry. The amazing thing I

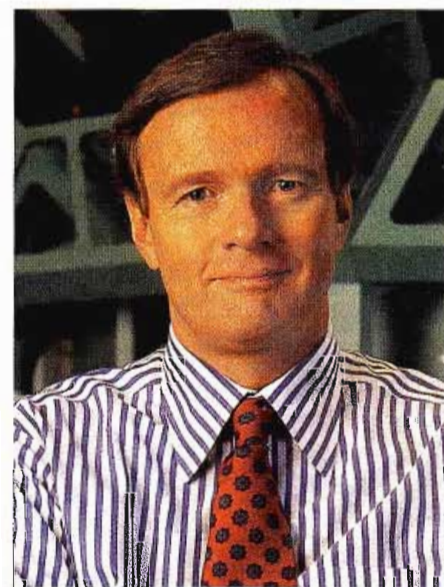
noticed was the excitement in their eyes, the energy, the love and knowledge of today's music and the burning desire to be in the music and entertainment industry.

"Bill Gavin's dreams live on through the members of the next generation who are about to enter the entertainment business. I just hope this group will be able to bring the same class and integrity that Bill Gavin brought to our industry. I hope there is another Bill Gavin among them." — Butch Waugh, Senior VP/Gen. Manager, RCA Label Group/RLG Nashville

### It Didn't Work

"Oh, sure, now we're pretty sophisticated. We know how to rotate music with some good software, we know how to break an extrapolated month out of a trend, we know stealth marketing. We've even learned to test entire music libraries in our audience's home interactively instead of making them sit in some hotel room with 99 strangers for three hours. But, we haven't always been this advanced.

"Years ago, a friend asked me to help a buddy of his who was getting killed in the ratings. I went to the market, listened for two days and gave him a number of things to do to improve his station, which had sounded awful. It was pretty basic stuff, not the least of which was to give the call letters of the station more than two or three times an hour. Six months later, I was passing back through the market and the station was still sounding awful. I called and told him I didn't understand...seemed like nothing had been done that we talked about, even the call letters! 'Oh, we tried call letters,' he said. 'It didn't work.' Some of us have come a long way."—Bill Moyes, Moyes Research Associates



### Sea Change

“The broadcast industry is undergoing a sea change. Where it will all evolve to remains to be seen. One thing has remained constant, however; the commitment to radio evidenced by *Gavin*. For this reason, SESAC continues to monitor *Gavin*’s



reports as a source for compensating writers and publishers in formats such as Americana, college, jazz, and rap.

“I never had the privilege of meeting Bill Gavin, but I would hope that SESAC’s style and ethics match his legendary integrity.”—William Velez, President/CEO, SESAC

### The Zs and the Gs

“Since beginning Putumayo World Music in 1993, I have found *Gavin* to represent a great example of combining musical passion and professionalism. From the gentle and sardonic Zimmermen boys and the other writers and editors to the engaging Galliani troops, *Gavin* has nurtured a special breed of human being. *Gavin* rocks!” — Dan Storper, CEO, Putumayo World Music

### Hair Dye?

“At 14, I had my first radio show on WICN. The station shared the same building as the Department of Youth Services. Both were where the misfits ended up. Every Friday night my sister, a friend, and myself went to the station lugging huge bags of vinyl to play, chocolate to keep us awake, and hair dye.

“There were only two rules to obey. Show up on time and sign off on time. Sure, there were some words that you weren’t supposed to say, but when you’re 14 and DYS is on the other side of the wall, it’s hard to resist—especially at 3 a.m. We sang along on air, tried to stage dive off the

chairs in our small space, and frequently gave 15-minute diatribes about the state of punk rock, junk food, adults, and hair do’s and don’ts. Our listeners were freaks of nature and hospital patients.

“WICN welcomed me into a wonderful and accepting world. It taught me that being a freak was OK as long as I didn’t hurt people. And it gave the hospital patients proof that they could get a show, too.” — Megan Jasper, Subpop

### Pure Magic

“Radio is a fantastic business. The ability to send music and thought through the air, and deliver knowledge and transfer emotion is pure magic. It is also a privilege.

“There are no great rewards without risks. Radio colleagues laughed when we launched *The Wave*. Today, *Smooth Jazz* is a tremendous mainstream hit.”

“When they tell you it can’t be done, don’t believe ‘em. At NBC in the early days of *The Source Network*, broadcasters told us, ‘You can’t talk openly about sex like that on radio.’ Today, Dr. Ruth Westheimer remains a grandmotherly icon of sex education and relationship counseling.”

“Things never turn out as predicted. Remember when AM stereo was touted as being the salvation of the AM band? Mike Harrison summed it up succinctly when he said, ‘You can’t design a car to compete with an airplane by putting wings on it.’

“Radio will be around for a long, long time. No matter how the programming is delivered, the concept of radio programming will be with us forever. Radio programming is the most intimate form of media and the only medium you can enjoy while you are active. Try reading a newspaper while driving a car or surfing the Net while watching TV.

“The longer I live, the more I discover how much there is to learn. Bill Gavin once said to me, ‘You can do anything, you’re a dreamer.’ How did he know?”—Frank Cody, President/CEO, Broadcast Architecture

### Reliable Radio

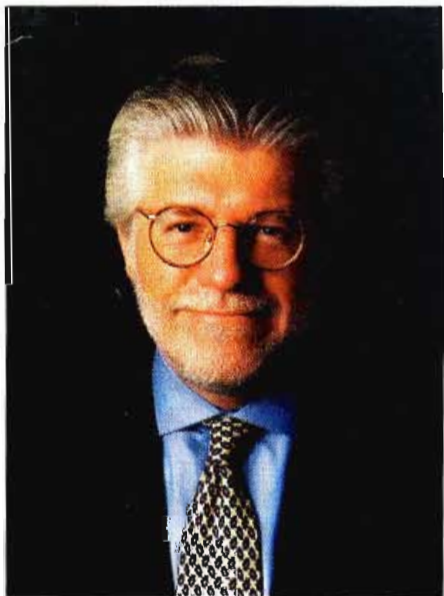
“Radio has changed considerably in 40 years, but one constant has been its ability to serve local audiences with timely, relevant information. Our listeners know their hometown radio stations can be relied upon for local news, information on school closings and weather-related emergencies, and an array of programming formats unmatched over the world.

“We at the National Association of Broadcasters are committed to being the strongest advocate possible for radio in Washington. We’ve got a dedicated staff that understands why our industry must continually remind policy makers about the positive contributions radio brings to listeners on a daily basis, free of charge.

“Let me congratulate *Gavin* on your 40th anniversary, and may the next 40 be just as successful.”—Edward O. Fritts, President & CEO, NAB

### Crazy Wisdom

“I love radio. It’s been part of my life for over 30 years. I love it because of the people that make up this industry, including my long-time partner and mentor, Dick Clark.



“But mostly, I love it because it’s nuts. It’s filled with characters. Show me a radio station, network or production organization that doesn’t have its share of craziness and I’ll show you a losing organization. A lot of the best

ideas in the medium were looked at as absurd when they were introduced. Some of the greatest salespeople in radio have been borderline-insane. And what would we do without talent who are unpredictable, unruly, and downright conventional?

And then there’s the magic of radio. What some would call the medium’s weak-

ness is actually, creatively, its greatest strength — that it continues to call upon more of the consumer’s imagination than any other medium.

Sure, people are always asking me about consolidation and deregulation, and you know what I tell them — that these current trends are emblematic of the craziness and unpredictability that I love about the business.”—Nick Verbitsky, President/CEO, United Stations Radio Networks

### A Fast 40 Years

“In 1958, this music business was still learning how to record on separate tracks, FM broadcasting was still in its infancy, and ‘digital’ wasn’t even in our lexicon. By 1968, at the close of *Gavin’s* first decade, not only had the pace of technology quickened, but the music itself was exploding into a rock and roll revolution. *Gavin* had to adapt, and as an audio engineer, so did I. I went from recording Lesley Gore in 1963 to The Band in 1969.

“As the ‘70s began, we introduced live concerts from my studio, bringing forth the seminal Elton John album, *11-17-70*. These live concerts were broadcast over WPLJ in New York and picked up by other stations around the country. It was this interaction with radio that made me so acutely aware of *Gavin* and what the publication meant to the worlds of music and broadcasting.

“Broadcasting again played a role in the ‘80s, when we brought the compact disc to radio. Once again, I witnessed *Gavin’s* influence on behalf of this new technology.

“The ‘90s brought still another technological breakthrough with the use of fiber optics (EDNET). In 1993 we used it to record tracks in real time from different locations to produce the now landmark Frank Sinatra *Duets* album.

“So what will the next 40 years be like? None of us has a crystal ball, but I would be willing to bet that whatever happens, *Gavin* will be there to report it.” — Phil Ramone, President, N2K Encoded Music