

# KRLA BECOMES "A THING OF THE PAST"

[A Recreation of Three Legendary L.A. Radio Stations]

by Steven M. Mittman

442-1-3

On Friday, April 1, 1988, radio station KRLA - 1110 kHz., Pasadena, California, played an April Fool's Day "joke" of sorts on its audience. Listeners casually tuning in the station that day may have been surprised to discover that their favorite oldies station was gone -- and in its place was another radio station! In fact, during the course of the day, KRLA had assumed the identities of three other radio stations -- all legendary giants from Los Angeles' past! For ten full hours that day, KRLA treated its listeners to the recreations of the "dominant" (that is, number one-rated) rock 'n' roll station from each of three different eras of days gone by. First, listeners of "all oldies, all the time" KRLA were brought back in time to thirty years ago, and found themselves listening to the number one radio station in Los Angeles on April 1, 1958 -- "Color Radio" KFNB - Channel 98! Then they were brought to twenty-five years ago, to April 1, 1963, and listened to L.A.'s dominant station then -- "Modern Radio" KRLA! And finally, KRLA's listeners were brought to twenty years ago, and experienced April 1, 1968 with the "legend of legends" -- "Boss Radio" 93 KHJ! [Bear in mind that, while sounding extremely authentic, these "sounds from the past" were recreations -- being performed live in the KRLA studios.]

Here is the announcement which KRLA made at 9 a.m. on Friday, April 1, 1988: "This is Mike Wagner, Program Director of 'all oldies, all the time' KRLA, Pasadena. For nearly thirty years, KRLA has provided Southern California radio listeners quality programming. We've had our ups and downs, but KRLA has always been there for you. We thank all of our loyal listeners and sponsors throughout the years for supporting 'The Big 1110.' Today, KRLA becomes -- 'a thing of the past.' [Pause.] KRLA will now go where no other radio station has gone before... Backwards. Today KRLA will pay tribute to three great Southern California radio stations as we look to the past. From 9 a.m. to noon, KRLA presents a recreation of 1958 -- 30 years ago -- and becomes the dominant station in Los Angeles then -- 'Color Radio' KFNB. Today from noon to 3, KRLA recreates 1963 -- 25 years ago today -- and becomes KRLA in 1963. Then, this afternoon from 3 to 7 p.m., it's 20 years ago today, and 1968 with 'Boss Radio' 93 KHJ and the Real Don Steele. Join us now as KRLA, Pasadena becomes 'a thing of the past,' and sets our time machine to -- April 1, 1958!" . . .

[Jingle:] "Color Radio is here!! Color of excitement! Color dynamic! Colorful Color Radio is here...! On KFNB - Channel 98! Color Radio - Channel 98!" [Into "At the Hop."]

And then, there it was! KFNB -- of thirty years ago! I was "actually" listening to the broadcast coming from my radio -- live! And it was completely "authentic"! The disc jockey was Ted "T.Q." Quillin, and the first thing to catch my ear was that he was speaking from within an echo chamber! (I wonder where KRLA got it!) To create the sensation that this was happening now, Quillin gave true time checks (such as "It's now 9:07") [in "real-life, Quillin was actually the midnight D.J.]; yet everything from the news (with mentions of President Eisenhower), to the weather ("more rain tomorrow") [it was a warm, clear day in 1988!], to their sports (with mentions of the new Los Angeles Dodgers) were of April 1, 1958! All of KFNB's old jingles were there, too, and I made some interesting observations about them. First, I was rather surprised to note that the "KFNB - Channel 98" jingle is the same basic melody as still used today (in 1988); only now, in place of singing the word "channel," they sing the word "news"! Secondly, although the station had a definite "rock 'n' roll" "feel" to it, the jingles seemed to still reflect that late-40's or early-50's "flavor," or style of music. (They reminded me of those singing commercials so popular at that time.) Thirdly, KFNB had a jingle for, literally, everything: One for their "identification"; one for their news; one for the weather; one for sports; one for their "Fabulous 40 Survey"; one to announce the D.J.'s name [the tape included Quillin speaking, and we got to hear how his voice actually sounded back in 1958!]; one to promote their entire D.J. line-up; and one even to advertise the fact that they were the number one station (see below)! And finally, it was interesting to note that all of their jingles were long -- almost miniature songs! One of them was printed above. Here are some additional samples:

1. "Mister Weatherman -- / Tell us what's cookin' tropologically; / The forecast, the pressure, and humidity; / The wind direction and velocity; / The weather and the temperature: / What's it gonna... KFW - Be?!"
2. "We spot the hits, and we hit the spot / In a new and exciting way! / On Color Radio, Color Radio / Choosing tomorrow's hits today! / With the 'Fabulous 40' in hi-fi, / Hot off the wire news, / The changes in the weather from our weatherman, / And the latest in sports reviews! / Color Radio, Color Radio! / On KFNB - Channel 98!"
3. "We're first! We're first! We're first! We're indisputably number one! Color Radio in L.A.! / We're the most listened to station! / It's the thing to do! / So, thanks to you; / From we -- / At KFNB! / We're number one!"

The songs that were played were what we now (in 1988), of course, call "super old oldies" (!), and it was fun hearing Ted Quillin refer to many of the old classics by announcing, "Here's the latest from Chuck Berry..." and "This is Elvis' new hit..."! As was men-

tioned above, KFNB had what they called the "KFNB Fabulous 40 Survey," and Quillin would frequently inform his listeners where various songs placed on the survey; for example, "This next song is number six on the Fabulous 40 Survey!" Also, the more popular songs on the survey (e.g., "At the Hop") were played a couple of times in "heavy rotation," just as they actually would have been back on that date!

An element which greatly served to further enhance the realism of the program was Quillin's excellent presentation. In a manner of a fine actor, he spoke in such a style which seemed all too realistic. His words were the words of a D.J. on that date -- not a D.J. pretending to be on that date! When he spoke, it was as though he assumed we were all familiar with the current events of the day -- which we would have been (though, actually, of course, we often weren't!). To illustrate, at one point he said, "Remember that big mud slide that closed Pacific Coast Highway north of Santa Monica last week? Well, highway crews were just about ready to open it yesterday. About thirty minutes away from the grand opening -- and down came another mud slide! Thousands of tons of earth across the P.C.H.!" Another time he was speaking of the Los Angeles Dodgers, and then interjected the thought, "You know, I keep wanting to say 'the Brooklyn Dodgers.' But, of course, it's the new Los Angeles Dodgers now!" Speaking in such a way added a dimension of depth to the program which truly made this seem as though this really were KFNB in 1958!

There were also various comments made which were quite reflective of the times; and especially now, from our future perspective, they were exceptionally interesting commentaries. Speaking from his echo chamber, Quillin told his listeners of 1958, "You know, there are a lot of people around the country saying, 'Rock 'n' roll -- ugh! That is awful!' Radio station KWK, St. Louis, has been breaking rock 'n' roll records on the air! I mean, smashing them! They're giving them the final farewell play! Station management has banned all rock 'n' roll on KWK because they say it is 'undesirable'! And -- by the way -- KWK's ratings have gone right into the 'porcelain convenience'!" And a bit later he added another item: "Well, we don't have to go out of town for news about how rock 'n' roll and Top 40 is taking over. Locally, KLAC disc jockeys Dick Haynes -- you know, 'Haynes at the Reins'? Right! -- and Gene Norman just quit over the format change to Top 40, rock 'n' roll! They ain't gonna play that raunchy music!" . . .

At 12:00 noon, we moved forward five years in time (to twenty-five years ago) to April 1, 1963, and KRLA now became the number one station in Los Angeles on that date: Itself!

This was now 1963. And it was a time of anxiety. We had just nearly gone to war with the Soviet Union over their nuclear missiles in Cuba, and now hostilities were breaking out between "those two small countries in southeast Asia." As the growing possibility of war loomed on the horizon, people invariably turned to their radios to seek escape from the problems of the day. And, in marked contrast to those problems, such escape was indeed provided by the innocent sounds of a fun, new group. A group called... The Beach Boys! And as we entered the world of 1963 on KRLA, the first thing we heard was this fun, free-spirited group yell, "GO!" -- and we were into... "Surfin' U.S.A.!"

Gone was the echo chamber, and the disc jockey playing all the hits sounded very familiar -- he was Johnny Hayes, who is still with the station (in 1988)! Their four-note jingle (for "K-R-L-A") also sounded very familiar -- it is the same four-note jingle as is also still used in 1988 (just played slightly differently).

In fact, at first my impression was that there didn't seem to be too much different between the KRLA of 1988, and the KRLA of 1963. I was listening to the same D.J., listening to the same jingle, hearing the same familiar "KRLA" call being mentioned, and even listening to the same "oldies" music (which, of course, happened to be current in 1963!). But then, after just a few minutes of listening, I began to notice that things weren't quite the same. There was a different "feel" to the station. This WAS a different KRLA! That jingle, for example, which at first seemed so similar, kept being played over and over and over; sounding more and more dissimilar with each play! And my old "familiar" one was not being played at all! And where was their famous slogan, "The Big 1110"?! Instead of that slogan, Johnny Hayes kept saying: "The giant 50,000-watt music power station -- KRLA!" ("Fifty-thousand" was always strongly emphasized.) And perhaps the most striking thing of all was that they never said, "All oldies, all the time"; nor, in fact, even billed themselves as an oldies station! Far from it, they were now "Modern Radio" KRLA, and pumping out all the current Top 40 hits of 1963!

The KRLA of 1963 also used lots of promos. After nearly every song, Johnny Hayes gave a brief promotion announcement for another D.J. on the KRLA line-up (some of whom have gone on to become quite famous). For example, a typical one would be: "Bob Eubanks, tomorrow, 6 to 9 on KRLA!" Also occasionally promoted was KRLA D.J. Casey Kasem, and his countdown show on Saturdays (which was the predecessor to his nationally syndicated American Top 40 countdown show which began in 1970).

KRLA also seemed to play a more interactive role with its listeners in 1963. For example, a promo-tape was played in which some whacky cowboys swooped down on some Indians. Suddenly, the cowboys all stopped firing, and when the Captain shockingly asked why, they responded that they ran out of caps! Then a voice-over announcement said, "Become a member of Hudson's Commandos!" and invited listeners to send a S.A.S.E. to KRLA for some club items. ["Emperor" Bob Hudson (who dressed the part, complete with turban and robes, and drove around Hollywood in a gold Rolls-Royce) -- the self-proclaimed "leader of the youth movement and ruler of the pop scene," and whose two primary missions, along with his KRLA Commandos, were to take San Francisco, cover it with water and make it the world's largest ice rink, and to turn Sunset Blvd. into the world's longest bowling alley -- listed (by registration) more than 40,000 members when he left KRLA (for KFVB) in 1966)] Another way in which KRLA was very active with its listeners was by producing a rock newspaper, which was heavily promoted. During the program, tape-promos and Hayes would frequently say: "Get your copy of KRLA's Teen-Beat -- just for teenagers -- at Wallich's Music City in Hollywood!" [By the way, this newspaper, now a collector's item, was the world's first rock music newspaper -- even beating out Rolling Stone! (Anyone out there have a copy?!)]

As with KFVB, the news, sports, and weather were all of that date. Here was the "big" news story of April 1, 1963 in Los Angeles: "L.A.'s streetcars and trolleys were taken out of service yesterday, and replaced by 300 air-suspension buses. And, true to the very end, the last trolley to be retired -- was ten minutes late!" The news of the day was presented by both the staff newscaster during the station's regular newscasts, and also by D.J. Johnny Hayes -- who would often quote newsworthy and interesting articles from the Los Angeles Times! (A humorous incident occurred at one point when Hayes remarked that his copy of the paper had been chewed by his neighbor's dog, and was therefore difficult to read! He then proceeded to attempt to read the paper, and -- sure enough! -- stumbled over some of the words! Apparently what really happened was that he was probably no doubt trying to read a poor-quality photocopy of the 1963 newspaper made from a library's microfilm!) Other news mentioned President and Mrs. Kennedy's activities on this April Fool's Day, and of some unrest which erupted yesterday in the South when some "Negroes were trying to register to vote." In the weather department, a storm moved through Southern California yesterday, and more rain was likely today. . . .

Then, at 3:00, we again moved forward another five years in time, to exactly twenty years ago. It was now April 1, 1968, and the number one station in the southland was -- "Boss Radio" 93 KHJ! As even KRLA's announcement here conceded, "Everyone, everywhere, was listening to 'Boss Radio'!"

[Original KHJ tape:] "And now, ladies and gentlemen... The Real Don Steele!" [Jingle:] "93 KHJ!!" [Intro high-energy Don Steele:] "It's 3:00 in Boss Angeles!" And then, "All right! Here's the Beatles on 93 KHJ...!!!" [Incidentally, on this program Steele was on the air from 3 to 7 p.m., but in real-life on this date, his show was actually on from 3 to 6 p.m.]

[Don Steele is now (in 1988) a KRLA D.J. -- but in 1968 he was the fast-talking Real Don Steele, and the epitome of the high-energy D.J. on a high-energy station! Although Top 40 had been around since KFVB's days, program director Bill Drake molded "Boss Radio," and literally invented the slick, fast-paced, high-energy sound so closely associated with Top 40 radio of the 60's and 70's. Also, Drake transformed KHJ into a Top 30 station, and even during this broadcast Steele remarked that he was playing "your favorite Boss 30 hits, baby!" (See further comments about this near the end of this article.) So successful was the "Drake Formula" that KHJ's parent company, RKO, began using it on its other stations across the country, including KFRC in San Francisco. (From there, of course, the concept spread like wildfire to other Top 40 rock 'n' roll stations around the country.)]

This recreation of KHJ in 1968 -- as with both the KFVB and KRLA recreations -- was also completely authentic, down to the last detail -- no holds barred! That is (as was mentioned), KHJ was number one at this time, and Steele frequently exclaimed, "Thanks to you, Boss Radio is numero uno, uno, uno, baby! We're number one, and the BEST radio station in all of Boss Angeles!!!" (Remember, this was really being heard over KRLA, and Steele is now really a KRLA D.J.! -- Or maybe after this broadcast, he was a KRLA, D.J.!!)

Keeping in the style of KHJ's fast pace, their jingles, too, reflected that fast pace. They were short, fast, and to the point. Thus, in contrast to KFVB's six-line song announcing the weather, KHJ's jingle went simply: "KHJ weath-er!" And Steele, with energy virtually bursting from within, would exclaim: "HOT, HOT, HOT, HOT, HOT, baby!" Then he would quickly run down the list of temps. for a few areas (most being in the high-70's), and conclude with, "...and it's 79 groovy degrees here in Hollywood!" Another jingle which was played fairly often was "KHJ Boss Hit-Bound!" which was then immediately followed by some song moving up the charts, such as Simon and Garfunkel's "Sounds of Silence."

Their news, called "KHJ 20/20 News," was given at forty minutes past the hour, and was announced with an "electronic-sounding" six-note version of their "93 KHJ" jingle. The newscaster would begin with a "teaser," go into a commercial break, and then return with the details. It happens that April 1, 1968 was a rather "busy" newscast, and presented here is the transcript from one of their newscasts: [Electronic news jingle, then:] "Is President Johnson playing an April Fool's joke? I'm Adam J. Demori, KHJ 20/20 News." [Commercial break, then:] "President Johnson stunned the nation last evening! Mouths popped open all over the place when Johnson said he's had it; that a 'house divided is a house that cannot stand.'" [Tape of Johnson: "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."] "It was barely a month ago that the President reminded us that Lincoln had stuck it out despite dissents, riots, rebellion; despite war, death, taxes, and inflation." [Tape of Johnson: "Sad, but steady, Lincoln stuck it out. Sad, but steady, so will we."] "And yet, today, April 1, 1968, the nation is in a state of disbelief, wondering what the real reasons are. Is it a political chess move, a joke, or did he really mean what he said last evening?" The newscast then went on to include tapes of Senator Robert Kennedy and Vice President Hubert Humphrey announcing their intentions to get the Democratic nomination for President. Other news included a (famous) speech Martin Luther King, Jr. gave yesterday in which he proclaimed, "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!" and that, having now seen the Lord, he was prepared to die if need be. (Ironically, it would be just three days later -- April 4, 1968 -- that he would be assassinated.) In news closer to home, up in Sacramento today, Governor Ronald Reagan unveiled another plan in his tax-reform message. The news concluded with: "KHJ -- first in Los Angeles with 20/20 News!" Then jingle: "93 KHJ - sports!"

(I was both amazed and extremely impressed by the amount of trouble KRLA must have gone through to find -- and prepare -- those old tapes to recreate the actual newscast of that day! [Do you suppose the archives of the current all-news KFVB might have helped out some, hi?]) Additionally, to be hearing those historical events as though they were all actually happening at that very moment was an indescribable experience! To be hearing it all "live"; and yet, to also know of the tragedies just about to occur, and of the other turn of events, was truly a very "chilling" experience! The "liveness" of the broadcast somehow made everything seem meaningful! Much more so than, say, even watching an old newsfilm; or even more boringly, reading about it in some textbook! [Perhaps this is how history should be taught in our schools!] Simply put, it was very well done!!)

Then it was back to the Real Don Steele again! Another item which added to the program's authenticity (and which was fun to hear!) was that even KHJ's old phone number was constantly given out! Steele would frequently invite his listeners to make requests: "The 'Boss-line' request-line is now open at Hollywood 1 - 9353!" Of course, I tried calling it and true to form -- and which might have come as even a shock to KRLA! -- the line was busy, busy, busy! (After the show was over, I finally got through! It turned out to now be the number of a doctor's office! Oh, how I feel for that poor receptionist that day! I'll bet that'll be one Friday she will never forget, hi!) Regardless of that, though, I think to have included even KHJ's request-line was an exceptionally excellent touch! . . .

And then, before you even knew it, it was 7:00. It was over. This little trip back through time last ten hours -- and yet, seemed to just fly by! These three great, legendary radio stations -- "Color Radio" KFVB - Channel 98, "Modern Radio" KRLA, and "Boss Radio" 93 KHJ -- were once again back in the pages of history, and KRLA brought us home to 1988. Here were KRLA's closing remarks:

"We've just completed a trip through time as KRLA became 'a thing of the past.' Today we spotlighted three great radio stations -- at their peak of popularity: 'Color Radio' KFVB in 1958; 'Modern Radio' KRLA in 1963; and 'Boss Radio' KHJ in 1968. Of these three legendary radio stations, only one continues in their tradition of bringing the southland the best rock 'n' roll music. One sole station survived a three-decade-long 'hit-radio' battle of the airwaves. And we're proud that that station is 'all oldies' 1110 KRLA! L.A.'s favorite oldies, played by L.A.'s favorite D.J.'s, on Southern California's original oldies station! Thanks for listening to our trip through time! Now, KRLA will resume our regular programming, and present a 'Million Dollar Weekend.' More memories -- from the leader of the past -- KRLA!" . . .

And then it was April 1, 1988 and "all oldies, all the time" KRLA, with disc jockey Humble Harve! Humble Harve used to work with the Real Don Steele on "Boss Radio" 93 KHJ, and the first thing he said was, "It feels really weird to follow Steele on 'Boss Radio'! Shades of Melrose Avenue!!" (Melrose Avenue was where KHJ's studios were located.)

And now -- the critique! As was mentioned, I found the entire program to be quite excellent! And yet -- there were some areas which were "less than perfect." Without meaning to degrade the overall excellence of the program, nor in meaning to discount the amount of research and hard work which must have gone into the making of this special broadcast, here were some of the mistakes ("flaws") I noted:



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1. In real time this program was being broadcast on a Friday. I kept noticing, though, that the disc jockeys on all three stations also kept referring to it being a Friday and the weekend being upon us. In actuality, April 1, 1958 was on a Tuesday, and April 1, 1963 and April 1, 1968 were on Mondays! (Shame on KRLA for apparently assuming that we would not know that, hi!)
  2. At one point, Ted Quillin on KFVB told this joke: "The first rule in the 'Book of Love' is that too much sex makes you deaf. -- Huh?" Well, an innocent enough joke for 1988 -- but the word "sex" was verboten over the air in 1958!
  3. KRLA gave away five hula hoops during the KFVB program, and to do so, Ted Quillin gave his phone number as "520-5752 (which is the same as "520-KRLA"!)). Now, ignoring the fact that KFVB never used that number (!), the actual unforgivable sin was that, to keep it in the spirit of the times, they should have used a word-prefix (such as KHJ's "Hollywood") to denote the first two digits of the phone number.
  4. Johnny Hayes on KRLA also goofed at times. When reading the L.A. Times, most of the time he (correctly) said, "This is from today's L.A. Times, dated April 1, 1963..." However, a few times he mistakenly said, "This is from the L.A. Times, dated April 1, 1963." Of course, one would not use the word "the" when referring to that day's paper!
  5. During the KHJ traffic reports, there were mentions of the "91 Freeway." In fact, the 91 Freeway did not exist in 1968!
  6. As was mentioned earlier, KHJ in 1968 was a Top 30 station. Of course, they did sometimes play lots of other songs, too. But KRLA seemed to be "cheating" by "sneaking in" too many of those "other" oldies! Especially near the end of the program, it got real bad! They literally began playing one "super oldie" after another! "Boss Radio" had too tight of a playlist to be playing so many "golden oldies." I'll bet the real KHJ of 1968 was rolling over in its grave!
  7. As is required by law, KRLA gave their legal ID at the top of every hour, as well as also at each half-hour mark. However, they didn't include the legal ID's and jingles for the three stations during the recreations! For completeness, I feel that those ID's and jingles should have been included somewhere during the recreations, too!!!
  8. KRLA said an untrue statement at the beginning of the program. They said, "KRLA will now go where no other radio station has gone before... Backwards." Actually (and this may be of particular interest), another station had done this before! Circa 1970, I recall that KMET - 94.7 FM had also recreated a station from the past for the day -- and that station, ironically, also was the legendary -- "Color Radio" KFVB!!!
  9. And finally, at the end of the program, KRLA again made another statement which is not true. They said, "One sole station survived a three-decade-long 'hit-radio' battle of the airwaves; and we're proud that that station is 'all oldies' 1110 KRLA!" In fact, they did not survive it! KHJ has that honor (though, eventually they "lost" too)! (See below for details of the histories of these stations...)

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Some closing comments: The amount of time, research, and effort that had to have gone into a program of this kind is truly mind-boggling! To recreate even just one such station would have been quite a challenge -- but three is astonishing! The above-mentioned "flaws" aside, KRLA deserves a well-earned "tip of the hat" for work well done!

Other mediums are universally recognized for their importance and historical value, and are saved and preserved for future generations to experience and enjoy (for example, classic radio and television shows are rerun; works of art are displayed in museums; and so on). We see now that great radio stations, too, can be recognized for their importance and historical value, and need not necessarily vanish forever into oblivion either! It is exciting to know that fine programs such as this one can make it possible for future generations to experience the magic of some of the outstanding, legendary stations of the past!

And a final word: Per a call to KRLA, I was informed that they received a great amount of positive feedback about this program, and might perhaps do another one of this sort again in the future! Let's hope so!!!!

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[For those persons interested: I taped this entire program, utilizing the "high-quality" sound of Beta "Hi-Fi" video tapes. I will be happy to make available copies of all or part of this program -- at cost. Specify either Beta video tape (four 3-hour tapes, which includes two hours of KRLA of 1988) (This is great for home stereos!), or cassettes (seven 90-minute tapes). Contact me for details.]

Here, in brief, are the histories (and some highlights) of the three stations featured in this program:

KRLA started out in 1949 as country music station KXLA. On Monday, January 6, 1958, KFVB became known as "Color Radio," and brought the new sound of Top 40 rock 'n' roll to Los Angeles. The following year, in early September of 1958, KXLA became KRLA, and also switched to the new Top 40 format, as "Modern Radio." (Interestingly, shortly afterwards, KRLA brought on board Ted Quillin from KFVB!) In 1962, KRLA ran into trouble. The F.C.C. withheld renewal of their license pending challenges by some 21 applicants. The station continued to operate, however, under the trusteeship of Oak Knoll Broadcasting -- a non-profit group which diverted all monies generated above and beyond operating costs (that is, "profits") to Los Angeles' major NET (educational)/PBS (public) television station, KCET/28; and a little bit to various charitable organizations. Shortly after "Color Radio" celebrated its 10th anniversary, on Sunday, March 10, 1968, KFVB "made headlines" (puns always intended!) by switching formats and becoming Los Angeles' first all-news station (though XETRA in Tijuana, with its powerful signal, also had listeners in L.A.). [On "Color Radio's" final day, Bob Hudson had his listeners inundate KNX with calls pleading that they hire him, lest he be out of work! KNX did hire him -- for all the good that did, though -- as shortly afterwards KNX also went all-news -- forcing Hudson to San Francisco; and XETRA to becoming beautiful music!] By the early 1970's, FM stations -- which were also programming popular heavy metal and Top 40 music formats -- were, with their clean stereo sound, beginning to lure young listeners away from the traditional AM stations. In 1971, KHJ ended its "Boss Radio" format (although the catchy "93 KHJ" jingle was retained), but continued on with a new, modified Top 40 format. [It was at this time that I can recall first listening to KHJ.] In March of 1973, "Modern Radio" also ended when KRLA abandoned Top 40 rock 'n' roll, and switched formats to Middle-of-the-Road. In 1975, KRLA again switched formats and became Los Angeles' first AM oldies station. During the mid-to-late '70's, KHJ went disco for awhile, as did KRLA at night, but both eventually returned to their respective traditional formats when the disco craze died. In early 1979, under a government-sponsored test program, KHJ became one of the first stations in the United States to begin broadcasting in AM stereo (Kahn system). [English-language XETRA in Tijuana, which beams its powerful signal to the western United States, was the first station in the world to broadcast in AM stereo when, in 1970, it began an on-the-air testing of an early version of the Kahn system for Kahn Laboratories.] On Monday, November 26, 1979, after a 17-year limbo, the F.C.C. finally awarded a broadcast license to KRLA again! (Its new owners were awarded a license after several of the challengers had, two years earlier, decided to merge together. Some of the principals involved included Bob Hope, Art Linkletter, and Goodson-Todman Productions.) By 1980, FM had completely dominated all Top 40 rock 'n' roll, and in October of that year, KHJ finally threw in the towel, and abandoned rock 'n' roll completely for the first time, and jumped on the country and western bandwagon which was sweeping the nation. However, when the "Urban Cowboy" craze fizzled out, on Friday, April 1, 1983 (interesting date, huh?!), KHJ suddenly and surprisingly brought back its old "Boss Radio" format and jingles! [Although I had no doubt heard KHJ as a child in the '60's, this was first exposure to the format which I can recall.] However, there was a twist -- rather than being Top 30, they were now playing oldies music (similar, in fact, to the way they sounded during this program!), and were once again competing head-on with KRLA! In June, 1984, KHJ dropped "Boss Radio" once again, and hoping to cater to all of the drivers on the freeways, created a new format tailored for the "city on wheels": "Car Radio" -- which consisted of "traffic reports every ten minutes" sandwiched between "Contemporary Hit" songs (as Top 40 was now being called). However, that approach to Top 40 on AM also failed, and on Saturday, February 1, 1986, an era ended when KHJ went "Smokin' Oldies," and changed its call letters to KRTH (the call adopted from its popular oldies FM station, K-Earth 101), and once again was competing directly with KRLA! (The "KHJ" call letters, by the way, still survive on television channel 9.) Interestingly, the "traffic reports every ten minutes" idea was then incorporated into the all-news format of KFVB - News 98!