

RADIO

LIFE AND REVOLUTION

WAVES

-ON THE FM DIAL-

**JIM
LADD**

INTRODUCTION BY DON HENLEY

Deliciously subversive" —Ray Manzarek, keyboard player for The Doors

DISCLAIMER

Radio Waves is a true story based on actual events, either related to the author by the participants, or told through the author's personal experience.

Some scenes portrayed in this book are composites of actual events or are reconstructions based on the types of experiences I've had during my years in radio. Some of the radio broadcasts and other material quoted in this book are my creations, based on my personal recollection. And that stuff about the "phone company" and Acme Transport Ltd. being a CIA front, was just a joke. You know, a little creative license, like the part about the automatic weapons.

Most of the names in this book are also real. However, the following have been changed:

Terri Belle	Lucifer Le Rock
Ralph Bolton	George McCarther
Dean Brady	Officer MacIntosh
Alan Draper	Thom O'Guardia
Ginger Feldman	Jude S. Papers
Officer Flynn	Wiley Perch
F. Reginald Glutman	Pollen
Joanne Goodwin	Arnold Quisle
Frank Grayson	Biff Shmooze
Hai Ku	Ira Steinberg
Officer Jerry	Mega Turnon
Bill Kelly	Bobby Weed
Officer Kimball	Ray White

Along with the names of certain characters, the radio stations' names have also been changed, including: RADIO KAOS, KASH, KBRK, KFRE, KDOM, KHIP, KCWB and KGAB.



RADIO

WAVES



LIFE AND
REVOLUTION
ON THE FM DIAL

BY
JIM LADD

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**To St. Michelle with all my love,
and to my Mother and Father,
who never stopped believing.**

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INTRODUCTION

by Don Henley

Music changed my life. Radio, the vehicle for that music, was my connection to the world that lay outside my small hometown. During those difficult, adolescent years, it was a friend in the dark; a messenger to a lover; a magic carpet; a ticket out. Rock and roll was coming of age and hormones were rattling all over the globe. The latter half of the sixties would see thousands of young people head west, drawn by the power of the music and the cultural revolution that was springing up around it. The Beatles had invaded the States, Elvis was making bad movies and San Francisco and Los Angeles were fast becoming the gathering places for long-haired kids who wanted to reinvent themselves and merge into the strange and wonderful metamorphosis that was taking place.

Jim Ladd and I were fellow travelers on this rock and roll caravan, although our paths would not cross until 1973 when he interviewed the Eagles just after we had released the *Desperado* album. He struck me then as an anomaly in his profession. He was serious, intelligent and thoroughly prepared. He displayed a respect for, and a knowledge of the music—especially the lyrics—that I had not previously encountered. The heady days of the early seventies were wondrous, confusing and scary—filled with tremendous highs and lows—but Jim, in his empathetic way, got us to open up—serious young men that we were—and talk with candor about what was on our minds. It was a refreshing change from the bluster and fatuousness to which we had been accustomed. Music had changed and so had radio—at least on the FM band.

It seems odd to think that rock and roll FM radio has only been with us since 1967, but it was born that year in San Francisco—the year I took my first acid trip and listened to *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (coincidentally enough, in the Eagle Apartments in Dallas, Texas). Los An-

geles and Boston followed in short order and soon the emerging counterculture had its own personal medium. Moreover, FM was superior to AM in sound quality *and* it came in stereo! This, however, was not the greatest difference between the two. The main difference was the music and the way it was presented. Listeners were given credit for having a brain, a conscience and a sense of humor above that of a ten year old. DJs often played songs in sets of two or three according to their topicality or, as Ladd put it, "They knew the music and how to relate it to the social issues of the day."

In 1975, Jim committed what many believed was career suicide by leaving the number-one rated FM station in L.A. to take a lower-paying but more fulfilling job at the scruffy, second-rated FM station. By 1978, however, Ladd and the iconoclastic family of DJs at RADIO KAOS had resurrected and redefined "free-form" FM rock radio. KAOS ruled the airwaves of Southern California. They had survived the aberration called "disco", but music and culture were mutating once again. "Punk" was gnawing its way out of its shell and "new wave" was in the germinal stage. Fate and bad helicopter maintenance were about to deal Jimmy Carter a devastating blow; the country was getting ready to swing to the right.

The story of radio in the eighties is basically the story of American culture. We went data crazy. Words and phrases like "format," "research," "marketing campaign" and "demographics" became ensconced in the radio lexicon. Disc jockeys were slowly being stripped of their autonomy. They could no longer say and play what they pleased. Radio, like television, was becoming a corporately programmed conduit for comforting entertainment and mindless escapism. But the real problem was more insidious. Greed was back with a vengeance. Jim Morrison said it best, "We want the world and we want it now." The laissez-faire policies of the Reagan administration made opulence and shameless acquisition fashionable. National unconsciousness was the order of the day. Radio stations became mere investment properties for the new generation of "me decade" entrepreneurs who wanted to turn a neat profit quickly. Ratings was the name of the game. Consultants were brought in to restructure and program the stations in the hopes of boosting ratings, not over an extended period of time, but as soon as possible so that the station—or chain of stations—could then be sold. Hence the data freak-

out and the pandering to every musical fad that came down the pike, regardless of quality or value (record companies were just as guilty). Jim Ladd would be the first to admit that there is nothing inherently wrong with data. But, since we, as a culture, are now addicted to immediate gratification, due, ironically, in large part to electronic media, the American entrepreneurial mind thinks in terms of immediate profitability rather than long-term domination of markets as practiced by the Japanese. This mind-set is destroying our society—especially the arts and the environment—from the inside out. The dog is eating its own tail.

Radio, in many instances, is no longer controlled by people who truly love and appreciate music. In fact, a great many of America's products, treasures and traditions are in the hands of those only concerned with quantity, not quality; those who would mortgage the future in favor of the present. This is the legacy of the Reagan years—capitalism run amok. Jim Ladd has told not only the story of FM rock radio. He has, with an admirable amount of humor and affection, chronicled the U.S. of A. as it slides into the twenty-first century.



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PART ONE



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CHAPTER ONE

THE

TRIBAL

DRUM

Come on people now
Smile on your brother
Everybody get together
Try to love one another right now.
—the Youngbloods

WHAT I'M about to tell you is very personal. Not kiss and tell personal, but the kind of homily that springs from a loving and respectful memory.

Imagine for a moment that you were given the keys to a magic chamber. A psychic clean room if you will, where, upon entering, real life is put on hold. Within this enchanted room, there are no wars, no taxes, no headlines—even the laws of physics do not apply. Inside this sacred vestibule you are given the power, not only to transcend who you are, but to recreate yourself, over and over again. What would you do if you had access, four hours a day, to such a wondrous place? Four precious hours, during which all the inflexible bonds of daily reality simply vanished, as you literally plugged into your own imagination.

Can you possibly comprehend the addictive properties inherent in such an island of mental health, freed from all doubts and insecurities, a place where anything is possible? What would you do inside this room? What kind of world would you create? What would you do, if you could do anything?

Such a place existed once—a flash point that tore a hole in the fabric of reality—and let forth a fountain of music and life. At the very center of that spark were the people who made L.A. rock—the notorious outriders who shined a sonic spotlight on one of the most creative, turbulent, and exciting periods in American history. This is the story of the days and nights within that magical chamber, inside the glass booth of RADIO KAOS.

Although this tale of KAOS is based on truth, this is *not* a textbook for the whole of rock radio by any stretch of the hallucination. It is, however, a look behind the microphone that spoke for an entire generation of Southern Californians. A unique moment in an era of social revolution and cultural permutation, a moment that, to one degree or another, has changed us all.

K-A-O-S was not just another set of call letters taking up space on the FM dial. 94.7 illuminated the frequency modulation band like a community bonfire, a beacon for a generation in search of the light. It was our hideout, our escape, our secret code: “underground radio.”

Underground radio was born in the late sixties, and second only to the music, it was our generation’s most important cultural link. The origin of the term “underground” is kind of murky. History, however, provides an abundance of stories, so pick one.

We always called it “free form.” Free-form radio was an approach to the music and the show itself, which resulted in a highly personal and completely spontaneous new art form. Most of us never thought of it as a job, and that was always the problem. A job was something “straight people” did to earn ulcers. For us, it was more of a calling. We were guerilla fighters for a generation of creative explorers, inmates who took over the asylum for just one purpose—to play with the public-address system.

Tom Donahue was the man who stole the keys to the glass booth, and opened it up to an entirely new generation of radio pioneers—long-haired, barefoot, tie-dyed dreamers, who

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.....1967-1975.....

came to their tiny, run-down, and woefully ill-equipped stations, filled with the rhythm of adventure, and the melody of revolution. Innovators, who saw themselves as the conduit of a great and powerful magic that was busy being born.

Remember JFK, Martin Luther King, LBJ, Vietnam, and Nixon? How about hippies, LSD, Bobby Kennedy, Kent State, Woodstock, Neil Armstrong, People's Park, or the great banana-smoking caper? For those of you whose sense of recent history is limited to buzzwords such as aerobics, BMW, and tofu, you'll just have to trust me when I tell you that things were very *different* then.

How you remember the sixties is completely dependent upon how you survived the sixties. Those who saw it down the barrel of an M-16 in Southeast Asia have a different perspective than the guys with a college deferment. The memories of black civil rights workers in Montgomery will differ greatly from those of middle-class whites who lived in suburbia. If you were the parents of a teenager, you were probably torn between complete bewilderment and sheer terror. But if you were fortunate enough to be young, idealistic, and living in San Francisco, you had a chance to be touched by the Spirit: a pure light, which shone down upon those seven mystic hills, and changed everything.

Something wonderful happened, something unexplainable. For an all-too-brief nanosecond of history, the "movement," or the "counterculture," or whatever label one chooses for the tribe, was shown a vision of the promised land. And like some great simultaneous revelation, everybody began to treat one another as if they were Jesus. It was a deep and profound bliss, and if it touched your heart, you know that you've never been the same.

This Big Bang of consciousness in the late 1960s ignited a tangible sense of wonder and commitment, unique in American history. And it was against this backdrop, or more accurately because of it, that FM radio was born.

KFRE was the genesis, the very first FM rock station on planet earth, a legendary beacon that would be the prototype for all future FM stations in America. It, as well as the very idea of free-form rock radio, was invented by a 350-pound unemployed father of four, who was living with his soon-to-be-second wife, Raechel. Raechel Hamilton was only eighteen years old when she first met Tom Donahue in the mid-1960s.

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She had talent, brains, and a lightning wit to match her Veronica Lake style of beauty. And Raechel would need them all to keep up with her future husband, a man more than twice her age.

“Big Daddy” Tom Donahue was a major Top 40 radio star in the Bay Area, until he was forced to do one too many remote broadcasts, from one too many record store openings, and something inside him snapped. He could no longer bring himself to play music that insulted his intelligence, for a bunch of kids chewing bubble gum to a candy-coated beat. This was the first in a series of events which would lead to the most revolutionary change in radio since Alan Freed coined the term “rock ‘n’ roll” back in the 1950s.

It was Tom Donahue’s fault! It was all Tom Donahue’s fault! Let’s get that clear right up front. Okay, maybe it wasn’t all Tom Donahue’s fault, it was also the Beatles’ fault, it was the Rolling Stones’ fault, it was the Grateful Dead’s fault, it was the Doors’ fault. And let’s not forget Dylan, Hendrix, Joplin, the Jefferson Airplane, and—Bill Graham! These were the people who ruined my life. These were the musical subversives who opened some invisible trapdoor of alternative thought which I happily tripped through. But I have proof that it was Tom Donahue who pulled the rope!

All of this can be traced back to a fog-shrouded San Francisco night in 1967. Tom and Raechel Donahue sat with a friend in their small Victorian apartment, listening to the Doors’ first album, while rearranging brain cells via Dr. Tim’s magic snake oil. The playing cards were starting to melt, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to tell the hearts from the diamonds when, through the haze of incense and acid, Big Daddy shifted his enormous bulk and posed a fateful question:

“Why in the hell aren’t we hearing any of this stuff on the radio?”

Good question. And Tom Donahue was not a man to let a question like that go unanswered.

The next day Tom began to call FM stations (which in those days usually had one of three formats: foreign language, religious, or static), until he found one whose phone was disconnected.

Eureka!

“Rae, this is it,” Tom called to Raechel as he hung up. “KFRE had their phones yanked.”

“What do you mean ‘this is it’?” Raechel said as she entered the living room. “This is what, a radio station that’s so broke it can’t pay its phone bill?”

“Exactly,” Tom answered, already plotting his next move. “These people *need* us.”

“They need us?” Raechel pondered half to herself. “I thought we were the ones in need.”

“We are,” Tom smiled. “It’s perfect.”

Raechel walked back to the kitchen, where the children were eating lunch, and closed the door. “Look Tom, you just quit the biggest AM station in town where you were making good money, because you couldn’t stand their bullshit. Now you want to go to work for a foreign-language station that’s flat broke. What’s going on here?”

Tom motioned toward the beanbag chair next to the couch. “Sit down Rae, I want you to listen to this idea.”

Raechel walked over to the big red Naugahyde lump, and flopped down in the middle. As soon as she appeared to be settled, Tom began.

“You and I are living at the very center of the counter-culture movement. Right now San Francisco and Berkeley are the hot spots for new music, politics, art, the whole hippie thing, would you agree?”

“Yes,” Raechel answered, still not sure where he was going with this.

“Well, it hit me last night, all this new music, all these changes taking place around us, yet Top 40 radio is still the same old shuck-and-jive it was ten years ago. I think there’s a need for a completely new kind of radio. A station that plays only really hip music, like the Airplane, Quicksilver, Moby Grape, The Doors—we could even play somethin’ from Janis, and follow it with a Bessie Smith cut. Really expand the parameters of the music to include all the stuff we like, but never hear on the radio. Think of it Rae, no more teenybopper crap, we could play anything we wanted. We could program the radio—like Bill Graham books the Fillmore!”

“Do you think it would work?” asked Raechel. “I mean, do you think there are enough people . . . ?”

“How many freaks showed up at the park last week for that free concert with the Dead?” Tom asked rhetorically. “Five, six thousand? And that was just word of mouth. The only people who even knew it was going to happen were the ones who live right here in the Haight. How many do you

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think would have come if there was a radio station that had gotten the word out? A station that was really into what's going on?"

"My God," Raechel whispered as the idea began to take shape in her head. "Now I see what you're gettin' at. And instead of pimple creams and insurance companies for sponsors—we could get water bed stores and head shops—I'll bet Graham would buy time on the station for the Fillmore."

"Hell, if we work it right, he might let us broadcast some of the shows live!" Tom added, as the synergy between the two minds locked into a groove.

"And PSAs, Tom, no more of those dry moronic bake sales and science fair spots," exclaimed Raechel, now up and pacing around the room. "We could do public service announcements for the Free Clinic, and SNCC and the Black Panther food bank. . . ."

"What do you say, Raechel, do you think we're too old to run away and join the circus?"

The next move was to locate the station owner, and do the Donahue dance. Tom was not only a good tap dancer; as an alchemist, he was second to none. Moments into his routine, he was conjuring up dollar signs in the eyes of one Frank Grayson. Tom did this by explaining to Frank that his phone was out of order due to nonpayment of bills, due to the fact that KFRE had no ratings, due to the fact that no one in the greater San Francisco area was listening.

"But I can change all that Frank," Tom intoned like a shaman in the midst of some ancient tribal ritual, "and all you have to do is stand back and let me work the magic."

Mr. Grayson sat in his darkened office, lit only by the dim afternoon sunlight that filtered its way through a heavy Bay Area fog and finally struggled past soiled windows into the murky room. The station was doing so poorly, he kept the lights turned off during the day in order to save electricity. Frank watched solemnly as the gigantic configuration of Tom "Big Daddy" Donahue danced through the shadows, billowing forth a stream of ideas and information. He didn't know anything about these new rock bands, nor did he have the slightest clue as to what a head shop was, but Tom Donahue had proven himself in this market, and Frank Grayson was tired of sitting in the dark.

So, the following Saturday afternoon, Tom and Raechel

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.....1967-1975.....

packed up their album collection into four cardboard boxes and loaded them into the back of a beat-up Volkswagen bus. As they drove to the station for the first time, they realized that no one on the planet, aside from Frank Grayson and themselves, knew what was about to happen. There were no newspaper ads, no billboards, not even an on-air announcement declaring that KFRE was about to mutate—none of the usual advertising hoopla which radio stations normally use to herald a change in formats. They would be stepping out into thin air, all alone, without a promotional net. They had four boxes of records and access to the airwaves—the rest would be up to them.

Tom and Raechel arrived at KFRE in a flurry of activity, and for the next two hours busied themselves in preparation for the show. The bewildered engineer who ran the taped programs could only sit and watch as this forty-two-year-old, 350-pound hippie and his teenage bride prepared to take over the station.

Then, at 6:00 P.M., April 7, 1967, Tom Donahue opened the mike on a new chapter of radio history. And in a voice as big as his frame, launched the era of free-form FM radio:

*"This is Tom Donahue, I'm here to clear up your face
and mess up your mind."*

It was the Summer of Love, and San Francisco's newest addition to the counterculture had just been born. He promised an "honest and direct" approach to the music, and declared that KFRE would serve as an "open bulletin board" for the city's hip community. It was a new radio manifesto, a declaration of independence, written between the lyrics of the music he was about to play.

Come gather round people where ever ya roam
And admit that the waters around you have grown
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone
If your time to you is worth saving
And you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a changin'

—Bob Dylan

The very choice of songs, as well as the manner in which

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he played them, was in itself revolutionary. Tom played "sets" of songs, three or four in a row without stopping in between, as was normal for the time. Furthermore, he didn't talk over the beginnings or endings of the records, but treated the music as art rather than product. After each set, Tom would back-announce the songs, and talk about how they related to what was going on in the city, or perhaps how a particular set of tunes carried a broader national message. He chose his own music, and in between sets, continued to define the future direction of the station.

Meanwhile, Raechel did everything else.

Because Tom had spent the last twenty years in Top 40 AM radio with his own producer and engineer, he had never in his life run a board, or cued a record. So it was left to Raechel to pull the albums, cue up the songs, answer the telephones, and provide Tom with anything else that was needed. They worked together in a kind of close-order tandem, inventing this new style of radio, one record at a time.

The response was immediate and overwhelming.

They didn't know how word got around so fast, but within an hour, the few unintelligible complaints from the tiny foreign language audience were drowned in a deluge of phone calls from an overwhelmed Haight-Ashbury.

"Is this for real?"

"I've never heard anything like this before."

"My friend just called and said to turn you guys on."

"How long have you been doing this?"

"Who are you people?"

On it went into the night, the telephones ringing off the hook as the audience bore witness to an entirely new art form, coming to life in the cool evening air of The City. The noise spread like a juicy rumor, it was electric, it was psychedelic, it was San Francisco in the sixties.

At about eight o'clock, Raechel was confronted by a nervous employee, who'd been ordered to "keep an eye on things" by Frank Grayson.

"There are two people at the front door who want to—come in!" he stammered, obviously upset. "We've never had visitors at KFRE before. What should I do?"

"Well, what do they want?" asked Raechel as she handed Tom his next record.

"They said they've brought gifts," he mumbled, looking

down at the threadbare carpet on the control room floor. "No offense, but they're a couple of those, you know, hippie types. What do you want me to do?"

"Hippie types!" cried Raechel in mock horror. "Well, we certainly can't have their kind hanging around outside the station. Invite them in!"

Shocked and confused, the poor man turned and walked out of the studio like he was headed for death row. A few moments later, the studio door opened, and in walked two fine young examples of middle-class rebellion, dressed from head to toe in tie-dyed splendor.

"Hi," said the skinny blond kid, his long, straight hair tied back in a ponytail. "My name's Swan and this is my girlfriend Juju. We can't believe what a groovy thing you guys are doing! Everybody's freakin' out, I mean you played the Dead, Ramblin' Jack Elliot, and Dylan without even stoppin' to say anything in between!"

"Everybody's talking about it!" squealed Juju, an attractive seventeen-year-old dressed in beads, bell-bottoms, an oversized T-shirt, and Jesus sandals. "We heard you mention how cold and bare the studio looked, so we decided to bring this stuff down—you know—to kinda help out."

"Yeah, we got this groovy Hendrix poster, two or three Fillmore posters, a Zig-Zag poster, and the one of Joplin with her shirt unbuttoned," exclaimed Swan as he surveyed the drab gray walls of the studio.

"Everybody at our apartment donated somethin', and we volunteered to bring it down to you," added the wide-eyed Juju, her mass of curly red hair flying in all directions as she spoke. "We got candles and incense and some hand-strung beads and this big ankh that one of the guys made out of pop-tops and—"

"You won't believe it," Swan broke in, "but half the people in the Haight got you blastin' through their radios. People are opening windows and moving their speakers out onto the ledges so that everybody in the street can hear. It's almost like the Dead concert in the park a couple of weeks ago, everybody's dancing and smokin'—it's far out!"

Tom stood up and hugged Raechel in a way that said "we did it girl," as Swan and Juju began to clap and dance to the music of Canned Heat.

Raechel found a roll of duct tape for the posters and gave

it to Swan, who set about decorating the studio walls, while Juju lit candles and sticks of incense. They had also brought a large five-by-seven-foot tapestry, which required all four of them to hang. So, during a long record, Swan and Tom (looking very much like a bizarre version of Laurel and Hardy) stood on chairs, holding the tapestry between them, while Raechel directed its proper placement, and Juju held the hammer and nails.

When they were finished, the dingy gray hole of a studio had been transformed into a brightly colored music box, illuminated by the iridescent hues of psychedelic posters, and the warm smell of sandalwood.

KFRE immediately became the communication headquarters for the entire Bay Area hip community. Along with Tom and Raechel, the first air staff featured the now-successful actor Howard Hesseman, then known as Don Sturdy, who would later portray a disc jockey called Johnny Fever on the TV sitcom "WKRP in Cincinnati." He was followed by Carl Gottlieb, and at midnight Chris Ross did a show called "Beef With Egg on the Side."

There had never been anything like it before. The shows were outrageous without resorting to the zany and frenetic palaver listeners were used to hearing on AM radio. The jocks were low-key, cool, and unpretentious, while developing a style of humor that was both irreverent and loaded with double entendre. They knew the music, and how to relate it to the social issues of the day. Something new was emerging, something deeper than mere show biz, a daring new sound that rang with both the hope and the alarm of a village church bell.

So in 1967, KFRE was born, with a record library that consisted of Tom and Raechel's own albums, and the vision of this remarkable pair of outlaws. It was an idea whose time had come, an outlet not only for a completely new media breakthrough, but a clearinghouse for the ideas that were to emerge from the burgeoning cultural renaissance as well.

They had struck the tribal drum.

During the next six months, KFRE exploded in popularity as word continued to spread. They signed up five new sponsors in the first three weeks: two head shops, a water bed store, a secondhand clothes store, and something called "Magnolia

Thunderpussy.” Magnolia Thunderpussy had the most outrageously funny radio commercials ever produced, although no one ever quite figured out what they sold.

News of this rebellious new FM station shot through the rock 'n' roll grapevine, and soon New York's WOR and Boston's WBCN were creating their own individual brand of free-form radio. The lights were beginning to come on in Frank Grayson's office. Obviously he had something here (even if he didn't like the music and was still very uncomfortable around these strange-looking people), it *was* working, you couldn't deny that—working so well, in fact, that two big stations back east were now trying a similar approach. Frank reached across a stack of papers, turned on his desk lamp, and thought to himself, “I wonder if this thing could work in L.A.”

Tom and Raechel had just finished their shift when Frank called them into his office.

“Christ, it's bright in here, Frank,” Tom said with a sidelong wink to Raechel. “What did you do, upgrade your desk lamp to a sixty-watt bulb?”

“Very funny Tom,” Grayson replied, clearly not amused. “The station is doing better, but we're certainly not out of the woods yet.”

“Better?” chimed in Raechel. “Better, Franklin? You just got *five* new sponsors, all of whom actually speak English. I'd say the station's doing better, it's only the talk of the entire Bay Area.”

“Well, that's true,” Frank acknowledged grudgingly, “and that's why I asked you two to come in here.”

“We're not going to have another one of those discussions about a dress code are we, Frank?” Tom asked, rolling his eyes toward the ceiling.

“No, it's not about that,” said Grayson, “although I'll never understand what possesses you people to go around looking like—”

“You're going to give us a raise!” cried Raechel, clapping her hands in an imitation of a child at Christmas.

Grayson waited for this latest outburst of the now familiar Donahue sarcasm to wane before he continued. “It's not a raise exactly, but it could mean more money if you decide to accept the deal.”

“We're listening,” Tom said dryly.

Frank cleared his throat and adjusted his necktie. "As you both know, I own part interest in another FM station down in Southern California. Pasadena to be exact. And I am offering you and Raechel the opportunity to take over the programming of that station in addition to KFRE. It would mean traveling back and forth between here and L.A., but you'll be in complete control of the operation, with a free hand to do as you see fit."

"You mean that little station in the church? What's it called?" asked Tom.

"KDOM," Grayson replied. "It's an FM station much like this one, and seeing that this place is beginning to work reasonably well, I thought . . ."

"Is that a 'reasonable' facsimile of a compliment, Franklin?" asked Rae.

"Anyway, I'm offering you the job," Frank said, ignoring Raechel.

"And the money, Frank?" asked Tom.

Frank Grayson fiddled with his tie again and readjusted the lamp. "Well of course I can't afford to pay you the same as you're making here, but I will offer you a fifty percent increase in your present salaries, and of course I'll pay for transportation and expenses."

"I see," Tom said quietly, then sat back in silence and thought for a moment. "You're asking us to build an unknown station from scratch, double our work load, plus spend at least three days a week on an airplane, for only half again as much money. Is that about right?"

"Well, I guess in so many words, Tom, yes, that's correct."

"A rock 'n' roll station in a church," mused Tom. "It could be a kick. I'll tell you what, Frank, Rae and I will fly down to . . . where is it again?"

"Pasadena," offered Grayson.

"Pasadena. We'll fly down there this weekend, check it out, and give you our answer on Monday, okay?"

"Great," said Frank, "I'll have your plane ticket ready on Friday."

"*Our* tickets, Frank," corrected Tom. "Both Raechel and I could use a weekend away."

"Agreed, you have been working pretty hard."

"Franklin, *two* almost compliments in one day?" smiled

Raechel as she delivered her parting shot. "Be still my fluttering heart!"

"Just think, Frank," grinned Tom. "If this works, you could be buying hundred-watt bulbs in no time."

The following Friday evening after their show, Tom and Raechel boarded a PSA shuttle from San Francisco International Airport for the fifty-five-minute flight into LAX. During the trip, Tom and Raechel made up a list of who they might get as jocks if they decided to take on the new station.

"I'll tell you the first guy I'd go for," said Tom, "BMR."

"B. Mitchel Reed?" asked Raechel, in surprise. "B. Mitchel Reed is making at least a thousand a week, and he's at the top of the ratings. How much do you think Grayson will let us offer a guy like that?"

"Maybe a hundred and fifty a week max," laughed Tom. "But I know Beemer, and I think I can talk him into it. He's as sick of Top 40 radio as I am and he just might consider it."

By the time they reached their motel a few blocks from the Pasadena Presbyterian Church, they had completed a tentative list of air talent, which included such future greats as Les Carter, Outrageous Nevada, Steven Clean, and Ace Young.

Next morning, the world's two most unlikely broadcast moguls walked into the large white stone church which served the Presbyterian congregation of Pasadena, California. It was a beautiful, well-kept cathedral, with two impressive stained glass windows behind the altar, and a high vaulted ceiling pointing the way to God.

"Reverend Binky?" asked Tom as he knocked at the opened door marked Pastor.

The short, balding priest looked up from behind his desk and squinted in the direction of the door. "Yes, I'm Reverend Binky. How may I help you?"

"We're the Donahues. I'm Tom and this is Raechel."

The good Reverend pulled his glasses down from his forehead, and tried to focus on the unkempt apparition standing in his doorway. Tom, now sporting a full beard and hair well past his shoulders, was wearing a T-shirt with the Grateful

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Dead's skull-and-roses logo painted on the front, while Raechel was dressed in her usual "baby doll" clothes and pigtails.

"The Donahues?" gulped the Reverend Binky.

"Yes, Frank Grayson talked to you last Wednesday," offered Raechel. "We're here to look at the radio station?"

"Oh yes, now I remember," said the Reverend Binky, a little embarrassed. "Forgive me, you're not quite what I expected. Please, come with me."

Nervously, the Reverend Binky led his unusual guests on a short pilgrimage through the church, and into a storage room at the back. Here he took a large set of keys from his pocket and unlocked a forgotten metal door.

"It's down there," announced the Reverend, "just down the stairs and to the left."

"In the basement?" asked Raechel.

"That's right. Please feel free to look around all you like, but do mind those stairs. I'll be in my office when you've finished." And with that he turned and started out of the room.

It was a basement all right: dank, musty, cold—with worse lighting than Frank Grayson's office—but it was big. Two long rooms at the far end were joined by a dirty plate glass window, separating the air booth from the engineer's cubicle on the other side. There was plenty of room for record racks and a couple of small offices at the other end, and to their great surprise, they also found a separate room which contained a complete recording studio circa 1940, large enough to hold the entire Glenn Miller Orchestra. Tom and Raechel inspected the antique equipment and small record library of Tennessee Ernie Ford albums filed along with the rest of the inspirational music, and shook their heads in disbelief.

"Tom, this is nuts," sighed Raechel. "This place makes KFRE look like a five-million-dollar facility."

"Ten million," said Tom. "But there is something I like about the idea of broadcasting the Grateful Dead from a church."

"Amen to that," agreed Raechel. "But you get to explain 'Pig Pen' to Reverend Binky."

For the next two months Rae and Tom worked like demons, flying back and forth between the two stations, seeing

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each other only rarely, when they both ended up in the same town. They hired the air staff, assembled the record library, brought in a salesman and someone to double as the traffic department and receptionist. Each night Tom would tape his show on KFRE, and send it down to run on KDOM the next day. Raechel found a small one-bedroom apartment and stayed in Pasadena to run KDOM during the week, switching towns with Tom on the weekends. It was madness, but they did it.

By October of 1967, just six months after Tom Donahue first announced his radio free manifesto, Southern California was ready to link up with San Francisco, Boston, and New York, as the sound of the tribal drum spread across the land.

Although I didn't know it yet, the entire rhythm of my own life, as well as that of my peers, was about to be inexorably changed. Soon we would find the keys to the magic chamber, and there, inside the glass booth, add our own measure of cadence to the tribal drum. For me, the mounting thunder of this primal beat would signal the genesis of everything.

First there was the music, then there was the medium, then all hell broke loose.

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CHAPTER TWO

ONE
TOKE
OVER
THE
LINE

One toke over the line sweet Jesus
One toke over the line
Sittin' downtown in a railway station
One toke over the line
—Brewer and Shipley

IT WAS January 1968, and I was sitting in my room listening to KDOM, wondering what it was like to be one of those people on the air. Someone had told me about the station a couple of months ago, and I hadn't touched the dial since. More and more I felt drawn to the radio, this hilarious, unpredictable fountain of music. It was the only place on the dial that actually played albums cuts, that didn't scream at you like some kind of lunatic drill sergeant—and they always seemed to be having so much fun!

The news of a "far-out rock station"—on the *FM* band—spread slower at first in Los Angeles than San Francisco. Instead of the instant recognition KFRE received, the word about KDOM was much more deliberate in coming. Los Angeles is really more of an "area" than a city, and although

the Sunset Strip served as a quasi form of Haight-Ashbury, the L.A. scene consisted of a series of pockets (extending from Santa Barbara to San Diego), rather than a localized community. By now though, a lot of people were listening to KDOM—including other radio stations.

I had moved down to Long Beach, California from a small farming community outside of Sacramento. Aside from the usual merchants and small town business folk, our picturesque little hamlet was populated by two types of people: those who made their living from the land, and military personnel from the neighboring air force base. Neither of these two groups was ever known for its tireless contributions to our country's liberal think tanks, and any deviation from the village norm was looked upon with great suspicion indeed.

My parents could have been the inspiration for the TV show "Father Knows Best." Honest, kind, hard-working people, they're straight-arrow pillars of the community, who always vote Republican. They are elders in every good sense of the word, a mother and father who stand behind their kids no matter what. Because of those very attributes, however, they suffered more than I from the cruel laughter and cowardly jokes of the good townspeople.

It seems that some of the village folk were becoming increasingly concerned about the un-American length of my hair. In those days, long hair was seen not only as reason to question one's sexual gender, but proof of the Communist threat as well. It can get rough in a small town when you're different. So when it came time to leave high school, I just kept on going till I hit L.A.

Like other pilgrims who'd tasted the bittersweet fruits of "individualism," I decided to move in with a large group of people who looked just like me. Home was something known in the vernacular of the time as a commune. I shared this experiment in bohemian living with ten other social misfits, although we always preferred the term "free spirits." We called it Crab Hollow (don't ask me . . .), a wonderful seventeen-room Old World mansion, built in a bygone era of elegance and grace. By the time we got hold of it, however, the old girl had already been reduced to a three hundred dollar a month rental, awaiting the wrecking ball; but we loved that old place.

Life in a commune is something I'm really grateful to have experienced—when I was twenty. During the day I at-

tended city college, where I learned that I had an aptitude for radio and TV communications, and absolutely no ability whatsoever in calculus. At night I played rhythm guitar in a local band, and wrote deeply meaningful protest songs which I was convinced Bob Dylan would understand, even if my friends did not. My "friends" usually reacted to these heartfelt compositions about love and brotherhood in a desperate world by threatening to call the local draft board to demand that my student deferment be revoked.

Fortunately, I soon realized that God meant for me to talk—he did not want me to sing. This divine revelation came to me one night, during a quiet discussion with our commune's resident pacifist and student of Gandhi, Ms. Rainbow Sunshine.

"I swear to God I'll rearrange your face," Rainbow shrieked, brandishing a large solid brass peace symbol about an inch from my nose, "if I am *ever* subjected to one of your 'flashes of genius' again!"

Between school, the occasional club gig with the band, and waiting for Dylan to discover me, I began hanging out at a tiny mom-and-pop operation called KBRK. KBRK-FM played middle of the road pop, but was beginning to experiment with the new "underground" music during the late night and early morning hours. Don Bunch worked the 6:00 P.M. to midnight shift. In some ways Don looked like what people expected a DJ to look like in those days, only hipper. He drove a big white Pontiac Grand Prix, wore sport coats, slacks, and Beatle boots, and sported a thin mustache.

Don let me hang out during his show, file records, schlep coffee, and generally get infected with the madness of radio. This was my first peek behind the curtain, and I loved it. The mysterious dials, big turntables, giant tape recorders, flashing lights, and the *records*. I had never seen so many record albums in one room before.

"So Don, let me ask you a question," I said when he'd finished cuing up his next song. "Why do you start some records by pushing the remote button, while other times you'll hold on to an album by hand, start the turntable spinning underneath, and *then* let go of the record?"

"It depends on how precise you have to be," he said as he reached for a cigarette. "Let's say that you know the song on the air is going to fade out, okay? And you want to cross-fade from the end of that cut into the beginning of the next one.

Well in that case a remote start is cool, because you're just fading out one song while you fade up the next. You don't hear exactly when the second song begins anyway so. . . ."

"Okay, but sometimes you start the next turntable while you're holding on to the disc," I pressed before he had time to finish, "and you then let the album go—"

"Because," Don interrupted, "if the song that's playing on the air ends *cold*, you want the next track to begin immediately afterwards—tight, no holes. When you start a turntable by remote, it takes a second or so for it to get up to speed. But if you let go of a record while the turntable is already spinning, it starts instantly. Ya see? Tight, no holes."

"Great, thanks," I said as Don turned back to face the mike. "I hope I'm not asking too many questions. By the way, what does that row of blinking lights to your—"

"Hold it!" Don yelled as he realized that the song on the air was quickly coming to an end. He grabbed his headphones, flipped on the mike, and calmly addressed his audience as if he hadn't been distracted at all:

"All right, that was 'Shady Grove' by Quicksilver Messenger Service on 105.5 KBRK. This is Don Bunch with you. Let's open the request lines now and . . ."

One day I got a message to call Don at the station about a possible job opening on the air. It seems that KBRK had decided to try this "underground rock music" twenty-four hours a day, because people were bored with pap radio even then, and the station was desperate to increase its ratings. Desperate enough, it seems, even to give me a try.

"You need to come in and cut a demo tape so the owners can get an idea of what you sound like on the air."

On the air? Was this guy really talking about me, actually going on the radio?

"Hello? Jim, are you there? . . . Hello?"

"Yes, I'm ah . . . I'm with you," I stuttered.

Don then continued: "You'll also need to get your FCC license before you apply for the gig."

"No problem," I assured him. "I know all about that stuff from my radio and TV classes at school. By the way, what's a demo tape?"

The news set off euphoric visions of instant stardom: long

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black limousines, hoards of autograph seekers, and beautiful girls. Lots and lots of beautiful, long-legged . . . This day-dream was quickly shattered, however, when it finally sank in that I would, in fact, actually be doing this over the public airwaves. Playing records on the college radio station for a few students in the quad was one thing, but this was for real.

Two weeks later, having obtained the proper federal documents (a process about as difficult as getting a driver's license—only the lines are shorter), I met with the general manager, played him my demo tape, and got the job.

I was about to do my very first professional broadcast, and so convinced was I that my premier would rocket me to stardom, I called every living soul I knew within the sound of the station and told them to tune in. After all, this would certainly be an important moment in radio history.

**THE JIM LADD SHOW, PREMIERING THIS SUN-
DAY NIGHT AT 8:00!**

In reality, it turned out to be a completely forgettable seven hours of paranoia. Imagine your reaction as you sit frozen to the dentist's chair while he informs you that the Novocain delivery didn't make it, but those three root canals will have to be performed anyway. Nerves notwithstanding, I made it through that first shift, and spent the next year and a half learning everything I could, making every mistake in the book, and having the time of my young life. All this, and \$1.65 an hour, too.

KBRK had its offices in what was a rather authentic reproduction of a fifteenth-century medieval castle, complete with circular towers, gargoyles over the windows, and a draw-bridge leading to the front door. Inside, the huge, rambling edifice continued its historical motif, from the sweeping staircases which connected lavish ballrooms, to the tiny passageways that led to its basement catacombs. Built in the 1920s, it sat right on the sand in Long Beach, and commanded a breathtaking view of the offshore oil derricks.

The studios and offices of KBRK took up all of three rooms on the fourth floor, and of course, the view from the control room window (located to the *rear* of the person on the air) was of a brick wall about two feet away. To me, however, it could have been 30 Rockefeller Plaza.

The equipment in the air studio was, I suppose, typical of any small station at the time. The giant circular knobs and VU meters on the control board looked like a 1930s prop department idea for Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory. The turntables rumbled, the cartridge machines on which we played the commercials ran slow, and the reel-to-reel tape decks were based on a design Edison had rejected in favor of the recording cylinder. But the record library was well stocked and the paychecks were never late, so as first jobs go, I was luckier than most.

After a few months of Sunday night shows, I was given a full time shift, midnight to 6:00 A.M. This is precisely the right slot for a rookie, because the program director is usually asleep, and at four in the morning mistakes can sometimes be funny. It was a wondrous time of learning and adventure without restriction, a time of total and complete freedom on the air.

No one older than twenty-five knew anything about this underground music anyway, so the management types just let us alone. I could play anything I wanted, and I mean *anything*; from the Jefferson Airplane's latest to Willie Dixon's first record; from Ravi Shankar to the Beatles; from John Hammond to Led Zeppelin. And you could *say* anything. Well, if you knew the code.

The music of that time was filled with radical new ideas, and a unique generational perspective. Alternative points of view, not heard on the six o'clock news, came through the music loud and clear. Songs about the peace movement, civil rights, Vietnam, drugs, the generation gap—and massive quantities of sex.

I cannot tell you how many times over the years Mick Jagger helped me get laid. And on the off chance that he may be reading this right now, I'd like to thank him from the bottom of my heart.

"That was the Stones on KBRK and a song called 'Live With Me' from their latest album—I got nasty habits indeed!

"Before that we heard the Doors with 'Love Me Two Times' from Strange Days, and we began with 'The Lemon Song' from Led Zeppelin.

"You know to my mind, there is nothing more satisfying than having your lemon squeezed 'till the juice

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runs down your leg.' And if any of you ladies are hungry for a nice lemon squeeze on this hot, sticky, Southern California evening, give me a call here at KBRK. I'll be more than happy to fulfill your request."

Music has always been a very sensual art. Some may even say tactile. But rock 'n' roll by its very nature is sexy. Yes I admit it now, rock music is everything that the Neanderthals said it was, and my mission in life was to celebrate it on the air.

You see, girls not only like the guys that actually make the music, they also like the guys who broadcast it as well. You can see where I'm going with this, so fill in your own fantasy. But needless to say, once I made this discovery, songs like "Shake Your Money Maker" and "Who Do You Love" got lots of air play on my show. I mean let's be honest, Dylan still hadn't called, and I played much better on my air guitar than I could on my Gibson.

It was a time of raw development, a time to gather the tools I would need to build my own style and approach: tools such as musical segues, verbal presentation, and a working belief in something called the "muse." Once you tapped into the muse, you could play your radio show like an instrument. You could make your *own* music, choose just the right tune to strike a specific chord, find that certain combination of lyrics that tied the songs together in a thematic way. Plus, you had all the best players in the world just sitting there on the shelves, waiting to rock 'n' roll.

Here, late at night, alone in the studio, I began a voyage of self-discovery that was both highly public, and deeply personal. Like in a profound meditation, I immersed myself in the music, and let it carry me away. This above all was the most wondrous discovery. For six hours a night, I could do anything, exorcise any demon, live out any fantasy, create any world which my imagination and knowledge of the music could divine. I was a stationary minstrel who spun the myths and legends of the tribe in a stream-of-consciousness approach that encouraged the unexpected. I had begun my long journey down the path of the shaman.

All this from a stack of vinyl and a couple of turntables, inside the glass booth.

Outside the studio walls of KBRK however, things were not quite so cosmic. Reality, in fact, was running rampant. In

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January of 1968, the North Vietnamese launched the Tet offensive, later that year Lyndon Johnson announced that he would not run for a second term, and on June 6, Bobby Kennedy was gunned down in a kitchen corridor of the Ambassador Hotel. In April, the SDS took over Columbia University, and two months later, Congress passed a ten percent surcharge on income taxes to offset the soaring cost of Vietnam, further lining the pockets of the big corporations who were getting rich off the war. In August, a vicious police riot broke out at the Democratic national convention in Chicago, while bloody antiwar protesters chanted "the whole world is watching." But the most devastating event for me that year happened on a motel balcony in Memphis. For me, Dr. Martin Luther King had represented all that was noble about the sixties; now, his death had come to symbolize everything that was wrong with America.

Some good things happened that year though. Walter Cronkite came out publicly against the war, Stanley Kubrick's film *2001* opened amid record sales of LSD, and on Christmas eve, the crew of *Apollo 8* read from the book of Genesis, as they became the first human beings to orbit the moon.

Against this backdrop, driven by the music and a youthful if not well-educated social conscience, I began to vent my observations of the world around me over the air. Now let me take a moment to explain a bit about how and why we did this, for those of you who were not there, or for those of you who may have forgotten why the cops were hitting you.

The music of that time spoke of a changing world, a world in which history offered few moments of longitude or latitude from which to measure. *We had our leaders, but no one had a map.* Through the music, however, we found comfort in the fact that we were not alone at the crossroads. Rock 'n' roll had found a social conscience, and it was the one thing that the straight world never counted on.

From Saigon to Chicago, and from Liverpool to Memphis, the entire history of the baby boom generation's coming of age was being written into the records. All you had to do was listen. If you heard this music and were moved by it, you were probably a person who was affected by its message. Well that certainly included me and a lot of my peers. I'm not saying that we were all following some sort of political dogma, that would have been far too serious. It simply never occurred to most of us that we *shouldn't* talk about this stuff on the air.

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"We're sending this one out to Joan Baez who got busted again today. She was arrested along with one hundred other demonstrators who were blocking the steps of the Oakland Induction Center.

"I know she won't hear this, but a lot of people have called the station to wish her well. We love you Joan and our thoughts are with you here at KBRK.

"It's a Dylan song that she recorded last year called 'With God On Our Side.' This is 105.5 K-B-R-K, Long Beach."

We, as a generation, were a part of a magnificent and often frightening time warp of evolution. It was happening from moment to moment, and the music was the chronicle of events as seen through our alternative point of view. Having listened to the Jefferson Airplane after visiting the psychedelic pharmacy myself, I not only had an alternative point of view, I had a bond of sorts with everyone else who had heard "White Rabbit" as something more than just a nice three-minute song with a good beat.

The music meant something to us, it told us that we weren't insane, just crazy—crazy enough to think that we could make a difference. Knowing that our audience was also moved by the music in this way, we felt a great personal responsibility to be honest with our listeners, and this meant believing in the songs we played.

This feeling of sharing something with the audience which genuinely affected their lives was both exhilarating and humbling. Answering the request line one afternoon, I heard the voice of a young activist, shouting over the jumbled background noise of a pay phone:

"Is this KBRK? Well, I'm Steve, and we're out here in Griffith Park at the peace rally. . . . Yeah I got him on the phone. . . . Sorry about that, anyway we've got your station on the P.A., would you play something for us?"

This was the rush, this was the connection: taking a request or an idea from one listener, and sharing his feelings with thousands of others.

"This is KBRK, and I'm gonna play this next set of songs for everyone out at the peace rally going on in Griffith Park, for all of the soldiers on both sides of the

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DMZ, and most especially for the politicians in Washington."

Then we would play a set (three or more songs in a row), which would both lyrically and musically speak to the subject at hand; something like this:

"Universal Soldier" by Donovan

"Unknown Soldier" by the Doors

"I Don't Want to Be a Soldier" by John Lennon

It was this approach to radio that made FM different from Top 40, and so threatening to the powers that be. It was our role in the great passion play that engulfed the late sixties and early seventies. Some of us marched, some wrote songs, and some of us used the asylum's own P.A. to ask the same questions over the air that others were asking in the streets. The music, the message, and the medium all combined to resonate the tribal drum, which kept time for a syncopated movement of new ideas and innocent dreams. FM radio *was* the soundtrack of our lives.

Now that we've touched on two of the motivating factors which helped to shape FM radio (sex and revolution), let me give you an example of the professional grace and style with which I and some of my colleagues approached this revolutionary work.

One weekend I pulled two air shifts in less than eight hours. I was scheduled to do my regular midnight-to-six show on Friday night (Saturday morning), and then be back on the air at 2:00 P.M. that same afternoon. Hey, I was young and stupid, no problem. So I got off the air at 6:00 A.M. and rather than drive all the way home, I opted to nod out on the couch in the office until I had to go back on the air and be brilliant. This was a sleeping arrangement that almost everyone I have ever worked with has had to endure at least once.

Anyway, the jock on the air woke me at about one-thirty, I got some coffee, and signed on at two o'clock. So far so good. About an hour into the show I decided that, because it was such a beautiful Southern California Saturday, and because I was proud of myself for being such a responsible broadcast professional, I would reward myself with a few tokens from one of Mother Nature's most enduring herbs.

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Fearing an unannounced visit from the general manager of the station, I decided to put on a long record, and while it was playing I would go outside onto the fire escape and take a few moments to gather the inspiration I was looking for. I back-announced the set of songs that had just finished, ran a couple of commercials, and then proclaimed in my best professional voice:

"I'm Jim Ladd, and as a really special treat, we're going to play 'Dark Star' by the Grateful Dead. You're tuned to 105.5 FM, KBRK Long Beach."

I then started the song (a twenty-four-minute track which took up all of side one on the *Live Dead* album), carefully checked the meters, and marked the time so I'd know when to be back. Then I took a joint from my cigarette pack, walked from the studio, through the outer office, and out the front door—which I heard lock securely behind me.

Hey, no problem, I'm a professional, I have my own key to the station and everything. It was on my key ring, right there next to the turntable. The same turntable that at this very moment was dutifully spinning the Grateful Dead around and around in an inevitable spiral, which twenty-two minutes from now would bring the needle directly onto the label of the record.

At that moment the projection screen in my brain shifted images from that of a cool radio pro, to a point-of-view shot of me looking up at the general manager from the kneeling position. In full 70mm and Dolby sound, I saw myself trying to explain how the outer door to his radio station got kicked in during my shift, and why my right foot was in a cast.

If I ever needed inspiration, now was the time. I looked around the hallway, found it abandoned, and lit up the joint. Three puffs later, it came to me that windows were also a potential source of entry, and I made a beeline for the fire escape. Reaching the door, I threw it open, stepped outside, and heard *that* door shut and lock securely behind me—SHIT!

There I was, only six months into the profession I had decided to devote my life to, locked out of the studio while on the air, and stoned out of my mind. Not only that, I was stranded on the rickety fire escape of a 1920s version of Henry

VIII's castle, four stories above the parking lot, and beginning to develop a severe case of drug-induced acrophobia.

Instinctively I looked at my wrist to see how much time I had left before the Dead record ran out, and felt a rush of pride at having enough composure left at the sight of my bare arm, to realize that I didn't wear a watch. Fuck it. What I needed was a window, not some man-made gimmick invented to give us a false sense of well-being in the great space-time continuum.

Looking up at the line of windows which ran along the fire escape, I found some good news and some bad news. The good news was that the third window from where I was standing was wide open. The bad news was that the architectural genius who designed the building had drawn the blueprints for the windows to run in a straight line parallel with the ground, but the fire escape stairs were built at a forty-five-degree angle to the windows. This meant that my point of entry was a good ten feet above the stairs—SHIT!

Well thank God for youth, the adrenaline of paranoia, and good parental genes, because I was young enough not to think about injury, scared enough to try anything, and at six foot three, just tall enough to make the try. Positioning myself under the open window, I cursed the nameless architect (who in my present mental state I was convinced had planned this scenario some forty years earlier while designing the building), and jumped with all my might.

I missed—SHIT!

Now I had not only succeeded in locking myself out of the station twice, *and* was guilty of illegal substance abuse, but my right knee was bleeding. As they say on the TV commercials, "Pardon me, I've got to get back to playing records."

Well it was do or die, so I did. Curling myself into something resembling a wounded Slinky, I leapt skyward for all I was worth, and caught the window ledge with my fingertips. Pulling myself up hand over hand, I reached the windowsill and fell elbows over asshole into the outer offices of KBRK, about thirty seconds before the Grateful Dead finished what, to me, will always remain one of their most memorable recordings.

I am proud to say that I did learn a very valuable lesson from this experience. A lesson that has stayed with me throughout my entire professional career. *Never*, under any circumstances, ever leave the studio to smoke a joint. From that day forward, I always locked the studio door, and kept a can of air freshener in the booth.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHASM,
THE KIDS,
AND
THE
BUNKER

You can't be twenty
On Sugar Mountain,
Though you're thinkin' that
You're leavin' there too soon,
You're leavin' there too soon.
—Neil Young

LIFE AT this point was daily Disneyland. The enthusiasm that's ignited by finally answering *the* question—What do you want to be when you grow up?—should somehow be hermetically sealed and stored in cryogenic freeze. Then, years down the line, when one becomes jaded, or complacent, or beaten down by the machine, you just thaw out 10cc's or so, and rekindle that original spark of wide-eyed optimism. I had found my direction in life, and the compass needle was pointing due Rock.

The show was going well. Every night was different from the last, because when you make it up as you go along, you don't know where you're going until you get there.

I lived for this.

Once I began to "feel" the audience out there, my work

changed from a vocation to a calling. It was never me talking at my listeners, it was *us*. The attitude of the station was something akin to a band of friendly travelers, cloistered around midnight radios like so many campfires. We shared our songs and stories in much the same way our ancestors did, in the long dark nights before electricity.

It never occurred to me at first that part of this job was considered "show business." Hopefully it was entertaining, but show *business* seemed too shallow for what we were trying to do. It wasn't about "rock stars" either. It was about community, and a sense that we were all in this together. For this reason, my approach was to speak directly to my friends gathered round the electric campfire—not shout at "the herd."

As harmless as this may sound, it was this very attitude which brought me to the brink of termination in countless meetings on the general manager's carpet. You see, most upper management types think of you, "their loyal listeners," as *sheep*; which means they fulfill the role of *predators*. The last thing they want is for someone like me to stampede the herd by saying anything controversial. Or saying anything that may provoke thought. Or saying anything truthful. Or saying anything at all.

Nothing in my career has ever served me better, or caused me more strife, than my refusal to be somebody's sheepdog. I was talking to friends, not mutton.

People who owned radio stations were used to employing disc jockys who would merely scream what they were told to scream. The important thing was to be tight and bright, and to do it in less than six seconds:

"Hey guys and gals, this is the big boss sound of Ninety-Three K-H-J! where you'll have a chance to steal us blind in our giant new Rip off the Radio contest coming up next hour!

"If we call your number and you answer with the phrase: 'I listen to K-H-J and I want to rip you off,' and you can correctly answer our rip off the radio question within ten seconds, you'll win ninety-three dollars in cold hard K-H-J cash!

"We'll be back with another hot stack of wax, and a dedication to Buffy from Bob in Norwalk right after a word from my good friends at Autorama. Remember, tell

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'em that your old Uncle Bubbly sent you in for the deal of a lifetime! So don't dare touch that dial, or you might miss out!"

On the other hand, the new FM approach was something like this:

"That was John Lennon on KBRK-FM, and a song we'll send out to Spiro Agnew called . . . 'Gimme Some Truth.' We've got a word now from the Long Beach Free Clinic, and then we'll do another hour of commercial-free rock 'n' roll on 105.5 FM."

It's like two people viewing the same spot from opposite sides of the Grand Canyon. The conservationist, spiritually moved by its sovereign splendor, marvels at the tenacious and artful masterpiece which has been sculpted by the Colorado River. The developer, however, looking at the exact same vista from the opposite rim, dreams of an aerial tramway which will one day connect his gigantic hotel-casino complex with a shopping mall on the other side. Both see the same thing, but from very different points of view.

The enormous chasm separating my rather naive view of FM as a "populist mandate" from management's perspective of radio as a "business tool" widened even further when I came across a newly posted memo on the bulletin board—a piece of paper filled from top to bottom with thousands of little numbers. That was all, just numbers. Either this was someone's term paper on quantum physics, or an accountant had thrown up on this memo. Either way, I couldn't possibly see how this would ever affect my life. But, for some still unknown reason, I turned to my program director and asked: "Hey Ron, what do all these little numbers mean?"

Ron McCoy was a slim, dark-haired southerner who moonlighted in local club bands. He had a warm, hospitable manner that made you feel welcome, never underfoot, and like a monk to a novice, Ron patiently explained, "Those 'little numbers,' as you so correctly refer to them, are called *ratings*, and some of the smaller ones belong to you."

Not noticing the gentle sarcasm as it zoomed over my head, I asked the next logical question. "Well, what do they mean?"

“Think of ’em as a kind of report card. It tells you, and more importantly the owners, how many people are listenin’ to your show. The higher them numbers are, the more sponsors for the station. The more sponsors for the station, the more money for the owners. The smaller the numbers, the less chance you have of staying employed. Understand?”

“What?” I said, scratching my head. “You mean the people who do this determine if I eat or not?”

Satisfied that he’d gotten his point across, Ron turned back to his paperwork, adding, “Welcome to the real world of radio, kid.”

Well this still didn’t sink in, because for me, it wasn’t a matter of how many head were in the herd, it was the joy of being on the air. How much it mattered to the owner and general manager of KBRK, however, was made crystal clear the very next day.

While I was substituting for the regular afternoon jock who was on vacation, a listener called on the request line to tell me that the air staffs of both KFRE and KDOM had just gone out on strike. Rumors of unrest had abounded for weeks, but now push had come to shove. Feeling a kinship with my fellow rivals, I opened the mike and began to report the news of the strike over the air. So far, I was perfectly within the bounds of acceptable broadcasting. I then, however, went on to ask everyone who was listening to me to call KDOM and demand that the air staff be reinstated.

About halfway through my little speech, I noticed out of the corner of my eye that the general manager was waving frantically at me through the control room window. I waved back, thinking this must be some kind of professional radio code for “Good job—go get ’em kid,” and continued my on-air plea for broadcast justice. Now this guy really started going apeshit; plus, he had recruited Ron and one of the secretaries to join him in this mad display of fist waving and desperate gesturing. Well, now I figure that I must be better at this stuff than I’d thought. So I really began to pour it on about how KDOM was the first FM station in L.A. and that they stood for something, and how we all owed it to Tom Donahue, and that now was the time when the jocks really needed our support, etc., etc., etc.

Bringing what I was convinced was an award-winning radio editorial to its emotional crescendo, I started the next rec-

ord, turned off the mike, then sat back to await the flood of kudos from my grateful cheering section in the next room. At that moment, the GM burst through the door and demanded to know if I was having some sort of drug-induced trauma, or had I just simply gone insane? Through his sputtering about my obvious lack of judgment and self-destructive urge to sever the thread from which my job was now hanging, I gleaned something about violating radio rule number one: *Never* give aid and comfort to the enemy.

What enemy? I thought to myself as he continued to rake me over the coals, I thought this was about getting the music to the people. Apparently I was mistaken.

"And if you ever pull a harebrained stunt like that again," he screamed, leaning over the turntable and shaking his finger at me, "you'll be joining your 'comrades' on the unemployment line!"

"But sir," I said trying to calm the situation, "these people are on strike and—"

"I don't care if they're on the moon!" he screamed. "You're all from some other planet as far as I'm concerned!"

"Well, technically sir, the moon isn't really a planet, it's—"

"You never, ever, mention another radio station's name for any reason!" he stormed. "What do you think we're doing here? For God's sakes, you don't think for one minute that I actually like this hippie bebop crap you play do you?"

"Well I—"

"The point is to get the little bastards to listen to *our* station! This is *radio* you idiot!"

Silly me. What I saw as a tragedy, he saw as an opportunity. Now he could get the enemies' herd to listen to his station, and they had about ten times the flock we had. My biggest fear was that this guy was going to vapor-lock right there in the studio, and if he died, would that mean my services would no longer be required?

Having finally vented his anger, he turned and stomped out of the studio, proclaiming, "Such an act of radio treason should be viewed by the FCC as grounds for execution." He disappeared around the corner, still shaking his head and muttering something to the effect that if America wasn't going to hell in a hand basket, no jury in the country would convict him.

“The Strike,” as it is known in the dusty logs of FM history, sounded a theme of management versus air staff discord, that was destined to repeat itself with the regularity of an atomic clock. It was the first time that art met business. Art lost.

Whoever coined the phrase “nothing succeeds like success” is going to love the logic of this story. Because as soon as KFRE and KDOM began to succeed, the trouble began.

Tom and Raechel Donahue had taken two unknown, bankrupt FM stations and reinvented radio for a new generation of fans. They were programing both KFRE and KDOM. They were personally in charge of the hiring and training of all DJs, engineers, and office personnel. They did the payroll and the promotions for both stations, dealt with the record companies, *and* did a four-hour air shift each night. For this they received a *collective* paycheck of \$150 a week.

There were no thank-yous, no bonuses, no reinvesting of profits to upgrade equipment or increase the salaries of those who were performing this minor financial miracle. When the money began to come in, Frank Grayson decided it was time to get serious, to run the operation like a “real business.” After all, he had been struggling in the dark for a long time.

Mr. Grayson informed Tom Donahue that some changes would have to be made. First, he wanted Tom to make a choice between the two stations. He was to concentrate on either KFRE or KDOM and Frank would take charge of the station Tom decided to give up. Also, from now on there would be a “dress code around this place.” After all, for the first time in its history, sponsors were actually coming by to visit the station in person, and these people Tom had hired, well—they all looked so—*bizarre*.

A dress code. Was he kidding? Half of these people didn't even wear shoes.

Tom looked at Grayson in disbelief. He had already seen an example of what this would mean only a couple of months earlier, when Grayson had demanded that Raechel turn the payroll duties over to him. Two weeks later, the paychecks began to bounce. It got so bad that by week five, Bobby Weed (an ex-pot dealer hired to sell commercials for KFRE) was forced to dig up a coffee can from his backyard to cover the station's payroll with his own “muddy money.”

Tom called the staff together, explained the concept of a

dress code to them, and then resigned. Less than twelve hours later, the entire crew walked out in protest.

At 3:00 A.M., March 18, 1968, Edward Bear opened the mike, announced that the staff of KFRE was now officially on strike, and turned off the transmitter. At approximately 3:15 A.M., the parking lot of KFRE began to fill with people from the community. As the scuttlebutt spread through Haight-Ashbury and North Beach, a roar of protest went up in reaction to the empty static, which now replaced the tribal drum.

By 3:30 A.M., word had reached the Grateful Dead. By four o'clock the band had arrived at the station, set up their equipment at one end of the parking lot, and begun playing for the crowd of supporters, which had grown to well over three hundred people.

The battle lines had been drawn. If KFRE was to fulfill its promise as the tribal drum, it would have to make a stand for tribal principles. Those principles could best be summed up in just one word: freedom. As the staff saw it, KFRE was the people's radio station. The fact that Frank Grayson happened to own it had nothing to do with the principle involved.

The next day B. Mitchel Reed, along with the entire KDOM staff, walked out in solidarity with the Donahues. In his letter of resignation to Grayson Broadcasting, BMR simply said, "I hope you know that you have screwed up the best thing that's ever happened to FM radio."

On March 21, a cable arrived from the Rolling Stones expressing personal support for the strikers.

As Frank Grayson desperately scrambled around for people to replace his recalcitrant air staff, sponsors began canceling their ads in support of the walkout. And in a show of commitment to principle never again equaled in the record business, the Grateful Dead, Blue Cheer, and Country Joe and the Fish all demanded that their records *not* be played over KFRE until the Donahues had been reinstated.

On two separate occasions, Tom was visited by representatives of the longshoremen's union and by the leader of the Hell's Angels. Both offered to send over a squad of guys to "beat the crap out of anybody who crosses your picket line." This was a sticky moment. Nobody wants to piss off the longshoremen *and* the Hell's Angels. But Tom handled each offer with the savoir faire of a seasoned diplomat, politely declin-

ing on the grounds that violence of any kind would not be in keeping with what KFRE stood for.

The strike lasted eight weeks. Bill Graham sent food from the kitchens at the Fillmore to the picket line every day. He even offered to set Tom and Frank up in a hotel room until they could negotiate a solution. But when Frank Grayson refused even this gesture of compromise, Bill swore he would never advertise on KFRE again. Time would prove Bill Graham to be a man of his word.

For eight long weeks, Tom and Raechel found the resources to feed and support a total of fifty-five people and their families, in two different cities, four hundred miles apart. There were benefits: at the Avalon Ballroom with the Grateful Dead, Blue Cheer, Charlie Musselwhite, Santana, Cornelis Bendersnatch, and Clover, and then the Super Ball Benefit on April 3, again with the Grateful Dead, along with the Jefferson Airplane, Electric Flag, It's a Beautiful Day, and Moby Grape.

"The strikers held their mud," as Raechel would say, and the community stood behind them. But in the end, they never went back to KFRE or KDOM. What did happen, however, was infinitely more amazing.

Instead of a great idea becoming just another casualty of good intentions, FM radio was about to be propelled into the national corporate arena. Until now, the handful of underground stations that were beginning to spring up across the country were small mom-and-pop FMs like KBRK. None of the giant broadcasting companies had even taken much notice. Now Tom, having proved that his idea worked, went to Micromedia, Inc. With the skill of a con man, and the conviction of a zealot, he convinced Micromedia to hire the entire staff of KFRE at their FM outlet in San Francisco, known as KHIP.

Micromedia also owned an FM station in Los Angeles. And here, almost as if by divine guidance, Tom and Raechel led their ragtag band of radio pilgrims out of the church basement, and into RADIO KAOS. Like the proverbial phoenix, both KHIP in San Francisco and KAOS in Los Angeles rose from the ashes to become legends.

RADIO KAOS had arrived, and from the moment it hit the airwaves I was a fan. They were doing the same free-form approach they had used at KDOM, only now they had a much

stronger signal with which to infect the youth of Southern California. I listened with wonder to the new 94.7 FM, inspired by these determined young rebels who refused to die. The Donahues had done it again, and this time they had hit on something that would make radio history: "A Little Bit of Heaven, 94.7, K-A-O-S."

While the Donahues settled into their new surroundings, my life was about to take several unforeseen turns. The first came in the form of a KBRK salesman by the name of Biff Shmooze. Biff was all business—three-piece suit, short hair, and a flare for stylish shoes that bespoke a go-getter, a man on his way up. One afternoon Biff took me aside and, in "the strictest confidence," told me that he had just been hired by another radio station.

Biff said that it was about to change from an automated taped format to live DJs and twenty-four hour rock 'n' roll. He urged me to make a demo tape immediately, before the word got out, and everyone in Iowa started to flood this place with job requests. When I asked him why I should think about leaving KBRK, Biff sat me down, and began to paint *the big picture*.

"This is the big time," he said in a hushed whisper. "The station is KASH-FM and it's owned by one of the *big three networks*. Jim, this could mean a huge leap in your *career*."

Looking around to make certain we weren't being overheard, he leaned in closer. "It could mean a shot at *prime time*, a *bigger* audience, and a lot more *money*!"

Up to that point, the thought of ever leaving KBRK hadn't really come up. I was happy there, although still trying to live on \$1.65 an hour had become almost impossible, because it was no longer just me, but the two of us. For I had met my future wife.

Michelle Susan Theresa Marto (Shelly) was the kind of long-legged Italian girl that men sustain neck injuries over when she walks by. She had a mane of shiny dark hair that fell in ringlets down her back, big almond eyes, and full red lips that could soothe you or scold you depending on that famous Italian temper. Shelly was the second of five children who did her growing up wherever the army saw fit to station her old man. Like most children of the military, and of alco-

holic fathers, she quickly learned how to fend for herself. For Shelly and her siblings, things like the security of a permanent mailing address and high school friendships were temporary at best.

Shelly and I had been living together for almost six months. We'd left the commune and were now sharing a cement dump with another couple. It was "apartment from hell": cement floors, cement walls, and a cement front yard, the parking lot of a Bank Of America building in the backwater of Long Beach. We spent our first Thanksgiving together in that horrible place, so poor that our holiday meal consisted of two frozen boiling bags of turkey, and a loaf of white bread from the local 7-Eleven.

Our love for one another, however, helped to blur the harsh reality of our surroundings. We were happy, and we had our dreams. True love can conquer a lot; but we would need more than dreams to deal with what was about to happen.

One cold foggy night, standing at a pay phone in the parking lot of the bank, our lives were to be altered forever. As we huddled together against the damp foreboding chill, Shelly placed her nightly call to the hospital in New Jersey where her mother was being treated for a heart condition. The antiseptic voice at the other end of the line informed "Miss Marto" in a quiet professional manner, that "Mrs. Marto had passed away in her sleep."

After the first wave of tears, the realization that her younger sister and two younger brothers would now be homeless hit her even harder. We talked about the promise she'd made when her mom became ill—a solemn vow between mother and daughter that she would take care of the children. Through her tears of grief, she explained that her father was not the answer, and that it was up to her. Otherwise, the kids would be placed in foster homes. We talked all night and into the morning, but from the moment she got the news, Shelly's mind was made up.

This woman-child, mature far beyond her eighteen years, didn't hesitate for a second. And two weeks later, Shelly and I were the proud parents of triplets: Dean and John, who were nine and eleven respectively, and Rochelle, thirteen years of age. Obviously we would now need more than just our dreams to live on, something more than the cement dump, and \$1.65 an hour. I had to come up with an answer, and fast.

Remembering Biff and *the big picture*, I decided to give this new station a try. Working every night after my show for a week, I put together an audition tape and got an appointment to see the general manager of KASH. I was about to collide with the big-time world of network radio.

Five days later, I found myself standing at the altar of corporate broadcasting in Los Angeles. It was a world so foreign that I had to be cleared by a guard at the front gate before being allowed entry.

The building looked like an enormous concrete bunker, and within its walls were housed not one, but two completely *different* radio stations. The AM outlet was KGAB, talk radio twenty-four hours a day, bastion of conservative morality, and the highest-rated station in the greater Southern California area.

Its poor cousin, and black sheep in the corporate family of respected broadcast facilities, was the FM station, KASH. The call letters were chosen, as I found out later, by some corporate vice-president who thought they would be "hip" as well as a constant reminder as to the *real* purpose of the radio station.

I have now gone two whole paragraphs, and the rent-a-cop at the guard gate (who's been telephoning people throughout the building all this time), still hadn't gotten the proper security clearance. He kept staring at me and checking his clipboard. It was obvious that he wanted to make damn sure about this.

"Are you certain you have an appointment?" he asked as he eyed my long hair and beat-up Chevy.

"Yes," I assured him, "I have a three o'clock appointment with John Winnaman."

"Winnaman, Winnaman," he muttered to himself as he riffled through the pages on his clipboard, "I don't see anyone named Winnaman on my list."

"He's the general manager of KASH-FM," I said.

"Oh," he barked with obvious disgust, "you want that other station, the new one. Why didn't ya say so in the first place?"

After several more wrong numbers, he finally reached the proper extension, and I was cleared to enter the building.

In no way was I prepared for what lay beyond the front entrance. Accustomed only to the mom-and-pop operation at

KBRK, it was a bit overwhelming walking into one of the world-famous big three networks. Opening the door, I found myself at one end of the longest hallway I had ever seen in my life. It looked like an indoor runway.

Taking a deep breath, I began to make my way up the hall, past brightly lit rooms full of very expensive equipment, and lots of technical engineers with clipboards of their own. Then I began to traverse the line of production studios. Each of these had even more expensive-looking equipment, and production engineers busily editing tape. Then came the row of air studios. In the largest of these, the midday announcer was keeping America strong by airing the collective call-in wisdom of the great Silent Majority. And all of this was for the AM station only.

The small air booth and single production room allotted to KASH stood alone on the opposite side of the hallway.

Halfway up, the runway opened into a large, brightly lit reception area. I had reached security checkpoint number two, and had to go through an additional set of clearances, this time by the receptionist. Here was a woman not to be trifled with—a blond in a tight sweater and short skirt she was not. This trusted company employee looked more like an ancient librarian from a women's correctional facility. Determined to maintain silence and proper library decorum, she motioned for me to take the seat farthest from her desk and to wait until I was called.

Feeling like I had just been dismissed by Aunt Bee's evil twin, I moved away and sat down. She kept staring at me over her glasses, certain that I had somehow eluded the guard, who obviously had not included her on his list of phone calls from the gate. Suddenly, I noticed that everybody walking by was also staring at me. It looked like *GQ* on parade; everyone was wearing the same blue suit, and sporting extremely short haircuts. My fashion statement for the day was a cowboy shirt, sport coat, Levi's, boots, and hair to the middle of my back.

Trying to appear calm, I looked around for a magazine or a newspaper, anything to divert my attention from the ominous glare of Miss Warmth behind the desk. Finding nothing to read, I began to silently count the awards bestowed on KGAB over the years by a grateful industry, which covered all four walls of the reception area. After about five minutes,

Nurse Ratchet summoned me back to her desk and informed me that I had been cleared to pass her station. Still peering over her glasses, she then instructed me to continue up the hall to the general manager's office.

There I was put through my third and final security check by the general manager's secretary, and at last allowed entrance into his office. KBRK this was not.

Mr. Winnaman was the first real corporate suit that I ever had to deal with. He looked as if he had been constructed in some high-tech "Stepford" factory that specialized in the manufacture of upper management executives. Tall, with silver gray hair, obviously handsome, and impeccably dressed, Mr. Winnaman could have just stepped from the pages of *Fortune* magazine.

"Jim Ladd? I'm John Winnaman," he said as we shook hands, "I'm glad that you could make it, I've certainly heard a lot about you from Biff. Please have a seat, would you like some coffee before we get started?"

"No thank you Mr. Winnaman, I'm fine," I answered, not expecting such a friendly greeting.

"Please, call me John," he said as he sat down behind his desk. "How long have you been at KBRK now Jim?"

I sat up in my chair a little straighter and answered, "About a year and a half."

"And where were you before that?" asked Winnaman as he thumbed through some paperwork.

"Well, actually Mr. Winna . . . ah, John," I said, clearing my throat, "I was going to school. KBRK is the first station I've ever worked for."

"How much do you know about KASH?" John asked.

I straightened my coat and crossed, then uncrossed, my legs. "Only that most of your programming is on tape at the moment, and that you're getting ready to go live twenty-four hours a day."

"That's right," answered John as if I'd just responded correctly to a question on a math test, "and we plan to build a winner here. Something that will make the network sit up and take notice."

After a brief pause, he looked at me and said, "Jim, let me ask you a direct question."

"Okay," I said.

"How do you feel about—winning?"

After some conversation about the new direction John envisioned for KASH, and general inquiries regarding how I saw myself fitting into the world of big time radio, we left his office and walked back down the hall to meet the program director. All the way there John continued to tell me about KASH and I kept waiting for the part about the dress code. Opening an unmarked door, we stepped into a tiny office which contained, to my great relief, two people who looked just like me.

The program director was a tall blond fellow whose name, Hai Ku, reflected his great love for ancient Japanese culture, not his ethnic origins. The other person was Hai's assistant and romantic companion, the lovely and passionate Pollen.

In the midst of this corporate American stronghold, I had found two freaks I not only liked at first meeting, but whom I could actually relate to. They had worked together in San Francisco and moved down to L.A. in a package deal to turn KASH into a live rock station.

Hai proceeded to explain the rules of the game. They were radio people just like me who loved the music just like I did. We would not be playing any Top 40 bullshit, but real rock 'n' roll; and there was no dress code.

There would, however, be something known as the "format."

This format thing, as I understood it, was some sort of guide to the songs that I could play. I didn't see how this would affect me in particular, because I already knew the music, which was one of the reasons I was being considered for an air shift. By the time I left KASH that day, I had met the three principal people who were in charge of the station at the local level, and I had a new job.

I went back to KBRK, explained the situation, and offered to stay there if they could up my salary to a livable wage. When they declined the offer, I gave my two weeks' notice, but they said I could go immediately and wished me well. I will always be grateful to the people at KBRK, including the owner and his wife, for taking a chance on me.

Shelly, Rochelle, John, Dean, and I all celebrated that night at Bob's Big Boy, with double-deckers and the chocolate shakes that you have to eat with a spoon. KASH would mean a real salary, a contract with one of the big three networks, and the answer to our immediate problems. For the

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first time since the children arrived, Shelly and I felt confident that there would actually be enough food on the table. The kids wouldn't be sleeping on the floor any longer, nor having to wear the same clothes they'd brought with them from New Jersey.

It was 1969, the year of My Lai and Manson, Altamont and Agnew. But it was also the year of Woodstock and Neil Armstrong's "one giant leap for mankind," and for me and my family it was a year of hope. Now we could start thinking about bicycles, and baseball gloves, and a new dress for Rochelle. Most importantly, Shelly and I could now move our instant family out of the cement dump, thanks to my new job at the concrete bunker.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE FORMAT AND CREATIVE CHEATING

WE NEVER CHEATED ON THE FORMAT ONCE.
WE FOLLOWED EVERY RULE AND OBEYED EVERY COMMANDMENT.
WE WERE ETERNALLY FAITHFUL TO THE SACRED TABLET.

JUST LIKE any new job, I spent the first week or so getting to work at least an hour early, and being overly polite to everyone I was introduced to.

The first member of the air staff I met was "Triple J." J.J. Jackson had a naturally bright, upbeat delivery, knew the music inside and out, and had a golden ear for spotting new bands. J. J. was a born air personality, and tailor made to do afternoon drive. Because more people in Los Angeles are stuck in their cars between the hours of 2:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M. than the population of most small countries, afternoon drive is one of the big money shifts, and J. J. Jackson was definitely the man for the job.

"Ladd, meet J. J. Jackson," Hai said as J. J. entered his office. "J. J., this is Jim Ladd, our new midday victim . . . ah, I mean midday jock."

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“Very happy to meet you, Jim,” said J. J. as he extended his hand. “Don’t mind Hai, he has a real problem with sincerity.”

“Nice to meet you, J. J.,” I said as we shook hands. “I’m really looking forward to working with you.”

“Really looking forward to working with him?” Hai grinned with obvious delight. “I thought you were just telling me how much you hated black people.”

I couldn’t believe my ears. “What?” I sputtered not getting the joke, “You asked me if I was part American Indian and I said ‘Yes I’m an eighth Blackfoot.’ I never said anything . . .”

“Give the guy a break, will you Hai,” J. J. said, coming to my defense. “Look Jim, let me warn you right up front, the guy’s a Nazi. Just look at him—blond hair, blue eyes, the most uptight white man on earth. Everyone knows that he was forced to change his name from Herr Kurrmaster to Hai Ku when he got into radio.”

“Very funny Jackson,” laughed Hai. “Look, before you start telling us all about Jesse Owens and the ‘thirty-six Olympics again, why don’t you take Tonto here into the studio and show him how a real radio station works. You do know that we broadcast with electricity, not smoke signals, don’t you Jim?”

“Come with me Jim,” said J. J. as he turned to leave, “I can only take the smell of sauerkraut for so long before I start to get sick.”

J. J. was followed on the air by one of the funniest people I have ever heard on radio. George McCarther was a little older than the rest of us, which meant that he had a background in Top 40 radio. He was somehow able to make the transition of style, but always retained that kind of edge to his delivery. Everyone like the “General” because he had a way of making you feel comfortable, even if he didn’t appear completely at ease with himself.

Then came Damion, who worked the 10:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M. shift. Damion was a gifted bullshit artist. That, combined with his unflappable sincerity and natural charm, left him little else to do in life but become a DJ. We called him the “Silver Fox” because of the silver-gray color of his hair, and his lifetime ambition to sleep with every woman in the Western world under the age of seventy-five. This is some-

what inaccurate because they didn't actually have to *sleep* together, just as long as they had sex.

This was the first KASH crew. All, save the General, were free-form fliers, brought in from all over America. J. J. had been lured away from Boston's WBCN, one of the most highly respected FM rock stations in the country, Damion had worked at the network's Chicago outlet before coming to L.A., the General was a big name DJ in San Francisco, and I was the hometown kid. It was a talented air staff of young Turks who knew the music, knew who made it, and knew how to present it.

What we did not know, however, was that all of this knowledge would no longer be required.

KASH and KAOS were extremely close together on the dial. Separated by only a point in frequency and a half inch on the tuner, we were natural rivals. Both were FM stations, both played rock 'n' roll, and both were out to finally bury the "stinking corpse" of Top 40 radio; but that is where the similarities ended. RADIO KAOS was the L.A. outlaw: free-form rock radio at its irreverent Donahue best, and proud of it. We, on the other hand, were to take a much different approach. We were going to use—THE FORMAT.

On its own the term certainly doesn't sound all that threatening, just two little words: the format. But, in this context, it came to symbolize the antithesis of everything FM radio stood for.

Now let me see if I can find the words.

The format is a plan or a blueprint, drawn up by either the program director or a "radio consultant" (a life form much further down the food chain, whom we'll get to later), the purpose of which is to dictate what music will be played on the radio station and when.

Formats can be highly complex formulas usually based on "proven scientific principles" of demographics, call-out research, sales figures, telephone surveys, and something called "focus groups." A focus group is just one of the many devices used by radio management in which you, the guinea pig listeners, are observed through one-way glass without your knowledge. You will notice that I did not mention the word *music* in this definition of the format. Songs were thought of not as pieces of music, each with its own mood or message, but as product, to which you the radio consumer would presumably respond.

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We would no longer be able to pick our own songs, create musical sets, or even play something just for the pure joy of it. From now on, every single song played over KASH would be chosen for us, and you, by the format. This not only meant that the jocks would no longer have any say as to what music got played over the air, but a large number of the more "obscure" artists were simply removed from the studio as well. The network wanted to cash in on the rock 'n' roll boom, but they wanted to do it in a safe and orderly manner.

The format worked like this: At the start of your shift, you went to a shelf in the air studio, and got four blank "play sheets," which looked something like this:

KASH Play List

	<u>Name:</u> _____	<u>Shift:</u> _____	<u>Date:</u> _____
	<u>Artist:</u>		<u>Title:</u>
C	_____		_____
A	_____		_____
F	_____		_____
B	_____		_____
A	_____		_____
D	_____		_____
B	_____		_____
C	_____		_____
A	_____		_____

The letters at the beginning of each line directed you to a category of music, which you were to look up in a card file. This was a long metal box filled with hundreds of three-by-five cards, each one containing the name of an artist and the title of a song. The cards were divided into categories which corresponded to the list in front of you.

A, for example, might refer to a current hit single, B a track from a current hit album, C a new record, D an oldie, and so on.

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On the back was a place for you to initial and date the card to indicate when you played it last. After doing the required paperwork, you would then be allowed to play the song and move down the list to the next category, then start the process all over again.

You were not supposed to vary at any time from the order of categories on the play sheets, and you were required to play only the first card that presented itself in the box. All this was to ensure the proper balance and rotation of music, from which to achieve the maximum amount of people listening to the station.

Art in its purest form.

No longer could we mix songs together into thematic sets, using lyrics to tell a story, or to try to make a point. This music, this vibrant, rebellious, magical, poetic rock 'n' roll, these songs from Dylan, the Beatles, and the Doors, were now merely random cogs in the great format wheel.

Even if you were not the kind of listener who made the lyrical connection from one song to another, you must have been jolted at some time in your life by a station that would play a soft Joni Mitchell ballad, and then slam into "Paranoid" from Black Sabbath. This is the kind of musical insensitivity inherent in the format, that would be unthinkable to any free-form DJ worth his salt.

On top of all this, we couldn't even spin the records ourselves! Due to some bizarre contract with the engineers' union, we, the air talent, were not even allowed to touch most of the equipment. We sat in an air booth which contained only a microphone and an on-off switch. The engineer sat on the other side of a large glass window in a separate room which held the turntables, cart machines, tape decks, and the control board. We communicated to our engineer through an intercom system, and passed the records to be played through a slot in the wall. It felt as if we were in quarantine.

The worst part about this arrangement was that we were not in control of the segues between records. A "segue," for those not familiar with the term, is the transition from one song to another. DJs take a lot of pride in their segues. Not only were we conscious of the lyrical content of the songs, but we had to be aware of how the cuts flowed together musically as well.

We had to take into consideration the tempo of the two songs we were trying to string together, the key they were in, if the

first one was going to fade out or end cold, and how the next one began. Could we cross-fade the tracks, or were we going to slip-cue the next song when the one now playing had finished? All of these things had to be considered for *each and every* song that we played. And attempting to explain all this to an engineer—even the good ones—was like trying to tie a double half hitch in a piece of thread while wearing boxing gloves.

The final insult to injury was something called the “liner cards.” These three-by-five pearls of poetic wisdom contained one-line station logos or catch phrases, which we were supposed to shout at the herd. Remember the “Rock ‘N’ Stereo” logo? Instead of talking to our friends, we were now supposed to sell to the sheep. They didn’t want orators, they wanted carnival barkers.

Now I knew what those animals on “Wild Kingdom” felt like. One minute you’re running along as free as a lion on the African plain, when suddenly, some two-legged bastard hits you with a dart gun. The next thing you know, you wake up in a cage, dodging popcorn being thrown at you by a bunch of geeks with cameras and balloons.

The staff was horrified. We felt that to follow this approach would betray everything rock ‘n’ roll stood for. This was not freedom, this was not rebellion, this was calculated prepackaged show business. For those of us who took professional pride in our ability to paint audio pictures, using songs as colors and the airwaves as our palette, it would mean turning our backs on what FM radio was really meant to be.

J. J. and I met Damion at his apartment to analyze the situation. We had gotten the news from Hai the day before—from now on we were to eat, breathe, and sleep the format.

“Can you believe this shit?” Damion cursed as he grabbed for his beer. “Play an A card, then play a B card, then play—what kind of constipated lawyer cocksucker thought up this great idea?”

“Well I can tell you this, no one mentioned anything about a *format* when they were talking to me about leaving Boston to come out here,” J. J. said. “They told me I would be doing virtually the same kind of show that I was doing on WBCN, only in L.A., where no one owned a snow shovel.”

“These people don’t want disc jockeys, they want accountants,” I said, reaching over to turn up the stereo. “Did you hear that, George just came out of Judy Collins and went right into a Deep Purple cut! These guys are nuts!”

“What if we all tell Hai that this won’t work?” asked Damion, “and that we’re not going to do this shit. What are they going to do, fire all of us at once? They just hired us.”

“Do you really think that the people in New York care what a bunch of disc jockeys in L.A. think?” J. J. replied. “They’ll just tell Hai and Winnaman to handle it or else.”

“Well, we have to think of something,” I said, “because this is without question the worst idea I have ever smelled.”

I spent many nights trying to come to grips with the nauseating idea of having to fake my way through a show. Free-form radio had become my personal quest, my guru, my path, a road that led to a kind of spiritual fulfillment inherent in the creative process. I also believed that FM radio had an obligation to be a voice of truth and dissent in these turbulent times, and clearly, that voice would be the first casualty of the format.

I held the medium itself in a kind of sacred regard. That precious glass booth served not only as a stage, but the podium from which I might cheer on the great cultural renaissance sweeping America. Now I was faced with giving all that up, to play a three-by-five card from the D category.

But what could I do? Even if I could go back to KBRK I wouldn’t be able to feed my family, and no matter what personal misery selling out caused me, I had to do that.

It was the complete lack of artistic freedom, and the feeling that we all were letting FM radio down, which forced the air staff to resort to something we called “creative cheating.”

WE NEVER CHEATED ON THE FORMAT ONCE.
WE FOLLOWED EVERY RULE AND OBEYED EVERY
COMMANDMENT.
WE WERE ETERNALLY FAITHFUL TO THE SACRED
TABLET.

There might have been a few mistakes, or “accidents,” but never more than twenty or thirty per show. The air staff devised plots to bypass the format that would have made Machiavelli proud. It was either that, or lose all sense of what the art of FM radio was all about.

The most common way in which we got around this android version of radio was to stack the three-by-five deck in our favor. This could be done by rummaging through the card box until you found a Humble Pie song you wanted to play, instead of the Cat Stevens tune that was at the front of

the pile. Then you would check the back of the card to determine when it was played last, and if it hadn't come up recently (like that day), you would substitute it for the one you were supposed to play, and misfile *Tea for the Tillerman*.

Doing a radio program is a lot like flying an airplane. You have to achieve takeoff speed, gain the proper cruising altitude, stay on course, and at the end of a four-hour flight, bring the show in for a safe landing, ready to hand the controls over to the next pilot. With all the preoccupation required for this type of instrument flying, it's amazing that we ever got the station airborne at all.

Another popular method for rerouting the "flight plan" was to wait until the song that was playing on the air had just about ended before you gave the next record to your engineer.

"You got about a minute and a half left before this Zepelin song runs out, do you want to tell me what we're going to play next, or should I just make a wild guess?"

The voice coming over the intercom from the control room was dripping with sarcasm. It was Damion's engineer, Lloyd, and Lloyd was beginning to get nervous.

He was watching Damion through the large plate glass window that separated the control room from the air booth. Damion was just standing there in front of the record shelves, staring at a girl's picture on the front of an album cover.

"Okay, you're now officially into the red zone," Lloyd said, his tone shifting from sarcasm to panic, "ya got less than a minute left!"

Damion returned the LP he had been studying to a spot in the rack two shelves below its original location, and in a fit of seeming desperation, grabbed a Stones album from another shelf. As Lloyd looked on, his eyes darting from the clock to the drama unfolding in the air booth, Damion ran to the slot that connected the booth to the control room and shoved a copy of *Goat's Head Soup* through the opening in the wall. With only thirty seconds left, Damion pressed his intercom button and yelled: "Side two cut five!"

Lloyd grabbed the album, flung the cover across the room, and slapped the record down on turntable number two. Now ten seconds away from an embarrassing moment of dead air, Lloyd dropped the needle onto the vinyl disc and spun it madly by hand, trying to find the beginning of the song. When

he heard the strains of a guitar come through the tiny cue speaker, telling him that he had found the opening bars of the track, Lloyd backed the LP up a quarter of a turn and stopped. Just as the song on turntable number one ended, Lloyd made a desperate lunge for the control board, fired turntable number two, and the Rolling Stones filled the airwaves.

“Hey, this is ‘Star Star!’” Lloyd cried in a mixture of fear and disbelief. “You’re playing ‘Star Star!’”

“Oh, did I say side two?” returned Damion. “I meant to say side *one*, cut five—sorry.”

“But this is ‘Star Star!’” repeated Lloyd, too shocked to even hear what Damion had said, “We’re playing ‘Star Star’—on the air!”

As Damion cranked the monitor volume up to ten and began to play air guitar along with the record, Lloyd opened the intercom again: “I give you about ten seconds before Hai comes through the door with a gun.”

Eight point two seconds later, Hai Ku stormed into the air booth with blood in his eyes.

“What in the name of Buddha do you think you’re doing?” screamed Hai.

“What?” shouted Damion, not bothering to turn down the deafening level of the speakers.

Hai reached over and turned down the monitors. “Why are you playing a song that’s not on the format? A song that isn’t even in the card box? The only song in the history of recorded music that uses the word ‘starfucker’ about eighty times in four minutes?”

“You know I’m really pissed!” Damion feigned. “I was supposed to play ‘You’ve Got A Friend’ by Carole King, but I couldn’t find it, and the track on the air was just about over, so I had to grab the closest thing at hand.”

“What the hell do you mean, you couldn’t find it?” Hai said, mocking Damion’s answer. “The albums are filed alphabetically, are you telling me that you couldn’t locate the letter K?”

“Gee I don’t know,” Damion said as contritely as possible, “maybe Ladd misfiled it by mistake. He’s had a lot on his mind lately and—”

“Ladd misfiled it!” screamed Hai in contempt. “The only time I’ve ever heard Ladd play a Carole King song, I

was standing in the room when the card came up and he had no choice!"

"Well sorry Hai," Damion said, "but you can check for yourself, the album is not where it's supposed to be." Damion then cranked the volume back up to earsplitting level, and added, "Too bad too, that Carole King tune would have made such a great segue after 'Living Loving Maid.'"

Hai stormed out of the room, determined to physically destroy the errant copy of *Goat's Head Soup* so as to prevent Damion's little "mistake" from ever happening again. When the door had shut behind him, Lloyd, who had been listening to this exchange from the other room, opened the intercom and asked Damion, "Would you like to bet that I can tell you which record album you were staring at before you pulled the Stones LP? The one you refilled two shelves below the K section?"

Damion just grinned and went back to shuffling the three-by-five cards.

The only reason Hai ever put up with this kind of behavior from the staff was because he understood the free-form ethic of his jocks. He believed as much in the spirit of the music and what it stood for as we did—it's just that somebody had to be responsible to the corporate beehive.

As we, the air staff, struggled to come to grips with the format, Hai Ku was coming to grips with the realities of his job as well. Being a program director for any radio station is truly a monumental job. As a PD, you are not only accountable for everything that goes on the air, but your job also includes being responsible for people like me.

Someone has to have a concept of what the radio station is all about: what music it will play, what image it will project, what community events to align itself with. Someone has to run the programming department within budget, deal with the record companies and concert promoters, field the complaints, and think up new promotions. At the same time, this person must still remain close enough to the music to relate to his audience.

On top of all this, the program director must keep one thing foremost in his mind: It's his job to produce the ratings. Literally, *his* job. It ain't easy. It takes someone who has good business sense, is creative, and has the patience to deal with "talent"—people like me.

Hai's job was further complicated by the fact that much

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of what he did had to be sifted through the collective unconsciousness of what I called "The Black Hole in New York." The corporate beehive, filled with lawyers and upper-management drones, each one further removed from the L.A. rock scene than the next. For someone as immersed in the counter-culture as Hai, this must have been hell.

Hai Ku did find a philosophical common ground with the corporate beehive though. It was *organization*. The social structure of beehives is strictly organized and highly predictable. Hai, being the anal retentive that he was, saw great beauty in the structure and organization of the format, and so did New York. They wanted to systematize the music so that it could be counted, categorized, and correlated.

I wondered what Keith Richards would think about "systematizing rock 'n' roll." These people didn't have a clue.

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CHAPTER FIVE

WAR COUNCILS AND KITE STRING

Public stonings always took place in the conference room. Here, bathed in that certain ambience that can only be achieved under bright fluorescent tubing, we of the New Left would meet.

UNDER THE repressive yoke of the format, I was forced to learn how this kind of structured rebellion was supposed to work and why. With hindsight, of course, I can now see that professionally it was a necessary if unpleasant thing to do. Up until then, I had approached radio only in terms of art. It was becoming clear, however, that if I was going to depend on this profession for food and shelter, I would have to learn to deal with the entire picture.

One of the most important elements of this “real world” boot camp was the monthly War Council, aka the mandatory air staff meetings.

“I listened to your show today,” said Hai as he began to distribute his latest memo into the air staff’s mailboxes. “Are you sure that a career in radio is really for you?”

“Well, good afternoon to you too,” I yawned in mock boredom, “nice to see that you’re in your usual good spirits.”

“You’re still young you know,” Hai said as he continued stuffing memos through the slots, “have you given any thought to one of those trade schools? You know, like auto mechanics or welding?”

“Pollen have a headache last night—again?” I asked, opening up my mailbox. “I understand that’s quite common for people who live with anal retentives.”

“Someday you’ll thank me for trying to impart a modicum of order into your disturbed and wasted life,” Hai countered, not missing a beat. “I understand that neatness is an asset in the carpet-laying business.”

“Maybe if you tried some soft music and candlelight,” I answered while opening a letter. “Women have been known to like that as an occasional alternative to begging.”

“It’s amazing the amount of public information that must be available to the sexual novice these days,” Hai chuckled, then handed me the last of the typewritten pages he’d been distributing. “By the way, this memo applies to you in particular. See ya tomorrow.”

Knowing a good outcue when he’d said one, Hai headed down the hall and disappeared into his office. I looked down at the latest edict from “haiquarters,” (written in Hai’s usual tongue-in-cheek style) which began:

Attention! The next piece of paper that you receive could be pink!

There will be a mandatory air staff meeting tomorrow May 9 at 10:00 A.M. in the conference room. Prompt attendance is compulsory (see “mandatory” in dictionary) for all air staff. . . .

It was with this feeling of warmth and team spirit that we were summoned to the dreaded monthly tribunals.

Public stonings always took place in the conference room. Here, bathed in that certain ambience that can only be achieved under bright fluorescent tubing, we of the New Left would meet. The walls were clothed in nondescript wallpaper and adorned not with art, but gigantic reproductions of the station’s current Foster and Kleiser billboards. The confer-

ence room was equipped with a corporate toaster oven, a corporate coffeepot, and a corporate wet bar, reserved for the corporate client ass-kissing parties.

Gathering round the ten foot by four foot glass-and-chrome conference table, constructed for the comfort of sales executives, not hippies, we were issued the latest edicts from the programming department. These usually dealt with changes in the format, new promotional ideas, upcoming concerts, and the latest bowel movement from some network exec in New York.

Hai positioned himself at the head of the table, Pollen at his right, while the rest of us sat in various stages of alertness, depending on the hour and the degree of abuse involved the night before. Hai would shuffle through his stack of notes as he waited for the room to quiet down, while the passionate Pollen adjusted the straps on her tiny halter top, or pulled at her skintight miniskirt in an obviously flirtatious manner. Pollen dressed for sexcess, which always made her the visual center of attention, and she loved it. But then so did we.

The meeting would open with Hai explaining any new tactics he wanted to incorporate into the overall "battle plan." These were usually strategic adjustments, which were supposed to strengthen our campaign to beat the enemy and steal his herd.

"Because those of you sitting here this morning have proven your ability to read and comprehend the English language by responding to yesterday's memo, I have taken the liberty to type out these latest adjustments to the format, rather than use the picture book visual aid system I was planning on. Although Ladd had to ask someone to help him with the big words, we've even xeroxed one for you, too, Jim."

It was much too early in the morning for verbal banter, so I just sipped my coffee and let Hai continue.

"The first change is that from now on, anytime you come out of a spot break [commercials], you are to go directly into music with the phrase: 'Rock 'N' Stereo K-A-S-II' or, 'This is ninety-five and a half KASH-FM,' and nothing else."

The staff let out a collective groan.

"The only exception is if your first record is a C, that's a *new* record Jim, then you are to say: 'Here's the brand-new release from . . . so and so . . . on Rock 'N Stereo K-A-S-H,' and go directly into music."

“Let me get this clear,” said J. J., not hiding his amazement, “are we supposed to say one of these three liners, and *only* one of these three liners every single time we break for spots?”

“That’s right,” said Hai.

“And we’re not to vary from these things in any way?” asked Damion.

“You are to say them exactly as written, unless you’re just back-announcing a set of songs and then going directly into another tune,” said Hai, not acknowledging the dismay in Damion’s voice. “In that case, you’re free to choose one of the other liner cards in the booth.”

“Don’t you think this might sound just a tad redundant?” I asked. “Like after the first twenty minutes or so?”

“Our research shows that we announce our call letter seven point three percent less than the average AM station whose name recognition is in the top five. We need to pump the call letter more.”

“Everybody knows the importance of saying the call letters Hai,” Damion injected, “but you’re talking about two completely different types of radio here. I can understand wanting us to use the call letters more often, but repeating them in exactly the same way every time is lame.”

“I want to burn the call letters into the listeners’ brains,” said Hai, “and that means repetition.”

“That means redundant,” said J. J. “We just changed from taped programming to live shows because the robot approach didn’t work!”

Hai looked over at Pollen, who was busy readjusting her halter top again, and back to the restless gathering that was murmuring agreement with J. J., and said, “Good, now that we’re all in agreement, let’s move on to item number two.”

After an hour or so of this crap, we’d finally get down to the good part.

Hai kept a list of any and all transgressions that had occurred since our last gathering. With great delight, he would go around the table, and one by one, verbally flog those who had deviated from the format.

Let’s say, for example, that Hai had been listening to my show, and heard an ever-so-slight variation from the liner card I was supposed to read. In this case, I was introducing a

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song from Cream, and instead of parroting the required script:

"Here's a song from Cream, on Rock 'N' Stereo K-A-S-H."

I said something like:

"Did you read in the paper that Richard Nixon's ancestry has been traced back to the year 1772? It seems that his great-great-great-grandfather, Captain Milhous Nixon, was court-martialed for bringing a boatload of convicts to the New World, then denying he had anything to do with it.

"I like a man with roots, so we're gonna send this next song out for Dick Nixon. I mean, where would this country be if it weren't for Dicks like him?"

"Here's 'Politician' from Cream, on ninety-five and a half, K-A-S-H."

Hai could do twenty minutes on this easy, and although in his hippie heart he might agree with the statement, he would use this minor infraction of good taste as reason to ask insulting questions about *my* ancestry.

Or perhaps J. J. played a Bowie cut that was not in the all-important card file—another ten to twelve minutes of material for Hai, who simply could not understand what J. J. or anybody else heard in David Bowie.

"What were you thinking of playing a cut from this guy anyway?" asked Hai. "He's a one-hit wonder at best."

"We've been through all this before," Jackson responded, rolling his eyes in frustration. "I'm telling you this guy is going to be a major star. Christ Hai, RADIO KAOS has been all over this album for a month now, and we're only playing the single. Everybody's heard the single Hai, we should be playing a lot more—"

"The guy wears makeup," interrupted Hai. "He's a fruit, a three-dollar bill."

"He sold out the Santa Monica Civic three nights in a row," countered J. J. "Get the tin out of your ears and listen to his music. I don't give a shit what the guy looks like, I'm telling you the audience loves him!"

"What is the attraction here J. J.?" Hai asked snidely. "Some sort of closet problem that we're not aware of?" Hai,

of course, had no idea what David Bowie's sexual preferences were—he just enjoyed baiting J. J.

The fact that J. J. was a two hundred-pound bad-ass marine, before a drastic change in political consciousness had brought him to rock 'n' roll, only served to enhance the tone and volume of the discussion which would then ensue.

Once, Hai nailed Damion during one of these group encounters from hell for not sounding up to par on the air last Tuesday. Suddenly finding himself in the public pillory, the normally silver-tongued Damion not only didn't have an answer, he couldn't remember last Tuesday.

Hai kept pressing. "Is there anything wrong?" he asked. "Are you suffering from some sort of mental or physical disorder?"

Damion shifted in his chair and tried to come up with an answer, but Hai wasn't through yet.

"Perhaps it was something out of the ordinary in your daily routine that could have caused this mental lapse?"

Under pressure to come up with *some* kind of answer while the rest of us gleefully looked on, relieved that the light of interrogation was off of us, Damion finally said, "Well, the only thing I can think of, is that I usually smoke a joint before my show, but I was running late for work and didn't have time to roll one before I left the house."

Before anyone even had a chance to react to Damion's unexpected retort, Mr. Ku looked him straight in the eye and deadpanned, "If you value your job, don't ever come to work without getting high again!"

Damion complied, and being the stone professional that he was, in future allowed plenty of time to roll one before coming to the station.

Hai could really work a room.

Although the format remained an ever-vigilant radar gun slowing our creativity, as a staff, we were tight. The chemistry of the people, our love for the music, and the natural camaraderie of a small band of explorers surrounded by hostile forces, helped turn a bunch of strangers into a team.

One of our favorite gathering spots was Hai Ku's place. He had a house right on the sand in Venice Beach, and we certainly had some moments there. I think that Hai's propensity for living on the shore of the Pacific Ocean had more to

do with his desire to be as close to Japan as possible than with any great love of the sea, or of weekend skateboard freaks.

Most of us guys enjoyed a certain amount of macho posturing in our youth, and such a display of machismo at one of Hai's famous beach parties, almost cost me my career. After a drink or two, I challenged Hai to a sword fight. Hai of course was into several forms of Japanese martial arts, and he fancied his ability with a samurai sword. I have always fancied my ability never to turn down a dare while drunk.

Armed with wooden practice swords, Hai and I began circling each other in a mock combat dance. I swung, he blocked my weapon with his. He swung, and I blocked his sword with my Adam's apple. After that I challenged Hai to a mano-a-mano game of backgammon.

Another memorable party game occurred one New Year's Eve when Hai decided, for reasons of his own, to handcuff one of our friends to the door handle of the black limousine in which he'd arrived. This poor bastard greeted 1972 all alone, standing in an alley behind the house, listening to the rest of us singing "Auld Lang Syne" and popping champagne.

These slightly warped expressions of friendship were not limited merely to our off-hours either. One afternoon I was reading a commercial on the air when suddenly the studio door burst open. Startled, I looked around in amazement, thinking I was being busted by the FCC police. There was Hai, standing in the doorway with a fire extinguisher. Before I had time to duck, Hai jerked the trigger and let go with full force, all over me, the microphone, and everyone listening at home. Dripping wet and covered in fire extinguisher foam, I vowed to repay this little joke with compound interest.

The next day, I stopped at a toy store on my way to work and purchased five rolls of high-quality kite string. That night, after Hai had gone home, I told the janitor that I left my car keys on Hai's desk, and in my best broken Spanish, persuaded him to open the door to Hai's private office. I was in! The time was now 6:15 P.M., and I was alone in Mr. Ku's private sanctuary, about to commit an act of creative vandalism that would be remembered in the annals of radio revenge for a long time to come.

Starting at the very back corner of his office, I tied one end of the first spool of kite string to his lamp. Then I ran the

spool to the opposite corner of the room and wound it around the volume knob of his stereo. From the stereo I crisscrossed to his desk and wrapped the string around the receiver of his telephone, then back across the office, to thread my web of retribution through the stack of reel-to-reel tapes on top of the bookcase. I then proceeded to tie the contents of the bookcase to the pencil sharpener on the opposite wall, then up to the overhead light on the ceiling, and back down to his paper clip jar.

I continued in this way until every object, throughout every inch of his office, was connected to a living nervous system of kite string. Touch any thread, in any area of his office, and something moved on the other side of the room.

Two hours and five hundred feet of kite string later, I was ready to make good my escape. Moving with catlike stealth, I passed the final loop of string through the handle of his coffee cup (which still contained the muddy remnants of an interrupted coffee break) and tied the final knot to the knob on the inside of his office door. This I did with geometric precision, calculating the final length of string so that I would not disturb the cup when I shut the door, but when the door was opened wide in the morning, the string would then pull the cup off the desk, and, if my calculations were correct, directly onto Hai's shoes.

At last, I carefully stepped back to admire my work, and beheld a sight that would have made Rube Goldberg green with envy. Hai Ku's office looked like a trout fisherman's worst nightmare. I pulled the door closed ever so gingerly, so as not to trigger the liquid land mine, and went home to await the inevitable explosion.

It took all of my willpower not to be there when Hai came in for work the next day. But showing up at eight-thirty in the morning when I didn't go on the air until ten would've been too obvious. I would have to be satisfied with secondhand accounts of "the look on Hai's face." These I knew would be generously offered in graphic and colorful detail by members of the office staff as soon as I came in.

Arriving for work that morning, I found the bunker was still reverberating from the shock waves unleashed when Hai had tripped the land mine. It was the talk of the building, and when I walked in, I was quickly surrounded by people eagerly looking for someone who "hadn't heard yet." After

listening to the story from five or six different viewpoints, here's what I pieced together.

By pure chance, Hai and Pollen pulled into the parking lot that morning, just as John Winnaman arrived for work. Hai and Pollen greeted John, and invited their boss to begin the day with a cup of coffee. All three were happily chatting as Hai unlocked his office and threw open the door. Suddenly, there was complete silence. John and Pollen stood there in stunned amazement; Hai stood there in stunned amazement and wet shoes. Thirty seconds went by and Pollen couldn't take it anymore. She erupted into convulsive laughter, pounding the desk and screaming at the top of her lungs.

Other people, hearing the commotion from down the hall, now began to arrive, and soon the outer office was filled with teary-eyed onlookers holding their sides and rolling on the floor. Finally, John Winnaman, who had still not been able to find his voice, turned to Hai and said, "I'll come back later when you're not so strung out."

This sent everyone into complete and uncontrollable hysterics. Hai just kept looking down at his shoes and back up at the five hundred feet of kite string, unable to decide whether to enter his office or simply close the door and go home. At last he decided to go in, but as soon as he touched the maze of finely woven hemp, things all over the room began to tumble to the floor. Hai, still unable to speak, was mercifully handed a pair of scissors and began hacking a trail into his office. When he had carved out an area big enough to stand in, he entered the room, and numbly shut the door behind him.

Hai was not seen again for the next three hours. The sounds of breaking glass, snipping scissors, and muttered curses were the only evidence that he was even in the building.

After that, Hai and I went back to lobbing verbal grenades, having wisely decided that if the practical jokes were to continue at this rate, sooner or later it would escalate into a full nuclear exchange.

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CHAPTER SIX

WEDDING BELLS AND THE NEEDLE

Two events at the opposite extremes of life, but as fate will have it, you take the yin with the yang whenever they're served.

AS I drove into work the next morning, I kept punching the buttons on my new car radio between KASH and KAOS. An FM radio in your car in those days was still something of a novelty, because Congress had only passed the law requiring all new car radios to include the FM band about a month before, and it would still be a few years before FM could hope to compete with the AM band for the all-important commuter listener.

Back then, FM radio was something most people listened to at home. But being on the air, it was easy for me to justify my new toy, even though after tax and installation, the radio was worth more than my beat-to-shit Chevy, a car my friends had affectionately dubbed "where dents go to die."

I hit the button for RADIO KAOS, and there was Ace

Young, doing his 9:00 A.M. newscast. Ace had a great set of pipes. Deep and resonant, they oozed with the authority of a network anchorman. But what he talked about, the stories he chose to report, and the way in which they were delivered, set him apart from all other radio newsmen on the air.

1972 gave Ace a lot of news to work with. Nixon was busy that year, having made his historic visit to China in February, and just a few months later, becoming the first U.S. president in history to visit Moscow. At the same time he was accomplishing these diplomatic triumphs, he was also bombing North Vietnam, mining Haiphong Harbor, and getting himself reelected.

There were other stories of note that year which Ace was following, such as the trial of Angela Davis, the first issue of *Ms.* magazine, the ongoing antiwar protests, and a not-so-routine burglary at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, D.C. Ace Young not only reported these stories, he gave you an alternative point of view that reflected both RADIO KAOS's outlaw stance, and the highly charged political sentiments of the rock community it served.

At the moment, Ace was wrapping up a phone interview with the founder of a new ecological action group called Greenpeace. They were announcing a radical new form of guerrilla tactics aimed at bringing world attention to the plight of whales, and Ace was pushing for details about their newly christened ship, the *Rainbow Warrior*.

At the end of his newscast, Ace summed up the disaster facing our planet's largest creatures with a personal observation regarding one species of life exterminating another, merely to produce a cheaper brand of lipstick. When Ace had finished, the jock on the air, obviously moved by what had just transpired, slowing brought up the opening strains of the song "Wind On The Water."

Over the years you have been hunted
 By the man who threw harpoons
 And in the long run he will kill you
 Just to feed the pets we raise
 Grow the flowers in your vase
 And make the lipstick for your face.

Over the years you swam the oceans
 Following feelings of your own
 Now you are washed up on the shoreline

((((((**RADIO WAVES**))))))

.....1967-1975.....

I can see your body lie
It's a shame you had to die
To put the shadow on our eyes.
—Crosby & Nash

What normally should have been five minutes of rip and read headlines to fulfill the FCC's requirement that stations must devote a portion of their broadcast day to public affairs, was instead a riveting moment of radio that made you think, perhaps even made you angry enough to do something.

When the song ended, I hit the button reserved for where I worked and heard the tail end of our nine o'clock news. It was a network feed piped in from New York, with a middle-aged announcer regurgitating the government's latest GNP report. As the network man droned on about economic statistics and the current balance of trade, I wondered how many of our listeners really cared what the dry businesslike voice was saying. When the news feed ended, our morning man came back on and said,

*"It's 9:05 on a Monday morning, and this is Rock 'N'
Stereo K-A-S-H."*

Then he played something from the D category.

Dry, lifeless, mechanical, the format—momentarily interrupted by the "News at Nine"—lumbered back into its soulless machinelike pattern. I was growing more and more frustrated with the restraints of this robotic approach to FM. Hearing the exciting and meaningful things RADIO KAOS was doing only made me feel worse.

By June of 1973, two events were to happen that would galvanize our KASH air staff into a family. They were two events at the opposite extremes of life, but as fate will have it, you take the yin with the yang whenever they're served.

Shelly and I had moved our little brood into a rustic three-bedroom cottage in Laurel Canyon, located on the very boulevard immortalized by the Doors in their song "Love Street." Rochelle and John were both attending Hollywood High, while Dean was in a junior high school not too far away.

The kids had the whole of Laurel Canyon as their back-

yard, and soon became regulars at the Canyon Country Store (“... there’s this store where the creatures meet. I wonder what they do in there. Summer Sunday and a year...”), located at the end of our tree-covered lane. Within a week our charismatic threesome was on a first-name basis with the elderly store owner and his wife. They must have visited this Laurel Canyon landmark a least thirty times each afternoon, as the need arose for yet another gallon of milk, bag of dog food, or the third candy bar of the day. At the same time the old couple could never quite understand how someone at the age of twenty-five, who was not married to his twenty-one-year-old wife, came to have two teenage kids and a boy of twelve.

After three years of living in sin, our beloved children came to Shelly and me one day with the announcement that it would go a long way toward making their miserable little lives less complex, if they didn’t have to explain to their friends why their older sister and her boyfriend were living together when they “*aren’t even married.*” We explained to our socially burdened little cherubs that, in fact, I had proposed to Shelly three years earlier. But before any plans could be made, *they* had arrived to greatly *lessen* our responsibilities in the world. We went on to elucidate further how very sorry we were for this oversight, but until now we had neither the time nor the money to think about a wedding, and we hoped that this explanation would satisfy their nosy little schoolmates!

Shelly and I pondered this question for a few days, and in the end, she accepted my hand. After all, how could she refuse a proposal from a man who had just vandalized his program director’s office with kite string? We decided to have the ceremony in the backyard of our home. It was a wonderful little house built in the 1930s, and it sat on a half acre of ground, shaded by a group of majestic forty-year-old oak trees, planted by the original owners.

It was billed as the social event of the year. The entire KASHI crew saw themselves as adopted aunts and uncles to our children, so this union of the “hippie Waltons” was welcomed with great anticipation.

Being a guy, I was completely useless when it came to these matters, so the entire wedding was left to Shelly. Without her mom alive for advice and counsel, or even her father in attendance to give her away, it was Shelly who had to plan every detail herself—including sewing her wedding gown by hand.

I occupied myself with work and long discussions with the guys about how my bachelor party would end all bachelor parties to come. It was during one of these high-level think sessions that the General offered to hold the time-honored ceremony at his house.

“Now I am remodeling, and there is still some construction going on,” George explained, “but look at it this way; if we do any major damage, the carpenters will be there on Monday to fix it. Besides,” he continued, “it’s a four-bedroom house, and there’s a professional I know, who, for a fee, will stock the entire place with the kind of girls who don’t expect dinner and a movie!”

A cheer went up from the surrounding group of horn dogs, and it was agreed the party was on for next Saturday night.

George’s offer was a bit surprising because the General usually stayed to himself during his off-hours. George was as private in his personal life as he was open and funny on the air. We thought it was because he spent so much time working on his new house, a project which seemed to take all of this gentle and funny man’s time.

Next Saturday rolled around, but no one had heard from George. He’d failed to show up for work Friday night, without even a phone call to Hai. Missing your air shift without informing the program director was unheard of, especially for someone as professional as the senior member of the air staff.

“Hello?”

“Hai, it’s Jim,” I said adjusting the telephone. “Sorry to bother you at home, but I went by the General’s house like you asked, and he wasn’t there. Have you heard from him yet?”

“Nothing,” said Hai, “I haven’t talked to him since Thursday night.”

“Well I’m starting to get a little concerned,” I said in a level voice. “The party is only seven hours away. This isn’t like George, not showing up for work, and now this.”

Hai thought for a moment and said, “He probably missed his show due to some sordid tale involving one of the ‘professional girls’ he promised for the blowout. Knowing George, he talked her into auditioning for him and ended up at her place last night. Now he’s probably rushing around trying to get everything set at the last minute. You can bet we’ll hear all about it tonight.”

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“Look man this may be nothing,” I said, “but his car was in the driveway, and the porch light was still on.”

“Could you hear anything from inside the house?” questioned Hai.

“You know,” I said, pausing to recollect, “I thought I may have heard a radio or a TV or something, but I couldn’t be sure.”

“Well don’t worry about it,” said Hai, trying to mask the concern building in his voice. “If we haven’t heard from him by six, I’ll ask Gonzer to stop by when he gets off the air.”

Jeff Gonzer was our newest member of the KASH air crew. A veteran of both KDOM and RADIO KAOS, he’d been hired as our new morning man just over a month ago. Jeff had a solid reputation in town, and we viewed getting a former KAOS jock on our station as something of a coup. Like the rest of us, Gonzer was required to do a weekend show, in addition to his regular 6:00 to 10:00 A.M. shift Monday through Friday. This week, he’d pulled the Saturday afternoon slot from two to six.

Jeff Gonzer had sandy brown hair, cut short, unlike his peers, and a neatly trimmed beard. Years ahead of his time, he had given up alcohol, drugs, *and* cigarettes. Jeff had recently undergone an evangelistic conversion to the gospel of the vegetarian purist, and I think it was making him a little tense. On a station whose other jocks took more of a laid-back approach, Gonzer tended toward a hip version of Henny Youngman. Like many people I’ve met in radio, however, Jeff would prove that those whom it took some time to comprehend were usually those who were worth the effort.

Jeff pulled into the General’s driveway at about 6:25 P.M. He tried knocking on the door and ringing the bell, but to no avail. He noticed that George’s car was still there, and the porch light was still on, but there was no sign of movement in the house. With only an hour and a half to go before the party, Jeff began to feel that something was really wrong. He tried ringing the bell again, then pounding on the front room window. Nothing. Now Gonzer put his ear next to the door, and heard what he thought was the sound of a record player, or maybe a radio, playing at the back of the house.

Carefully maneuvering through the piles of lumber and drywall, Jeff Gonzer found his way into the unplanted backyard. There were no lights on inside, but with well over an

hour of daylight left, he had little trouble peering in through the bedroom window. He could see George lying motionless across the bed in an awkward pallid lump. Jeff began screaming, and struck the windowsill with his fist again and again until the glass wobbled inside the frame, but without result. Frightened and sweating, Jeff picked up a two-by-four from the pile of boards, smashed in the window, and confirmed the worst. The General had OD'd.

It was the first death in the family. We were devastated. Of all the people in this group of crazy risk takers, he was the last one we ever thought would go out at the point of a needle.

In those days, drugs were still viewed as more of a sacrament by us than even a recreational device. LSD, mescaline, and pot were something many of us shared in the spirit of friendship and the search for greater self-awareness. Cocaine was not something we knew of yet, and heroin, which turned out to be the horse the General rode, was always seen as an undisputed evil. His death was hard enough to take, but losing him to smack made us mad.

Instead of a bachelor party, we gathered for a wake. We were numbed, stunned into a silent disbelief.

Shelly and I wanted to postpone the wedding, of course. It just seemed wrong to gather for that kind of celebration so soon after the General's death. I discussed this with J. J., Damion, and Hai, but they saw it differently. They reasoned that the wedding might help people through their grief by serving to reaffirm life, and in that way, help us all to get on with the future. After a great deal of soul-searching, Shelly and I finally decided to go ahead.

So, on a beautiful summer day in June of 1973, we gathered together 250 relatives, friends, and our KASH family to reaffirm life, love, and a world we hoped to make a little better by our union.

It turned out to be a magical day. The cross section of people in attendance was unbelievable. Long haired rock 'n' rollers laughed and mingled with my Republican relatives. The station management types loosened their ties and swapped radio stories with the air staff. Young children stuffed themselves on wedding cake, and chased our two dogs, Citizen and Saga, through the backyard. We toasted with champagne, we sang and danced, and for that one summer afternoon in the backyard of a little cottage on Love Street, there was no generation gap, no war councils, no us against them.

For on that summer afternoon under the tall oaks, we found grace in the Garden of Eden.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINISH THE REVOLUTION WITHOUT ME

"A plain pine box."

RADIO KAOS continued to pummel Southern California with its outrageous brand of free-form radio, but was beginning to lose more and more listeners to KASH. Up in San Francisco, however, KHIP was going great guns. Tom Donahue, now general manager, sat behind his desk in the front office and surveyed a highly successful operation, still at the very epicenter of Bay Area counterculture.

Up until now, KHIP's role as the community bulletin board meant doing things like giving new bands a shot on the radio, promoting benefits for the Free Clinic, and generally fucking with the establishment in a Merry Prankster sort of way. But by April of 1974, things were about to get real serious.

The Vietnam peace accord had been signed over a year ago, and nobody was being drafted anymore. But no one on

either side of the political spectrum felt victorious, just thankful that the killing had finally stopped. There was no war to protest against any longer, but that didn't mean an end to the movement, not yet anyway. We still had Nixon, and he was up to his shifty eyeballs in the Watergate scandal.

Down the hall at KHIP, the program director and second in command was busy in his role as ringmaster for a psychedelic circus of phone calls, appointments, snap decisions, and trying to score a lid.

His name was Thom O'Guardia, and he shared just enough personality traits with Tom Donahue to make things really interesting. They were both Irish, both streetwise, and both ego-driven Geminis. Together, these two Geminis made an awesome foursome. Their working relationship was a never-ending pendulum which swung between the camaraderie of old drinking buddies and the convoluted mind games of two rival generals.

Thom O'Guardia's office was known by various pseudonyms, such as "smokers' corners" and the "O'Guardia Hilton." This was due to the fact that a number of people who'd entered pseudonym number one would end up passing out on the floor of pseudonym number two. On this particular day, one of the jocks and a record company promo man were crashed at one end of the room, completely oblivious to the torrent of activity surging in and out of the office.

Two other people, one an engineer and one from sales, were also in the room, waiting to speak to the program director on some urgent station business. O'Guardia, locked in serious negotiations over the price, weight, and country of origin, was on the phone to his dealer. Finally, he noticed that an unfamiliar person was standing at his desk, a man wearing a taxicab driver's hat and holding a large brown envelope with both hands.

"I was supposed to be here right at noon," announced the scruffy stranger in a grim voice. "You'd better listen to this at once."

He handed Thom a manilla envelope bearing the words:

Thom O'Guardia
KHIP
Open Immediately

Then, without waiting for a response, the man turned and left.

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Thinking this only mildly strange, O'Guardia nestled the phone under his chin, tore open the envelope, and poured the contents out onto his desk. There was a cassette tape, a photograph, and several sheets of written information, but Thom, still bargaining with the herb merchant at the other end of the line, was paying little attention. Finally, out of sheer boredom, one of the gentlemen waiting to speak with Thom picked up the photograph.

"Holy shit, it's Patty Hearst!"

"What?" O'Guardia asked, snatching the picture from his hand.

"It's Patty Hearst! Thom, this is from the SLA!"

The second these words reached his horrified ears, the guy from sales screamed, "I don't want any part of his!" and ran out of the office.

Thom let the phone dangle over his shoulder as he stared at the photograph. It was a young woman in her early twenties, standing in front of a Symbionese Liberation Army placard, dressed in fatigues, and holding a semiautomatic rifle.

O'Guardia picked up the phone and shouted, "Better make that *two* lids, and I'll need 'em here within the hour!" Slamming down the phone, he gathered up the package and ran down the hall to see Donahue.

The two Geminis listened to the cassette tape; then, as instructed, they called the news media. Within twenty minutes the hallways of KHIP were filled with members of the press. UPI, AP, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Rolling Stone*, even overseas publications sent their bureau chiefs to cover the story. Then came the electronic media: CBS, NBC, ABC, along with local television stations, all wanting film of "counterculture media guru Tom Donahue" standing next to a tape recorder and pronouncing the validity of the story. Oh yes, there was one other major information-gathering organization in attendance—the FBI, which swarmed over KHIP like a nest of hornets.

It was complete madness, but great press for the station. Every story included the fact that KHIP, "known as the people's radio station," had been chosen as the SLA's propaganda conduit to the "vile capitalist society" they'd vowed to overthrow. KHIP had found itself caught up in the kidnapping of the decade, and it was a very awkward situation. Although the radio station was doggedly proud of its role as

the bullhorn of the revolution, kidnapping an heiress, holding up banks, and full-blown shoot-outs with the police were not in the same tactical handbook for social change which KHIP was following.

The SLA had no place in the hippie movement. Student protests, mass rallies, and love-ins in the park were the basic methods employed by the "peace and love generation" to revolutionize society. And that was supposed to be done by *enlightening people*—a revelation of the spirit if you will. Nobody said anything about the violent overthrow of the United States government. These people had either missed the point entirely, or they were taking far too much speed.

They certainly didn't ask for it, but like it or not, KHIP was now the chosen drop point for SLA communiques, as the Symbionese Liberation Army continued its doomed and twisted attempt to bring down the "fascist bourgeoisie."

Several days later another cassette arrived. Heeding the SLA's threat to kill Patty Hearst if the police were called before the message was broadcast, Tom and Thom made the decision to play the tape as instructed. Again KHIP was besieged by both the press and the FBI moments after the tape had aired, and again Tom Donahue stood beside the tape recorder and pronounced the story valid.

This time, however, there was a hitch. The tape had been so poorly recorded that most of its message was inaudible—merely a jumbled, muddy ten minutes of noise, broken only occasionally by a recognizable phrase. But KHIP played it, the news media reported it, the FBI investigated it, and the Hearst family continued its painful nightmarish vigil for their daughter.

Twenty-four hours later, Thom O'Guardia was struggling through a myriad of last-minute details and minor meltdowns as he prepared to leave for the Paramount Theater just across the bay in Oakland. It was Saturday night, and the station was in complete bedlam. They'd been gearing up for this event for the last two months, and now it was less than ninety minutes to air time. Boz Scaggs had just left the Steve Miller Band to strike out on his own, and as it had with so many other new artists, KHIP had championed his cause, playing his first solo album long before anyone else in the country. Tonight's live concert broadcast was to be his official coming-

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out party, and the station was turning itself inside out to make sure everything on their end went smoothly.

Back in the early seventies, before satellite transmissions, digital recording, or guitar synthesizers, a “live remote” was still tricky business. It meant sending a *stereo* signal from the concert back to the radio station over unreliable telephone lines. It meant keeping both channels in phase and properly balanced, using equipment never intended for the job. It meant an open line from the event to the DJ at the station, who took the feed and sent it out over the air. It meant creative engineers, and it meant lots and lots of duct tape.

O’Guardia had just doused the latest brushfire to erupt between the phone company technicians and KHIP’s chief engineer, and was putting on his coat to leave for the concert. Before he could find his keys, someone threw open the door and screamed, “We just got a call from the SLA! They want you to pick up another copy of yesterday’s tape. They claim it’s better quality, and you can hear the—”

“What the fuck—now?” screamed Thom, not believing his own ears.

“That’s what they said. It’s supposed to be under a third-row seat at the old Metro Cinema.”

Thom O’Guardia lived for moments like this: those larger-than-life kind of moments when you feel like you’re living in a movie. Shouting a final barrage of instructions for the broadcast over his shoulder, he ran out the front door and jumped in his car. He had an hour and fifteen minutes to drive across town, get to the movie theater, find the tape, then floor it over the Bay Bridge and get to the concert.

O’Guardia drove like a maniac, running three red lights and almost sideswiping a bus on the way. It took him just under twenty minutes to reach the Metro Cinema, and by the time he got to the person of unknown foreign origin inside the ticket booth, Thom was roaring into high gear.

“I’m Thom O’Guardia, PD at KHIP. I’ve got to see the manager immediately!”

“One adult?” asked the girl behind the glass. “Dat’s tree doolars and feefty cent pleece.”

“No, I don’t want to see the movie, I want to see the *manager*,” shouted Thom. “It’s urgent!”

“The movie? Eees called *Dirty Harry*,” explained the girl. “Tree doolars and feefty cent.”

“Look you, I’m not here to see the . . . oh never mind!”

Not bothering with the guy at the door, Thom simply ran through him and into the lobby, demanding to see the manager. An usher showed him to a side door, and as Thom entered without knocking, he saw a short, middle-aged man in a tuxedo who was sitting behind his desk with a napkin and two candles, eating a cheese sandwich.

The stunned little man looked up from his meal, trying to make sense of this obviously psychotic hippie in Levi’s and a leather vest, screaming at him about some kind of emergency. He was so taken aback at the sight of O’Guardia that all he heard were a few key words: “Patty Hearst”—“third row”—“SLA”—“and whatever you do, *don’t* call the cops!”

Still holding his cheese sandwich halfway up to his gaping mouth, the hopelessly confused little man thought he’d just been warned that Patty Hearst was in his theater, and at that very moment she, along with the entire Symbionese Liberation Army, was sitting there watching Clint Eastwood clean up the streets of San Francisco.

Having completed the social formalities usually expected before one proceeds with an illegal search of private property, O’Guardia bounded out of the office, back through the lobby, and into the flickering darkness of the theater. He reached third-row center just as the movie’s first car chase began, and bent down to search for the tape.

Crawling on his hands and knees down what was fortunately an empty row of chairs, Thom located the cassette underneath seat number five. “Wait a minute,” Thom thought to himself, “I’ve seen ‘I Spy.’ I’d better check to see if this thing is rigged!” Carefully inspecting the small package for trip wires and booby traps, he satisfied himself that it was not a bomb, grabbed the tape, and ran back up the aisle and out into the street.

Back in his car, Thom paused to decide whether to race back to the station and throw the tape on the air before the Boz Skaggs concert began or wait until after the broadcast. He concluded that the SLA would have to postpone their armed insurrection for another couple of hours (after all, they couldn’t even work a tape recorder right), and decided to lay rubber for the Bay Bridge.

The broadcast ended at 10:00 P.M., Boz Skaggs was great, and the remote came off without a hitch. At 11:15 P.M.,

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O'Guardia was back at the station, and KHIP was airing the latest rhetoric from Cinque. By 11:45, the news media and the FBI began to arrive, helping themselves to the fresh coffee and doughnuts KHIP now provided whenever they hosted one of these impromptu little get-togethers. Tom and Raechel showed up just after midnight, and by 12:15 A.M., Tom Donahue was standing beside the obligatory tape deck, as the news cameras began to roll.

By April of 1975 the pressures of his life-style and those of radio began to take their toll on Big Daddy Tom Donahue. He was becoming cranky and short tempered. He began going to the station earlier and earlier each morning, spending long hours locked in his office, working as if there were no tomorrow. Along with the ill temper and weird hours, Tom became distant and withdrawn, even from Raechel. He never came out and said it, but he knew that his clock was running down.

Tom began to engage Raechel in long, intricate conversations about how he wanted to be remembered. And, true to his character, he was both forceful and devious in his approach.

"Now, you know I'm Roman Catholic, and that means a priest, and a service, and a very proper funeral," Tom began as they sat down to dinner. "It's very complicated in the Catholic religion, because the rituals go back for centuries. But I don't want all of that—I want to be cremated."

"Tom, why are you talking about this?" Raechel asked. "It's like you're preoccupied with the subject lately."

"I'm not preoccupied with anything," said Tom, as he carefully sprinkled a layer of parmigiana cheese over his spaghetti. "I just want to be cremated, that's all. And I want you to lead a procession of my friends to the Golden Gate Bridge, and mix my ashes with a pound of the best pot you can find, then have everybody smoke—"

"Tom that's disgusting!" yelled Raechel, shoving her food away. "I don't want to talk about this anymore."

"Okay, okay, if you won't do that, then you have to promise me that I'll be buried in a plain pine box." Tom paused to take another helping of calamari, refilled his wine glass, then added, "But no funeral service—I want a wake. An old-fashioned Irish wake."

On the afternoon of April 26, Raechel was at home fixing

lunch for the children when she heard a knock at the front door. Drying her hands, Rae asked the eldest daughter, Deede, to keep an eye on the stove, and walked into the living room. She opened the front door to find a young man wearing some kind of taxi cab driver's hat, holding a large bouquet of roses. "Mrs. Donahue?" asked the man. "These are for you."

"For me?" Raechel blurted out, completely taken by surprise. "It's not my birthday or anything. You sure you've got the right Mrs. Donahue?"

The cat in the cab cap consulted his clipboard and confirmed, "Mrs. *Raechel* Donahue. I was told to make sure you got this envelope as well. Sign here please."

Raechel took the small brown package and the roses, and sat down on the couch. Then, taking a long, wonderful breath from the unexpected bouquet, Raechel opened the envelope. Instead of a card, she found a cassette. Instantly, Raechel's entire world changed perspective. Her joy at receiving such a delightful surprise suddenly cracked in an almost schizophrenic reversal of emotions. She was cold with fear. This wasn't from a friend or even some secret admirer. "Oh no," Raechel thought to herself, "it's the SLA. They've found out where we live!"

Reaching for the telephone, Raechel dialed her friend Cynthia Bowman, who lived just down the street. "Cynthia, I need a favor. Can I send the kids down to stay with you for about an hour? It's important." Quietly but firmly, Raechel gathered up the kids, and sent them over to stay with Cynthia.

Her next call was to Tom at the station. But knowing he'd ask her what was on the tape, Raechel went to the stereo first, inserted the cassette, and turned on the machine. After a few nervous seconds of hiss, Raechel heard the deep resonant tones of her husband's voice. "Happy anniversary, baby doll, from your ever-lovin' Big Daddy." This was followed by the familiar opening chords to their favorite song, and as the sound of the Beatles glided gently out through the speakers, Raechel began to cry. She had completely forgotten that today was their sixth wedding anniversary.

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Donahue went out to dinner that night, and as usual, they were quite a pair. He, the 350-pound general manager of KIIP, replete with a three-foot-long ponytail and full beard, and she, his very young, very blond

wife, dressed in "baby doll" clothes and high-heeled shoes. Laughing and giggling like a couple of hippies in love, they marched into the exclusive Top of the Mark restaurant on Nob Hill, and set the place on its ear.

After they'd finished dinner and the coffee had been served, Mrs. Donahue reached into her purse and brought out a small box wrapped in silver gift paper. "Here Tom, happy anniversary," whispered Raechel as she handed him the present.

Tom opened the little box and looked up at his wife. "Rae, I can't take these, you've had 'em ever since you were a kid."

Tom carefully withdrew a very old and very sacred string of Indian burial beads, which was lying on a bed of white cotton within the box. It was one of the few family treasures Raechel had brought with her when they fell in love.

"I want you to keep them for luck," said Raechel as she closed his enormous hand over the delicate string of beads, "and because you're such a romantic old walrus."

Tom died two days later, on April 28, 1975. He had eaten so much life, had smoked and drunk his share of the world so voraciously, that it finally consumed him.

He left his wife and five children little in the way of money, but he had changed radio forever, and it was a legacy of which they could be proud. Now it was just Raechel and the children. She had her job at KHIP and her friends, but she was alone, in charge, and now must face the world with whatever lessons Big Daddy Tom Donahue had left her.

Raechel organized the wake, and her friend Cynthia Bowman took a few days off from her job at the Jefferson Starship office to help with the arrangements. It took some serious name calling before Cynthia could get the greedy funeral director, who'd been hawking his "silk-lined, pure mahogany casket with the solid brass fittings," to shut up and listen to what she was saying. But, after much discussion, Cynthia Bowman finally got what she'd asked for in the first place—a plain pine box.

They threw Tom a good old-fashioned Irish wake at the Orphanage nightclub in North Beach. Boz Scaggs, Van Morrison, and Tower of Power played for the five hundred

friends and freaks, gathered to pay their last respects to the father of free-form radio. Van Morrison sang his song "TB Sheets" as "TD Sheets" in honor of Tom. David Steinberg hosted the evening, and Bill Graham loaned the family a thousand dollars to cover the cost of the nightclub. Restaurants, catering services, and people from the audience all donated food for the occasion. Somebody even brought a large fishbowl to serve as the collection plate, and put it near the front door with a sign that read Donations for the Donahues.

Tom would have been proud. It was a rowdy raucous night filled with laughter and lies. The pipe was passed, and bottles of Jack Daniel's and Cuervo Gold were drained, as teary-eyed friends exchanged their favorite stories about Big Daddy. Toward the end of the evening, somebody stood up and offered yet another toast. It was a line from The Doors:

Out here on the perimeter there are no stars
Out here we is stoned, immaculate.

Tom Donahue was our generation's first town crier. He gathered the villagers together and introduced them to the music of a new breed of wandering minstrels. It was here, in this electronic town square, that we first heard the music, and danced to its message. He was the first to strike the tribal drum, and his departure would mark a dangerous turning point in tribal history.

There was one final note of irony to the evening, however, a harbinger of the future of FM radio and the movement itself. For when the party was over, the fishbowl—filled with money for the family—had ominously disappeared.

CHAPTER EIGHT
WALLS
AND
BRIDGES

Dream, dream away
Magic in the air, was magic in the air?
I believe, yes I believe
More I cannot say, what more can I say?
—John Lennon

SHORTLY AFTER Tom's death, Raechel decided it would be better for her and the children if they moved away from San Francisco and made a new start in L.A. Therefore, it was arranged with Micromedia that she would take over as the Music Director for RADIO KAOS. Soon thereafter, Thom O'Guardia was also relocated to Southern California.

O'Guardia had left KIIIP about a year and a half earlier (having been fired by Tom Donahue over some sort of Gemini dispute), and taken a job as program director for a station that was in direct competition with Micromedia's FM rocker in New York. After fourteen months of killing his former employers in the ratings, Micromedia decided that the best thing to do was to bring O'Guardia back into the fold by offering him the program director's job at RADIO KAOS. O'Guardia

accepted the offer, and once again, Raechel Donahue and Thom O'Guardia found themselves working together.

RADIO KAOS was in a bad way. Its reputation was certainly intact, but it was losing terribly in the ratings, and Micromedia hoped that their two most experienced players would be able to turn the station around.

While the new regime was taking over at RADIO KAOS, I continued to pump out the hits at KASH.

"Good evening everybody, I'm Jim Ladd and I hope you're ready to rock 'n' roll tonight. We're going to start off with a brand new record that could have been written about the owners of this very radio station. It's from Pink Floyd's just released album, Dark Side of the Moon, and the song is called 'Money.' You're listening to ninety-five and a half, K-A-S-H."

I signaled to my engineer to start the record, turned off the mike, and looked over at J. J. "Sorry to cut it so close," I said, referring to the fact that I'd rushed in only thirty seconds before J. J.'s last song had ended. "The traffic on La Cienega is unbelievable."

"Why do you always pick this moment in your show to zing the management?" asked J. J., rubbing the bridge of his nose in mock disdain. "You know everybody's listening on their way home."

"Hey, the real owners are in New York," I replied. "Besides, they love it when I talk about them on the air."

"Oh yeah, its Winnaman's favorite thing," laughed J. J. "So what do you think?"

"About what?" I said, searching through the card box for the next song.

"The ratings!" answered J. J.

"The numbers came in? How'd we do?"

"You really haven't heard yet have you?" he asked rhetorically. "We only beat fucking K-H-J, that's all!"

"You're puttin' me on."

"I can't believe that Hai didn't call you. We're the first FM in the whole country that's ever beaten a major Top 40 AM station," said J. J., his voice tight with excitement. "It's an honest-to-God milestone."

"You're telling me that we actually beat KHJ in the book?" I said, still not believing what I was hearing.

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“Not only that, but guess which two disc jockeys in this room are number one from two in the afternoon until ten at night.”

“Get out of here!” I screamed. “Now I know you’re joking.”

“It’s no joke, you and I had the biggest numbers in—”

The intercom crackled open, and the engineer on the other side of the glass broke in. “Sorry to interrupt, but you need to give me your next record. By the way, congratulations on the numbers, does this mean you guys will be tipping the engineers from now on?”

Not only had we pulled far ahead of RADIO KAOS in the ratings, we had actually beaten KHJ, L.A.’s giant AM Top 40 station. This was certainly a landmark event for this “novelty FM thing,” a fad that was supposed to go the way of the Hula-Hoop and bell-bottoms. For the first time in the history of FM radio, one of the poor cousins of broadcasting had garnered more listeners than a major AM facility. FM radio had indeed arrived.

This was heady stuff, and the credit was all Hai’s. He had taken the music of artists such as Jimi Hendrix, the Flying Burrito Brothers, and the Kinks, combined it with the mechanics of commercial radio, and won on the playing field of big business. KASH, black sheep of the network’s broadcast group, was now the official buzzword at the corporate beehive in New York.

The staff was elated to have beaten KHJ in the ratings, because to us, it represented everything that we were trying to change in radio. Top 40 was slick mindless pop pap, without one second of social involvement in its format.

This is not meant as a slam at the radio giants who worked at KHJ, by any means. In its heyday, KHJ could boast that its lineup included some of *the* most talented people ever to “spin a platter” or play a “stack of wax.” What we railed against was Top 40’s lack of media vision. Theirs was a myopic mindset, completely colorblind to the rainbow of musical and social changes happening all around it. Top 40 saw rock radio merely as a tool for entertainment, not as an instrument for change. From this narrow optical spectrum, AM radio glimpsed a world exploding in 3D Technicolor stereo through monovision glasses and black-and-white sound.

FM, on the other hand, was “. . . coming colors in the air!”

((((((RADIO WAVES))))))

.....1987-1975.....

This triumph over Top 40's bubble gum mentality was certainly a milestone, but it was, nonetheless, a bittersweet victory for me. It was wonderful that FM radio, and the artists we played, were finally being heard by a growing number of people. But why, we asked ourselves, was the audience listening to KASH, and not the hipper alternative of RADIO KAOS? Well like everything else, be it a flower, a human being, or a social movement, *everything* grows from its center, out.

Ripple in still water
When there is no pebble tossed
Nor wind to blow
You who choose
To lead must follow
But if you fall
You fall alone
If you should stand
Then who's to guide you?
If I knew the way
I would take you home.
—The Grateful Dead

Like radio waves emanating from a tower, FM's audience was also growing in concentric circles. From a small but highly loyal community whose lives interacted with its music, FM was now expanding its signal to include an ever-growing number of people who merely "dug the tunes." And it seemed that the more our audience grew, the further removed it became from the original intent of the medium. Though a lot more people were listening to the music we played, not all felt the communion we shared between the songs and the world around us.

We justified this by telling ourselves that KASH was, in fact, serving as a bridge to ease the masses out of Bobby Vinton and into Bob Dylan. Our hope was that, after exposure to the kind of music we were playing, this larger audience would begin to understand FM's approach, and thus be prepared for something with a bit more depth in the presentation. In other words, if RADIO KAOS were to get the big numbers, maybe Hai would drop this format shit, and let us do real radio again.

Of course, from the standpoint of the corporate beehive in New York, things couldn't be better. In fact, for most people in radio, "winning" is what it's all about. And because radio is such a risky way to make a living, you are *never*, under any

circumstances, supposed to look success in the mouth: Just keep feeding it.

Well I love success as much as anybody else, but "winning" wasn't why I got into radio. I am also in the minority. Without question, ninety percent of the people who make money in the radio game are motivated solely and completely by the goal of winning, by any means, and at any price. They're called salesmen, and by and large, these boys would gladly have Qaddafi on the air wearing the American flag as a turban, demanding that sheep eyes be substituted for apple pie as our national dessert, if it would get them another tenth of a point in the ratings. The sales department, by the way, is the usual breeding ground for general managers. Normally, GMs evolve from the logic swamps of sales and marketing, not from the creative tide pools of programming.

For this reason, most people in radio, outside of the air staff, couldn't care less *what* went on the air, as long as it sells. The funny thing is, they're right. I've never heard of a sales executive being called un-American for selling commercial time to a giant multinational company whose product is killing our environment. I have yet to read one scathing letter to a general manager demanding that a salesman be fired for selling ad time to a corporation that is undercutting the American worker by using cheap overseas labor.

But try to go on the air and question why some of our highest elected officials are able to squeeze the U.S. Constitution like a roll of Charmin, and believe me, you will get a response. It seems that substance is subversive, profit is patriotic.

After the death of George McCarther, Hai moved me into George's old time slot, 6:00 to 10:00 P.M. Losing the General was a sad way to find one's niche in life, but it was immediately clear that nights were where I belonged. I loved making radio by moonlight. A nocturnal creature from birth, I've always felt most comfortable after dark.

There is a special connection with the audience at night. After people get home from work or school, radio has the opportunity to become something more than mere background music. At night, the relationship between DJ and listener can be transformed into a mystical intercourse between shaman and tribe, both enraptured by the spell of rock 'n' roll emanating from a forbidden radio in the dark.

So there I was, working for the biggest FM rock station in L.A., at the top of the ratings, making good money for the time, and surrounded by close friends such as J. J. and Damion. Even Hai Ku had given up on trying to keep me quiet over the air, because the ratings seemed to prove what I had known all along: The more I spoke my mind, the more truthful I tried to be with my listeners, the more my audience would respond. This was a lesson which I've never forgotten, although every program director I've ever worked for wishes I had.

Yes, by all accounts I had it made. But there was something missing, something that meant far more to me than merely winning the game. I wasn't proud of the way I was playing. Although Hai had lightened up a bit, it still wasn't possible to play songs in thematic sets. The cuts still came up in random order as dictated by the format, and trying to couple thoughts and feelings with the lyrical content of the music was virtually impossible.

And without the ability to do this, what was it that made FM different? Where was the link between the music and the street? Where was the secret code of sexual innuendo and political double entendre to help unlock the change? Where was the tribal drum?

If you felt strongly about a story in the news that day about pollution, but couldn't follow your opinion with a song about the environment, why make the point? It would sound pretty stupid to make the statement anyway, when the only song you were allowed to play next was Carly Simon's "You're So Vain." Or let's say you were moved to eloquence by the sight of a particularly bodacious pair of ta tas. How could you follow that thought with the Beatles singing "Taxman"?

This was particularly frustrating during the Watergate scandals, when it seemed more important than ever for FM to remain its outspoken and deviant self. This lack of freedom to perform my craft, and the shackles which the format placed on artistic expression, were becoming unbearable. I had to find a creative outlet, or resign myself to Maalox milkshakes.

"I don't know what the fuck to do," I told Shelly as we sat outside on the patio. "I love the people at the station, everyone gets along great, you and I have never made this much money in our lives, but I hate not being able to do real radio anymore."

"You're not doing the kind of show you want," she said,

“but you don’t exactly follow the format to the letter either. You get away with more than anybody there.”

“But it’s just cutting corners, shuffling the cards so that occasionally we can put two songs back to back that vaguely fit together. We can’t really say anything, except between the lines. We’re not taking chances on any new bands. We’re not using a tenth of our talent. It’s maddening.”

“I know it is,” Shelly said patiently, having heard all this many times before, “but what choice do we have?”

That was always the question. I couldn’t go back to KBRK even if they could pay me what I was making. I certainly wasn’t ever going to work for a Top 40 station, and the only other FM in town was RADIO KAOS. My options were limited.

The answer was to be found in yet another innocent-looking memo on the bulletin board. While still young enough to believe that people really got jobs by answering one of these things, I read with great interest that the network that owned KASH was soliciting ideas for a ninety-minute rock show to be syndicated nationally.

I had been giving some thought for a while to developing an interview-music show featuring the artists that FM was playing. Although you certainly could read an in-depth interview with Jerry Garcia in *Rolling Stone*, you never heard these people speak unless you lived in a big city. Certainly in L.A., Boston, or New York, a band might drop by the local FM station while on tour. But if you lived in a small town, or if your town didn’t have an FM station yet, your only option was the occasional “Dick Cavett Show,” or once in a great while someone might appear on Johnny Carson. And although I believe Johnny Carson to be the very best in the business at what he does (not to mention his influence on my decision to get into radio), and I regard Cavett as one of the most intellectually astute people ever to host a talk show, in those early days, the questions usually dealt with length of hair, not the message of the music.

I wanted to create a forum in which the artists who were making these extraordinary statements could be questioned by someone who actually *listened* to the songs they wrote. Armed with the belief that there must be thousands of other people who felt as I did, and with absolutely no knowledge whatsoever about national radio syndication, I went to an office on Hollywood Boulevard and pitched my idea to the guy who would be

producing the show for the network. Fortunately for me, somebody at the corporate beehive must have made a mistake and hired this guy sight unseen from New York. Because as it turned out, he had actually heard of Pink Floyd.

His name was Ralph Bolton, and happily I didn't have to explain (as I was forced to on previous occasions when trying to generate interest in this idea) that "yes, even though these are rock musicians I will be interviewing, I assure you they can talk"; and "no, playing electric guitar does not in itself cause a person's gray matter to short-circuit."

I explained to Ralph why this type of show was important, and how I planned to link the subjects that would be discussed in the interview to the lyrical content of the songs. As I described for him an approach that would fall somewhere between "60 Minutes" and a kick-ass hour of rock 'n' roll, his eyes began to light up. Finally, I explained that I could not only do the interviewing myself, but write and host the show as well.

About a week later Ralph called to tell me that I'd gotten the job, *but*, "the network boys back in New York didn't like the name you suggested for the show," Ralph said, pausing to let this sink in. "They told me that 'Innerview' was much too esoteric for the sheep in the audience to comprehend. After all, if *they* didn't understand it?" Ralph cleared his throat and continued, "It seems that a middle management brain trust was formed, and the name most saluted when run up the flagpole was: 'The Every Other Sunday Stereo Special.'"

"The what?" I said, not believing my own ears.

"The Every Other Sunday Stereo Special,'" he repeated. "What do you think?"

I thought he was kidding. He wasn't. So I was now the host of the network's first foray into radio syndication, "The Every Other Sunday Stereo Special."

Despite losing the battle over the name of the show, I felt that I had won back some of the freedom that I'd lost to the format. I was elated to have found a balance between the need to feed my family and my hunger for a creative outlet. Now I could go into KASH and perform at the forty percent of my ability which the format allowed, and not feel frustrated at the end of the day.

There were thirteen "Every Other Sunday Stereo Specials" in all. These included shows with the Eagles, the Grateful Dead, and Jethro Tull. Not bad for a new idea, but at the

time, no one else was doing anything like this except on the local level. And then, it was usually a live in-studio visit, without the luxury of production or editing for content, which was the whole point of the show.

Without question, the most memorable interview of that first series was my encounter with John Lennon. After I had done all of six or seven interviews, I was of course beginning to picture myself as the new Edward R. Murrow of radio. John Lennon had just released his latest album, *Walls And Bridges*, and KHJ was touting an exclusive interview with him. Well, I went berserk! A Top 40 station got an interview with Lennon? Did we need more "Moptop" questions this many years after the Beatles had broken up? Did they even *know* that the Beatles had broken up?

I couldn't believe it! Wasn't Lennon's management aware of my vast journalistic track record in this area? Didn't they understand that this was *FM radio*, the voice of the people? And didn't John Lennon have a right, if not a solemn duty, to speak to the "real" people? Most importantly of all, I *really* wanted to do an "innerview" of John Lennon—even if it was going to be called "The Every Other Sunday Stereo Special."

Well I bucked up my courage, and with more balls than sense (or business acumen), I phoned Capitol Records and got hold of a very understanding guy in the promotion department. I wish I could remember his name, because he listened so politely to my rantings about "people's radio," and the "support we in FM had given John Lennon in his solo career," and how "FM was the voice of the revolution," and on, and on, and on. Well finally, I let this poor guy get a word in, and he promised faithfully to discuss the matter with his boss and get back to me.

"Oh yeah! Well listen pal," I screamed, not really hearing what he'd said at first. "I'm trying to tell you that nobody on earth can do an interview of John Lennon the way I—oh, uh, thank you. I'll wait for your call."

Three days later I got a call at home from Capitol Records, informing me that my request for an interview with John Lennon had been approved. It was scheduled to take place in two weeks, at the Record Plant in New York. I couldn't wait to see the look on Hai's face when I told him, especially since he was one of the people who assured me that nobody in his right mind would be interested in an interview show on FM.

“You won’t believe what I’ve just done,” I said in a voice loud enough for all to hear as I swaggered into Hai’s office. “You will never guess in a million years, but I can tell you this, you aren’t paying me nearly enough.” I waited for Hai to ask me what I was talking about, but when he didn’t even look up from his desk, I puffed up a little further and began again. “You are going to be kissing my ass in Macy’s window when I tell—”

“You got an interview with John Lennon,” Hai interrupted, obviously pleased at deflating my balloon. “You’ll never make it out of New York alive.”

“What do you mean I’ll never make it out of New York alive?” I said. “And how did you know about it?”

“I’ve told you before,” said Hai, “I know everything. By the way, have you ever been to New York before?”

“Well no,” I said in disbelief, “but what has that got to do with the fact that I just landed an exclusive interview with John fucking Lennon?”

Paying absolutely no attention to my question, Hai continued, “I knew a guy who went to New York his first time once. He was from L.A. just like you. Nice laid-back Southern California kid, never been further east than Anaheim. He got shipped back in seventeen individually wrapped containers.” As it turned out, Hai had gotten a call from a friend of his at Capitol about ten minutes after I did, and this was just Hai’s way of saying congratulations.

Every single evening for the next two weeks when I came in for work, Hai would “start spreading the news” of yet another horror story involving mugging and mayhem in “New York, N.Y.” When Hai went home for the night, J. J. and Damion took over the tag team paranoia duties. J. J. normally covered muggings and armed robberies as I came on the air, and Damion would brief me on murders and kidnappings as I left for home. By the time I finally landed at Kennedy Airport, I was ready to surrender my wallet to the stewardess if only she wouldn’t shoot me before I got off the plane.

I took a cab to my hotel, where there was a room that the station had provided via a network trade-out. Actually it was a luxury suite overlooking Central Park, and it was bigger than my entire house. This place had to cost at least five hundred dollars a night, and as I surveyed what were to be my quarters for the next three days, I began to gain a new appre-

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ciation for the benefits of “beehive employment.” Although the suite was the definition of posh taste and moneyed elegance, I was most fascinated by the door to my rooms. It contained, by actual count, eight separate locks. Eight locks on one door? What did the previous occupant keep in here, plutonium? No, this was New York City.

It was about 7:30 A.M., and having been on the red eye all night, I wanted to crash. But I had to call Capitol’s New York office at nine o’clock to confirm where and when we were going to tape the interview. Deciding to stay awake until after making the call, I ordered some breakfast, and turned on the TV.

So there I was, stripped down to a pair of Levi’s—no shirt, no shoes, no socks, hair to the middle of my back, eating breakfast in a suite overlooking Central Park—watching Marlon Brando threaten Maria Schneider with a dead rat and a cube of butter?

Okay, I know that some people on the East Coast love to think of us California types as something less than sophisticated, “but hey dude check it out,” this was a good two years before anyone I knew had even heard of cable TV. Suddenly finding myself watching *Last Tango in Paris* while eating cornflakes was definitely an eye-opener.

Having lost my appetite for the link sausage and buttered toast that lay there on my plate, I decided to get rid of the breakfast, table and all. I unlocked all eight deadbolts, opened the door, rolled the tray outside the room into the hall . . . and heard the door slam shut behind me. Standing there half-naked in the hallway, I listened in total disbelief to the sound of the eight half-inch steel rods slip through eight separate aluminum chambers, and complete their mission to protect my life and property with eight individual clicks. *Shit!* Locked out again.

I thought for a moment that I was experiencing some weird flashback. Fortunately I came to my senses before attempting to get back in through the window, since these were located on the eighteenth floor. Where was my room key you ask? On the nightstand right next to my wallet.

Well there was nothing else to do. So I got into an empty elevator, and consoled myself with the knowledge that although it was going to be a little embarrassing explaining to the desk clerk why this bleary-eyed out-of-towner was standing in his

lobby wearing nothing but a pair of jeans and a dumb look on his, and asking, "Would you please give me the key to room 1804?" at least it was so early, no one else would be in the lobby.

The elevator doors opened, and a crowd of twenty people who stood waiting to enter let out a collective gasp. No one moved, except those who had to clear a small aisle down the center of what was quickly becoming a mob. As I hurried out into the packed hotel lobby, I overheard one of the onlookers remark, "Hey, yo. What is dis guy, from California or what?"

After numerous assurances to the desk clerk that, yes, I was in fact a representative of one of the big three networks, and, "Yes you're right, I am from L.A.," he finally produced the duplicate key to 1804. I hurried back up to my room, this time sharing the elevator with a different group of amused New Yorkers. So far perhaps it wasn't the coolest entrance ever made in the Big Apple, but it killed some time, and after making my nine o'clock phone call, I went to sleep.

My contact at Capitol's New York office was kind enough to send a car to the hotel at three o'clock that afternoon, having realized I was not combat qualified to take a cab around the block, much less across midtown Manhattan. So there I was, twenty-six years old, seeing New York City for the very first time from the back of a limo, en route to meet John Lennon.

After a thirty-minute ride through Manhattan, I arrived at the world-famous Record Plant recording studios. I checked in with the girl at the front desk, and took a seat in the lobby. As I sat there waiting for Lennon to arrive, I began to recall some of the early Beatle press conferences I'd seen on TV. Suddenly, my mind was flooded with the images of John Lennon's wry grin, as he verbally dismembered some reporter who'd asked him a stupid question. A large bead of sweat formed on my upper lip. I was beginning to get paranoid. Real paranoid.

What if Lennon hates my questions and refuses to answer anything? What if I end up going back to L.A. without the interview, what then? I'll never live it down. The damn hotel bill would probably be more than I made in a week and, oh no—Hai. He will never let me hear the end of it.

After about ten minutes of this kind of self-induced angst, in walked John Lennon. He was wearing a black crushed velvet coat, black T-shirt, black pants, and a gray cap cocked to one side. We were introduced, he shook my hand with a warm smile, and we were escorted to an office where

we could conduct the taping. During our journey down the corridor, Lennon greeted everyone he saw by name, asking the secretaries about their kids, joking with the engineers, and generally infecting the place with laughter.

We were shown into a private office, John sat down behind the desk, and I took a seat opposite him on the other side. The guy from the record company told us that we had "forty-five minutes tops," and split. I had forty-five minutes to ask every question I'd been compiling in my head since the first time I ever heard *Meet the Beatles*.

As I unpacked my recording equipment, we talked about a mutual friend of ours, Elliot Mintz. Elliot had just sent John a meditation pyramid for his birthday. It was a canvas tent designed to amplify the meditative state by letting one chant one's mantra inside a pyramid, thus enhancing the benefits of Transcendental Meditation with "pyramid power." John loved the gift, and the day it arrived he had spent several hours assembling the pyramid's aluminum poles and canvas walls on the roof of his apartment at the Dakota. Unfortunately, that same night a huge gust of wind blew the ancient geometric configuration off the roof. John made me promise not to tell Elliot, and I have kept his secret all these many years until now.

As we continued chatting I plugged the microphone into the tape recorder, checked the levels, and was about to start the tape when, to my horror, I discovered that I'd neglected to bring a mike stand. There was nothing to hold this most essential piece of equipment during the interview, and I didn't want to make him uncomfortable by having to shove the microphone back and forth into his face after every question. As I was about to hit circuitry overload, Lennon noticed the mounting perspiration on my forehead, and set about improvising on his own. With an inverted coffee cup, a stack of books, and some Scotch tape, the man who had created some of the most powerful and enduring music of all time invented what, to me, was the world's most beautiful mike stand.

"How is your frame of mind as we sit here in 1974?" I asked as my opening question.

"Well I'm as happy as I've ever been you know," replied Lennon. "I mean I don't think any of us are happy, but I don't think we're all miserable. It's an old cliché that I've been saying for years, but 'it's heaven and hell every day,' and I just swing with it as it goes along you know."

“At the moment, I’m fairly happy, I’m pleased with the album, the album’s doing well so that helps make the heaven of the day a little better you know. But I think happiness comes whether you’re doing well or not doing well. It doesn’t seem to have anything to do with how you’re doing half the time.

“I don’t ever think of meself as a professional or a non-professional. The work is just part of me life. That’s why, say I’m not in the studio, I might be on the piano or I’m just thinking music all the time, so it’s not like a separate thing which I approach, it’s just, that’s how I am. It just happens to be the job I do.”

“How close do you feel you get on vinyl to what you hear inside your head before you record a song?” I asked, lighting up a cigarette.

“It’s usually a moment on a track,” said John. “You know I’m always looking for whatever it is, and I’m sure I’ll never find it, that’s why we go on and on etc., etc. But there’ll be a couple of bars on a track that’s just what I want to hear, but I can never sustain it for three minutes or four minutes, not *exactly* what I want. And there’s very few records that I ever hear that can really hold me for that whole record. It’s just how much buzz you can get out of whatever record for how long.”

“John,” I asked, “during the Beatles’ psychedelic period, you guys kept a lot of people awake nights playing their albums at slower speeds, or recording them on tape to play backwards and all kinds of things. Were there messages hidden in those songs or . . .”

“No, it was pure artistic expression,” explained Lennon. “If we were talking in terms of painting you know, an artist might have his blue period, his green period, and his brown period, you know? It was just purely music to us. And as we discovered more about music through one form or another, we transmitted it to the records and then it went out to the public. And we had a few little games like putting ‘he he he’ or slightly double entendre expression in the background to see if anybody got it, and we knew people were listening hard. It’s like a personal message, even if it’s something dumb like a Monty Python kind of joke, I still get off on that. I put all sorts of little pieces in records, but they’re not meant to be cosmic philosophies, they’re just, you know, little jokes. It’s like having a late night talk show, that you only put out twice a year.”

“Would you accept the term ‘philosopher’ as well as musician within the definition of what you do?” I asked.

Lennon thought for a moment. He then answered, “I wouldn’t claim to be a philosopher, only inasmuch as I am interested in philosophy, whatever that is. I would never study it and I don’t have that kind of mind to study things. But I pick at all the philosophies that are around whether it comes out of a Stones record or out of some old Indian proverb book. If it says it, it says it. And that’s philosophy.

“I consider meself a musician-artist, which I think is all the same kind of game. And artists are a kind of mirror of society, and they’re not some luxury for society. Although that’s the way most musicians, artists, or actors, etc. are treated, as a kind of peripheral icing on the cake of life. But I don’t believe that, and I think it’s important what we do, and we have to keep telling ourselves that.

“The artistic life is the life where the artist gets up in the morning and he doesn’t go to the office, so therefore he has time to look at life. While a lot of other people have to get on with a certain kind of physical reality about life, and they haven’t any time to think or look at what’s going on, because they’re busy doing it. Which is cool, you know, and if they can do it that’s fine. Whereas the artist sits back from society and looks at it, and draws a picture of it, and says, ‘Hey this is what I saw today.’ And when the nonartist has time to look at it, sometimes they don’t like what they see. They say, ‘I don’t look like that.’ You know it’s [like] when people first hear their voice on a tape recorder or first see a photograph of themselves they say ‘Do I look like that?’ ‘Do I sound like that?’ An artist is like a tape recorder or a camera. It says *yes* this is you, deal with it.”

“Let’s talk about your ongoing hassles with immigration,” I said as I checked my list of questions, “and the fact that the U.S. government is trying desperately to get you deported.”

“Well, I was getting pretty depressed about it,” said John. “Because it’s something that won’t go away.”

“You know after being hassled for so long by this country,” I began, “I’m really interested to know what it is about America that makes you want to stay here so bad.”

Lennon thought this over and said, “I think if there’s any hope in the world, America’s it. However much bad side it has, it’s only like human beings you know, we’re not saints.

And if there's anything cookin' or any hope in the world, America has it. It has the energy and everything else, and that's why I want to be here. I feel comfortable here. Luckily, I speak the same language, almost. So I really feel at home here. I never really felt a stranger. You know the music is international. That's another cliché but it's true. And American music was what I was brought up on. It feels quite natural for me to be here. The only unnatural happening is them keep telling me to leave."

"What's your vision of the future?"

"For all of us?" he asked.

"Yes."

"It's hard to see the future, I'm not a very good futurologist, you know. I believe that we get whatever we project . . . somehow I couldn't . . . it's putting it very simply, but somehow I believe that. Example. Somebody like Leonardo da Vinci projected that we would fly in machines or go under the water and we did that. So that's why I feel that projecting love and peace is important. Even though we're all human and I get violent and I'm not always peaceful, that's what I *want*. So I think if I project that then we're gonna get it.

"And maybe it's never going to be different and it's always going to be like this, and maybe we've got to settle for that. But if there is any change to be made, I think it has as much to do with attitude and projection of thoughts, as it has with actually physically changing things.

"If you get down to the nitty-gritty, it's almost the old battle between good and evil, for want of better words. Cause I know 'there's no such thing as good, there's no such thing as evil,' I don't want to go into all those philosophical games. But the fact is it seems to be one against the other, and the game seems to be that it's going on anyway, but if you don't do anything about it, in however slight a way, then one side or other gets a slight advantage. So even though it seems like one does something in vain like want peace or say they want peace or whatever, and your critics say 'Well you didn't get peace John. You sang about peace but you never got it,' I think, What would have happened if we *hadn't* said that? All of us together, you know, not me, I'm just the guy that's singing the song to represent what's being said on the street. What would have happened had none of us done that in the sixties, how would it be now? So I believe in the positive side of it."

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I paused for a moment while he lit a cigarette, then asked, "What do you feel was the overall effect of the sixties on our generation?"

"I think that a majority of us *were* changed by whatever was going on in the sixties," he said with emphasis. "And I think a lot of changes did happen, however subtly. And they happened and you can never, and this is something Yoko always says, 'You can never unknow what you know,' and we all *know* something. Whatever it was that we found out, or discovered for ourselves. Maybe every generation finds it and it's up to them to decide what to do once they find out certain realities about life.

"I think when our generation goes into middle age, that's the decision that we'll have to make. Whether to carry that slight torch of light that we all saw, and I'm saying maybe every generation sees it and then decides what to do with it you know? Whether we keep the light *lit*, or just say forget it and let the next generation handle this because I've had enough now, I want me car and me wife and I've decided to settle down instead."

The guy could not have been nicer or easier to talk to. Although it was obvious that I was new at this, he could see I was sincere, and he seemed pleased to talk about his music and his life. He looked you right in the eye when he spoke. He was funny, thoughtful, and direct. To this day, the only regret I have about this whole experience is that I wish I could have done the interview a few years later, when I really knew what the hell I was doing. Because he was a pro, however, I left New York with more than enough material to put together a wonderful ninety minutes of radio.

I arrived back in L.A. feeling wonderful, triumphant, on top of the world, only to learn that the network was going to cancel "The Every Other Sunday Stereo Special." They said that they couldn't figure out how to sell it. Couldn't figure out how to sell an exclusive interview with John Lennon? Apparently, news of the Beatles hadn't as yet penetrated the hinterland of network sales. Well, this was a problem I did not expect. This giant money machine couldn't find Fort Knox with a metal detector. I couldn't accept this, not now, not after I had seen my idea work on a programming level. Once again, being young and stubborn came to the rescue.

I discussed the situation with Damion and a mutual friend of ours by the name of Jude S. Papers. Jude had moved out to L.A. about a year before, and in that time, the three of us had become inseparable. Jude had one of the quickest minds of anybody I'd ever met, and when it came to humor with an edge, Jude used wit like a poison dart. Jude was the very best we had at our favorite game of truth called, Let's Insult Somebody. I kid you not, we made bets at parties on who would be Jude's main target for the night, and how long he would last before someone would have to call the paramedics.

Damion, Jude, and I decided to syndicate the show ourselves. We would be full partners, and between the three of us, build our own network of FM stations. We were joined by the salesman who had helped me get the gig at KASH. It would be his job to get the sponsors; the rest was up to us.

Our first big break was Alice Cooper. A friend of mine by the name of Denny Vosburgh was working for Alice Cooper's manager, Shep Gordon. Jude and I went to Shep and explained our situation. We couldn't get stations to sign up for the show without a major act to offer them, and we couldn't very well ask an artist for an interview without a network of stations to run the show.

We then explained to Shep and Denny that if they would pay for the studio and an engineer, we would give them a killer in-depth interview with Alice. They could then give this to a radio station in each city Alice would be visiting, as a way to promote his upcoming concert tour. After the tour, ownership of the show would revert back to us, and we could then use it to start our company.

Shep Gordon, Denny Vosburgh, and Alice Cooper took a chance on us, and I will always be grateful to them. We did the interview with Alice, and then spent the next month writing and producing what is to this day one of the most theatrical ninety minutes of rock radio ever aired.

Armed with an interview of Alice Cooper, we went to work signing up radio stations to carry the show. Jude and I did this from the front room of the house he shared with Damion. Calling across the country every day for two months, paying for the phone bills and mailing costs out of our own pockets, we signed up enough stations to finally land a sponsor. The show that the big boys in the network couldn't make fly as "The Every Other Sunday Stereo Special," was born again as "Interview."

Although Hai was never a big fan of the idea, he was our friend, and agreed to run the show on KASH. In radio syndication you must have L.A. and New York, or sponsors won't even look at you, so this was a big help.

"Innerview" was off and running. The response from listeners as well as programmers across the country was phenomenal. Stations were signing up in droves, record companies saw the show's promotional potential and began calling us to book their bands. The sponsors were happy, and we were proud of the programs we were creating. Less than six months after the network had dropped the show, "Innerview" had become the hottest FM syndication property in the country.

Of course, things were working out far too smoothly to continue. The growing success of "Innerview," and therefore the growing success of two of KASH's indentured servants, raised a huge red flag inside the hexagonal cubbyholes of network headquarters.

One day Hai called Damion and me into his office. He seemed nervous as he closed the door and motioned for us to sit down. It was obvious that something was wrong.

"I don't, uh, I don't know how to say this, but I've just received a letter from the legal department in New York," Hai stuttered as he began to read from the ominous piece of paper. "It says that because 'Innerview' is no longer produced by the network, you both are in violation of corporate policy as regards to talent exclusively."

Damion and I looked at each other. "What the hell does that mean?" I asked.

"It means," said Hai, "that according to network guidelines, air talent is not allowed to work on any outside projects without the express written permission of the company. I'm afraid it's in the your contract, it's in everybody's contract, you can look it up."

"Oh, I get it. This is the payback for that little kite string joke in your office," I said. "Who told you it was Damion that did it?"

"I'm not kidding, you know how these guys are when they get a bug up their ass. They mean it, ya gotta give up 'Innerview,' or you'll be fired."

I thought Damion was going to come unglued right there. "Hai you know as well as I do that these bastards had the show for thirteen weeks and couldn't sell it, even with that ultrahip

name they came up with. Now we get it off the ground, and suddenly it's wrong to be producing it ourselves?"

Hai shook his head. "I know, I know, it's dumb. I've left a message with Winnaman's secretary that I need to see him when he gets back from lunch. Maybe he'll have a way around this. I'm sorry guys. I know this isn't fair at all."

I didn't know if it was because we were succeeding where they had failed, or if they were afraid that we were somehow becoming too happy and content with our lives. I didn't even know who "they" were. All I knew was that some corporate lawyer bee had sent this memo to Hai informing him that the network didn't want any of their worker bees showing this kind of incentive. Apparently it was bad for hive morale.

We fought it every way we could. We even offered the network a piece of the business, suggesting the obviously insane idea that "since they already were a network, and we had found a way to make this thing profitable, why not combine our efforts?"

The answer was no.

Both Hai Ku and John Winnaman, neither of whom had any personal stake in the show, wrote letters on our behalf and did everything in their power to find a way around this policy. They even tried to convince their bosses that letting us continue would not be harmful to the hive, and might, in fact, prove to be beneficial.

The answer was no.

This was a maddening turn of events. Damion, Jude, and I believed in what we were doing. It gave us great joy to work hard on something we could be proud of again. We had invested ourselves in a project that we knew was breaking new ground, and it felt good. If it hadn't been so well received by the audience and stations around the country, or if we had failed because we were doing poor-quality shows, we could have understood it. But this was a completely abject decision, a mindless regulation made all the more vicious by its total lack of regard for what we'd done, or how it would affect us personally.

After four years with KASH, somebody three thousand miles away, whom we had never even met, issued an ultimatum via interoffice memo and changed everything:

Confine yourself to the role of corporate worker, or leave the hive.

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PART TWO

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CHAPTER NINE

BREAK ON THROUGH

You know the day destroys the night
Night divides the day
Try to run, try to hide
Break on through to the other side
Break on through to the other side
Break on through to the other side yeah
—The Doors

WRITING MY letter of resignation to Hai was the worst part. He had done everything he could to try and reverse the network's decision. He had taught me more about professional radio in four years than I would have learned anywhere else in ten. And he was my friend.

Some people thought I should be committed, some were convinced that I must have taken the "brown acid" at Woodstock. Others hinted that professional help might be in order, and one concerned soul suggested that a .38 to the temple would be a more honorable means of career suicide.

I just wanted to do real radio again. Where, wasn't the issue.

The situation confronting me was this: I was twenty-seven years old. I had a wife and three adopted kids, four-

teen, sixteen, and seventeen years of age. In addition to the children, Shelly and I had also collected a small menagerie which included three dogs, four cats, one hamster, a Pinto mouse, and Shelly's pet monkey. Our rent was about to go up dramatically, we had a car that was headed for the afterlife, and one of the angelfish (did I mention the aquarium?) was suffering from a severe case of fin rot.

It was at this moment that I had to make a career decision that would have the most profound effects on the future of us all. I had two things going for me, two strengths on which to rely: I was the number one rated FM air personality in my time slot, and I had Shelly. God bless Saint Michelle, she has never wavered in these situations. Whenever we have come upon one of these crossroads in life, she has always stood firmly behind me, usually kicking me in the ass to get on with it. And that's just what I did.

Acting as my go-between, Jude placed a call to one F. R. Glutman, general manager of RADIO KAOS. The antithesis of John Winnaman, F. R. Glutman was a self-inflated overweight three-piece suit of a man, commonly known to the employees forced to bob up and down in his enormous wake as "the Hound."

Jude began the conversation with polite reference to the fact that the latest ratings for RADIO KAOS were swirling in the well-known "porcelain bowl," and a rumor had it that the owners of the station were reaching for the handle. Having gotten his attention, Jude then went on to paint a scenario for the Hound that went something like this:

"One of the full-time jocks at KASH is feeling restricted in his current situation, and might entertain a 'change of stations in life.' This person also has a nationally syndicated radio show, and can deliver the biggest names in rock 'n' roll music to RADIO KAOS every week. Shall I go on?"

The Hound wanted a meeting.

Two days later, Jude and I met F. Reginald Glutman for the first time.

I can still picture our drive to the meeting. It was one of those pristine Southern California Saturdays, when you feel like you can do anything. Jude and I pulled into the driveway of a lovely ranch-style house, home of the number-two suit at RADIO KAOS, a "Mr. Ira Steinberg." If the Hound was Moby Dick, then this guy was the Pillsbury Doughboy

turned used-car salesman. Ira was the general sales manager at KAOS, and he was *everybody's* friend.

The Hound was already waiting for us inside, and after the normal round of firm handshakes and offers of refreshment, we got down to business. Both of these gentlemen were very nice to us, made little effort to hide the fact that they were interested, but spent most of the meeting waxing rhapsodically on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from the point at hand to the concept of infinity. These boys had a story about everything.

Jude and I began by suggesting that if I came over to KAOS, it would make sense to put me on in the evenings, since I was already on at night and doing well. That reminded the Hound of something funny which happened one evening "two years, no, two and a half years ago when I was in Cleveland. . . ."

After a major detour down memory lane, Jude would try to steer the conversation back into the current time zone by explaining, "Jim would like it in his contract that 'Interview' will have a guaranteed time slot for as long as he is at KAOS."

The word "slot" would cause a circuit to close in the backwater of Ira's brain, and the Tweedledee of this duo would crack some salesman-level joke about a certain female sexual orifice.

In a desperate attempt to fix a compass reading on the lack of conversational direction, I began to explain my need for creative freedom at RADIO KAOS, and both of them launched into a sidebar debate about the First Amendment as it might relate to Poland.

These guys had less concentration than Abbott and Costello.

When the meeting finally ended, I went home to consider their offer. It was a tough call. On the one hand, I could simply sign a new contract with KASH and remain in familiar surroundings. The money was good, and at that moment, it was as close to secure as it ever gets in this business. But it would mean that I'd have to give up "Innerview" completely, and resign myself to the format. And that meant giving up any notions of free-form radio for at least another three years.

In the yang column, going to RADIO KAOS meant that

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“Innerview” would be on the air in L.A. It would mean a raise in salary, and most importantly, the chance to do real FM radio again. But it would also mean leaving the number-one rocker in town, for a station at the very bottom of the ratings. Most of all it would mean leaving my friends, people who had become family. In the end, however, the opportunity to play music from my heart instead of the playlist was too good to ignore.

Standing there, letter in hand, I tried with shaky voice and stammering logic to explain to Hai how difficult this decision had been. Even as tense and maladroit moments go, this was a real bitch. I was trying to sever the ties of employment, without cutting the cord of friendship.

When it was finally time to leave, I took a last walk through the hallways and offices of the bunker, and said my good-byes. The conversation with John Winnaman was tough. I always liked John, and I tried to explain to him how grateful I was for my time at his station. John Winnaman treated me like he treated all his employees, with courtesy, respect, and fairness. I didn’t know it then, but I was shaking hands with the last GM I would ever work for whom I could really trust. I’m not real good at farewells, especially with people I’m close to, but everyone from the jocks to the secretaries wished me well.

As I found out later, Hai’s first call after I had left the building was to Damion. “Ladd just hung up his jockstrap because of this ‘Innerview’ business. What are you going to do?”

With Ginger Baker timing, Damion answered: “I’m going to take a shower, I’ll call ya back.” Typical Hai, typical Damion.

It was hard leaving the bunker, but I had tried to do it honorably. I’d done everything possible to find a way of living within the rules of the hive, but it was obvious that I just wasn’t cut out to be a bee.

In the real world, what I’d just done didn’t mean shit to a tree. But within the close-knit universe of the L.A. music business, my “defection” caused quite a stir. Within an hour, it was the hottest rumor on the street. Most of the folks at the record labels, as well as the other stations in town, understood why I had to leave. But some of the reverberations went something like this:

“Did you hear what that crazy son of a bitch Ladd did? He *voluntarily* quit KASH.”

“He quit?”

“He quit the number-one-rated FM station, in the second-biggest market in the country. This *is* L.A. for God sakes!”

“What the hell for?”

“Get this, for his ‘art.’”

“His art?”

“You got it. Said he couldn’t take doing the format anymore. But I heard it was because KASH dropped that syndicated show he was doing.”

“Christ, he gives up a *network* gig in L.A. Has this guy skipped a groove or what?”

“Wait a minute, that’s not even close to the best part. Where do you think he’s going?”

“One of the other networks?”

“Oh no, try a certain local station that’s getting its ass kicked.”

“No, you can’t mean RADIO KAOS?”

There was no turning back now, the deed was done. After six years as a fan of L.A.’s most notorious radio frequency, I was about to enter the rebel camp. I was going to free-form heaven, 94.7, RADIO KAOS.

KAOS was only half an inch to the left of KASH on the dial, but it was worlds apart from the bunker. The studios and offices of RADIO KAOS were housed in an innocuous four-story office building on Wilshire Boulevard. It was located directly across the street from the world-famous La Brea tar pits, that bubbling churning tomb of the unknown dinosaur, still regurgitating the odd diplodocus jawbone after 140 million years of evolution. Just as KASH shared a building with the dogmatically conservative KGAB, RADIO KAOS shared its facility with KCWB-AM. And in some cosmic joke of right-wing, left-wing balance, KCWB played all country-western, all the time.

Unlike the sterile corporate condo of KASH, the lobby of this building was not only lacking a security guard, it looked like the *front doors* came as an afterthought. No, this was not a “radio complex,” this was rented office space in a brick tax shelter.

Arriving for my first meeting with the program director, I walked through the vacant lobby to the elevator, and

pushed the button. The doors opened immediately, and I stepped into the world's smallest public lift. It was a rickety old antique, last inspected by someone who had issued the safety permit in longhand, scrawled on a crinkled parchment certificate. Imagine spending the last four years of your life in a black-and-white 1940s melodrama starring Jimmy Stewart and Bette Davis. Then one day, you take a ride in this shaky old elevator, and when the doors open, you step out into a Technicolor Pepperland from *Yellow Submarine*.

Unlike the more ordered hallway conduct that I had become accustomed to at the bunker, the corridors of KAOS were just that, chaos. People were laughing, joking, hanging out, and by all appearances, having one hell of a party at 6:00 P.M. on a Monday. There was a familiar, pungent scent in the air, which told me that although these people might not be winning in the ratings, they certainly had better connections, and in higher places, than we got with KASH. Except for the Hound and Ira Steinberg, there wasn't a suit in sight! It felt like coming home.

This was my first peek inside the "outlaws'" camp. And, like Black Bart's hideout in the B Westerns, this place looked the part. I was about to meet the gang, and I was nervous. Coming from a station which the staff of RADIO KAOS viewed as an "establishment sellout," I quickly learned that I wasn't automatically in the gang just because I'd gotten the gig. I understood this. It was up to me to prove that I could do free-form radio. After all, these people only knew me from "Rock 'N' Stereo K-A-S-H."

My first dose of this "prove it, punk" attitude came when I entered the air studio for the very first time. It was my intention to introduce myself to the lady on the air, Mega Turnon. I had been a fan of Mega's from the moment I first heard her. She was obviously bright, classy, and very professional. She had a style so uniquely her own, that once you heard Mega, you never forgot her, or confused her with anyone else.

Mega was helping to create the mold for women on FM radio. She did this by not resorting to the stereotypical "breathless pussy" delivery, which conventional wisdom held as the only way a woman could "make it in the business." This doesn't mean that Mega wasn't sexy on the air, far from it. But Mega did it by being herself, and that meant you'd better like your radio fantasies with wit and brains.

It was extremely important to me that Mega and I get along, not only because I respected her work, but because from now on, I would be coming through this door five nights a week, as my shift now followed hers at 10:00 P.M.

I waited for the red On Air light over the studio door to go out, and then stepped inside. Mega looked up from the turntable and stared me right in the eye, but said nothing. I introduced myself, and proceeded to tell her how happy I was to finally get the chance to work at KAOS . . . and how much I'd always admired her talent . . . and how wonderful it was going to be to do real radio again . . . and that I was really looking forward to working with her . . . and . . .

Mega gave me a look of such supreme indifference that the temperature in the studio fell twenty degrees. I believe that her response was something like, "So what?"

The last Ice Age exuded more warmth.

Reeling a bit from this frosty greeting, I was again thrown off-balance by the sight of this Ice Queen. I hadn't given much thought to what Mega would look like, so when the fog in the studio began to clear, I wasn't prepared for the fact that I was being given the brush-off by a girl who could have easily made it as a fashion model. She was obviously aware of her beauty, and she obviously wanted me out of her studio.

Pleading hypothermia, I made a quick exit.

If someone were to have told me then that Mega Turnon would one day become one of my closest friends and the best radio partner I ever had, I would've told *him* to stop taking the brown acid.

A little shaken, I took a deep breath and decided to find the programming office, with the hope that meeting my new boss would go a little more smoothly. Normally, it's the program director who hires the air staff, but because of the delicate circumstances of my defection I had gone straight to the general manager, so first impressions in this case would be doubly important.

Following the directions given me by one of the office workers, I turned into the second doorway on the right, and almost collided with a stepladder blocking the hall. Following the sound of muttered curses, I fixed my gaze on a large sweaty guy at the top of the ladder. Dressed in Levi's, boots, black shirt, and leather vest, and sporting a ponytail about

two feet long, he looked like a cross between a Cherokee Indian and a Hell's Angel.

Before I got the chance to ask if he knew the whereabouts of the program director, my survival reflex forced me to leap back and duck simultaneously to avoid being knocked unconscious by a heavy wooded speaker, viciously thrown from atop the ladder. Still curled in a ball with my arms up over my head, I watched in amazement as the enraged Indian-biker began tearing madly at the remaining loudspeaker to the right of the doorway. Screaming now at full volume, he declared his undying hatred of "shit-kicker music" as he tore at the offending piece of audio equipment with his bare hands. Finally, the heavy wooden box ripped loose from its mountings in a wrenching explosion of dust and drywall, missing me by inches as it crashed to the floor.

Descending the ladder, this madman rushed past me, scooping up the victims of his outrage without even breaking stride. Then, still cursing in longshoremen-ese, he stormed down the hall. Feeling that it was now safe to get up, I poked my head around the corner just in time to catch sight of this lunatic standing in front of the elevator. He signaled to his two accomplices, who were already in position, and they proceeded to pry open the elevator doors. Letting out a loud whoop of delight, he hoisted the now-muted monitors over his head, and with great ceremony, hurled both speakers down the empty elevator shaft.

Standing there in disbelief, I almost jumped out of my skin as a voice directly behind me said: "Don't mind him, he hates it when they play the country station in the hallways."

Wheeling around in total panic, with eyes the size of frisbees, I saw a gorgeous five-foot-six blond. She was wearing a skintight tie-dyed dress, complete with a Suzie Wong slit up the right side, culminating at midhigh.

"You must be the new kid," she said without insult. "I'm Raechel Donahue; you can call me Miz Rae."

Great. Fine. Wonderful. I was standing in front of the woman, who along with her late husband, had invented the very reason I even had a career, while sweat gushed from every pore of my body. "Uh, uh, nice to meet you, uh, I'm Jim Ladd. Maybe I should come back later when—"

With a wave of her hand she cut me off in midsentence, and as she turned to walk away, calmly said over her shoul-

der, "Don't be silly. Just wait in there for a moment. Wanna smoke a joint?"

Thanking God, Allah, Buddha, Jehovah, and the Great Spirit for this time alone to regain my composure, I took a couple of deep breaths, and began to survey the room where Raechel had indicated I should wait. I was standing inside the RADIO KAOS record library, which doubled as Raechel's office. Aside from her 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. air shift, this is where Miz Rae usually hung out, while performing her duties as music director.

The inside of her "office" looked like a Haight-Ashbury poster shop. Every inch of wall space was covered with some sort of rock 'n' roll memorabilia, from the Animals to ZZ Top. It was a welcome change from the corporate condo decor I had just left, where such scandalous displays of interest in the music were strictly forbidden under rule 172, subsection 5, paragraph 16 of the corporate rulebook covering office decorations within a company bunker.

Still smarting from my rather frenzied introduction to the outlaws' camp, I was in the middle of wondering aloud if perhaps I should have listened to my friend's advice about professional counseling when I walked Raechel with the Cherokee biker. Closing the door behind her, Raechel introduced me: "Jim, I'd like you to meet your new program director, Thom O'Guardia. Thom, this is Jim Ladd." As we shook hands for the first time, Thom said, "Welcome aboard, wanna get high?"

Thom pulled a small wooden pipe from his right vest pocket and sat down. From his left pocket he produced a plastic baggie, about half-full of some killer red-haired Hawaiian, and began filling the pipe. Raechel offered him a book of matches, and we began.

A former chief of the Santee-Yanktonai Sioux, a man named Chased by Bears, told of this ancient Indian ritual more than a hundred years ago:

Before talking of holy things, we prepare ourselves by offerings. . . . One will fill his pipe and hand it to the other who will light it and offer it to the sky and earth. . . . They will smoke together. . . . Then will they be ready to talk.

We smoked. And we talked of the tribal drum. And long

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into the night, we passed the sacred calumet back and forth between us, speaking as warriors have done since the long dark nights before electricity. When the pipe was finally extinguished, we felt that we knew something about each other: knew we were cut from the same cloth; knew that we shared a common love and vision for this special kind of radio.

That's what it was like then. You relied on your heart and your instincts. That's what it was like, on my first day in KAOS.

We chased our pleasures here
Dug our treasures there
Well can you still recall
The time we cried
Break on through to the other side
Break on through to the other side
—The Doors

CHAPTER TEN

ROOM FULL OF MIRRORS

I used to live in a room full of mirrors
All I could see was me
I take my spirit and I crash the mirrors
Now the whole world is here for me to see
—Jimi Hendrix

THE MOVE from 95.5 FM to 94.7 FM was merely a flick of the wrist, or the push of a button on the dial. Creatively, however, it was like the difference between East and West Berlin in 1975. My time in the radio gulag was over. This was Checkpoint Charlie, and I could smell freedom. I was eager to speak from the heart again, to choose my own songs again, to follow the muse.

During the next week I spent a lot of time in the bar next to the station, getting to know Thom O'Guardia. He was a hard-drinking fast-talking Irishman, with a bottomless reservoir of blarney. The bar was called the Egg and the I, and was located in the upstairs loft of a small, rather esoteric art gallery. O'Guardia would not have routinely chosen this kind of chi-chi saloon, but the bartender poured Jack Daniel's by the shot, and it was right next door.

Like Raechel, Thom was no "flower power" hippie. That was much too serene for him. Thom was a sharp streetwise operator, who by 1975 had already collected his share of radio battle scars. He had the heart of an optimist, the brain of a cynic, and the soul of a gypsy did Thom O'Guardia, and we hit it off immediately.

Three days before my first show, Raechel and O'Guardia called an air staff meeting to formally welcome me aboard, and rally the troops for the fight ahead. The gathering would also serve as a rite of passage, my initiation into the gang.

As I entered the room where I'd first met Raechel and O'Guardia, it looked like most of the air staff had already arrived. Unlike the meetings at KASH, which were held in a sterile corporate conference room, these gatherings took place in Miz Rae's cramped office-record library. It was the antithesis of a war council. There was no chrome-and-glass table; people sat wherever they could among the stacks of new albums and old *Billboard* magazines. It looked more like an SDS caucus than an air staff meeting.

Mega Turnon had found one of the few chairs available, and sat talking in hushed tones to newsman Ace Young. Ace looked like a poster boy for Southern California—very blond, nearly six feet tall, with a passion for brightly colored Hawaiian shirts. Mega spotted me at the door and nodded for me to approach.

"Ace, this is Jim Ladd," said Mega, in a polite but distant tone.

"Ace, it's a pleasure," I beamed, shaking his hand. "I've been a fan of yours ever since—"

"Oh there you are," chimed in Raechel from out of nowhere. "Well, I see you've met Ace—and I understand that Mega has *already* had the pleasure—oh Beamer! I've got somebody I want you to meet."

Grabbing my arm, this turbo-driven whirlwind propelled me, along with the remainder of my greetings to Ace Young, to the far side of the room.

"Beamer," she said, "this is the new kid, Jim Ladd. He's fresh from the corporate salt mines, and hungry for some real radio. Jim, meet B. Mitchel Reed."

Peering up over his glasses, the dean of L.A. rock radio extended his hand. B. Mitchel Reed was a tall, rather pasty-looking gentleman in his late forties. He had the countenance of a much older man, a man for whom the radio miles had

taken a heavy toll. For twenty years, the Beamer had been one of the most popular, and powerful, Top 40 disc jockeys in the history of L.A.—until he heard FM free-form radio. After just one conversation with Tom Donahue, B. Mitchel Reed chose to walk away from the big paychecks, the fast cars, and a possible television career, to work for starvation wages and a chance to create something revolutionary. He was a true radio legend and it was an honor to meet him.

“B. Mitchel Reed,” I said, pumping his hand, “well this is really an honor for me. I can’t begin to tell you how many times over the years . . .”

“Yeah yeah, he knows he’s an icon,” laughed Raechel as she pulled me along, “you can tell him all that stuff later. We have to get the meeting started. Oh, here’s Perry.”

In rapid-fire succession Raechel introduced me to the overnight jock, David Perry, and to her programming assistant, Terri Belle. Terri was an attractive brown-eyed girl, with a warm smile and boyish figure. Her petite stature and shy persona masked the articulate, tough-minded side of her nature. I found out later that, even though Terri had no prior radio experience, F. R. Glutman had promoted her from office secretary to programming assistant. And in typical management fashion, the Hound had done this without so much as a word to the people she was supposed to assist.

Finding a vacant spot on the floor, I sat down next to Ace, as Miz Rae called the meeting to order.

“I think by now you’ve all met Jim Ladd.” Raechel announced to no one in particular. “He starts this Monday night at ten, following Mega.” This was accompanied by general mumblings of welcome from the assemblage as Raechel continued. “As you all know, Jim has been in radio purgatory for the last four years, so do what you can to make him feel comfortable. Is there anything you want to say Jim?”

“Well, not really,” I began, pausing to clear my throat. “Just that I’ve been a fan of this station for a long, long time, and I’m really looking forward to working with—”

“Oh, don’t forget to see Louise in Glutman’s office after the meeting,” Rae interjected before I had a chance to finish. “She has some forms for you to sign, and she’ll need a copy of your FCC license before Monday. Okay Thom, it’s all yours.”

“I’ve gone over the latest ARB [short for Arbitron Rating Book], and as you know we don’t look good.”

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“How bad is it?” asked Mega.

“Well, your numbers were up slightly in men,” said Thom as he thumbed the breakdowns he was holding. “But overall . . .”

“KASH is still kicking our butts,” Raechel said, finishing Thom’s sentence for him.

“That’s true,” agreed Thom, as he passed his copy of the ratings over to Mega. “But what really has me worried is this disco bullshit.”

The already legendary station had found itself with a dwindling listenership, as the new pop fad called disco quickly began to take over the record charts. In the post-Watergate days of 1975, the recently pardoned Nixon was playing golf in Palm Springs, while Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Mitchell were doing time in jail. Both the FBI and the CIA had been caught spying on American citizens involved in the antiwar movement, but after the fall of Saigon on April 30, the disco crowd couldn’t care less about such trifles as domestic spying, or the assassination of foreign leaders by the CIA. They wanted to dance.

Enter Donna Summer, KC and the Sunshine Band, and a thousand one-hit wonders, anxious to cash in on a formula made for people who’d grown tired of “social causes.” Even David Bowie and Elton John were jumping on the bandwagon. Growing numbers of the audience were beginning to view radio as simply a vehicle for the latest prepackaged pop fad. The forerunners of the yuppie vacuum had John Travolta and the Bee Gees as their cultural heroes, while the rockers were listening to Led Zeppelin and the emerging Bruce Springsteen.

How to guide KAOS through this mindless disco daze on the one hand, and the crass appeal of KASH on the other, without radically changing the station’s progressive style, was the immediate question facing RADIO KAOS. It was a strange time for a staff of people who knew no other approach to FM radio than the principles of truth, justice, and the “rock ’n’ roll way.” And had it been any other group of “employees,” RADIO KAOS might have died right there.

“Anybody got any ideas?” Thom asked, opening up the meeting for general discussion.

The conversation was free-flowing and spirited. I sat quietly, absorbing it all, listening to everybody jump in at once. This was night and day from the staff meetings I had

been used to, much less formal, more like a rally than the "orientation sessions" held at KASH.

Everybody had his or her own particular vision of what KAOS should or should not be doing, but surprisingly, all the various points of view were well within the same zip code. No one, for example, thought that the "way to win" lay in the station playing a few disco records now and again, or that we should start giving away pillowcases full of money. The general consensus seemed to be that what the station was doing was basically correct, it just wasn't doing it well enough.

Most people wanted to talk about smaller logistical problems; rather than the overall direction of the station—scratched records that weren't getting replaced, or greasy pizza boxes left in the studio by some unknown person with shabby domestic habits. No one seemed to care very much about the current position of KAOS in the all-important Holy Grail of ratings. They were certainly aware of the pressure, but as I've said, the problem for them seemed to lie in the smaller details, like misfiling records.

Ace offered the theory that, "misfiling albums is another example of inferior hygienic training. I think it must be the same person who left the pizza boxes on the tape deck."

"I know who's doing it," O'Guardia suddenly announced to the room at large. "It's Ladd! He's actually a spy sent here to sabotage the station."

"What?" I stammered, slow to get the joke.

"How much is KASII paying ya?" he demanded, "and are you willing to cut us in if we don't tell the Hound?"

As if Charlie Watts had just given a "one-two-three-four!" the group jumped in on the downbeat. They did two verses of "*we want a cut!*" and were halfway through a chorus of "*or we'll tell the Hound!*" when the office door swung open, and in walked F. Reginald Glutman.

This cast a pall over the gathering similar to that which descends on a high school classroom whenever the principal pays an unannounced visit. Even at KASH, the appearance of the general manager during an air staff meeting was highly unusual.

Mr. Glutman greeted everybody, and the group returned his salutation with muffled hellos and slightly stiffened postures. Everyone that is, except Raechel. As the room fell silent, ready to hear what the general manager at KAOS had

come to say, the ballsy Miz Rae reached into her purse and pulled out a joint.

Like a herd of deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming truck, the congregation froze as everyone tried to grapple with what was happening. Stunned and gagged, Glutman's eyeballs dilated to the size of two Buick hubcaps. His jaw lost all muscle control and dropped open in mute disbelief. He was completely transfixed by the sight of the illegal object, and could not take his eyes off the dreaded "marijuana cigarette."

Like the sound of air being sucked from a vacuum tube, the awkward silence was finally broken, as the room inhaled a collective gasp. All eyes frantically danced from the joint to the Hound and back to the joint—everybody's except the Hound's, who was positively mesmerized by the reefer. After another fifteen seconds of dead silence, which felt like God had pressed the slow motion button on his remote control, Raechel leaned across the floor, and with great ceremony, handed the joint—to me!

You couldn't have driven a needle up my ass with a sledgehammer! She might as well have shot me with a phaser set on stun. This was both a test of my mettle and a signal to the Hound that the less he knew about the creative process of the programming department the better.

There was only one thing to do. I took the joint from Raechel, dug out a pack of matches from my shirt pocket, and lit up. I inhaled a long purposeful drag, and passed the show stopper on to O'Guardia. As the doobie made its way around the circle of anxious desperadoes, Reginald Glutman began to shuffle nervously toward the exit. Utterly confused and bewildered, he slowly walked from the room without saying a word, and closed the door behind him.

The entire air staff exploded into torrents of laughter and exclamations of disbelief. Ace was laughing so hysterically that he tumbled off a stack of boxes on which he'd perched, and hit the floor with a thud. Mega leaned over and slapped Raechel five, as Thom and Beamer began doing imitations of Glutman's muted reaction. It was a good ten minutes before any semblance of order could be restored.

Miz Rae's subtle statement of programming autonomy was a moment I will never forget. It was very street, very Raechel. It was also a simple yet dramatic test of my backbone, as well as of the Hound's authority. I had shown my colors in front of the gang, and from then on, they knew I could be trusted. Now what remained was to see if I could cut it on the air.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

TRANS- FORMATION

I stood stone-like at midnight
suspended in my masquerade
I combed my hair till it was just right
and commanded the night brigade
I was open to pain and crossed by the rain
and I walked on a crooked crutch
I strolled all alone through a fallout zone
and came out with my soul untouched
—Bruce Springsteen

IT WAS October 1975. Bruce Springsteen made the cover of both *Time* and *Newsweek* simultaneously, Patty Hearst had been seized by the FBI a month earlier, and Sony had just introduced something called the VCR. The U.S. and USSR shook hands in orbit via the Apollo-Soyuz mission, accomplishing something in outer space which they had not been able to do on the ground. The autumn of 1975 was a very happy time for John Lennon and Yoko Ono. On October 7, John finally won his four-year battle with the U.S. Immigration Department allowing him to stay in America, and two days later, on John's thirty-fifth birthday, Yoko gave birth to their son Sean.

While all this was going on, I was sweating bullets in preparation for my first show Monday night. Because there were only two major FM rock stations in town, my desertion to the competition was no longer just industry news, it was

the hot dish on the street. F. R. Glutman certainly knew this. In fact, it was part of the package. He took out a full-page ad in one of the local music papers, both to announce my debut at RADIO KAOS and to tout my defection from KASH: "Coming This Monday Night at 10:00 . . ." read the ad. In addition to the print advertisement, the station cut a sixty-second recorded promo, which was running every hour, and the jocks were talking it up as well.

I wondered if the audience would understand why I had traded KASH for KAOS. Most people in "the business" couldn't believe anyone would leave a winner without being fired. Damion and J. J. understood. They had known the intoxicating fragrance of "free air" prior to KASH, and how impossible it was to resist. They understood all right. But now that I had taken the leap, I'd damn well better deliver.

My first show *had* to be good, and I was really beginning to feel the pressure. I also knew that I hadn't so much as touched a turntable in the last four years. Because of the union requirement that only the engineers at KASH could run the control board, turntables, etc., my technical skills had gotten pretty rusty. So I called Miz Rae to ask if I could hang out with her for a while, and she was kind enough to let me spin her records for a couple of hours, so I could get a feel for the studio prior to Monday night's show.

Like I said before, piloting a radio show is something akin to flying an airplane. All aircraft must be "learned" to some extent before you really feel comfortable in the cockpit. You have to ascertain where all the gauges are located and how they read. You've got to find the ignition switch for the microphone and calculate how hot to rev the VU meters. You've got to know how fast the turntables can accelerate from zero to 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm, you must remember the location of the cart machines, and make note of which remote switches are for the tape decks and which ones are for the turntables. Once you finally get a feel for the cockpit, of course, you stop consciously thinking about how the ailerons work, and just fly the plane. Another aspect of being on the air that is analogous to flight is that if you crash, it's a very public event, but without the dignity of being killed.

On top of this, having been constrained by the tunnel vision of the format, I now found myself momentarily blinded by absolute freedom of choice. Like a prisoner who walks out into the blazing sunlight after four years in the hole, it would

take a while for my eyes to adjust. To suddenly have unlimited choice of music again, rather than no choice at all, left me with an acute case of sensory overload.

The pressure was really beginning to build. I was so nervous I felt like Woody Allen at a John Birch meeting. Fortunately, however, I had a strong support group among my family and friends. Jude, for instance, was a fountain of help and encouragement. "First off, everybody and their mother will be listening Monday night," he warned over and over again, "so you better not screw this up! That first show is all-important, so it has got to be brilliant. If it's not, your career in this town is finished."

As a further confidence builder, Jude went on to add: "More importantly to me, if you blow this, where are we going to get another station in L.A. to carry 'Innerview'?" After this little heart-to-heart chat, my anxiety level shot up so high that I began talking like Woody Allen.

I spent the weekend at home with my family and the menagerie, contemplating what I should do for "that all-important first show." Living as the head of a miniature Noah's Ark was helpful as a sanctuary from "the business," but impossible as an environment in which to focus one's thoughts. In our house, something was *always* happening.

Shelly tried everything to see that our delinquents were on their very best "eggshell behavior" around me. I know this because I heard her telling them in increasingly strident tones, "Jim is under a lot of pressure right now, and I don't want you kids bothering him." However, due to either a selective hearing impairment or some chronic lack of attention span, the poor woman was forced to repeat this simple message at least twenty-seven times during the next forty-eight hours.

Rochelle, now a fully blossoming teenage girl, did keep the ritual arguments regarding what time she had to be home to under the normal twenty-minute harangue. Johnny and Dean found things to do outdoors that for once did not require the usual weekend trip to an emergency room. And for her part, Shelly confined the monkey to its cage, thus keeping the hyperkinetic capuchin from indulging in its two favorite pastimes: bobbing for guppies, and throwing fish turds at the cat.

I worked all weekend doing something that I've rarely done for a live show in twenty years on the air: I mapped out the entire four hours of music in advance. As I said before, the whole idea of free-form radio is to dive into the muse and

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let the music take you where it will. But knowing I would be preoccupied with the mechanics of the room, as well as my own adrenaline, I wanted to make sure that I had plenty of strong thematic sets already laid out, just in case I got lost. Most importantly, I wanted to make some kind of statement, take a stand right out of the box. I wanted to make it clear: *This was not going to be radio as usual.*

Monday night came quickly and I had little appetite, even for Shelly's homemade manicotti. I was filled with great anticipation, but my stomach was filled with bats—giant South American vampire bats, the kind that attach themselves to the throats of range cattle and make them anemic.

Arriving at the station about 8:45 P.M., I parked on the small side street that terminated at Wilshire Boulevard, and said a short prayer before getting out of the car: "Dear God, please don't let me fuck this up."

As I made my way up to the studio, I remembered my first encounter with Mega, and a cold wind seemed to blow right through me. What if she's in her Ice Queen mode again? I wondered. That would really make me nervous. I have enough to deal with without having to worry about frostbite too. I'm not wearing thermal underwear. Did I remember my notes? Thank God I'm not nervous. I've been doing this for almost six years, my ratings at KASH were the highest in the city. I can do this. At least I'm not nervous. Why am I standing here talking to myself?

This last question finally broke my anxious reverie, and I found myself standing outside of the air studio. Sucking in a deep breath, I opened the door and entered the booth. Mega looked up from the turntable just as she'd done at our first encounter, only this time, with a warm pleasant smile.

"Good evening," she said, "make yourself at home."

"Thanks, Mega. Look, I know I'm really early, but I thought I might pull out some records before the show—if I won't be in the way."

"Don't be silly," she said in her normally calm and collected manner, "help yourself."

"Thanks, I'll try to stay out of your way as much as possible."

This in itself was no easy task, because RADIO KAOS had, without question, the smallest air studio I'd ever seen. It gave new meaning to the term "booth." The room held a maximum capacity of three people, and was maybe ten feet long by six

feet wide. Three of the four walls were covered from floor to ceiling with record shelves, while the control board sat against the remaining wall beneath a filthy plate glass window. Two large turntables jutted out into the room from the left-hand side of the board, leaving barely enough space to squeeze between them and the record racks, which housed the groups whose names began with the letters S to Z.

When the DJ was seated in the chair at the control board, the back wall was no more than three or four feet away, and contained the alphabetical continuum of J to R. To the right of the board was turntable number three, and just beyond that, the wall containing albums A to I and the door to the studio. The few precious inches of wall space that were left had been covered over long ago with layers of posters, Polaroids, political cartoons, and assorted rock 'n' roll graffiti.

Mega and I did seem to agree on one thing. We both liked to keep the lights in the studio turned down low. This may seem like a trifle to those used to working under bright fluorescent ceiling lights, but mood has a lot to do with how you come across over the air. Most morning and afternoon jocks tend to keep the studio brightly lit as a means of staying up and animated for a daytime audience. Those of us who talk to you at night like a more intimate atmosphere, something like a cave with poor lighting.

The hour passed quickly, and after four cups of coffee and five trips to the john, I was as ready as I'd ever be. At 9:51, Mega ran her last three commercials, then opened up the mike to say good night.

"Well that's it for me. But coming up next, the debut of our newest KAOS defector, Jim Ladd. Welcome to the station Jim."

(Shouting off mike) "Thank you very much Nervous . . . and ah . . . I would just like to say that I'm happy to be here, and surprisingly, I not the least bit mega."

"Really. So you normally smoke three cigarettes at once? Don't worry folks, he'll be fine. This is Mega, 'I'm not nervous' Turnon, and you're listening to 94.7 K-A-O-S, Los Angeles."

Mega then started her last record, and asked if I had any final questions. I said no, she wished me luck, and I found

myself alone for the first time in the glass booth at RADIO KAOS.

The next few moments were a blur. It felt like I was reliving my very first day on the air. I got out the list of songs I'd drawn up, and laid it on the control board in front of me. I then carefully placed the needle down on my first record and cued it up. Next, I double-checked to make sure I knew which button started the turntable. Headphones, I thought to myself, Where are my headphones? Oh yeah, under my coat.

I checked the progress of Mega's last song, and estimated that I had about a minute left before it ended. Reaching over the turntable, I retrieved the headphones from underneath my jacket. As I did so, however, the four-foot-long curly black cord spilled out of my hand like an elusive garter snake, knocking the tone arm clear across my first record.

"Grace under pressure Jim," I said aloud, "grace under pressure." I quickly recued the song, just as Mega's last record was beginning to fade out. Putting on my headphones, I swallowed hard and said another little silent prayer. "Dear God, please don't let me fuck this up. Amen."

With that, I took a deep breath, turned on the microphone, and stepped out into KAOS.

"How ya doin' everybody, I'm Jim Ladd. If it seems strange for you to hear me on this station, imagine the changes I'm going through right now.

"I've been a fan of this place for a long time, and being here is like a dream come true. But I want to state for the record, that I will miss the people I worked with at KASH. They understood my reasons for leaving, and I'm proud to say that we all remain close friends.

"I came here because something was missing. Something which had nothing to do with the people. It had to do with the basic approach to FM radio itself, and what I believe rock 'n' roll is all about.

"For me, this is an opportunity to use the radio waves in a more creative way again. To go faster, farther, higher, deeper, and further out on the edge.

"This will not be radio as usual. This is going to be free, spontaneous, and unpredictable.

"So if you're ready, I invite you to crank it up, and come along for the ride. Welcome, to RADIO KAOS!"

I hit the button to start turntable number one, and Led Zeppelin came blasting through the speakers.

((((((**RADIO WAVES**))))))

.....1975-1977.....

It's been along time since that Rock and Roll
It's been along time since I did the stroll
Let me get back let me get back let me get back
Baby where I come from
It's been a long time, been a long time
Been a long, lonely lonely lonely lonely time
Yes it has.

As Led Zeppelin's "Rock and Roll" neared its end, I readied my next song, and when Jimmy Page struck the final chord, I unleashed the Jefferson Starship's "Freedom at Point Zero."

People get ready there's a ship a comin'
Get ready like a lover
I got a note from the heart of the darkness
The melody isn't over.
Steady as steel I want to take the wheel
Drive you like a rock 'n' roller
Freedom at Point Zero
Rock 'n' roll isn't over

One more tune and I would have completed my first set of songs on RADIO KAOS. When the Starship ended, I slammed into the Stones.

The band's on stage and it's one of those nights
The drummer thinks that he is dynamite
You lovely ladies in your leather and lace
A thousand lips I would love to taste
I've got one hard and it hurts like hell but
If you can't rock me somebody will
If you can't rock me child somebody will

Now, it was official. I could feel it from the moment I played that first set of songs, music that I had chosen myself, songs that would scream my liberation loud and proud: "I am gonna rock 'n' roll you people, and if it's too rowdy or too rebellious, then you're too old."

It was a moment of pure transformation. Like a moth emerging from the death sleep of a cocoon, to find it has been reborn as an eagle, I was free, alive, and filled with a reckless urge to fly.

CHAPTER TWELVE
THE
MAGIC
CAULDRON

The force of this last outburst sent another shock wave through the thick gooey swamp across the street.

IT ALL started flooding back to me. The letting go. The feeling of surrender to something vast and warm. I was beginning to trust in the muse again, and the more I followed the music, the further I wanted to go. No boundaries, no format—just me and the audience and the rock 'n' roll. Together, we could go anywhere our imaginations would allow.

“I’m gonna play a set of songs for those of you listening to RADIO KAOS in your cars, on this magnificent full moon night. If you’re at home, close your eyes and imagine with me, that you’re driving up Highway One. You’ve got the top down and the moon is shining on the still Pacific, as you and your lover race along the deserted highway.

“There are no clouds tonight. No cars tonight. Just

((((((RADIO WAVES))))))

.....1975-1977.....

you, your lover, and the full moon. Now, crank up your radio and step on the gas. Nothing can touch us, save for the wind and the warm lunacy of the moonlight.

"We're listening to the soundtrack of Southern California, on our way to a little bit of heaven, 94.7, K-A-O-S."

Let's swim to the moon

Let's climb through the tide

Penetrate the evening that the city sleeps to hide

Let's swim out tonight love it's our turn to try

Parked beside the ocean on our moonlight drive

Let's swim to the moon

Let's climb through the tide

Surrender to the waiting worlds

That lap against our sides

Nothing left open and no time to decide

We stepped into a river on our

Moonlight drive

—the Doors

After four years in a radio straitjacket, the taste of creative freedom was now doubly sweet. I couldn't wait to get to work each night and lose myself inside the glass booth. It was like winning the lottery, it was like sex, it was heaven.

As the weeks passed, I began to make friends with my new comrades. The permafrost surrounding Mega started to thaw a little, and I found that David Perry, the jock who followed me at 2:00 A.M., had a wry sense of humor which I liked. The warm but shy Terri Belle made it her personal project to help me get settled, and even the general sales manager, Ira Steinberg (who was, after all, upper management), seemed to go out of his way to make me feel welcome. O'Guardia and I usually had a drink at the bar next door once a week; and I was getting to know Raechel Donahue, the woman behind the legend.

Being around Raechel was like holding jumper cables in the rain. Miz Rae was pure stream of consciousness, her words and ideas jumping out at you like sparks arching between two mental connectors. She had a brilliant intellect, a lightning wit, and an honest-to-God photographic memory. Rae's mind was so jam-packed with details about everything in the world, that if it weren't for the woman's instantaneous recall, her memory banks would have exploded years ago.

Raechel Donahue was a being who was *never* at rest. Talking to Raechel was really a lesson in the fine art of listening—listening to Raechel Donahue. Her brain seemed to work something like a pinball machine. What passed for her attention span was really more akin to a speeding silver ball, unleashing a different idea every time it bounced off a new synapse bumper. Wrap this psyche in the charms of Veronica Lake, add a pinch of Mae West, a dash of Grace Slick, and a large dose of attitude, and you begin to get a picture of Miz Rae's complex and eclectic personality.

Because we worked opposite ends of the clock, the only members of the air staff that I didn't get to see much were our morning team of B. Mitchel Reed and newsman Ace Young. But from my rather isolated late-night perspective, the air staff as a whole seemed to cook on both a creative and a personal level.

KAOS was not without its political intrigue, of course. When I came to the station, I took it for granted that Thom O'Guardia's title as operations manager was merely a different term for program director. Raechel was obviously second in command as the music director, and Terri Belle's job as programming assistant was to do the legwork. But it turned out that the scenario was a bit more complex than that.

It seemed that when F. R. Glutman hired Raechel and O'Guardia, he decided that rather than have them work together as a team, he would pit them against each other for the job of program director. So he gave O'Guardia the title of operations manager, made Raechel the music director, and then as a wild card, promoted Terri Belle from office secretary to the rank of programming assistant. He gave them all equal power, creating an awkward and doomed triumvirate, with no clear-cut lines of authority.

Glutman thrived on this kind of intrigue. I soon discovered that he seldom did anything in the open save for yelling or bragging. He liked to be in charge to the point of being out of control, and he couldn't let someone as strong-willed and street smart as Thom or Raechel have too much power. Glutman was more comfortable with women in positions of authority under him than men, so this convoluted stratagem served his purpose nicely. But it was hell on the people who were caught up in his ill-conceived web of ego. And it sapped

energy from the real problem of getting RADIO KAOS back on track.

Thom O'Guardia had been the program director of KHIP, for God sakes. O'Guardia was not used to "taking orders" from anybody except Tom Donahue, and Raechel was completely unaccustomed to the concept—period. Both felt this wicked little chess game was beneath them, and instead of allowing it to drive a wedge between their working relationship, they closed ranks for self-protection. Glutman did succeed in causing great difficulty for Terri Belle, however.

Raechel and O'Guardia had no problem with Terri as their "assistant," but to accept her as an equal part of the brain trust was impossible. She was obviously intelligent, and an extremely hard worker who was determined to learn everything she could about the business. But this was her very first job in radio, and it took more than a love of music and good typing skills to program a major market station such as RADIO KAOS. It annoyed Thom and Raechel to no end that Glutman insisted Terri be treated as an equal, and they showed their contempt for the Hound's warped agenda by ostracizing her entirely.

The longer this went on, the more strained the relationship between Glutman and O'Guardia became. Their personalities clashed like Brooks Brothers and bell-bottoms, and it was obvious to everybody that something was going to happen. The ironic thing was, RADIO KAOS was beginning to turn around.

O'Guardia had arrived only weeks before I joined the station, and now, just six months later, RADIO KAOS was starting to show an upswing in the ratings. O'Guardia was certainly responsible for a major share of this increase, having brought with him the savvy tricks of the trade that he'd proven effective in San Francisco and New York.

It wasn't just O'Guardia's programming expertise either—it was the force of his personality that had caused RADIO KAOS to shake itself out of the doldrums. Thom O'Guardia knew how to motivate an air staff. He made the jocks believe that RADIO KAOS was important, and in turn, what they did on the air was important as well. And he didn't do this by blowing smoke up anybody's ego. O'Guardia was not the kind of guy to stroke someone he didn't respect. Thom

.....

O'Guardia believed in the power of real FM radio, and he knew that his staff had to share in that belief, or the station would never get back on its feet. They had to understand that RADIO KAOS was just as important as any country and western station, and if that meant ripping a couple of speakers out of the wall to get his point across, so be it.

Despite the upturn in ratings and staff morale, Glutman continued to deny O'Guardia the title of program director, and this drove Thom nuts. Tensions between the two had almost reached the flash point, when Thom got a job offer from Capricorn Records. O'Guardia knew that if he stayed, Glutman would find a reason to fire him sooner or later, as the Hound made little effort to hide his displeasure with the strong-willed Irishman. So O'Guardia thought the situation over, and decided it was time to whistle Dixie.

"Look Reggie, let's just get it out on the table," said Thom as he took a seat in Glutman's office. "You don't like the way I'm trying to run things around here, and I can't program the station without your support."

Glutman squished around in his chair for a long moment and then asked, "So what's your point?"

"The point is that I've been offered a job and I think I'm going to take it," answered Thom. "It's with a record company for heavy tissue, an expense account—"

"Heavy tissue?" interrupted Glutman.

"Good money," explained O'Guardia. "I told 'em I wouldn't leave until you found someone to replace me on the air. Also, I want to be here to help whoever you hire as the new operations director get up to speed before—"

"You know this reminds me of the time I was flying a Cessna Cherokee out of Cleveland. Had a rough takeoff and a damned miserable flight, but you know what I learned from that experience?" asked Glutman.

"Any landing that you—" started Thom.

"Any landing that you can walk away from is a good landing," finished Glutman. "All's well that ends well as they say. So even though we've had our problems, as long as we have a smooth landing, I wish you luck."

"There's just one thing," Thom began, "I want to be allowed to say good-bye to my audience. I won't announce anything over the air until the last show, but it's important to me to be able to thank my listeners."

"I can't see why that should be a problem," said Glutman. "Just keep it quiet till we get the new OD in place, and find somebody to do your show."

Thom looked at Glutman but was unable to catch his eye, as the Hound fumbled nervously with a paperweight. "So it's agreed?" asked Thom rhetorically; then he decided to restate the terms so there could be no misunderstanding. "I'll stay on until you find the new operations director and someone to do my show, but I *will* be able to say good-bye to my listeners."

"You have my word on it," replied Glutman. And the two shook hands.

Three days later, Glutman yanked Thom off the air without notice, and formally announced to the press that he had fired Thom O'Guardia.

The day after that, a memorandum was issued to the air staff from the general manager's office. Ripe with the stench of deceit, the memo called for a full air staff meeting. This one was to be held, not in the casual setting of Raechel's office, but in the more businesslike surroundings of the AM station's conference room.

Arriving for my second staff meeting at KAOS, I noticed that the very person who had called this little tête-à-tête was conspicuous by his absence. Sitting at the head of the table, where I had expected to see F. Reginald Glutman, was little Terri Belle. She looked dreadfully ill at ease, obviously tense, and extremely apprehensive. Terri's demeanor did not seem terribly out of place, though, because changing program directors at any radio station is always a time of great anxiety for everyone.

As the room filled with nervous DJs, speculation as to who Glutman would hire to replace O'Guardia was running rampant. Would he be one of us? Would he try to change KAOS dramatically? Would we still have jobs? Finally, everyone began to settle down.

Terri, now visibly trembling, stood up and began to explain how much she was "going to miss Thom," and, speaking for everyone here, she "wished him all the best." After another three or four minutes of nervous preamble, she fi-

nally brought herself to the subject at hand: who was going to be the new PD?

Everyone began to shoot restive glances in the direction of Miz Rae. As music director she was next in line, but more importantly, as the remaining half of the duo who had invented this medium in the first place, she was the only logical choice. Raechel sat calmly, waiting for the next shoe to drop. When it fell, it touched off an explosion that not only shook the very bricks of the old tax shelter, but sent shock waves coursing through the La Brea tar pits clear across the street.

"I know this may come as a bit of a surprise to all of you—it, ah, certainly did to me," Terri began, fumbling for the right words. "But as of ten-thirty this morning, I am the new program director of RADIO KAOS."

You could have heard a pin drop on the moon.

"Pardon me?" Raechel gasped in disbelief. "You? What do *you* know about programming a radio station?"

"Raechel, I just told you that it was a bigger surprise to me than anyone," Terri replied honestly.

Even Raechel could see this was true, and while the rest of us sat there mute, momentarily stunned by this unexpected turn of events, Terri began passing out Xeroxed instructions to everyone present as she tried to proceed. "We will be using this format beginning tomorrow. As you can see, it utilizes a clock-type approach."

"That's not even your format," Miz Rae interrupted, "that piece of shit came from one of Glutman's buddies. The Hound put you up to this, didn't he?"

Terri began to stammer something about the station's lack of direction, but Raechel Donahue was already out of her chair, and into a rage. "Let's get Glutman down here right now!" she demanded. Then, reaching in front of Terri, Miz Rae grabbed the telephone and jerked it across the table.

Cursing to herself, Rae punched the intercom button and dialed up Glutman's secretary. "Louise, this is Raechel. You better tell Reginald to get down here right now, or there will be hell to pay!"

The now vehement Miz Rae slammed the receiver down so hard that it ricocheted off the phone and went careening across the table. The force of this last outburst sent another shock wave through the thick, goeey swamp across the street, this time dislodging several large bits of a female triceratops and the jawbone of a pygmy horse.

((((((RADIO WAVES))))))

.....1075-1077.....

Before the telephone receiver had time to stop bouncing around the table, Raechel started pacing madly up and down the room, while the rest of us held our breath. As we waited for Glutman to arrive, the word "format" began to ring in my head. Format? You mean RADIO KAOS was going to institute a format? Holy shit! I had just left KASH because of this.

Suddenly, the smell of Aramis cologne began to fill the conference room. Ten seconds later in walked the Hound, and Raechel was on him like a mother grizzly defending her cubs.

"Is this your idea of a joke," screamed Raechel, "or have you finally flown once too often without an oxygen mask?"

"What's wrong?" asked the Hound, momentarily taken aback by Raechel's outburst. "Don't you like Terri?"

"Of course I like Terri," Raechel snorted, "Everybody *likes* Terri, but that is hardly the point."

"Well then I fail to see the problem," answered Glutman, trying to shift the line of discussion. "You will, of course, continue as music director for as long—"

"The problem, Reggie," Raechel said bitterly, "is that Terri has only been in radio for about five minutes, and the only person in attendance who is *less* qualified to program this radio station is you."

At this point the rest of the staff began to make noises in favor of Raechel's position. But before anyone could really seize the floor, the tough and fiery Miz Rae was at his throat. "My husband and I founded this station! We built it from nothing when you were lost in the woods, and this is the way you pay us back? This is the respect you show for Tom Donahue's memory?"

Instead of considering the point, Glutman became defensive. "I'm the general manager here, young lady, and I'll have you know that back in 1954, I was the *top rated* air personality in all of Cleveland."

"And if I hear that story one more time," yelled Raechel, shaking her finger at the Hound, "I'm going to throw up all over you and your damn Mantovani records!"

We had now come to a juncture where I knew that I had to step in. "Look, Reginald," I started evenly, "this is not a good idea. The whole reason I came to this station was for the freedom it offered on the air. It's the entire foundation of what made RADIO KAOS so great in the first place, and with a few minor adjustments, will make it number one

.....

again. If you do this, you'll be playing right into the hands of KASH, and they can play the format game a lot better than you can."

Typically, Glutman steered away from a direct confrontation of the issue and began to conjure up Tom Donahue. This was a *big* mistake. "You know if Tom were here, he would see the wisdom of this decision."

Big mistake.

"Don't you dare mention Tom Donahue's name in the same breath with what you're doing!" Raechel said, hitting yet another octave. "He would never stand for this and you know it!"

"I, ah, I was talking about Thom *O'Guardia*," countered Glutman, trying to squirm out of this obvious blunder.

At this, Raechel Donahue, a twenty-five-year-old single mother of five, widow of the late Tom Donahue and keeper of his memory, stopped pacing and came to a complete stop. She turned to face F. Reginald Glutman, and in a low, deadly calm voice, spoke her mind.

"You're a lying cocksucker, and you know it."

The meeting was over.

The fact that Glutman had not even discussed what he was planning with Raechel Donahue was outrageous. So too was the fact that he'd made Terri Belle break the news instead of doing it himself, but these were merely hints of the unfathomable methodology that I would come to know as the logic of F. R. Glutman.

I expected Raechel to walk right there, and no one would have blamed her. That she did not really showed me what Miz Rae was made of. This strong, fiercely proud woman, who had more knowledge of FM radio in her little finger than Glutman would ever have in his entire swollen mound of anatomy, swallowed her venom and remained at the station. She had to. She was the stepmother of four of Tom Donahue's children, and the natural mother of his fifth, and she had to feed her family. Here was a person who'd earned my respect. Why she was not afforded that same respect from either Glutman or the company, both of whom were deeply in her debt, was far beyond me.

For the next couple of weeks, the station plodded along in a kind of limbo. Micromedia, the parent company that owned RADIO KAOS, had decided to move the station to new facili-

ties. We were relocating across town, in the same complex that housed Micromedia's local TV station. It would mean brand-new equipment, a lot of confusion, and a complete lack of direction through the upheaval of the move.

It was during this time that the battle-weary but unbroken Miz Rae picked up the new copy of *Billboard* magazine one Monday afternoon and, without even the courtesy of forewarning, read F. Reginald Glutman's announcement to the national radio industry :

ACCORDING TO F. REGINALD GLUTMAN, GENERAL MANAGER OF LOS ANGELES ROCKER KAOS, ALLAN DRAPER HAS BEEN HIRED TO REPLACE RAEHEL DONAHUE AS MUSIC DIRECTOR OF 94.7 KAOS-FM.

MR. DRAPER WILL ALSO TAKE OVER THE 2:00 P.M. TO 6:00 P.M. AIR SHIFT VACATED BY FORMER OPERATIONS DIRECTOR THOM O'GUARDIA.

MRS. DONAHUE (WIFE OF THE LATE TOM DONAHUE) WILL REMAIN WITH KAOS AS THE STATION'S 10:00 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M. MIDDAY AIR PERSONALITY.

Miz Rae didn't even blink. She held her head up, stayed on the air, and kept her family together. To his great disappointment, F. Reginald Glutman got no tears from Raechel Donahue.

By the summer of 1976, we were ready for the move to our new home on Sunset Boulevard. The building was a giant steel-and-glass box, faced in rough stone and concrete, and lined with long, narrow windows. Perched atop the parking structure that served the huge television lot, we sat directly across from the studios and offices of KVVU Channel 11.

RADIO KAOS shared the fifth floor with some sort of top-secret office complex, which had been leased to the "phone company." For reasons unknown, these "phone company" offices were kept strictly off-limits to anyone without a laminated badge and the proper code number. In nine years of air shifts, all I ever saw were guys in three-piece suits taking briefcases in, and guys wearing unmarked jumpsuits

hauling crates labeled Acme Transport Ltd. out. To this day, I'm still convinced it was CIA.

The new facilities were 180 degrees from the old place. Large, well-lit modern offices ran along a maze of corridors, complete with factory-fresh carpeting and the latest in office furniture. We had not one, but three brand-new studios: Studio A (the air booth) and two production rooms. The air studio seemed like some cavernous auditorium compared to the broom closet we had just left, and was replete with sparkling new equipment, from control board to cart machines.

Running along the back wall was a floor-to-ceiling record rack that must have been twenty feet long, and at the end of the shelves was a small door, which I'll come back to later. The control board sat in the middle of the room up against the opposite wall, facing a four-by-five foot double-paned glass window.

This window was always a mystery to me. We were now on the fifth floor of an office compound that had a rather impressive view of the Hollywood Hills along two sides of the building. The double-paned window of the air studio, however, did not open onto the beauty of the Southern California landscape. No, instead of utilizing the inspiration which one might glean from looking out onto the town you were talking to; this porthole of reality looked out onto one of the many hallways, and into the transmitter room beyond. The choice view lots had, of course, been reserved for management offices.

Sitting at the control board, you had two turntables on your left and one on your right, just like the old setup, except these ran on electricity and did not include a speed setting for 78 rpm. The cart machines, reel-to-reel tape decks, cart racks, etc., were all placed strategically around you, although they were a bit of a reach even for me. The microphone was hung on a boom type of apparatus that resembled an adjustable desk lamp, and there was a shelf over the control board in front of you which held the copy book.

Beyond the two turntables on your left was another floor-to-ceiling record rack about ten feet in length. To your right was the wall which contained the door to the studio at one end, and a small window that peered into the RADIO KAOS news booth at the other. This five foot-by-five foot cubicle contained only a table, a chair, and a microphone, but from

this minute little space would originate some of the most outrageous, absurd, and creative social satire ever to be aired over a licensed broadcast facility. We called them "news-casts."

Now remember that door on the back wall that I mentioned earlier? Well, this was a very special door because it led not into a room as such, but into what would become the most infamous three foot-by-three foot vestibule in all of Southern California: It was a completely unnecessary architectural anomaly that reminded me of an air lock, and served as a passageway from the air studio to the back door of the main record library.

Its existence was due to the foresight and planning of Miz Rae. You see, at the old building opposite the tar pits, we were a good five miles across town from the L.A. corporate headquarters, and it was generally understood by the management personnel within the building that if they walked into the air studio unannounced, they should ignore any unfamiliar odors they might encounter. Here, however, we couldn't be sure who was going to drop by, so the farsighted Miz Rae insisted on some means of privacy within easy access of the person on duty. So instead of a single door opening directly into the next room, one first had to enter a tiny chamber about the size of a telephone booth, then open a *second* door to enter the record library. Over the next twelve years, this little bit of heaven would have enough illegal substances consumed within its four walls to qualify it as an independent South American republic.

The move came at a good time. It numbed the shock of transition to a new programming team, and the new environment and glistening high-tech equipment gave us all a lift. Soon Terri Belle had settled into her bright modern office, Alan Draper was getting the music library together, and the air staff was busy covering the studio walls with posters and assorted graffiti.

Lots of fresh ingredients had been added to the rock 'n' roll stew. It had been well stirred in the last couple of months, and poured into a shiny new pot.

Now the cauldron was ready. The only thing that remained was to say the magic words.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE WHO AND THE STRIPPER

Mama's got a squeeze box
Daddy never sleeps at night
—the Who

I PUNCHED the remote button for the cart machine, and a commercial for a local stereo store began touting its latest sale. Just then, the studio door flew open, and in walked Damion as if he owned the place.

“Damion!” I exclaimed. “What are you doing here?”

“I just wanted to see how the poor people live. So this is RADIO KAOS,” he said as he looked over the studio. Then, having found no box of three-by-five cards or playlists, added, “So you really *can* play anything you want. God I hate you!”

“Well, I know it’s not as much fun as picking a Cat Stevens song from a box of three-by-five cards,” I said with a wide grin, “but hey, somebody’s gotta rock.”

The ad for the stereo shop ended, I hit another button, and the next commercial began.

"How much time before you go back into music?" asked Damion as he began looking through the record shelves.

"About two minutes," I said. "I've got one more spot after this, why?"

"Because 'Mr. free-form DJ who gets to pick his own music'—you should come out of your spot break with something from *this*." Damion whirled around and shoved a copy of the album *The Who By Numbers* toward me.

"Well sure, but why?" I said, a little confused.

"Because they're your next guest on 'Innerview,' that's why!"

"You're kidding, we finally got 'em to say yes?"

"J. J. finally got them to say yes. He called just before I got off the air. Said he spoke with their manager himself, and it's all set for next weekend in San-Fran-cis-co!"

"Well, God bless J. J.," I said as I started the last commercial and cued up the album. "It's great to have friends in high places."

"No shit," agreed Damion. "We've only been trying to get these guys to sit down with us for over a year now."

"Man, this is great news," I said as I checked the clock and saw that the commercial was just about over. "Hold on a sec. . ."

"I'm Jim Ladd and we're back now with a cut from the Who's latest album. It's a song called 'Squeeze Box.' As RADIO KAOS rocks Southern California!"

Damion was no longer a partner in "Innerview," of course, but we had been trying to do a show with the Who long before I left KASH, so when J. J. arranged it through his personal friendship with the band, we all decided to go up together.

Friday afternoon J. J., Damion, and I were joined by John Scott from the Who's record company, MCA, and the four of us flew up to San Francisco. We checked into the hotel, and decided to meet back in the lobby at six o'clock for dinner and a night on the town.

The dinner part was fine, no problem there. It was after dinner that the trouble started.

"So what do you guys want to do now?" asked John as he sipped his coffee.

“I don’t know San Francisco that well,” said J. J. “What do you want to do, Damion?”

“Let’s go to North Beach,” he said without a moment’s hesitation.

“Great!” John said. “I’m up for that. What about you Jim?”

“Oh yeah, I’m the only married guy here. That’s exactly what I want to do. Go to the most notorious red-light district on the West Coast with you three lunatics.”

“Come on Ladd, take the ring out of your nose for one night,” laughed Damion. “What do you say, J. J.?”

“Well, I’ve heard a lot about North Beach—let’s go.”

“Thanks, Jackson,” I said as we left the restaurant. “I’ll remember this when you guys are bitchin’ about the penicillin shots.”

We took a cab across town, which gave Damion, J. J., and John ample time to explain in detail to the cabdriver what a pussy-whipped friend they had in the back seat. So married he was afraid even to be *seen* in North Beach.

Realizing where my evening was headed, I decided to let them have their foil in spades, and launched into a routine for the annoyed cabbie about how “I didn’t have to pay for it” and “who wants to spend five bucks for a watered-down drink and a sticky chair, just to watch some chick with a tattoo.”

When the cab pulled over, we got out at the top of a hill. There, stretched out before us, were ten city blocks of neon lights and sharkskin hawkers. It was the tits-and-ass mecca of San Francisco. All of the culture, all of the art, all of the elegant cosmopolitan traditions of this most sophisticated city stopped here at North Beach. This was the navel of the underbelly, the last repository for all the spilled beer, broken teeth, and bawdy women that were once the trademark of this now respectable seaport.

As we made our way down the boulevard, past a never-ending line of burlesque houses and adult bookstores, my three companions decided that something was needed to get me into the spirit of the evening.

“I know,” announced John. “Let’s just start right off with the seediest joint on the strip, the worst-lookin’ place we can find, then work our way up. That oughta loosen up our straight arrow friend here.”

“You guys are nuts,” I said looking up at a giant blinking sign, which read Girls Girls Girls. “I told you clowns that if Shelly finds out I went into a place like this, she won’t speak to me for a month.”

“Nobody’s going to tell the little woman,” chided Damion.

“Yea Jim, we all know you’re Mr. Faithful,” poked J. J. “We’ll tell Shelly you kept your eyes closed the whole time.”

As we walked into the darkened club, we were greeted by the seven-foot bouncer, who extracted a ten-dollar cover charge from each of us, and explained about the two-drink minimum. We made our way through an opening in some thick velvet drapes, and found a table right next to the stage at the smoky end of the room.

Shortly after we were settled, the house lights dimmed, the stage lights came up, and a scratchy recording of “The Stripper” began to play over the house P.A.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” announced the gravel-voiced emcee, “let’s have a big round of applause for—Miss Ginger Snatch!”

Out onto the stage pranced five feet nine inches of legs and silicone, dressed in a sequined bra and G-string, high heels, and a large ostrich feather. To the delight of the crowd, Miss Snatch launched into her routine with total abandon, using every orb and orifice to her full and complete advantage. It was amazing the things this woman could do without dislocating something. Halfway into her act, she was somehow able to remove the sequined bra using only her teeth, and this sent the crowd into a frenzy.

Next, she came over to our table, and slowly began to remove her G-string. She kept looking at us. I thought it was because Damion had now taken out his wallet, and was trying to get her to accept a handful of cash and credit cards, if she would only have a drink with him after the show. She ignored Damion’s pleas, but continued to play to our table, as though we were the only four guys in the house.

“Can you believe the body on that girl,” J. J. said, nudging me in the ribs as he wiped the spittle from his bottom lip. “Tell me you wouldn’t love to spend a weekend with her one night.”

“What? Oh ah, I told you, I’m a happily married man. I

don't tits about other, I mean, I don't *think* about other women."

Still staring down at our table, the limber Miss Ginger now began one of the most erotic bump-and-grind finales ever in the history of striptease. She shook and jiggled, pranced and posed, crawled across the stage on her back, and when the music finally stopped, every last man in the house gave her a standing ovation. The crowd whistled and screeched, as Ginger sauntered back to retrieve her bra and boa. But instead of leaving the stage, she ran back over to our table, and hopped down onto the floor.

"Jim is that you?" she screamed in a voice that carried well over the room. "It's me, Ginger! Ginger Feldman! How are you!"

"Ginger Feldman? Wow, I . . . I . . . I didn't recognize you."

Ginger then plopped down in my lap, and yanked my head directly into the cleavage of her more than ample bosom. "Remember these? Gee I've missed you. How long are you in town?"

At this, all three of my stunned companions exploded in one gigantic spit take, spewing mouthfuls of watered-down bourbon all over the table. They laughed so hard that they tumbled off their chairs, and landed on the floor gasping for air.

They were still laughing when we got back to the hotel at 3:00 A.M. And they were still laughing in the cab the next day on our way to interview The Who.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

MEGA AND THE MADMAN

As the letters continued to be ignored, they became increasingly more sinister and disturbed.

RADIO IN the evening, especially FM radio, is a much more intimate medium than during the day, and I wanted to capture by voice and verse, word and rhythm, story and song, the imagination of those who had gathered round the glow of the FM campfire, hungry for the sound of the tribal drum.

Certainly there were some kids who spent more time with me each night than they spent with their parents in a week. Locked in suburban bedrooms with their teenage hormones, high school homework, and forbidden radios, we soon became close friends.

Then of course there was an entire subculture of guys who stocked shelves in supermarkets, worked the late shift in convenience stores, or pulled overnights pumping gas. These

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were the boys who just *had* to have "Freebird" dedicated to the night shift at Vons.

I knew that I was also speaking to the young girl from the Midwest, who'd been job hunting since 9:00 A.M. Dragging herself back to a lonely apartment after another series of rejections and trampled dreams, she was left to contemplate one more day in L.A. "Three propositions but no job offer—again." Sometimes, Hollywood can seem like a cruel affliction. Now, alone with her thoughts late at night, KAOS was her only solace.

"Close your eyes for a moment. And make believe that suddenly, all of your troubles, all of your problems, all of your worries have somehow disappeared. Whatever they are, for the next twenty minutes or so, they simply do not exist.

"Now, let me take you to the most beautiful and romantic place on earth. You are in a luxurious room, it is quiet, peaceful, intimate. As the door slowly opens, you feel the bittersweet rush of anticipation. Somehow, you sense that you are going to be happier tonight than you have ever been before, or will ever be again. You never want to leave this place, this room, your lover who stands in the doorway. You are about to experience the most romantic night of your life.

"Here's to your little bit of heaven, from RADIO KAOS."

Close your eyes close the door
 You don't have to worry anymore
 I'll be your baby tonight
 Shut the light shut the shade
 You don't have to be afraid
 I'll be your baby tonight
 —Bob Dylan

It was almost midnight when I finished the set and opened the mike again.

"Brand new song from Fleetwood Mac called 'Rhannon.' The Jefferson Starship before that with 'Miracles,' and we began that set with Bob Dylan, and 'I'll Be Your Baby Tonight.'

"I had a request a little while ago for something



Jim Ladd began his career in radio in 1969. By the early seventies, he was the most popular DJ in Los Angeles.



Michelle Susan Teresa Marto (Shelly), whom Jim Ladd met in 1970, at her and Jim's wedding in 1973.



Hippie Waltons on the train to San Francisco. (front to back: Dean, John, Shelly, and Rochelle)



Jim Ladd began his career in radio in 1969. By the early seventies, he was the most popular DJ in Los Angeles.



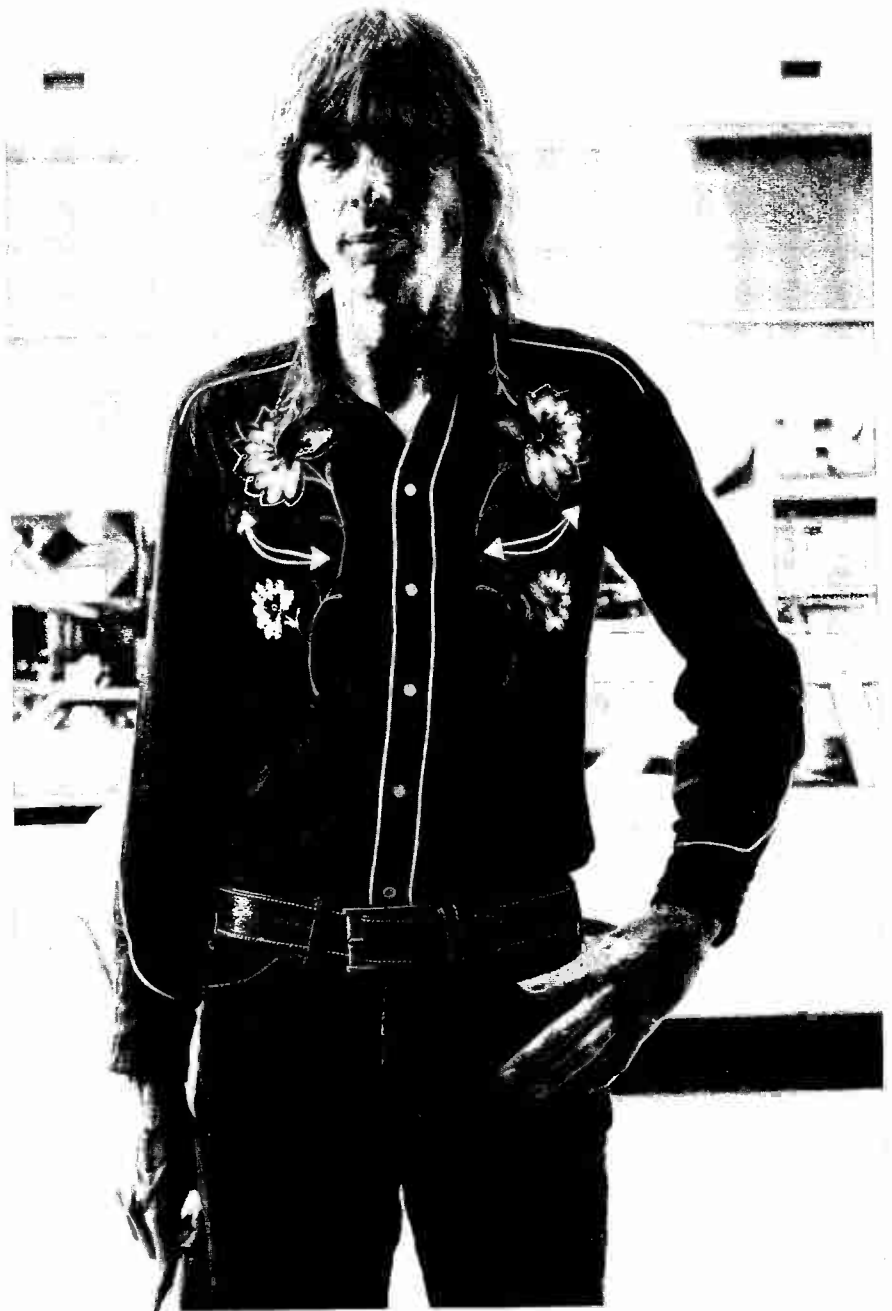
Tom and Raechel Donahue who in San Francisco on April 7, 1967, launched the era of free-form radio and started the beat of the tribal drum.



Jim Ladd (left) interviews Joe Cocker on the air live at KGAB in 1973.



Jim Ladd on the air at
KASH in 1973. (Adele
Surfas)



Jim Ladd as "The Lonesome L.A. Cowboy" who worked the airwaves nightly at RADIO KAOS from 10 PM to 2 AM. (Adele Surfás)

TOURISM PASSPORT TO PEACE

1987 INTERNATIONAL TOURIST YEAR



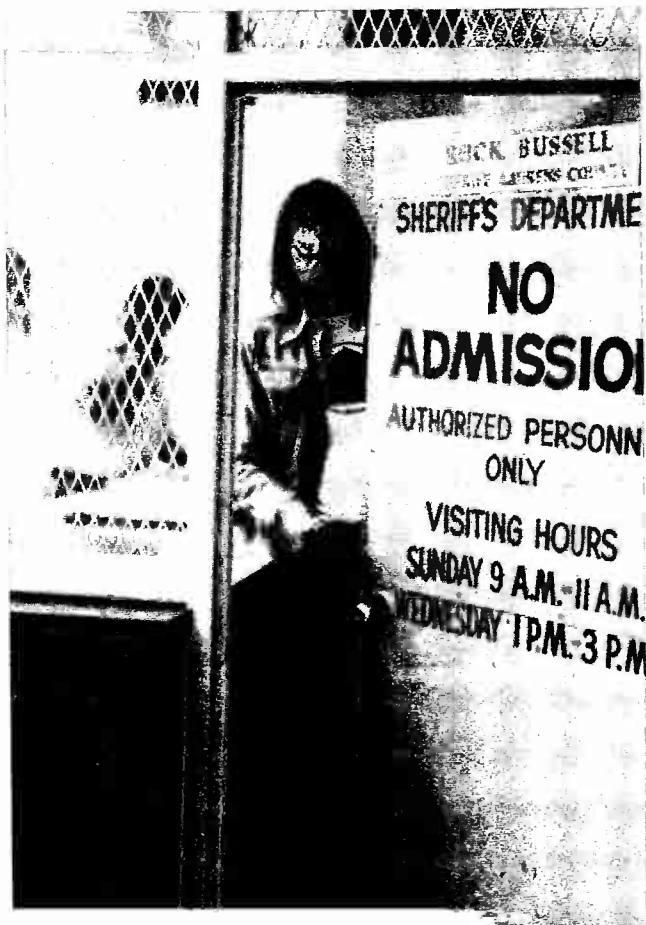
Midday personality Jack Snyder (left), news director Ace Young (center) and Jim Ladd monkey around in Terri Belle's office at RADIO KAOS.



Jim Ladd with Ric Ocasek (left) and Elliot Easton (center), members of the band the Cars, in the Paraquat Lounge at RADIO KAOS in 1981.



Jim Ladd and his dog Mojo with Mick Fleetwood (left) during a taping of Ladd's syndicated radio program **INNERVIEW**.



Jim Ladd getting busted in Dublin, Georgia, on Easter Sunday, following an **INNERVIEW** taping with the Allman Brothers in the late seventies.



Jim Ladd with Tom Petty taping a segment of INNERVIEW.



Jim Ladd with Glenn Frey (center) and Don Henley (right), members of the Eagles, during an INNERVIEW session for the Eagles' album *The Long Run*.



Michelle Susan Teresa Marto (Shelly), whom Jim Ladd met in 1970, at her and Jim's wedding in 1973.

Hippie Waltons on the train to San Francisco. (front to back: Dean, John, Shelly, and Rochelle)



from Yes, so I think we'll roll this track called 'Heart Of The Sunrise.'

"I'm Jim Ladd, and this—is RADIO KAOS."

I hit the start button for turntable number two, and the Yes song began to spin. As I shut off the microphone the door opened and, to my complete amazement, in walked Ira Steinberg.

"Ira, what are you doing here at this time of night?"

"Surprised to see one of us suits here so late?" he said with a broad grin. "I was just leaving actually—been going over the numbers all night—but I wanted to stop in to tell you how good you're sounding on the air. I love that new Fleetwood Mac cut. What's it called again?"

"'Rhiannon.'"

"'Rhiannon,' great song," he said, waving his arms in broad sweeping gestures as he talked. "Ya know, I heard what you said last night around 11:30 about makin' out in the back of a car? I about fell out of bed when you went into that thing about wet thighs! Anyway I know you're busy. Just keep up the good work, you're sounding great."

"Well thanks, Ira," I said, astonished to hear this from anyone in a suit, much less the head of the sales department. "But, to be honest, I'm kinda disappointed in my numbers. I was really hoping for a bigger increase in this book."

"No way," said Ira with a cheerful slap on my shoulder. "This can't even be counted as your first book. Not with all the upheavals in programming, not to mention moving to new studios and everything else that's been going on. You're a great addition to the station, and once we get settled in, this place is going to take off like a rocket."

"Listen, Ira, I want you to know I appreciate you coming in here like this," I said. "KAOS is destined to do something very special. I can feel it."

It was the first time that anyone in an upper management position had ever taken the time to do something like that, and I never forgot it. It wasn't just his reassurance about the ratings, it was his comment about the show itself. Ira actually listened to the station because he enjoyed it, and he could tell if someone on the air was really trying, or just going through the motions. Unlike Glutman, who considered rock 'n' roll merely a necessary evil, Ira liked the music we played. He

also liked hanging out with the air staff, and seemed genuinely interested in what we were trying to do on the air.

Ira Steinberg was the other side of the coin from F. R. Glutman. He was much more of a carrot than a stick man, preferring to deal with people like a hyperfriendly salesman rather than a hard-nosed boss. I liked Ira and, after that night, I made it a point to get to know him better.

Slowly, a little bit at a time, even Mega and I were starting to become friends.

The beautiful but distant Ms. Turnon held a degree in broadcast communications, which she had obtained with the intent of going into radio management. Apparently, Mega was convinced that management was where the real money was, and that being on the air was for Bozos. As it turns out, she was right on both counts. In fact, Mega's first job was as a promotions director for a San Francisco television station. When she applied for the same position at KHIP, Tom Donahue saw something in her that convinced him she should be on the air. After numerous assurances that she would not be required to wear big floppy shoes and a red nose, Tom finally persuaded Mega to give it a try.

The most commonly used adjective to describe Mega had to be the word "class." Whenever Mega's name came up in conversation, whether it was with someone at the station, or a fan who had buttonholed me (desperately wanting to know "what's she really like?"), the word "class" was always included somewhere within his perception of Mega. This was not an affected virtue purchased from some finishing school etiquette course. Nor was it a false demeanor which she'd acquired while reading "Tips for the Working Woman" in *Cosmo*. Hers was an inborn sense of dignity, nurtured by a knowledge of who she was, and just as importantly, who she had decided *you* were.

Mega also had an uncanny ability to translate business ethics into real terms. In broadcasting, business ethics are more commonly known as "rat fucking." Her aptitude in this area gave Mega a no-nonsense perspective on radio, and a surgeon's skill at slicing through the grease and doublespeak of managementese.

Miz Rae once described her as "the implacable Turnon, the immovable Turnon, a woman who couldn't be manipulated by Zeus."

Due to her cover-girl features, Mega had also developed a pernicious defense system, which she used with great skill to ward off any unwelcome overtures that are the price of high cheekbones and a taut figure. Included in her battery of tactics was the way she normally dressed—always fashionable but seldom revealing. But even Mega's defense system couldn't protect her from the crazies in the audience—for that she would need the LAPD.

The incident took place at the old building on Wilshire Boulevard, shortly before we moved into the new studios. Had it been the new facility, with its guard gate, secured parking structure and locked security doors, the outrage might have been avoided. Mega's nightmare began with a series of letters from an overzealous fan. She didn't interpret the correspondence as being particularly dangerous at first, merely the rambling accounts of a listener who was convinced he was the reincarnation of Jesus Christ. The letters always arrived in the same large envelope containing twenty to twenty-five handwritten pages, scrawled in a schizophrenic style of block printing. Invariably, this author of "the gospel according to our Sister of delusion" would remember some vital piece of information after sealing the epistle and be forced to cover the back of the envelope with a number of last-minute revelations. Mega never responded, and after the fifth or sixth unanswered communiqué, he began to get threatening.

As the letters continued to be ignored, they became increasingly more sinister and disturbed. Finally, Mega decided that she had better show them to somebody; so, playing it down as "probably nothing," she gave the latest edition of this twisted soul's gospel to Terri Belle. Fortunately, Terri brought in the police.

The cops took the matter quite seriously, and the next day sent two plainclothes officers out to talk with Mega.

"Miss Turnon, has this person ever tried to contact you by phone here at the station?" Officer Flynn began.

"Yes," said Mega, "several times."

Flynn's partner, Officer MacIntosh, asked, "Was he threatening in any way?"

Mega thought for a moment. "No, not at first. In the beginning he just started rambling on about his dreams and how they related to the messages in the songs I was playing.

He seems convinced that every song I play on the radio is meant specifically for him."

"Now, did he start calling you before or after you began to receive these letters?" Flynn asked as he began writing in his notebook.

"After the third or fourth letter I think," Mega said, beginning to get a little nervous at how interested both officers were becoming.

"Does he always identify himself as the one who's writing you?" MacIntosh asked softly as Flynn continued taking notes.

"Always," Mega responded. "He always begins by asking me if I've read his last letter and why I've never written back."

"Then what happens?" asked Flynn.

"Well, I keep telling him that I'm glad he likes the station, but I am not sending him messages over the air."

Without looking up from his notepad, Flynn asked, "When did he start to become abusive?"

"About a week ago," said Mega, clearly beginning to get worried. "He said that if I refused to recognize him as the true Jesus, that I was defying the Holy Word. And if I continued to ignore him, I'd be punished by the wrath of God."

Flynn looked up from his notebook and asked: "Did he tell you how you were to be punished?"

"No," she answered, "just that it would be swift, and that I would be doomed to the eternal fires of hell. I'm telling you the guy is a real looney tune."

"Is there anything else you can tell us?" MacIntosh asked.

Mega looked down at her hands and tried to steady herself before answering. "Yes," she said in a quaking voice. "He calls me Mary."

"Mary?" repeated Flynn.

"Yes," Mega whispered, "Mary Magdalene."

Flynn and MacIntosh told Mega that they would try to contact this person at the return address on the envelope. In the meantime, they warned her to be extra careful on her way to and from the station, and to pay special attention to make sure she wasn't being followed.

After her show that evening, Mega rode the little elevator down to the lobby. She checked the double-glass doors at the

entrance to the building before she let the elevator go, but saw no one. Mega walked quickly through the lobby and out the glass doors onto Wilshire Boulevard. Again she gave a look around before allowing the doors to close behind her, but seeing no one, let go of the door and headed straight for her car. Just as Mega reached the corner, she heard a voice coming from directly behind her.

“Mary Magdalene. You have denied me, and thus you have denied thy Holy Father as well.”

Mega froze in midstep. She could not breathe nor bring herself to turn around. As guarded and deliberate as she had been to assure that this moment would never occur, here she stood, trapped on a dark street corner, outside of the station, completely alone.

Hearing no footsteps, but now acutely aware of a physical presence behind her, she jumped to her right as a large, tattooed man stepped out from behind a parked car and confronted her.

He was dressed in dirty chinos, a sleeveless T-shirt, and no shoes, his filthy brown hair hung past his shoulders, and he had a thin, unkempt beard. But it wasn't his size or the way he was dressed that frightened Mega. It was his eyes. Unlike the all-knowing, all-forgiving eyes of the Savior we're used to seeing in religious paintings, these eyes were filled with rage.

Without the slightest introduction or salutation of any kind, the frenzied prophet launched directly into his litany of transgressions that she, “Mary Magdalene,” needed to confess.

“*Why* have you not answered even one of my letters?” he demanded. “Do you deny that I am the true Christ, come back to the world as prophesied in the Holy Scriptures?”

Mega couldn't release herself from his stare. He didn't blink at all, his eyelids were locked to his brow like the eyes of a dead man. He was obviously, hopelessly, mad.

“I stood with you when all others scorned you as a fallen woman,” he said. “Surely you must stand beside me, now that I have returned.”

Her car was just around the corner, no more than twenty steps away, but it seemed more like twenty miles. Standing there in the shadowy streetlights of Wilshire Boulevard, completely alone with this psychotic savior, Mega began to pray.

“Isn't it obvious that you are destined to help spread my

message to the world?" he continued without waiting for her to respond. "After two thousand years you must now take your rightful place by my side!"

Finally Mega's defense mechanisms began to kick in: "Please try to understand," she said as evenly as possible, "how was I to know until now—that it was really you?"

This caught him off-guard, and as he hesitated, trying to think of an answer, Mega began to walk very slowly toward her car. As she did so, she continued talking to him as if nothing at all was wrong, as if she were truly happy to have found him—again.

"I've waited so long," the words sounded forced, her mouth now completely dry, "I just couldn't make such an important announcement over the air until I had proof."

Fortunately, Mega had decided to play this very low key, rather than attempting to run. This seemed to put him at ease, and instead of trying to block her way, he merely fell in beside her as she walked.

Now Mega began to feel she was gaining some control over the situation: at least she was moving closer to the safety of her car. If she could just keep this guy talking long enough to get inside and lock the doors . . . Mega swallowed hard and asked as matter-of-factly as possible, "Now that you've returned, what do you plan to do?"

"I shall take vengeance on those who have sinned against me!" he shouted as he came to a halt. "With this! The sword of the Almighty God!"

He grabbed Mega by the arm and swung her around hard to face him. As he did so, he reached behind his back with the other hand, and drew an eight-inch hunting knife from his belt.

"But I told you all this in my letters!" he screamed. "Didn't you read my letters?!" He was becoming hysterical and his grip tightened on Mega's arm, but she was so transfixed by the knife that she didn't feel the pain.

Suddenly, his tone changed. He was no longer screaming, but spoke in a low, grim voice. "Were you lying to me, Mary Magdalene?" For the first time, he shifted his gaping stare from her face. She could feel his eyes, dead man's eyes, moving down her throat to her breasts, past her waist, down trembling legs, and back up her body in a slow, lurid manner.

His voice was now tight and grabled as he began to mum-

ble, "Haven't you learned anything from my death and resurrection? Have you joined those in league with Satan who are trying to destroy me?"

Mega was frightened to the point of hysteria but somehow kept her wits. "I've saved every letter," Mega pleaded as she caught her own reflection in the blade. "They, they will be the new gospels. I, ah, I could read one each night on my show."

"Yes! Yes!" he shrieked, looking her in the eye again as he eased his grip on her arm. "That's what I've been telling you! That's your purpose here! When I heard the songs you were playing for me over the radio, I knew that God had sent you to give testimony of my return!"

"You're right, it will be wonderful," Mega said as she fought back a wave of dizziness. "Why don't you walk me to my car? I've got to figure out how to present this on tomorrow night's show. I want to write it all down. I've got to make this a big announcement, plan out what songs to use, really make people understand."

Mary Magdalene walked side by side with her tortured redeemer, as he launched into his warped vision of their past life karma, and the inevitable apocalypse, all the while using his knife like a pointing stick, to explain some invisible chart of events. Mega acted as interested as possible while she kept a steady pace toward the car. Finally, mercifully, she made it. Battling the nausea that was rising within her, and with trembling but determined hands, Mega found her keys, unlocked the car door, and got in.

Suddenly the guy began raving at full volume, shouting his sermon on the curb at the top of his lungs. Mega locked the doors, and he began to curse her with the fate that would befall the nonbeliever. Mega started the car and threw it into gear. As she pulled away from the curb, she could see him slashing the air madly with his knife, leaping up and down like some whacked-out evangelist. Over the sound of her screeching tires, Mega could hear something about "eternal damnation" as she floored the accelerator and raced off toward home.

The next night, and every night thereafter for the next two weeks, the LAPD sent a black-and-white unit to meet Mega at the station when she arrived. The police couldn't arrest the lunatic because he hadn't actually done anything yet,

and Mega was afraid to file a formal complaint, so they just kept confronting him until he finally got tired of the spread-eagle position. Although the LAPD had been known to over-react in those days whenever rock 'n' rollers were involved, they could also be very reliable allies.

After that, Mega brought her two huge German shepherds to work with her every night. The keenly alert and fiercely protective Claudy and L. D. sat patiently in the studio throughout her four-hour shift, guarding against any further pathetic prophets or the intrusion of unwelcome wise men. And for the next couple of months, I put on a long record to start my show, and escorted Mega to her car. Not that she needed more protection than the two giant canines, but it made me feel better, and this show of concern seemed to bring Mega and me closer together as friends.

It was during this time that Mega and I gave each other "the nickname." It was the *same* nickname for the both of us: "Reputa the Beauta," or Reputa for short. She was Reputa the Beauta Part One, and I, of course, was Reputa the Beauta Part Two. We got these strange handles from an impromptu rap Peter Wolf did during the intro to "Musta Got Lost," from the J. Geils Band album *Blow Your Face Out*. I don't know exactly why it struck us so funny at the time, but it stuck, and to this day we still refer to each other affectionately as Reputa.

Throughout all of this, Mega's air work remained flawless. Her presentation was flippant yet aristocratic, warm but a bit enigmatic. Her taste in music was perfect for early Southern California evenings. She knew how to soothe the frustrations of freeway commuters, and when to subtly shift the mood, as her listeners began arriving home. Mega never did a lot of deeply thematic sets. Her style was to present a broad variety of songs, which kept you up and interested. You never heard her fall into a predictable pattern; she would keep you guessing while she fashioned her own seductive musical moods.

I began looking forward to chatting with Mega before my show each night. I usually arrived around nine-thirty, and we'd talk about new music, what bands were coming to town, bizarre news stories of the day, and of course, the latest station gossip. Reputa came in just as everyone was leaving for the day, and always managed to get an update on the latest frings, faux pas, and fuckups.

Within a few months, the seeds of a partnership began to germinate. Claudy and L. D. finally accepted my nightly presence, and soon I felt it was safe to stop wearing the catcher's cup under my Levi's. After a while, Mega and I started feeling comfortable enough to do crossovers (the spontaneous banter between jocks at the end of one shift and the beginning of the next), which can sometimes produce the best one-liners of the day.

Mega: "Well, it's time for me to leave. Jim Ladd is here, but it looks like he's in no condition to be operating heavy equipment."

Jim: "Thank you for that Reputa. Since you brought up appearance, I must compliment you on your outfit this evening. That red corset and garter belt really becomes you. And those fishnet hose and high heels really set it off!"

Mega: "Well, thank you for letting me borrow them Reputa, I know how fussy you are about your clothes."

Jim: "Hey wait a minute! Those aren't my—"

Mega: "This is 94.7, RADIO KAOS. Good night everybody!"

If you were going to play one-upmanship with Mega, you had better come with your guns loaded.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ROCK'N'ROLL IN OPEN-TOED SHOES

I pulled into Nazareth
Was feeling 'bout half past dead
I just need some place
Where I can lay my head
Hey mister can you tell me
Where a man might find a bed
He just grinned and shook my hand
No was all he said.

—the Band

IT WAS about ten-thirty on a Friday night. I pulled a copy of Peter Frampton's new album, *Frampton Comes Alive*, from its jacket, placed it on turntable number two, and was about to cue it up when the hotline rang.

"Hello," I answered, holding the phone with one hand while setting the needle down on the record with the other.

"Jim, it's Terri. I'm sorry to call you on the air, can you talk for a second?"

"Sure, just let me do this segue and I'm all yours." I set the phone down, cued up "Do You Feel Like We Do?" and waited for the song on the air to finish. When it did, I started the next turntable, and picked up the phone.

"Okay, back again," I said. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, first off, your crossover with Mega was hilarious, I didn't know you could do that with sheep."

“Thank you Terri, thanks a whole lot,” I laughed. “But why do you always think it’s funny when she nails *me*?”

“Hey, there aren’t that many women in this business, and we’ve got to stick together. But listen, the reason I called, and again I apologize for bothering you on the air, is that I just wanted to make sure Mega told you about the get-together tomorrow night at my house.”

“Yes, she said to be there at eight o’clock, is that right?”

“That’s right, I’ve just been so crazy that I completely forgot to leave you a note. It’s air staff only—no wives, no friends, nobody from upper management—can you make it?”

“Well gee, Terri, I don’t know, I’ll have to check my social calendar. You know how busy we high-powered radio personalities are,” I said, pausing as she made gagging noises at the other end of the phone. “Well it looks like you’re in luck. My next Saturday night isn’t booked until January of 1980.”

“Lucky me,” she said. “I’ll see you tomorrow night then, and by the way, Jim—leave the farm animals at home.”

With that she hung up, and when the Peter Frampton tune ended, I opened the mike and announced:

“I just got a call from my boss. It seems that she’s throwing a huge party tomorrow night at her house, and everyone listening is invited! Stay tuned to RADIO KAOS, because later on in the show I’ll be giving out her address and home phone number, just in case any of you need directions. But right now, I think we should play this one for a great boss, and a generous hostess! It’s ‘Beer Drinkers And Hell Raisers’ from ZZ Top, on RADIO KAOS!”

Terri Belle had a monumental job in front of her. The station had been near the bottom of the ratings for well over two years, and now it was up to her to fix it. By 1976, FM radio had become profitable enough to get the attention of the corporate bigwigs, who just a few years before had all but ignored the fact that their company even owned a station on “the other frequency.”

Micromedia had a number of FM stations across the country which were doing quite well, especially the ones in New York and Detroit, and corporate headquarters was putting the squeeze on Glutman to get RADIO KAOS back on track in L.A. They were tired of losing money, and they didn’t care how Glutman did it, but they wanted results and fast. For this he chose a twenty-seven-year-old secretary with absolutely no previous experience in either radio or management.

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The situation was absurd.

Even though she possessed none of the background essential for the job, Terri Belle did have a number of things going for her. She was bright, familiar with business procedures, and a born organizer. Beneath Terri's quiet demeanor was a woman who would stand up for what she believed in; plus, Terri had the most essential ingredient of all—she was a true believer. Like the rest of us, Terri Belle loved FM radio so much, she would do anything just to be around it. Unbeknownst to Glutman, he had inadvertently hired a stone cold rock 'n' roller, not a bureaucrat.

Terri had one other quality she might not have possessed if she'd had years of management experience behind her—she listened to her people. Terri knew better than anyone how much ground she had to make up, and this meant she not only accepted creative input from her staff, she actively sought it out. Because she was smart, Terri didn't try to bullshit her way through. Instead, she bent her will toward learning everything she could about FM radio. Terri had listened to "White Rabbit," too.

Now feed your head on this. It seems insane, but somehow Mr. Glutman's wild ride into the wonderland of management paranoia had brought RADIO KAOS crashing directly into the perfect Alice for the job.

I arrived at Terri's just as music director Alan Draper was getting out of his car. He waited for me to park and we walked in together. Terri and her boyfriend had moved into a small rustic house right next door to Mega, when it came up for rent a few months before. It was a charming little two-bedroom cottage, tucked beneath broad oak trees, on a tiny one-lane road in the Hollywood Hills.

"Alan, come on in!" said Terri as she opened the door. "And who's this you brought with you? Hey, it's vampire man everybody, you know, the guy we never see in the daylight."

"Thank you for that wonderful introduction Terri," I said, following her into the room. "How ya doin' Ace?"

"Great man, good to see ya," he said as we shook hands. "Beamer, do you remember this guy?"

"How are you, my son?" intoned B. Mitchel Reed. "You know I came across a track the other day that would be perfect for your late night thing. An old Muddy Waters side called—"
"A voice from behind me cut Beamer off in midsentence.

“Well, it’s the new kid. You can bring in a chair from the kitchen if you want, or just grab a place on the floor.”

“How ya doin’, Raechel,” I said, still facing Beamer. But as I turned to greet her, she had already engaged our over-night jock David Perry in deep conversation.

“Reputa,” called Mega from the couch.

“Hey Reputa,” I replied, taking her hand. “And how is L.A.’s foremost lady of the evening tonight?”

“Oh just fine you evil dog you,” laughed Mega as she gestured toward the kitchen. “Pour yourself some champagne.”

“Champagne? What are we celebrating?”

“The fact that we have champagne, silly.”

Everyone gathered around the coffee table as Alan started rolling joints, and the conversation soon turned to F.R. Glutman. Everybody did an impersonation of the Hound, but Mega’s always seemed the most heartfelt.

“*You know little girl,*” said Mega, mimicking Glutman’s greasy nasal voice, “*if you played your cards right, you could have a Jaguar XJ6, too.*”

The room went into hysterics at Mega’s uncanny impersonation of the Hound. “Can you believe that asshole actually said that to me?” asked Mega in her own voice. “It was in the parking lot, when I made the foolish mistake of commenting on his new car.” Then Mega slipped back into the Hound’s persona again, “*If you played your cards right . . .*”

“Remember his Christmas promotion idea?” asked Ace.

This sent a chorus of groans through the room. “What Christmas promotion?” Alan asked.

“It was before you and Ladd got here,” Ace began. “We’d been after the Hound for months to do something about promoting the station—billboards, T-shirts, anything. No, Glutman said he didn’t have any money in the budget for promotion, wouldn’t even pay for bumper stickers, but he goes out and spends thousands of dollars on this old fire truck. Then he spends more thousands of dollars to have it reconditioned, and gets these stupid firemen’s helmets made up for the air staff, with RADIO KAOS painted across the front. He then ‘orders’ us to ride this thing in the Christmas parade, claiming it was ‘perfect for the image of the station.’”

“It was the most embarrassing thing I’ve ever had to do in radio,” stated Beamer.

“The guy is certifiable,” added Mega.

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“So get this,” Raechel said, jumping into the story. “Glutman is of course *driving* the fire truck and waving madly to the crowd, who he is convinced have turned out just to see him. Now, not only were we mortified to be doing this, we were also freezing, so we decided to get some brandy to ward off the chill as well as the embarrassment.”

Now Terri Belle joined in. “The parade had to stop every few minutes when the front of it reached the reviewing stand, so Mega decided the next time we saw a liquor store, she was going to sneak off the truck and run in. Sure enough, the next corner we come to had a liquor store, and when the parade stopped, Mega jumped off the back, and slid through the crowd. But by the time she got the brandy and came running back out, the parade had moved two blocks down the street. So now she had to race down Hollywood Boulevard, wearing this ridiculous fireman’s helmet, as people in the crowd are yelling ‘Hey, aren’t you Mega Turnon?’”

“Of course, the Hound was so busy waving at the multitude,” laughed Raechel, “that he never even noticed Mega, nor the fact that most of his air staff was blind drunk!”

Everybody had a good laugh over this, and then insisted that Ace do his impression of the Hound when he went off on one of his stories about flying. After a while, the conversation turned to new music, old favorites, and radio. It was the first time this new team had gotten together outside of the station, and it was immediately apparent that some strange alchemy was taking place here. Something was at work in this room, something wonderful.

These people were relating to each other on a level far beyond the polite civility of an office party. The potential certainly existed for a lot of egos to bump into each other in that room, but it was obvious that everyone had left theirs at home. There were no “stars” in attendance that night. Even Beamer, especially Beamer, who had long ago earned legend status in the business, was just another one of the jocks.

Finally, Terri Belle asked a simple but historic question. “So what are we going to do about the station?” It wasn’t the question itself so much as the fact that she had asked it. Instead of trying to impose some rigid format on this unique group of radio artists, she decided to handle the situation like a coach, rather than a tyrant. Terri realized she had some of the finest radio talent in the country sitting in her front room, and all she had to do was motivate them.

You could have powered RADIO KAOS for a year on the electricity generated that night. Everyone jumped in with both feet, searching for a solution not by committee but from a kind of collective inspiration. We were a group of people who still believed that rock radio could help change the world, and there was nothing more exciting than that.

"I'll tell you how I see it," I said, jumping into the fray. "KASH is just playing it safe. The format is God there, that's never going to change. And that's their Achilles heel. They deliver the hits, but they're too rigid. The other so-called rock stations are either Top 40, or disco, or both, and the soft rock stations are basically just playing warmed-over middle-of-the-road music. I think what we need to do is crank this puppy up."

"I agree," said David Perry. "No one's really doing balls-out rock 'n' roll anymore."

"It seems like KASH plays Seals and Crofts every half hour," added B. Mitchel Reed. "I agree, we need to establish ourselves as the hard rocker in town. We do need to play the hits, of course, but the right hits. What we don't play will be as important as what we do play."

"What do you mean?" asked Terri.

"Well, for example, we shouldn't be afraid to play a top ten single from some band just because KASH is playing it—we don't want to out-hip ourselves," explained Beamer. "But we shouldn't touch anything that smacks of disco, or pop, or anything that's not rock 'n' roll, no matter if it's number one in *Billboard* for six months."

"So what are we saying here?" asked Terri.

"We need to kick ass!" I said.

"An all-or-nothing attitude," exclaimed Raechel. "We need to take a giant leap out of the safe zone again."

Terri turned to look at Mega. "What do you think?"

"I think they're right."

The champagne flowed and the joints were rolled and we rocked into the evening. And in the wee hours of the morning, as the last of us stumbled home, we knew something extraordinary had just happened. It was the first time the "essence" actually materialized. We called it "the Magic," and it was the key to it all—a moment of purple haze.

It was like turning on a light switch. Monday morning, RADIO KAOS exploded into the loudest, rudest, crudest rock 'n' roll radio station ever to pollute the airwaves of Southern California. The staff was infused with the spirit of Kristoffer-

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son's definition of freedom, and with "nothing left to lose," we went after L.A. like Pete Townshend attacking a Marshall amp.

The "plan," if you could call it that, was so simple and so directly to the point, that it would seem like madness to most corporate radio executives. This decision, however, was to rekindle RADIO KAOS's original mandate, and push FM rock radio closer than ever to its national destiny.

Within a month, RADIO KAOS became the talk of every high school and college campus from Santa Barbara to San Diego. You could feel it coming through the dial like a poltergeist entering your house. The audience was astounded, and this time, much as it had happened nine years earlier at KFRE, the word spread like a gasoline fire.

Although the station was free form, it wasn't formless. There was order to be sure, and this is where Terri Belle really helped bring KAOS out of chaos. Instead of trying to impose a strict radio-by-the-numbers format on a group of such creative DJs, Terri took the data she got from research, combined it with the principles of free-form radio, and invented a framework in which the air staff could create something unique.

Like KASH, we would be required to play a set number of hit singles, current album tracks, and new songs each hour, but *how* we did that was up to us. Instead of dictating each and every song in an unrelated hodgepodge of chart positions and research data, Terri Belle and Alan Draper provided us with *tools*. They took that same data, decided which songs should go into the library and which would come out, then relied on the imagination of the air staff to transform their research into rock 'n' roll radio.

In doing so, the record library had to be trimmed, of course, and that was sad, but the audience didn't request Ravi Shankar much anymore, nor Judy Collins either, so most of the softer more esoteric stuff had to go. The listeners wanted Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, Lynyrd Skynyrd, and Bruce Springsteen, and we gave it to them like nobody else could. But not just the hits. In keeping with FM radio's original mandate, we explored all the music from the bands we played, going deeper into the records than anyone else. KASH just played the hits, we played music.

By removing from the library anything that didn't fit within the broad parameters of what we were doing, we eliminated the possibility that one of the jocks would be playing an hour of jazz or poetry readings at three in the afternoon.

This still left us with thousands and thousands of albums to work with, ranging from Bob Dylan to ZZ Top, from Alice Cooper to Pink Floyd, but it was left to the professional and artistic judgment of the person on the air to decide how that spectrum would be used.

Because we didn't separate ourselves from the listeners, we knew if a song was popular in L.A. even if it wasn't on the national charts. And because we were encouraged to use this knowledge, RADIO KAOS became the only place in town where you could hear all those great cuts "that never get played on the radio." KASH and the other stations programmed only what the record charts told them was selling nationally. We were playing what Southern California wanted to hear.

One of our main concerns during this transition to a harder-edged sound was that we maintain the integrity of the tribal drum, the very foundation on which RADIO KAOS was built. So to fill the gap left by the departure from the library of such voices of conscience as Joan Baez and Phil Ochs, we redoubled our efforts in support of the social concerns that affected our listeners.

Greenpeace, The Alliance for Survival, the Vietnam vets, any organization that was trying to carry on the social changes begun in the sixties, was given the station's full support. We sponsored benefits, featured stories about rallies and community events on the news, and, most importantly, carried the torch for change into our individual shows.

RADIO KAOS had the rock 'n' roll edge, a Merry Prankster attitude, and a powerful obligation to keep the fading sixties ethic alive. And whenever you mix a strong sense of social justice with an "I don't give a fuck" attitude, you know it's not going to be boring.

"Hello my darlings, this is Raechel coming to you from KAOS. It's just about twelve o'clock and time once again for the Blue Plate Special. As you know, every day for lunch we serve up an hour of songs suggested by you, our loving and wonderful fans. Now today's letter comes from Debbie in Huntington Beach and she writes:

"Dear Miz Rae, please do a Blue Plate Special about guys who never call you back when they promise. If you can, please include Linda Ronstadt's "You're No Good" and "It's All Over Now" from the Stones. I would ask you to dedicate it to the guy I have in mind, but I know he will be listening and I don't want to give him the satisfaction. Keep rockin', Debbie."

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"Well Debbie I warned you to stay away from Jim Ladd. You know he can't be trusted."

Raechel hit turntable number one and the intro to Linda Ronstadt's song began.

"I'm Raechel Donahue and today we're serving up a hot steaming plate of RAT-a-toni for lunch. It's today's Blue Plate Special, here at the KAOS bar and grill."

As Linda Ronstadt began her scathing rebuke of an unworthy no-good scumbag, I cranked up my car radio and made a mental note to pay Miz Rae back with interest on tonight's show.

"It's midnight in KAOS, and . . . oh I almost forgot . . . I wanted to thank Miz Rae for dragging my reputation as a gentleman through that hour of ptomaine she calls the Blue Plate Special."

"If you're listening Rae, I didn't call you back because your panties haven't been located yet, although we've had several hundred calls from guys in the audience claiming you left them at their place."

"Now here's a little something for you Raechel. 'Back In The Saddle' from Aerosmith, on 94.7 K-A-O-S."

We called each other "our polar opposite," not only because we worked the same hours on opposite sides of the clock, but because we were as different as two people who believed in the same thing could be. Rae was much more subtle on the air, preferring innuendo and the counterpunch to an outright assault. She let the music express her social and political observations for her, while I loved to get up on my soapbox and rave. We got along beautifully, Raechel and I, but then we were both suckers for a lost cause.

Come to think of it, nobody on the air staff was remotely like anybody else. Each of us held strong views about FM radio, each took the utmost pride in his or her four hours on the air, and all gave of themselves to the audience in a very personal way. Yet somehow, all these individual approaches melded into the cohesive sound of KAOS.

As we approached the autumn of 1976, the station began to show an increase in the ratings, as the street buzz continued to grow.

There was still no promotion, no billboards or newspaper ads, just word of mouth, and the sound of the tribal drum.

Because we had little advertising support from Glutman or the network, we had to think of things to do ourselves, and one of the ideas Terri Belle came up with soon became synonymous with RADIO KAOS. It was called "Rocktober," a prime example of good old-fashioned Yankee ingenuity. It was an event created out of thin air, which cost nothing, but sounded like a million bucks.

The initial concept was Glutman's, oddly enough, a promotional idea he'd used with some success back in Cleveland. When he first announced that he wanted us to rename a calendar month as a station promotion, none of us were very enthusiastic. But once we reconciled ourselves to the fact that he wasn't going to let it drop, we made the best of it. And in all fairness, the idea turned out to be a good one.

Rocktober was, of course, an unbelievable amount of work for Terri. The idea was to fill the month of October with as many special events as she could get her hands on: live concerts, in-studio guests, phone interviews—specials of every kind. On the weekends we did things such as "The Rolling Stones A-Z," (an invention of Thom O'Guardia's) during which we played every song ever recorded by them, beginning Saturday morning at six and running through midnight Sunday. Have you ever tried to sit down and alphabetize every Stones song ever recorded? Rocktober caught on with the audience like free money at a paupers' convention. The listeners loved it, and Rocktober became a tradition at KAOS.

As RADIO KAOS began to pick up momentum, F. R. Glutman seemed to become more and more agitated. He realized that he didn't have a clue as to why the telephones were ringing again, or why sponsors were now contacting the station. All he knew was that he was in charge. Instead of encouraging this newly found momentum, he began to meddle with everything. It soon became apparent that a major part of Terri Belle's life was going to be taken up by trying to keep Glutman as far away from her air staff as possible.

Glutman started hounding everybody to the point of absurdity. He would walk into the air booth in the middle of someone's show, and out of the blue, deliver a twenty-minute lecture on the proper volume at which to run the VU meters. Or, he'd bring Terri into his office for an hour argument about why she had not added the new Captain and Tenille

record. Of course, all this just bonded Terri and the jocks even closer together. The better we did, the more Glutman freaked, the more he freaked, the tighter we got.

In the middle of this swirling vortex of weirdness, F. R. Glutman found something that truly disturbed him, a problem so potentially dangerous to the success of the station that he had to deal with it swiftly and decisively—open-toed shoes. It had gotten completely out of hand. F. R. Glutman had warned Raechel time and time again that “open-toed shoes were not allowed in the workplace.” He had discussed this with her on three separate occasions, and now this very morning, he had noticed that she was wearing them again. The Hound leaned over and dialed his secretary on the speakerphone.

“Louise.”

“Yes, Mr. Glutman,” answered the alert and always polite Louise.

“Please come in, and bring your pad.”

That afternoon as Raechel left the studio after her show, she ran into Terri in the hall. Tensions between the two had eased by now, and although there was no love lost, Terri and Raechel worked together as pros, if not close friends.

“Congratulations Rae,” said Terri. “One more for the wall.”

Raechel looked at Terri, not knowing what in the world she could be talking about. “Congratulations for what?”

“Oh hell,” winced Terri, stamping her foot. “I was sure he’d have given it to you by now.”

“Darling, what on earth are you talking about?” asked Raechel.

“Your gold record from Elvin Bishop,” explained Terri. “It was delivered just before you came in this morning. It’s for ‘Fooled Around and Fell in Love.’ Glutman didn’t give it to you?”

“No,” said Rae a bit confused. “He came into the studio two or three times today, but he didn’t mention anything about a gold record.”

“He was in my office when Capricorn delivered it, and he insisted on giving it to you himself. I thought he would have done it already,” Terri explained. “Well, maybe he was waiting till you got off the air. Just act surprised—sorry I blew it.”

“Don’t worry about it,” said Raechel as they continued down the hall. “I’ll just bat my eyelids and say things like, ‘Oh, how thrilling.’ He’ll be happy.”

Raechel said good-bye to Terri, turned the corner, and stepped into the production room. The engineer was a tall, athletic kid of about twenty-three. Gus was remarkably even-tempered for a production man, a job usually filled by people who live on the knife edge of mental collapse. This is where all those commercials get recorded onto all those tape carts, which then go into the studio to be played over the air. It's a thankless, pressure-filled, ulcer-wrenching job at times, but Gus seemed to thrive on it.

Gus was transferring a prerecorded commercial for a big record store chain to cart when Raechel breezed into the room. "Not *that* guy again!" Raechel said as though she were cursing. "Those spots are the worst. Where did they get that bozo, anyway?"

"I don't know," said Gus. "He's worse than the guy that does the drag racing spots."

"Do you think this clown screams like that in real life?" Raechel asked rhetorically. "Could you imagine some jerk coming up to you on the street, screaming a mile a minute at the top of his lungs like that? He'd be in the Thorazine hotel in no time."

"Terri's been to Steinberg about it twice that I know of," said Gus as he racked up a fresh reel of tape. "Ira promised to ask the sponsor if they would let one of our jocks recut their spots for the station, but so far we're still stuck with him."

"Anyway darling, do you have any production for me before I leave?" Raechel asked.

"I've got a sixty-second water bed spot, and a couple of movie tags," responded Gus as he handed her the written copy. "Shouldn't take too long."

Raechel entered the tiny voice booth next to the production room, and knocked off the "Opens Friday at a theater or drive-in near you" movie tags in about thirty seconds. Then, she and Gus spent the next forty-five minutes rewriting a rather dry and unexciting piece of copy for a local water bed store. When they were finished, they had created a brilliantly funny piece of radio theater, featuring one of the sponsor's "top quality water beds" and a nearsighted walrus.

By the time Gus had dubbed in all the music, added the sex noises and other sound effects, spliced it all together, and put it on a cart, Rae and Gus had invested about three hours in those sixty seconds of tape. For this they received not one extra cent. But it was hilarious, and instead of being a tune-

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out for the audience, it added a little something special to the sound of KAOS.

Raechel left for home without seeing Glutman. But when she came into work the next morning, she found a memo from the Hound waiting for her in her mailbox. After reading it, Raechel was so amused that she decided not to respond to Glutman in person, but to share the experience instead. Something like this:

"Good morning everyone, Miz Rae with you on this titillating Tuesday here in Tinseltown. To begin the show, I want to share with you this memo, which I've just received from the general manager. It reads:"

MEMO: August 12, 1976
TO: All KAOS Employees
FROM: F. Reginald Glutman, General Manager
SUBJECT: *Footwear*

It is against company policy to wear sandals or open-toed shoes of any kind in the workplace. Violation of this policy will be cause for disciplinary action.

I have already discussed this with some of you on repeated occasions. You know who you are.

Signed,
F. Reginald Glutman, General Manager.

"Well, we don't want to step on any toes now do we? So from now on, it looks like I'll be doing my show barefoot!"

She didn't see Glutman that day either, but she got another memo Wednesday morning, this time regarding food in the studio. And again Miz Rae shared this latest edict from on high with her audience. Raechel enjoyed this so much, she made it a regular feature on her show, and on those days when there was no memo from Glutman, she would simply make one up.

As the weeks passed, Glutman became more and more focused on Miz Rae's persistent violation of the ban on open-toed shoes. He continued to issue memos to her on this and a wide range of other infractions, but never mentioned anything about her sharing his memorandums with the public. Apparently he liked the publicity. This went on for a couple

of months, until one day Glutman went too far. He issued a strongly worded memo forbidding Raechel from bringing her children into the station.

It seems that her baby-sitter canceled at the last minute one day, and Rae was left with no alternative but to bring three of the five kids into work with her. They had been raised in radio studios all their lives and they knew the drill. Sitting quietly off to one side, they entertained themselves with coloring books and toys, while being careful not to make noise when Mommy had to talk on the radio. For some reason this really annoyed Glutman, and he fired off a stinging salvo regarding the "businesslike atmosphere" which should be maintained within the station.

Raechel did not read this memo over the air. When she finished her shift, she went to see the Hound in person. And according to Miz Rae, this is how it all went down.

Raechel entered Reginald Glutman's spacious corner office, but paid no attention to the unusually clear day outside, nor the striking view of the Hollywood sign which it afforded. She went to one of the two chairs opposite Glutman's desk, sat down, and noticed again how much lower both these chairs were than his. There she sat, assaulted by the stench of too much Aramis cologne, while she waited for Glutman to get off the telephone.

He looks like a greasy baby, she thought to herself, when her eyes caught a glint of gold at the far end of the office. Even from the opposite side of the room, she could make out her name embossed on the plaque underneath an album. The gold record and the plaque, sealed under nonreflective glass in a chrome frame, were just sitting there on the floor gathering dust and disdain.

Finally, Glutman hung up the phone, as a small Richard M. Nixon bead of sweat fell from his upper lip. "Yes, Raechel, what can I do for you?"

"Reginald, you know that I have been bringing those kids to work with me all their lives, why are you doing this now?"

"It's not just the damned kids, Raechel. Mega thinks she can use the studio as her personal kennel at night, people are running in and out of here at all hours, and Ladd even put someone on the air who just dropped by the station. He didn't even know this person—just some *listener* off the street for God sakes."

"So?" asked Raechel honestly. "What's your point?"

“The point is that I’m going to shape this place up,” Glutman began. “This is 1976, not 1967, when you and your hippie children were starting out. I’ll not have this radio station turned into a zoo, or some kind of day-care center.”

“You’ll *not* say anything about my kids,” said Raechel, her voice rising slightly. “You leave my children out of this.”

“What I meant was, this is a *business* now,” said the Hound, as another bead of perspiration began to gel under his nose. “It may have been all right when you and Tom were in San Francisco, but this is big-time radio here in L.A., and you can’t conduct yourself like you would at home.”

“F.R., you have never understood this kind of radio, and you never will,” Raechel pronounced in a strong, even voice. “All those things you just mentioned are *exactly* what this station is about. That’s what it’s always been about.”

“I’m in charge here, young lady,” shouted Glutman, as another salty pellet dislodged itself from his upper lip. “This radio station is what I say it is!”

Standing now, Raechel said, “Well if you don’t want my children here, then you don’t want me.”

“You’re free to make that decision,” replied Glutman coldly.

“Well then you won’t mind if I get this out of your way I suppose?” Raechel stormed across the room, grabbed the gold record, and tucked it under her arm. “You know, Reggie, you should have fired me when I called you a cocksucker.”

When she reached home that afternoon, shaken, exhausted, and feeling very much alone, Miz Rae gathered her children together and said, “Kids, I have an announcement to make. Champagne and cracked crab are out, we’re back to ham hocks and beans.”

The next morning, she called Glutman’s secretary, Louise. “Tell F.R. that I am not coming in today, or tomorrow, or any other day. And tell him it’s been a little slice.”

Wednesday, Rocktober 27, 1976, Terri Belle issued the following memos:

MEMORANDUM	DATE: Rocktober 27, 1976
TO:	All concerned
FROM:	Terri
SUBJECT:	Raechel Donahue

Effective Monday, Rocktober 25, Miz Rae resigned her position as midday air personality for RADIO KAOS.

((((((**RADIO WAVES**))))))
.....1975-1977.....

Raechel wants to pursue a career in television, and we wish her the best for her future happiness.

Terri
CC: FRG

MEMORANDUM DATE: Rocktober 27, 1976
TO: All concerned
FROM: Terri
SUBJECT: Jeff Gonzer

It is with pleasure that I announce that Jeff Gonzer has rejoined the KAOS air staff.

Jeff was most recently with KASH for the past four years and before that, he was with RADIO KAOS as our morning air personality.

Jeff will do weekday mornings, 6:00 to 10:00 A.M., and Saturdays, noon to four.

B. Mitchel Reed moves into the 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. slot, weekdays.

TERRI
CC: FRG

That's the way it is in radio. You help to invent a brand-new art form, give nine years of your life and a husband to a company for which you made millions of dollars—and within forty-eight hours it's like you were never there. Raechel was gone, Gonzer was back, and Beamer got to sleep in a little later.

The following day, F. R. Glutman ordered all RADIO KAOS archives, up to and including the year 1976, to be erased and used for blank tape. Eight years of radio, eight years of irreplaceable history, were degaussed into hiss. Along with Raechel Donahue went names like Richard Kimball, Stephen Clean, and Shadoc Stevens. Even Beamer's old shows were destroyed. Almost a decade of radio artists whose style and creativity were legendary, now reduced to random electrons. Even the newscasts, programs which documented a generation's struggle from civil rights to Vietnam, were all expunged in a meaningless act of revenge.

The station would never be quite the same without Miz Rae. The final link joining RADIO KAOS with its genetic roots had now been severed.



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PART THREE



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE

"Innocence grows out of the house of youth," he once told me. "I just wanted to play the tribal drum, now it's become big business."

BY THE end of 1976, the nation had celebrated its two hundredth birthday, and elected Jimmy Carter as its thirty-ninth president. The last ragtop Cadillac, a white Eldorado convertible, rolled off the assembly line, and two guys named Steven Jobs and Stephen Wozniak set up shop in a garage to work on some harebrained contraption called the Apple Computer. Watergate was big box office as the nation watched Redford and Hoffman portray Woodward and Bernstein in *All the President's Men*. Tom Wolfe had dubbed the seventies the "Me Decade," and rock 'n' roll was reflecting the times. And it was time to party.

RADIO KAOS took off in the ratings. We jumped from number twenty-six in the market to number five. The rockers had found us, and they were telling their friends about the

weirdness “a little bit farther to the left” on the dial. One by one, friend to friend, person to person, KAOS grew organically. We basked in the role of the underdog, the outlaw, the one your parents were afraid of. Not a marketing campaign aimed at the eighteen- to thirty-four-year-old demographic, but a secret channel, shared only by those who knew where to listen. Tuning into KAOS in the seventies was a personal statement in itself, pure theater of the mind, a cerebral stage on which each listener’s own imagination could play.

One warm spring evening, I was listening to Mega as I drove down Sunset Boulevard on my way into work. She was playing “Toys in the Attic” by Aerosmith, and as the traffic light turned red, I pulled up behind a young guy in a VW bug. He had the top down, and his radio up so loud I could hear that we were listening to the same song. A young woman pulled up next to him, and he noticed that she too was listening to KAOS. He began waving, trying to get her attention. When he did, she rolled down her window and yelled, “RADIO KAOS, all right!”

“Right on!” shouted the kid in the VW bug, and as lead guitarist Joe Perry began his solo, the two strangers launched into a spontaneous air guitar duet. Almost as if it were part of the show, the traffic light remained red for exactly twelve bars, while the serendipitous bandmates blazed away on their imaginary Les Pauls. Just as the guitar break ended and Steven Tyler screamed back into his vocals, the light turned green. Nodding good-bye in recognition that they were both on the same wavelength, the two KAOS cousins sped off into the night.

“Aerosmith, and ‘Toys in the Attic’ on KAOS. Before that we did ‘House Party’ from those bad boys from Boston, the J. Geils Band. And we began with a new one from Ted Nugent called ‘Wang Dang Sweet Poontang’ off the Cat Scratch Fever album.

“I’m Mega ‘call-me-a-limo’ Turnon, with you for another forty minutes or so, and then it’s that raconteur, the Lonesome L.A. Cowboy, Reputa the Beauta Part Two—Jim Ladd.”

“Well, Reputa’s in a feisty mood tonight,” I thought to myself as I pulled into the parking lot.

Mega started her last record and got up from the chair. As I sat down to take over she asked, "Did you hear about Beamer?"

"No," I said, cueing up my first record, "what happened?"

"He went into the hospital today for eye surgery," answered Mega as she gathered up her things. "Terri said he'll be out for at least two weeks."

I could see the concern in Mega's eyes, though she was trying not to show it. Mega and Beamer didn't socialize much outside of the station, but Mega's regard for the aging veteran was obvious. "I'll give Carole a call when I get home," said Mega as she opened the door to leave. "If I hear anything important I'll let you know."

This was only the latest in a string of health problems which had haunted B.M.R. in the past few years. It's a hard life out there on the edge, and B. Mitchel Reed had been walking the horizon for a long time. Heart problems, loss of hearing, and now cornea surgery were taking their toll. Beamer had always looked older than his years, and now he was getting frail. Frail, but nowhere near finished, because just three days after the operation, B. Mitchel Reed was back on the air.

Like many of us in this business, Mitchel was a loner. He grew up carrying his dad's sample case of ladies' clothing from one town to the next, and he learned to hate the Willy Loman existence his father was forced to lead. But Mitchel didn't let his poor beginnings stop him from earning a master's degree in political science, nor did it prevent him from becoming a teacher before getting into radio.

Like others possessed of the insecurities that can accompany intellect and a rude childhood, Beamer never seemed comfortable away from his work. Even after twenty-five years on the air, B. Mitchel Reed still needed that connection with his audience. It was the only time he truly felt at home.

So two days after his surgery, Beamer talked F. R. Glutman into turning his hospital room into a radio booth, complete with microphone, headsets, and two-way communications with the studio. And with his wife Carole at the station spinning the music and playing the commercials, a one-eyed B. Mitchel Reed did his show right there from his hospital bed.

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It was one of the few times that F. R. Glutman ever displayed this type of compassion toward one of his employees. Glutman had a great deal of respect for Beamer, and did everything he could to help. Surprisingly, the Hound didn't even try to exploit the moment by insisting we use it as some sort of cheap publicity stunt. For once in his life, he simply, quietly, did the right thing; and for Beamer, it came at just the right time.

"Hey baby, this is B. Mitchel Reed coming at you live, well for the moment anyway. You know the food in this place is horrible, I mean it's even worse than the stuff they serve you on the airlines. I wonder if I can get a pizza or something delivered. I'll have to look into that.

"In the meantime, here's a request that someone out there with a real sense of humor just called in to the station. "Eyesight to the Blind," off the Tommy LP.

"While you listen to that, I'm going to ring for the nurse and see if I can't get a large pepperoni with extra cheese. This is 94.7 FM, RADIO KAOS."

B. Mitchel Reed may have been a legend to the rest of us, but inside he was an anxious man. On the air, Beamer had a voice that could raise the dead, but off the air, away from the safety of the studio, he was as nervous as a gerbil. He needed the sanctuary of the glass booth so desperately, he had even figured out a way to bring it into the hospital with him.

It was another example of how much this thing called FM radio really meant to us. You felt like you had to be a part of it *every minute*, because it was the best part of you. KAOS wasn't just a career move, it was personal. If you listened to the station for any length of time, you felt as though you knew each of the jocks as friends. No one came into the station wearing an "on air personality"; what you heard was a human being, warts and all.

Like any artist who takes his or her craft seriously, each of us worked in radio because we had no other choice. We believed in what the music stood for, and we felt a deep connection with the people who listened. To know that we actually got through to someone out there, that you made them laugh, or made them think, or caused them to jump up and

down, meant everything to us. This feedback from the listeners, however, was always a delayed reaction.

You can't see the people who are listening while you're doing a show. There's no way to tell if the audience is applauding, or making a mad dash to turn the dial. Feedback comes over the request lines, or in the mail. You're performing in front of a live audience all right, but instead of being crowded together in one huge arena, you're playing to hundreds of thousands of private clubs, disguised in the form of bedrooms and cars.

It would be like going to a rock concert where the audience sat absolutely mute throughout the entire performance. Then, when the concert was over, they wrote letters to the band explaining their reaction to the show. Of course, the ratings told you how many people were in the hall, but that was always after the fact.

According to the ratings, attendance was up, way up, and Ira Steinberg was thrilled with the station's growing success. He hadn't been able to increase the price for commercial time in over three years, and now, all of a sudden, KAOS was a sold-out show. And they weren't just local sponsors either; giant companies such as Coca-Cola and General Motors were placing time buys. "That freaky rock station," too esoteric to be taken seriously, was getting numbers too big to be ignored.

Ad agencies representing huge national accounts were now calling Mr. Steinberg to buy time on the station. This was a far cry from a short while ago, when Ira and his small sales force were pounding the pavement trying to convince local merchants to buy two spots for thirty-five dollars—"and get the third one free." Now he could sit in his office and negotiate business over the telephone, and his biggest problem wasn't finding somebody to buy spots, but explaining to his longtime clients why their rate had suddenly gone up to three hundred dollars a minute.

This phenomenal jump in the book, and the new prosperity which it brought, didn't come without a price, of course. The sharp increase in ratings attracted sponsors who'd never have considered buying time when the station was in the toilet. Instead of water bed stores, head shops, and the local pizza parlor, now we were getting the big corporate clients. They had the money all right, but they didn't *sound* like RADIO KAOS.

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After such a long financial dry spell, it was hard to argue aesthetics when it came to money. But it was imperative that we not allow the sound of the station to be debased in a chaotic hodgepodge of high-revving corporate pitchmen. At KASH, I had learned to endure lame-sounding commercials from big ad agencies, but compared to the tongue-and-cheek spots KAOS had been producing, these new “lowest common denominator” advertisements seemed horribly out of place. And now the biggest U.S. company of all had discovered the impact on the eighteen- to thirty-four-year-old audience that KAOS could deliver, a giant corporate monolith that made General Motors look like a pauper—the U.S. Army.

They were still counting the bodies from the war in Southeast Asia, and the Pentagon was finding it hard to recruit new victims in the post-Vietnam climate. But instead of concentrating their efforts on a more prudent foreign policy, our government decided that the answer to the problem was to hire a better PR firm. Some high-priced Madison Avenue boys put their heads together, and came up with a catchy little jingle explaining to the high school graduate that the army’s “not just a job, it’s an adventure.” Explain that to Ron Kovic and the others who had learned to “be all that you can be.”

RADIO KAOS had been an outspoken voice against that insane waste of human life, but now the government had come with a fat checkbook, and the station found itself promoting the very scheme which had chewed up so many of our finest and bravest. One night, after running one of the new army commercials in my show, the proverbial shit hit the fan.

(Jingle singers) “. . . be all that you can be,” in the army! See your army recruiter today!”

(Jim) “Now before you run out and enlist, how many of you are aware that Vietnam vets are actually having to sue the government to get the health care they deserve? That’s right, sue their own government. These guys have been double-crossed by the very leaders who sent them into battle, and are now having to fight another war for decent hospitalization right here at home.

“Our gung ho government was more than happy to pay Dow Chemical millions for Agent Orange, but it’s refusing benefits for the very soldiers they defoliated in the process.

(((((RADIO WAVES)))))

.....1977-1980.....

"Now here's the fun part, although the Pentagon isn't willing to pay for the last war, they are more than willing to fund this multimillion-dollar recruitment drive for the next.

"That's right folks, sign up now before it's too late! You never know when they're going to come up with the next dirty little war to protect American interests overseas, and you don't want to be left out.

"Just don't come back if you're wounded or disabled. We've got the money to send you there, but we don't have the funding to care for those clumsy enough to get maimed in a war zone. Remember, it's not just a job, it's economics!

"This is 94.7, K-A-O-S."

I turned off the microphone, started turntable number one, and brought up a song from Creedence Clearwater Revival.

Some folks are born made to wave the flag
Oooh they're red white and blue
And when the band plays "Hail to the Chief"
They point the cannon right at you
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no senator's son
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no fortunate one
Some folks inherit star spangled eyes
Oooh, they send you down to war
And when you ask them "How much should we
give?"
They only answer more! more! more!
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no military one
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no fortunate one

"What in the hell do you think you're doing, attacking a major sponsor like that over the air?!" shouted Glutman from behind his desk. "This is a *commercial* radio station, not your private soapbox!"

It was the following afternoon, and from my position on the general manager's carpet, I nodded hello to Terri Belle and Ira Steinberg, who were also in attendance. We were seeing a lot of each other lately, at what was quickly becoming my weekly chewing-out session with the boss. "Reginald, I know this is a commercial radio station, and I appreciate the fact that you're in business to make a profit."

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“Those commercials are what pays your salary,” stormed Glutman.

“And I gratefully accept the paychecks,” I said, “but this is a matter of principle.”

“Principle?” scoffed the Hound. “Principles have nothing to do with it. This station is in business for one reason and one reason only, and that’s to make a profit. You got that?”

“Look Reggie,” I said, starting to get angry at his abusive tone. “I’ll run all the pimple creams and car insurance spots you want, but I cannot in good conscience run commercials for the military, and that’s that.”

“You’ll run any damn thing we tell you to run,” screamed Glutman, now sweating like some enormous hippo caught out of the water. “It’s not up to you to decide which sponsors this radio station chooses to accept. All you have to do is play records four hours a night.”

“Don’t you think it sounds just a tad hypocritical for RADIO KAOS to be running army commercials after the stance this station took against the war?” I asked.

“The Vietnam war is over,” offered Ira, trying to find a middle ground.

“With all due respect, Ira, that war is not over,” I said evenly. “And we can’t pretend that it didn’t happen, just because the station is getting ratings.”

“What if they offered to buy time on ‘Innerview,’” asked Glutman sardonically. “I sure as hell bet you wouldn’t turn ‘em down then.”

“I already have,” I said, looking him straight in the eye. “Six months ago. They offered us a \$250,000 buy, and I said no. Believe me Reginald, my partner was none too thrilled about it either.”

Not having a ready answer to this, Glutman switched his attack to Terri Belle. “Terri, are you going to allow a disc jockey to dictate station policy?”

“I’m not trying to dictate station policy,” I said before Terri had a chance to speak, “I just can’t run spots for the army on my show.”

Quick on her feet as usual, Terri grabbed the opening before Glutman had a chance to respond. “So you wouldn’t object if the spots were to run outside of your show?”

I thought about this for a moment, then said, “No, I can’t

object to something that may or may not bother the other jocks, and again, I understand this buy represents a lot of money. I just can't run them on my show."

Ira Steinberg, seeing where Terri was going with this, jumped in and said, "All right then, I'll talk to the traffic department tomorrow and tell them not to schedule any more army spots on your shift. Is that all right with you, Reginald?"

"Well, I'll think it over," mumbled the Hound, furious that his position was not being defended.

"Now you may have some tonight, because the log was printed up yesterday as you know," said Terri. "Will you promise to run them if they're scheduled—without an editorial?"

"Of course," I said, happy this latest confrontation was drawing to a close. "I'm not doing this just to cause trouble, Reginald, I want you to know that. And I appreciate the fact that we were able work this out."

I left without getting an answer from Glutman, and when I went on the air that night, there were two spots for the army scheduled in my show. I ran both without comment, and next evening they were gone.

As I explained before, sales and programming may be interdependent, but they rarely see eye to eye. The bottom-line world of radio sales is a highly competitive firmament of numbers, salesmanship, and schmooze. There is one rule and one rule only—get the money. On the other hand, programming must be concerned with the total sound of the station, and that means what's aired in between the music as well.

Finding herself at the helm of a major market radio station, which was growing by leaps and bounds, Terri Belle now had to make sure that KAOS wasn't butchered by its own success. She was spending more and more of her time fighting to keep the really offensive commercials (like hemorrhoid remedies and pimple creams) off the air, because they simply didn't "sound" like KAOS.

Fortunately, Ira Steinberg was sensitive to Terri's requests, and respected her position when it came to the sound of the station. Unlike other salesmen I'd known, Ira actually liked this kind of radio, and in his own way, tried to support what we stood for. His job was to sell time, but he did make

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an attempt to bring in sponsors who at the least would not offend our listeners.

One of Terri's biggest victories in this area was over the Cal Stereo commercials. These things were the most ludicrous sixty seconds of abrasive hype ever produced. The listeners hated them, actually wrote letters to the station complaining about how they had to turn the dial every time one came on the air. Cal Stereo was a giant chain operation with stores throughout California, and they had lots of bucks to pour into radio advertising. Every music station in town ran their ads, so it wasn't like we were the only one. But these things were so obviously wrong for RADIO KAOS that Terri went to the mat with both Ira and the Hound to get them off the air. And to his credit, when Cal Stereo refused his offer to let us produce our own spots at no extra charge, it was F. Reginald Glutman who canceled their order.

Malodorous commercials weren't the only problems Terri Belle was forced to handle. The Hound, still riding high from his promotional coup with the fire truck, was constantly badgering her about one ludicrous promotional idea after another.

"No, F. R., I really don't think Mega will agree to dress up in a chicken costume and hand out Easter eggs at the mall."

At the same time, Terri was drawing major heat over her decision not to play anything from the *Saturday Night Fever* album. Glutman, along with everyone else in the industry, couldn't comprehend the thinking of a program director who refused to play the number one record in the country. "You play Led Zeppelin, what's wrong with the Bee Gees? They're rock 'n' roll aren't they?" Terri put her foot down on this one. Disco music was wrong for the station and that was that. Besides, if you even had to ask such a question, you obviously weren't listening to the same radio station she was. Terri stuck to her guns, and the numbers shot up again.

In the midst of fighting to keep the sound of KAOS as inviolate as possible, defending insightful programming decisions, and fending off Glutman's maniacal stream of goofy promotional ideas, there was another problem Terri had to deal with—me. After our battle with the U.S. Army, Glutman started hounding Terri on a daily basis regarding "the overt political comments" and "the outrageously lewd behavior on Ladd's show."

When the Hound had given Terri the job as program di-

rector, he issued her a copy of the FCC rules and regulations. He then told her to "learn them by heart." This Terri did by studying the manual assiduously every night in bed, while listening to my show. Evidently I was a great deal of help, providing Terri with a wealth of questionable statements, bordering on the illegal. Whenever I would say something that might be deemed offensive or subversive, Terri would check the rulebook to determine if it was legally actionable—you know, like a pop quiz. In this way, Terri Belle soon became a noted expert in the complex field of broadcast law.

"He *cannot* talk about wet thighs over the air!" stormed Glutman. "I won't have it!"

"Well, technically, he didn't say anything illegal," answered Terri.

"You don't think the word 'nipples' is going to bring in a few letters?" Glutman screamed, pounding his fist on the desk.

"All I know is that Jim and Mega have the biggest numbers on the station, so he's got to be doing something right," Terri countered.

"I'm not talking about Mega," said Glutman. "Mega doesn't say things like that and you know it."

Terri laughed and said, "No, you're right. Mega is a lot more subtle than Jim—but then who isn't?"

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" demanded Glutman.

"I'll have a talk with him, F.R.," answered Terri, trying to stifle a giggle.

Later that afternoon, Terri called me at home to relay her latest confrontation with the Hound. We had been through this many times before, and as usual, Terri delivered Glutman's message of gloom and doom regarding my long-term employment prospects at Micromedia with a wink and a nod. "Personally, I thought that was one of the funniest bits I've ever heard you do, but the Hound freaked!" laughed Terri. "So just cool it for a little while, okay?"

Terri had truly found her niche. Unfortunately, it was wedged between an obsessive wacko, and the protective bubble she tried to maintain around her staff. Terri took everything Glutman threw at her, while doing her best to keep the air staff from tampering with the brakes on his car. For some reason, the more popular the station got, the more fault Glutman found with its operation.

While the air staff knit itself into a protective coterie, Shelly and I were beginning to unravel. The children had graduated high school and struck out on their own, and for the first time since we'd met, it was just the two of us. Circumstances had compelled us to leapfrog over our twenties. While our peers were hanging out at clubs like the Whiskey and the Troubadour during the "sexual revolution," Shelly and I had been dealing with math homework and the PTA. We had been forced to grow up together so fast, it was almost inevitable that we should have grown apart.

We'd spent our youth raising an unexpected family, and at the ripe old age of twenty-nine and twenty-five, were left to contemplate the rest of our lives. Nothing could ever match the gift we had received with the opportunity to raise those three very special people, and neither of us would trade those years for anything on earth. But now the lost days and nights of our youth began to haunt us.

Shelly and I loved each other deeply, a bond that could never be broken by space or time; but at the moment, she and I had to take separate paths. Shelly moved in with a girlfriend and found a job, and for the first time in seven years, we were responsible only for ourselves.

I abandoned the house on Love Street, and rented a secluded little hilltop sanctuary in Laurel Canyon overlooking the city. As Carlos Castañeda learned from *The Teachings of Don Juan*, the first thing you have to do is "find your spot." This is exactly what I had done. From the moment I walked through the door, I had a profound feeling of home. Even the view from my front room window was rich with symbolism. Facing due east, I could sit with my back to the sea and look straight down Hollywood Boulevard toward RADIO KAOS and the rising sun.

My new next-door neighbor was my friend Elliot Mintz, one of the most respected air personalities L.A. radio had ever spawned. Elliot had been living in Laurel Canyon ever since its glory days, when it served as a haven for the folk-rock-poet society of the late sixties. Joni Mitchell, David Crosby, Jim Morrison, John Mayall, and Mama Cass, all were among those drawn to the canyon by its centennial oaks and the illusion of country life.

Elliot was, in my opinion, the best interview/talk show host ever to emerge from underground radio. During his ten years in the business, Elliot had logged over two thousand interviews and more than fifty thousand telephones calls over the air. He explored the entire gamut of the movement during his time in the glass booth, from Baba Ram Dass to Buffy Sainte-Marie, from Jane Fonda to Jack Nicholson, from Norman Mailer to Abbie Hoffman. A self-taught intellectual, and one of the most well-read humans on the planet, Elliot was the counterculture's answer to William F. Buckley, Jr.

He was also the most centered person I had ever met, and the neatest. No matter what Elliot was doing, he always looked like he was permanently pressed. While some preferred the shock value inherent in guerrilla radio, Elliot's show was more like a subtle meditation. He possessed a kind, soft-spoken personality, which he brought to the air in a gentle but relentless pursuit of the truth. And it was this last part of the Elliot Mintz on-air equation which repeatedly got him into trouble.

By now Elliot was out of the game completely, having proudly been fired from every single radio station he had ever worked for, including RADIO KAOS. "Innocence grows out of the house of youth," he once told me. "I just wanted to play the tribal drum, now it's become big business."

Possessed with an IQ which qualified him for Mensa, it didn't take Elliot long to realize that radio was not the most reliable form of employment in the world. So he struck out on his own, and was fast becoming one of the most sought-after personal representatives in show business. Among his exclusive list of clientele were his two closest friends, John and Yoko. His relationship with the Lennons grew out of the many interviews he'd done with them over the years, until eventually, he had become part of the family. Like everyone else, John and Yoko trusted Elliot, finding in him not only the credentials but the vision of a fellow explorer.

I'd listened to Elliot's shows for years, and make no mistake, had shamelessly borrowed, pilfered, and ripped off great chunks of his style and technique. As neighbors, Elliot and I spent many nights in the noble pursuit of philosophical truth, through the insight of red wine and reefer.

"Phil Ochs once said, that in a time of such ugliness, the only thing to do was to be beautiful," Elliot began. "I remember when I emceed the very first Easter Love-In at Ely-

sian Park in 1969. A full-blooded Indian chief performed the sunrise service for nineteen thousand people. It was the first tribal encounter in L.A., the very first time everyone who listened to FM radio came together and looked at each other. That was truly a religious experience."

"Don't you miss being on the radio?" I asked.

"To work at an FM station during that time was pure bliss," said Elliot as he refilled his wine glass. "We would have gladly done it for free. Just to be part of it for a moment was to be embraced by the spirit."

"Then why don't you get back on the air?"

Elliot leaned back in his chair and thought for a while, then said, "Because FM radio has changed. Look what you had to go through with the KASH experience: formats, three-by-five cards..."

"I know, I know, that's why I left," I said. "But the spirit is still alive and well at RADIO KAOS. And besides, look at how FM radio has spread across the country in the last ten years; it's bigger than we ever imagined."

"But how many of those stations are beginning to use some kind of format or playlist, and how many are still truly free form?" Elliot retorted as he got up to change the record. "Madison Avenue said: 'When you lower your standards you broaden your base.' At what price has FM inherited this new industry? The big boys can smell the dollars, Jim, and now that FM radio has become big business, they'll want to control everything. KASH was only the beginning."

Elliot was a true believer, but he was also a realist, and he was getting out while the getting was good.

A warm Santa Ana wind blew through the canyon as I walked home, and the lights of the city danced in the early hours before dawn. I thought about what Elliot had said. He was right, FM radio was big business now. The question was, could we harbor its integrity against the onslaught of its success?

I stared out my front room window at the vast cotillion of lights shining just beyond the ridge. It's up to them, I reasoned. Will people hold sacred the unpredictable rhythms of the tribal drum? Or will they be seduced by the safe and dependable drone of an automatic future?

I had to believe the people in those lights out there longed for something meaningful, something not solely grounded in the logic of statistics, or the jingle of Madison Avenue. Someone still had to believe in the magic of chaos.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MARIJUANA AND THE WHITE HOUSE

"If you *ever* pull another stunt like that, you'll never work in this town again!"

IT FELT like mission control had just given the command for ignition, and the solid-fuel rocket boosters were erupting beneath us. *Billboard* magazine named RADIO KAOS "Station of the Year," and two weeks later, we had officially beaten the automatic KASH machine in the ratings. RADIO KAOS was now the number one rock station, AM or FM, in all of Southern California, and we were about to make *Time* magazine.

On top of all that, there were three new faces at the station, three very different people, all destined for greatness. The first to be hired was Jack Snyder. Jack was working at a small station in Orange County when he got the call of his life.

"Jack, this is Terri Belle. Congratulations, you are now the new music director at RADIO KAOS. How soon can you start?"

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Jack was dumbstruck. He felt he had gotten the job the moment he met Terri, but even though they connected like long-lost siblings, he'd refused to let himself believe it. Jack was a huge fan of the station, had been for years, so when Alan Draper accepted an offer for the program director's job at an FM station in Chicago, Jack rushed to apply for the opening at KAOS.

He had dreamed of this day, and now he was not only the music director of RADIO KAOS, he was also the new afternoon drive jock as well. Jack Snyder was to follow B. Mitchel Reed at two, then hand the mike over to Mega Turnon at six. He would be wedged between a broadcast icon, and the very person whose provocative music and tantalizing voice had seduced him into a life of radio.

Jack Snyder and RADIO KAOS were a match made in Valhalla. He and Terri became instant partners in crime, a perfect complement to each other in every way. Musically, Terri had more of a hit-oriented ear, which is vital in a program director. She tilted in the direction of bands such as Foreigner and Journey, while Jack leaned toward groups like the Pretenders, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, and George Thorogood and the Destroyers.

Snyder was a big man who stood almost six feet, and weighed well over two hundred pounds. He had straight brown hair which came well past his shoulders, and a long curly beard. These, combined with his joyful demeanor, gave Jack the countenance of a great scruffy bear. He did have one major personality defect, however: five minutes into your first conversation with the guy, and you felt like you'd known him all your life. I have never understood how anyone could *do* that, but in his case, first impressions were correct. He was one of us from the moment he walked into the building.

Our second newcomer was a shy young Catholic girl. Her name was Joanne Goodwin, and we nicknamed her Goldberry after the character in *Lord of the Rings*. Goldberry was a student who'd been chosen to participate in the station's college intern program. She worked for class credits and no pay, and believe me, this is the bottom of the totem pole. Her basic job was to help Gus in the production room, but interns quickly learn that everybody at the station can find something for them to do.

Joanne was a tall, cute, rather studious-looking girl of

eighteen, with sandy blond hair and eyes the color of summer wheat. She was a walking nerve end of insecurity in torn jeans, but Joanne was a hard worker and attacked this fortuitous opportunity with a vengeance. Ms. Goodwin was also a gifted academic, who brought with her the dedication of an honor student and the fresh breeze of a hungry intellect. Her heart, her mind, her very being were filled with youth and hope, and it was obvious to everyone that Goldberry was remarkable indeed.

Now you know when you're watching "Monty Python" and they say, "And now for something completely different"? Well, keep that in mind while you meet the final addition to our little tea party. His name was Wiley Perch, and he was the working man's answer to John Cleese. Wiley was a six foot two inch ruggedly handsome guy whose energy level was something akin to Basil Fawley on acid.

Wiley Perch was perhaps the most animated person to ever stomp on what Hunter S. Thompson calls "the terra." He was constantly, unceasingly, perpetually in motion. A stream-of-consciousness being, he brought with him the kind of frenetic energy missing since Miz Rae. Even talking with Wiley was like trying to hit a moving target. He was forever rocking back and forth in his chair, as though he were trying to spur the conversation, or perhaps life itself, up to speed.

And why had this loose cannon been hired? As the zany sidekick for Jeff Gonzer on the morning show? A radical new experiment in weirdness on the overnights? No, Wiley was hired to do the news. That's right—the news.

Ace Young had built his one-man news department into such a vital part of the station that Terri wanted to add two additional newscasts at 5:00 and 6:00 P.M. But Ace was already doing four hourly reports beginning at six in the morning, and the news at noon, and all the research, and all the writing and reporting . . . and he could use some help already. So Terri sought permission from F. R. Glutman to give Ace the title of news director, and let him hire another newsman. Glutman agreed, but it would be *he* who would engage the new employee, not Ace. Why give that authority to the one person at the station most qualified to make the decision?

The next two months were an embarrassing hell. Glutman paraded no less than eight different candidates onto the airwaves of RADIO KAOS, in the middle of a ratings period, during the most listened-to hours of the day. One Les

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Nessman after another tried his hand on the air, each one worse than the last.

How I pitied Jack Snyder. He'd be thundering along, rockin' the hell out of Southern California, when all of a sudden the station would grind to a halt at the top of the five o'clock hour. Then for the next three hundred excruciating seconds, Glutman's latest crony would deliver the wrong news, in the wrong style, to the wrong audience. Finally, mercifully, Glutman got bored with playing bureau chief, and told Ace to get whomever he wanted. That's when Ace hired Wiley.

At this stage of the growth curve, the station had become such a huge phenomenon that it was more than a little intimidating to be the new guy. Wiley's first reaction to KAOS was that it was dangerous—a force to be dealt with. Once, years later, Wiley told me, "It felt like the studio was actually a *living thing*. The first time you looked inside, you knew it was sizing you up. But once you got to the heart and soul of the beast, you saw that it was merely your own reflection in the control room window—like a mirror that reflects your psyche, not your image."

The son of a famous sportscaster, Wiley had literally grown up around radio, although his only practical experience up until this point was a 250-watt AM out of Monrovia. Fortunately, Ace had spotted some intangible spark of genius in Wiley Perch, and recruited him for the new five and six o'clock reports. Initially, Wiley read the news in a pleasant, straightforward, professional way. He knew instinctively which stories were right for KAOS, and presented them to the audience in a comfortable low-key manner. But, as he gradually became more comfortable in his new surroundings, the real Wiley Perch began to emerge:

"John Wayne is resting comfortably at Cedar Sinai Medical Center after a painful bout with what doctors are calling intestinal gas.

"Meanwhile in Washington D.C., President Carter (sound effect of a loud fart) said today that he is confident in the growth (fart sound) of the economy in 1977."

One afternoon Wiley was scanning the AP wire in the newsroom when he noticed a small four-line story lost amid the major headlines of the day. It was an afterthought really,

just one of thousands of items coming across the Teletype every hour.

A spokesman for the Drug Enforcement Administration revealed today that small traces of the herbicide paraquat were discovered in a shipment of Mexican grown marijuana seized yesterday in San Diego.

Ironically, Wiley was a beer man—one of the people at the station who didn't smoke pot—but he knew a KAOS news story when he saw one.

Wiley read the article on both the five and the six o'clock newscasts, and each time the switchboard lit up with worried callers seeking more information. That night, Wiley left a copy of the story on Ace's desk, along with a note describing the audience reaction. Next morning Ace jumped on it immediately, and within forty minutes he'd taped interviews with two DEA officials in Washington, got a statement from the president of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, and was ready to go with it as his lead story at six. And when I tuned in at noon, he was doing a live phone interview with someone from UCLA.

“Doctor, what are the problems which can arise from smoking marijuana containing this herbicide?”

“Well a number of problems, unfortunately, such as bleeding from the lungs, harm to the throat and sinuses, and with long-term exposure there may even be a risk of cancer. Paraquat is a deadly herbicide and can certainly kill in sufficient doses.”

“How much would you have to ingest to be in real danger?”

“Well as far as smoking it is concerned, we have no idea at this point. Some patients became ill after only one marijuana cigarette, while others report symptoms appearing more gradually.”

By twelve-thirty, Joanne had written up a public service announcement asking the audience to write President Carter. Jack read it twice on his show, as did Mega, and by the time I

got to work, the station had become the paraquat information center for all of Southern California.

"It's eleven-thirty on a Wednesday night here at RADIO KAOS, and before we get back into music, have you heard about this latest idea for spending your tax dollars? It seems that some genius back in Washington, D.C., has convinced President Carter to spray Mexican marijuana fields with a chemical defoliant called paraquat. It acts much like Agent Orange did in Vietnam, except this stuff not only affects those sprayed with the chemical, but the people who smoke it as well.

"Let's say that a field of marijuana is sprayed, then harvested before the plants can wither and die. Now that grass is smuggled into the U.S., and smoked by people having no idea it's been soaked with a deadly herbicide.

"Even if you are staunchly against smoking marijuana, surely you'd agree that exposing a large segment of the population to such a health risk is unacceptable.

"If you feel strongly about this, and again, whether you smoke pot or not, please write to President Carter and ask him to stop this dangerous and ill-conceived policy.

"Poisoning people with their own tax dollars may be one way to curb drug abuse, but it's not the right way.

"I'm Jim Ladd, and this is 94.7 K-A-O-S."

Rolllllllllll another one, just like the other one
 You've been hanging' onto it
 And I sure would like a hit
 Don't Bogart that joint my friend,
 Pass it over to me
 Don't Bogart that joint my friend,
 Pass it over to me

—Little Feat

As Little Feat sang this refrain, I answered the request line.

"RADIO KAOS."

"I'd like to speak to Jim Ladd, please."

"This is Jim, what can I do for ya?"

"You know what you were just saying about the paraquat spraying? Well I've got a better idea than writing a letter—why don't you call the White House."

"Call the White House, you mean on the air?"

"Yeah, why not?"

“Well, in the first place I lost President Carter’s private number, and in the second place, it’s 2:30 A.M. in Washington, D.C.”

“I know, but they have a public line that’s open twenty-four hours a day. Anybody can call.”

“Are you serious?”

“I got the number right here. You want it?”

“Well, sure, go ahead.”

I segued into the next song, punched up an outside line, and dialed the number. Sure enough, someone answered.

“Good morning, the White House.”

“I’m calling from a radio station in Los Angeles, we are not on the air or anything, but a listener just phoned and gave me this number. I wanted to confirm that it’s valid, and that you actually have someone there answering calls twenty-four hours a day, is that right?”

“That’s correct.”

“Well thank you for your help,” I said, and hung up the phone.

“Yes! Yes! I love this audience,” I shouted out loud. “Talk about guerrilla theater, this is inspired!”

Tearing through the record library, I pulled every song I could think of which dealt with the planting, picking, or puffing of the embattled herb. As my mind raced into overdrive, I stacked my selection of musical commentaries next to the turntables, and thought about how I should handle this over the air. Then, as the song that was playing came to a close, I placed the scrap of paper with the White House phone number on the control board in front of me, and opened up the mike :

“That was the New Riders of the Purple Sage and a song called ‘Panama Red’ on 94.7 K-A-O-S. Before that we heard Little Feat doing ‘Don’t Bogart Me.’

“Now a listener just called on the request line and made a suggestion which I think is one hell of a good idea. Instead of writing to President Carter about the paraquat issue, why don’t we just call him up? I mean all together, en masse, right now?”

“This caller also gave me the phone number for the White House switchboard. I’ve already called and checked it out, and yes it is the correct number, and, it’s open twenty-four hours a day. Right now, as we speak, anyone in America can call the White House in Wash-

ington, D.C. and speak with a dedicated employee of our federal government.

"So let's see, it's 11:45 P.M., that means it's quarter to three on the East Coast. I'll give out the number over the air at exactly midnight our time, which will be 3:00 A.M. in Washington. Now I don't think the White House is receiving tons of calls at three in the morning, so this will definitely give their operators something to do.

"In the meantime, get a hold of anybody that you think might be interested in a live demonstration of civic involvement, and have them tune in. Because come twelve o'clock, KAOS is gonna rock the White House!"

Comin' into Los Angeles
Bringin' in a couple of keys
Don't touch my bags if you please
Mr. customs man.

—Arlo Guthrie

The phones went crazy, but I couldn't stop to answer them. I only had fifteen minutes to prepare for what would either be a dramatic expression of telephonic democracy, or a media backfire that could cost me my job.

"Okay, it's exactly midnight here at RADIO KAOS. I'm now going to give out the telephone number for the White House, for anyone interested in expressing their opinion—pro or con—of our government's funding the spraying of paraquat on marijuana fields in Mexico.

"Now we don't need to be belligerent, just call and politely state your opinion.

"All right, here goes. The number for the White House is, area code (202) 456-1414. That's (202) 456-1414. Call right now, and let them know what you think.

"I'm Jim Ladd, and this is what being the soundtrack of Southern California is all about—KAOS!"

Suddenly the request lines stopped ringing, so I picked up the phone, and dialed the number myself. It was busy! I hung up and dialed again. This time I got that nasal-voiced recording from the phone company: "We're sorry, but your call cannot be completed. All circuits are busy. Please hang up and try your call again." Within ninety seconds from the

((((((RADIO WAVES))))))

.....1977-1988.....

time I gave out the number, all telephone circuits into the Washington, D.C., area were jammed.

Now the request lines started ringing again.

“I just wanted to tell you that I called, keep up the good work.”

“My wife and I called twice, but it was busy.”

“What’s that number again, I think I wrote it down wrong.”

“I called and the lady was pissed. She wanted to know what radio station told me to call.”

“Yeah, I finally got through and guess what they said? The whole place was in *chaos!*”

The glass booth was electric, alive, almost vibrating with the excitement that only comes from this type of spontaneous on-air event. It was the kind of moment you live for in FM radio. The power of a single idea accelerating down a phone line, hitting critical mass at the far end, then exploding through the transmitter into a living, breathing adventure. An idea from a listener was relayed over the radio, struck a nerve in the vast community at large, and mushroomed into a synergy bigger than its separate parts. It was a true moment of magic. It was “derockraey” in action. It was the sound of the tribal drum.

The song on the air was ending, so I started turntable number two and brought up a track from Neil Young, a tune that I felt offered a sensible alternative to the problem at hand.

Homegrown is alright with me
Homegrown is the way it should be
Homegrown is a good thing
Plant that bell and let it ring.
The sun comes up in the morning
And shines that light around
One day without no warning
Things start jumpin’ up from the ground, well
Homegrown is alright with me
Homegrown is the way it should be
Homegrown is a good thing
Plant that bell and let it ring.

When the song was under way, I again dialed the White House number, and once again got the same whiny message.

Instead of hanging up, however, I engaged the necessary knobs and switches on the control board that would enable me to put the call on the air. When "Homegrown" was just about through, I brought the phone call up and let the recorded announcement play over the air, as Neil Young's ode to backyard gardening began to fade out.

We're sorry, but your call cannot be completed. All circuits are busy. Please hang up and try your call again.
We're sorry, but your call cannot be completed. All circuits are busy. Please hang up and try your call again.
We're sorry, but your call cannot . . .

I let the message repeat several times, then opened the mike, and while the phone company's lame apology still droned on in the background, I announced:

"Do you hear that L.A.? That's the phone company saying you've just jammed all circuits into Washington, D.C. The people who are getting through tell me that the White House operators are freaked! They don't know what the hell is going on.

"One minute it's silence at three o'clock in the morning, and the next minute their switchboard explodes with thousands of calls, all from Southern California, all wanting to voice their opinions on something called paraquat.

"There's no turning back now, so if you haven't gotten through yet, just keep trying. The White House phone number is (202) 456-1414. Remember, let's be polite, the person who's answering the phones didn't make the policy. Just keep calling, and if you hear this . . .

We're sorry, but your call cannot be completed. All circuits are busy. Please hang up and try your call again.

" . . . don't get discouraged. It means that RADIO KAOS is rocking the hell out of Washington!"

I turned off the mike and slowly began to fade out the phone company's message, while at the same time bringing in an old Rolling Stones tune called "Off The Hook."

((((((RADIO WAVES))))))

.....1977-1980.....

Sittin' in my bedroom late last night
Got into bed and turned out the light
Decided to call my baby on the telephone
All I got was a ringing tone
It's off the hook
It's off the hook
It's off the hook
It's off the hook
It's off the hook

Joanne Goodwin showed up about twelve-thirty. She'd been listening to what was going on, and drove in to see if I needed help with the phones. She was a lifesaver, answering the request lines, passing along messages and song requests, and freeing me up to concentrate on the show.

"It's now 12:45 here at RADIO KAOS, and because of you, the phone lines into the Washington, D.C., area are still jammed. If you just tuned in, you're listening to a live experiment in electronic, transcontinental, American democracy. A telephonic town hall if you will, linking L.A. with Washington, D.C., as we voice our opinions on the government's program to eradicate Mexican-grown marijuana: a policy which could pose great danger, for those who ingest the herbicide paraquat.

"If you need more information on what this is all about, call us here on the request line, and Joanne will try to help you out.

"In the meantime, here's that number for the White House again: area code (202) 456-1414.

"You people are the best. You're what rock 'n' roll is all about, and I'm proud to have an audience like you. No other radio station's listeners could possibly pull off something like this.

"We, you and I, this radio station, we are the tribal drum, and tonight we're makin' some noise. And that noise is the sound of KAOS!"

It's the singer, not the song
That makes the music move along
Won't you join together in the
band
This is the biggest band you'll find

J I M L A D D

.....
It's as deep as it is wide
Won't you join together in the
band
Everybody join together
Won't you join together
Come on and join together in the
band

—the Who

I went home that night feeling great. It had been one of those shows that you can never plan, but when they happen, you get swept up in the moment and just ride it out.

The next day was another story.

My phone started ringing at 9:30 A.M. I ignored it. Who in the hell would be calling me at this hour. Nobody I actually *knew* that's for sure. It rang again at 9:45 and I ignored it. When it rang at ten o'clock, I reached over and unplugged the damn thing and went back to sleep.

When I got up at around one in the afternoon, I made the mistake of plugging the phone back in, and it started to ring immediately.

"Hello?" I said, trying to clear the sleep from my voice.

"Jim? This is Louise, Mr. Glutman's secretary. Reginald has been trying to reach you all day. Hold on."

This didn't sound good—the general manager calling me at home.

"Ladd, where have you been? I've been calling you since nine-thirty this morning!"

"I've been asleep, Reginald. When you get off the air at two o'clock you don't get to bed until—"

"I don't give a shit!" he screamed. "You started this, and you're going to stop it. I want to see you in my office in one hour, is that clear?"

"Started it?" I asked. "Started what?"

"You know damn well *what*. One hour!"

Groggy and confused, I went into the bathroom and splashed cold water on my face, trying to clear my head. As I shuffled into the kitchen to make coffee, I flipped on the radio, and the first thing I heard out of Jack Snyder's mouth was:

*"... that number again is area code (202) 456-1414.
You guys have completely shut down the White House*

switchboard for fifteen hours straight, and we're going to keep it up until they stop the spraying.

"It's rock and roll your own, all afternoon on RADIO KAOS!"

It seemed that this thing had taken on a life of its own. It also seemed that the White House had called F. Reginald Glutman directly, and he was not the least bit amused.

The scene in the Hound's office was pretty much what I expected. He ranted and raved for about forty-five minutes, said I would be fired if I didn't drop the subject immediately, then dismissed me by threatening, "If you *ever* pull another stunt like that, you'll never work in this town again!"

God, I hate that cliché.

Leaving Glutman, I walked down the hall to Terri Belle's office and stuck my head in the door. She was on the phone with a local newspaper, explaining what had happened. "Not only will we continue to give out the number over the air," she said, "but the station will also initiate a petition drive by the beginning of next week."

Waving good-bye to Terri as she continued her conversation with the reporter, I made my way to the newsroom. Both Wiley and Ace were hard at work in their hopelessly overcrowded hole of an office, crammed with wire machines, tape recorders, and file cabinets.

"Ladd, what the hell are you doing here in the daytime?" said Wiley as he looked up from his typewriter.

"Oh, just came in for a friendly little chat with the Hound," I answered with a grin. "What are you boys up to?"

"Check this out," said Ace, as he handed me a stack of papers. "A guy just brought this down to the station. It's a study of the effects of paraquat on lab rats, done about two years ago in Boston. We're going to use it on the five and six o'clock reports."

"Gee, I can't wait to see the Hound's face when he hears that. He just got through telling me that I'll—"

"*Never work in this town again!*" sang out Ace and Wiley in unison.

"We had our little chat about killing the story two hours ago," laughed Wiley.

"I hate that cliché," grumbled Ace.

.....

I dropped by the air studio to say hello to Jack on my way out, and he was cookin'. Records were strewn all over the floor, the request lines were jammed, and Traffic's "Light Up or Leave Me Alone" was blasting at an ear-piercing level through the monitors.

"Jack, how's it going?" I screamed over the music. "You sound fucking great!"

"Thanks man! Guess what? I just had a call from a guy at some huge printing company out in the valley. He said that everyone in the plant called the White House on their lunch hour, and he volunteered to print up petitions for us if we need 'em."

"Cool!" I yelled. "You might give his number to Terri when you see her. I think we may need his services."

"Hey before you go, check out the Paraquat Lounge," shouted Jack as he cued up his next song.

"The what?" I screamed back.

"The air lock into the main record library," bellowed Snyder. "We just dubbed it 'the Paraquat Lounge.'"

I went on the air that evening, and ignoring Glutman's threats, hit the issue even harder than the night before. All public telephone lines into the White House stayed jammed for the next forty-eight hours. Alone, our audience had generated ten calls to the White House for every *one* call regarding President Carter's decision to return the Panama Canal to Panama.

Time magazine covered the KAOS story, and two months and 150,000 signatures later, Congress repealed all funding for the paraquat program.

It was a textbook example of the Promethean triad: rock 'n' roll, FM radio, and the tribe.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE
ALL-GIRL
HARMONICA
BAND

Well the men don't know but the
Little girls understand.

—Willie Dixon

WITH THE phenomenal success of the station, F. R. Glutman finally cut loose with some promotional dollars and the result was amazing. KAOS launched a billboard campaign that blanketed Southern California with a twist all its own. One out of every four billboards were erected upside down, and this simple act became a trademark that reflected the philosophy of KAOS.

Listeners from all over would call the station in a mild panic to tell us that "someone has made a big mistake—one of your billboards is upside down!" Soon, everyone who'd sent in for a RADIO KAOS bumper sticker proudly stuck it to his or her car in the same "mistaken" manner. Once again, RADIO KAOS had set the town on its ear.

Another famous element of the KAOS mystique entered

the station's vocabulary at about this time, a two-syllable word which meant absolutely nothing, yet absolutely everything. It was more like a sound, or a noise really, than an actual word. A small piece of verbal nonsense, dredged up from who knows what frenzied corner of Wiley Perch's unique brain. The word was "Whoo-ya." That's right, "Whoo-ya," and it would become even more synonymous with RADIO KAOS than the upside-down billboards.

"Whoo-ya" was like a punctuation mark, you could use it almost anywhere. Unlike the other code words, catch phrases, and inside shorthand that came and went amongst the air staff, "Whoo-ya" appeared over the air one afternoon and never went away. Wiley just started saying it, and before anyone realized what was going on, we were all saying it—like it made sense. Whatever it meant, it caught the imagination of our listeners, and "Whoo-ya" soon became a part of L.A.'s rock 'n' roll jargon.

It was just these kinds of high-level corporate ideas that were responsible for the enormous success of the station.

Whoo-ya!

As RADIO KAOS continued to soar in the ratings, KASH plunged to number fifteen in the market. Hai Ku was no longer program director of KASH, but I took no joy in this. Hai was a good man, a fair man, but he was just too rigid in his thinking. He viewed radio in terms of systems, not music, and in the end he was undone by the very monster he'd helped to create. The automatic KASH machine just couldn't compete with a living, breathing rival.

The tremendous success of the station merely encouraged us to push the edge of the envelope further and further over the air. For their part, Ace and Wiley were setting new standards for broadcast journalism, and I was damn proud of 'em.

"Dateline, Northern California. A nuclear power plant executive said today that this morning's radioactive steam leak at their Diablo Canyon facilities 'Posed no immediate danger to the general public.' He did fail to mention, however, that people exposed to radiation can no longer be considered 'the general public.'"

"I'm Ace Young, and that's it for the news at noon here on 94.7, K-A-O-S. But before we turn it back over to B. Mitchel Reed with the rock 'n' roll, I've got a note here from our own Wiley Perch. It says:

((((((RADIO WAVES))))))

.....1977-1980.....

"Dear Ace, As you have undoubtedly noticed by now, I taped a firecracker to the microphone. Do you have the guts to light it on the air?"

Your pal, Wiley"

Well it didn't take long for this little challenge to escalate. Next day, Wiley also found a note. This time it was taped to a beer mug on the small desk in the news booth.

(Wiley) "Dear Wiley, check out the surprise inside this mug. I'll be listening."

Your pal, Ace.

Jeeze Louise! Ace has taped three firecrackers together and twisted all three fuses into one. I don't know about this—Jack what do you think?"

Jack Snyder opened his mic and said: "Whoo-ya! Light the sucker!"

(Wiley) "You're sure?"

(Jack) "Go for it!"

(Wiley) "Okay then, here goes."

You could hear Wiley light the fuse, then scramble quickly out through the door of the tiny news booth, slamming it shut behind him. This was followed by two seconds of dead air, then a loud *bang!* and the sounds of splintered glass ricocheting off the walls.

Soon they were into cherry bombs, M80s, and using terms like "throw weight" and "bigger bang for the buck." The news booth looked like a bombed-out hovel from an old WW II movie. Smoke from these daily fireworks displays carried up through the ventilating system and into all parts of the fifth floor office complex, causing several outbursts of panic among the clerical staff, who thought the building was on fire.

Ace and Wiley also developed a rather cruel sidebar to this whole affair, as they relished jamming firecrackers into the headphone jacks in the news booth, then after the explosion, torturing our kindly old maintenance engineer, Bill Furrer. "Bill, what the fuck is wrong with this equipment anyway? How come it never works when you need it?"

.....

The on-air pyrotechnics finally came to a halt, however, when Ace set off a bottle rocket that shot through the acoustical tile ceiling. The damn thing flew up into the two-foot drop space between the ceiling tiles and the floor above, and went careening around the entire building, whizzing through the complex like an errant missile. No real damage was done, that is until the guys from the "phone company" across the hall thought they were under attack, and opened fire with automatic weapons.

Someone was spending far too much time in the Paraquat Lounge—which, by the way, was quickly becoming famous in its own right. The tiny passageway from the air studio to the main record library had become the local hangout. Sometimes we would cram as many as six people into that three foot-by-three foot space, which Mega called "an air lock between our world and reality." This is where we met for a smoke during the day, and it was the most densely ornamented wall space on the planet.

As a living bulletin board of poster art, political cartoons, and inside jokes about the management, the Paraquat Lounge was not only a place to "get away from it all," it was also a graffiti gallery for the mentally damaged. There were erotic pictures covered with handwritten comments from the staff, rock posters dating back to the Yardbirds, and the various and sundry nude Polaroids sent in by our listeners, deemed lewd enough to earn a place on these hallowed walls.

Even Ira Steinberg paid an occasional after-hours visit to the Paraquat Lounge, the only suit in all of Micromedia allowed into our secret clubhouse. It was here we got to know Ira as a person who cared about RADIO KAOS as something more than just the bottom line. Ira was okay. He had a gregarious personality that lit up any room with laughter, and he talked to us like human beings, not employees. It was during these sessions in the air lock that the seed of a coup d'etat was planted.

If only there was a way to get rid of Glutman, and make Ira Steinberg the general manager. It was the dream of everyone on the air staff. Ira was slick, he was from sales, but he wasn't cruel. More importantly, he actually *liked* what we did on the air. There was nothing we could do about getting Ira promoted to general manager, of course; the people who made those decisions were three thousand miles away in New

York. And from Micromedia's perspective, it was F. R. Glutman who was responsible for turning KAOS into a winner.

As we approached the fall of 1977, single life was beginning to play an ever-increasing role on my show. The sexual revolution was at its peak, and one of its most important elements was the sexual liberation of women. No longer subjugated to the role of child bearer and keeper of the chronic headache, women could now openly enjoy the pleasures of the flesh, just like men. It was a glorious time to be on the radio.

I would be thirty years old in a few months, and I had a mammoth itch. It was a wanton, reckless, erotic time, a period of supreme indulgence and delicious decadence. Rock music was becoming increasingly explicit in its approach to physical pleasure, and I used every nuance of the record library to seduce the late night ladies who listened to my show. I began to live the life of a "Lonesome L.A. Cowboy" to its fullest, taking every opportunity available to plunder Southern California's most famous natural resource: beautiful women.

One night, while playing a song with a rather extended harmonica solo, I made an offhand remark about how much I enjoyed girls who knew how to blow a harp. That resulted in something called "The All-Girl Harmonica Band," a two-year search for the "ladies with the best licks in town."

"You know living here in L.A., we're not only surrounded by the most beautiful women on the planet, we're also living in a virtual gold mine of musical talent. Always mindful of trying to help a struggling young artist, I am proudly announcing the formation of the RADIO KAOS All-Girl Harmonica Band. A talent search if you will, to find the ladies with the best licks in town.

"If you love to blow the harmonica, if you love to feel your tongue sliding up and down something hard, yet responsive, if you love to make an audience of one scream with delight, call me here at RADIO KAOS and I'll be happy to set up a private audition.

"Now here's a little something to help you get in the mood, from ZZ Top, called 'Tubesnake Boogie.' I'm Jim Ladd, the Lonesome L.A. Cowboy, just waitin' to hear from some lonesome L.A. cowgirl who knows how to please the reeds."

.....

“The All-Girl Harmonica Band?” asked Terri shaking her head. “You are one depraved puppy.”

“Depraved?” I laughed. “What’s so depraved about trying to help the women of our audience develop a skill?”

“You’re a lunatic, but I love you,” said Terri, still shaking her head. “What is it you wanted to see me about anyway?”

“What would you say about asking the Hohner Harmonica Company to give us, say, a hundred or so Little Ladies to give away over the air?” I asked, like it was a sensible idea.

“Little Ladies?” said Terri.

“Yeah, Hohner makes lots of different kinds of harmonicas in all different sizes,” I began. “The Little Lady model is a miniature working harmonica, only four reeds long. I figure we could get a box of these and I can give them away to girls who write in, explaining why they like to play the harmonica. Each night I’ll pick one letter to read over the air, and that girl will get one of these little harmonicas to wear as a necklace.”

“Stop, stop!” cried Terri, doubling over with laughter. “I love it, consider it done. I’ll draft a letter this afternoon. That’s too funny!”

“Thanks, Terri,” I said as I got up to go. “By the way, has the Hound said anything about this yet?”

“He doesn’t get it,” Terri replied. “He’s just glad you’re not calling the White House anymore. He told me that he was sure he’d convinced you to ‘stop being so controversial.’”

Hohner loved the idea, and thirty days later a UPS package arrived from New York, containing a box of one hundred Little Lady harmonicas. Of course, Terri failed to mention in her letter the overt sexual connotations that we would be attaching to these giveaways, so as far as the Hohner Harmonica Company knew, this was all on the up and up, so to speak. They thought an all-girl harmonica band was a wonderful concept, and even included a press kit with quotes from celebrities and community groups, all testifying to the pleasure they’d received from playing a Hohner.

“As you know, the fine folks at the Hohner harmonica company have been kind enough to provide us with one hundred Little Lady harmonicas, to be given away to those of you ladies who write me here at the station, explaining why you love to play the mouth organ.”

"If your letter is read on the air, you will receive a genuine Hohner harmonica, which can be worn as a necklace, proudly heralding your membership in the RADIO KAOS All-Girl Harmonica Band.

"Now in gratitude to the Hohner Company for its cooperation in this project, I want to read to you just a partial list of testimonials they sent to the station. Now it says here that:

"One of the actresses on 'Charlie's Angels' likes to play the harmonica, to pass the time when she's not on camera.

"A music teacher at the Betsy Ross School for Girls in Columbus writes, 'Our young ladies have become a most popular attraction at country fairs and local square dances.'

"And this one from a retirement home in Florida: 'Many of our guests have found new life after discovering the harmonica.'

"Like I've always said ladies, playing the harmonica is fun for all ages. So get those letters in today, as the search is officially on to fill the RADIO KAOS All-Girl Harmonica Band, with the best players Southern California has to offer.

"I'm Jim Ladd, and here's a song from Little Feat called 'Rocket In My Pocket.' You're listening to the soundtrack of Southern California, 94.7, RADIO KAOS."

It was about this time when Mega and Wiley came up with one of the most extraordinary pieces of radio comedy ever to slip through the loopholes of good taste: "The Fish Report With a Beat." How did it get started? Why was it allowed to continue? Who really knows. As an avid fisherman, maybe Wiley shared Dan Aykroyd's love for largemouth bass and kitchen appliances; all I know is, "The Fish Report With a Beat" soon became the most anticipated five minutes on L.A. radio.

Every Friday night following the six o'clock news, Mega Turnon and Wiley Perch would launch into the most twisted, the most licentious, and without question, the most hilarious piece of FM madness ever devised. It was supposed to be the weekly totals from local fishing boats and pier owners, but in the creative hands of these two bandits, "The Fish Report With a Beat" became something else indeed.

After Wiley had finished what loosely passed for the news

(which by this time usually consisted of stories about UFO sightings in Oklahoma or three-legged dogs named Tripod), Mega would start the instrumental theme music, open her mike, and the fun would begin.

(Wiley) "Hi again and hello then. Wiley Perch here on a finally its a Fish Report With a Beat day Friday on RADIO KAOS. So Mega, is it time to whip out my rod?"

(Mega) "Whoo-ya, let's go fishing."

(Wiley) "All right, here we go. Marina Dildo reports: 45 swallow-tailed pork prowlers, 52 Pacific Coast trench hose monster fish, 19 gastrointestinal probe launchers, 33 face flounders, 66 bone eaters, 75 pubic mound dwellers, and 1 wall-eyed beaver-pelted pocket perch."

(Mega) "Lake Titicaca had: 26 chicken dung of the sea fish, 14 amber jacks, 36 lumberjacks, 18 hydraulic jack fish, a couple of Many Moe and Jack fish, a Jack a Ramda fish, and a don't jack it on your veranda fish."

(Wiley) "Fudgepacker Point in Wesson Oil County recorded: 16 anglers, 4 woolmongers, 2 degenerates, 3 reprobates, and a derelict. Now for the fish: 24 Red Sea swill suckers, 7 strawberry-flavored disposable dolphins, 2 na, your humpbacked whale, a whale-backed hump, and a diseased clump of crab's fish."

(Mega) "Port Why-Not-Me had: five whatever happened to the \$20 Lid? fish, 14 one-eyed Trouser Trouts, 76 Hoover-nosed halibuts, an Acapulco Gold fish, a Where's the blow? fish, and an it's my birthday again barracuda."

(Wiley) "Whoo-ya! Dobie's Mullet Hut Swill Shack and Used Underwear Outlet reports: 67 illiterate management position ceiling lip hangers, 3 lucrative regurgitative red snappers, 14 massacred Custer carp, 5 encrusted clam probers, and 78 supple sirloin face sitters."

(Mega) "And over at Lake Lewd And Lascivious: 320 slightly soiled scintillating centerfold smelts, 1 out of town by sundown paraquat piranha, a pair of whose torn undergarments are these anyway abalone, and 96 wet and wild weekend wango tango tuna."

(Wiley) *"Raul's Bent Rod and Reprobate Emporium called in with: 78 infected yeast clams, 30 vulgar vag-ineata, 15 eager beaver snappers, 4 toe-headed eel suck-ers, 87 reclining bucket seat smelts, 60 vegetative vag snapping merket mullet, 74 rebellious reamer saddle burners, and 32 Ptomaine tuna facial smelts."*

(Mega) *"Finally, over at Spread Leg Landing, where there's a dock for all purposes: 2,000 come-on-boys-make-some-noise-talk-is-cheap-but-it's-the-end-of-the-week-so-let-it-all-hang-out rainbow trout, 152 muff diver mullet, 26 Nordic nymphomaniac long-neck clams, and 37 giant and juicy, Jupiter-effect-erect-and-ready-just-try-and-hold-it-steady-tainted-but-tantalizing trouser trout."*

(Wiley) *"Whoo-ya. And that'll do it for The Fish Re-eport With a Beat—baby. And now with the rock 'n' roll, let's turn on Mega."*

These two made The All-Girl Harmonica Band sound like the recruitment campaign for a nunnery. The astounding thing was, to my knowledge, the station never received *one* letter of complaint in all the years that "The Fish Report With a Beat" was on the air.

The same could not be said for me and my little late night promotional idea, however. But when Glutman finally did figure out what was going on, it was too late. The All-Girl Harmonica Band had entrenched itself as a staple of our late night programming. And as the letters from stunned parents and irate feminists flooded Glutman's office, Terri just kept reassuring the Hound that what I'd said "really wasn't *technically* illegal." One of our listeners, however, had decided to take matters into his own hands.

It was a Thursday night and I was running late for work. When I got out of the elevator, I hurried down the hall, trying to make it to the studio before Mega's last record ended. I ran to my mailbox, grabbed my headphones and the mail, then ran around the corner and down the hall to the booth. Because my hands were full, I had to kick the studio door open, and when I did, I was looking down the business end of a 12-gauge shotgun. On the other end of the weapon was a very serious looking member of the LAPD. "Who are you?" he demanded, as if shouting an order.

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“No, no officer, its all right!” said Mega, “That’s Jim.”

“You’re Jim Ladd?” he asked, without lowering the 12-gauge.

“Yes,” I answered.

“Okay, sorry Mr. Ladd,” said the officer, finally removing the shotgun from my forehead. “You’re who we’re here to protect.”

“Sorry Reputa,” said Mega. “I tried to call you at home but you’d already left.”

“Protect?” I asked as calmly as possible. “What do you mean protect?”

Now his partner, a much younger cop who’d been standing next to Mega, stepped forward. “Sir, a call came into Hollywood division at approximately 8:37 P.M. The caller informed our operator that his brother had a gun and was threatening to kill you. Sir, would you mind stepping out into the hall with us for a moment please?”

I put down the mail, asked Mega to cover for me while I worked this out, and went out into the hallway.

“We would like your permission to pat you down.”

“You want to search *me*?” I asked.

“Yes sir, for weapons,” said the older cop. “If this situation is for real, we don’t want to be caught in a cross fire, you understand.”

Well I certainly wasn’t carrying any weapons, but I had just scored a lid on the way into work, and it was still in my jacket pocket. “Well, sure, go ahead,” I said nervously.

The second officer ran his hands down my arms and legs and patted down my chest and back, hitting the baggy full of marijuana with the palm of his left hand. When he did so my heart skipped a beat. I thought that his next move would be for his handcuffs, but it must not have registered as anything suspicious. He was looking for weapons, not contraband, and finding no implements of destruction, satisfied himself that I would not be returning fire.

“So what’s this all about?” I asked, as my adrenaline pump downshifted into fourth.

“Well sir, like we said, we got an anonymous tip that someone was going to try and kill you tonight,” explained the veteran cop. “The caller said that he wanted us to stop his brother before he did something foolish.”

“Foolish,” I said, “jaywalking is foolish—this could ruin my whole day. Did this person leave a name?”

"I'm afraid not," said the younger partner.

"Well did he say *why* he wanted to kill me? I asked.

"Well, the caller said it had to do with his brother's girlfriend," answered the older officer as he scratched his head. "Something about a girl's harmonica club, or harmonica orchestra, or something like that. Does that make any sense to you?"

"Wonderful," I thought to myself. I always figured that if I was going get bumped off, it would be by some lunatic from the KKK, because I'd done a tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. Or maybe the CIA, who thought my liberal politics too subversive. At the very *least* by an overzealous member of the Young Republicans. Then I could be memorialized as the "rebel who died for a cause." Who wants to get assassinated because he told a bad dick joke?

I asked them to please escort Mega to her car and make sure that she got out of the building all right, which they were happy to do. When Mega had left the studio, I sat down and started my show. The younger cop, named Jerry, stayed with me, while his senior partner, Officer Kimball, took Mega to her car. Jerry said they had orders to get me out of the station as soon as possible.

"I'd rather stay on the air," I said, trying to get my mind tuned into the show while carrying on this rather bizarre discussion. "If I leave, this guy will know he got to me, and he'll continue making threats. I've got to stay on the air. Besides, if he's serious, I'd rather *know* when he was coming."

This was against procedure. I was supposed to be removed from the station, and spend the night somewhere other than home. I called Terri Belle and explained the situation. She decided to follow what the police said, as she had dealt with these situations before, and the cops had always been straight with her. Terri called David Perry and told him to get down to the station right away, while I called my old friend Damion, and asked if I could borrow his couch for the night. Ira Steinberg was alerted, and he responded to the situation by waking up a corporate attorney in New York to find out if the station could have any legal exposure should I be killed while on company property.

It was a memorable hour of radio, trying to keep the show going while making polite conversation with two of L.A.'s finest. But by the time David Perry arrived to take over, I

and Jerry and Officer Kimball were gettin' along fine. Jerry was a big fan of RADIO KAOS, and kept asking if he could make a request. Jerry liked Lynyrd Skynyrd, so I played a set for him that included "Saturday Night Special," followed by "Give Me Back My Bullets," "Gimme Three Steps," and "Call Me the Breeze." The older cop didn't seem to like rock 'n' roll all that much, but he was very conscientious about saving my butt, so Officer Kimball was okay in my book.

David Perry arrived. I thanked him for coming in early and told him that if he saw anything out of the ordinary to duck first and ask questions later. Jerry and Officer Kimball and I were joined by two plainclothes policemen, and the five of us rode the elevator downstairs to the garage. The plainclothes cops got out first to check the parking structure, and after satisfying themselves that the area was secure, we walked briskly to my blue Firebird.

"We'll follow you," said Jerry.

"Okay guys, thanks," I said as I got in and started the car. I pulled out of the garage and onto Sunset Boulevard trailed by a black-and-white unit and an unmarked police car, and headed west toward La Cienega. Driving slower than my mom on her way to a chamber of commerce meeting, I never went over twenty miles an hour, which logic told me was the thing to do with two police cars in my rearview mirror.

About two blocks from the station I stopped when a traffic light turned yellow, and a moment later there was a loud knock on the passenger window. I jumped in my seat, thinking that the crazed assassin had followed us from the station. For an instant, I thought I was about to die at the hands of some jilted psycho, who thought I was boffing his girlfriend under the control board.

"Open the door." It was Officer Jerry. I unlocked the door and he jumped into the passenger seat next to me, "Floor it!"

"Pardon me?" I asked, convinced that I must have misheard him.

"Go on floor it, they'll keep up. Just don't hit anything."

The light turned green, I punched the gas pedal, and the rear tires screamed as the Firebird took off in a rancid cloud of burning rubber. This was every guy's fantasy. Suddenly I

was Jim Rockford, tearing through the streets of L.A. at eighty miles per hour with the cops in hot pursuit. I had now completely forgotten why I was doing this, and dove head-long into the moment. There I was, racing down Sunset Boulevard with a police escort and a pocket full of weed. It doesn't get any better than this!

On we went, sirens blaring, red lights flashing, as the mean streets of L.A. flew by in a blur of pimps and hookers. Every TV cop show I had ever seen flashed through my mind as I careened in and out of traffic. "There are a million stories in the big city" . . . "I was working the day watch out of vice when the call came in" . . . "I carry a badge." By this time I was having so much fun I asked Jerry if we could take the long way through the hills, or maybe stop for doughnuts and talk about cop stuff, but he said they had other business to attend to, and we had better just go to the safe house and call it a night.

We arrived at Damion's apartment, and as we walked up to the door, I hoped he'd used the time to "tidy up the place" before I walked in with four LAPD officers and the evening ended with me having to bail him out of jail. We all went in, and after Jerry and Officer Kimball made sure everything was cool, they said good night. I thanked all four of the officers for their help and concern, and promised to send Jerry a RADIO KAOS T-shirt and some bumper stickers. Who said there's never a cop around when you need one?

When they had left, Damion and I smoked several joints to calm down, while I told, then retold the story of my 120 mph hot pursuit down Sunset Boulevard, embellishing only slightly the part about how I helped capture two armed robbers and a vicious gang of terrorists on the way. I crashed on Damion's couch that night, and dreamt of Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe, and tall mysterious dames whose perfume smelled like trouble.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE ROOKIE AND THE VETERAN

He was too old to rock 'n' roll
But he was too young to die
—Jethro Tull

LYNNSEY GUERRERO was the archetypal RADIO KAOS listener. For him, 94.7 was not only his constant companion, it was a personal friend. Though he'd never met anyone from the station, Lynnsey was on a first-name basis with all the jocks, as he and his fellow students at UCLA swapped accounts of what Jeff Gonzer had said that morning before classes, or what Beamer had played that afternoon during lunch.

Lynnsey saw KAOS as a cultural barometer with which he could gauge what was happening in the world that day, by the subject matter of the music we were playing. He listened with interest to the political and social commentary inherent in the shows, and he loved the fact that RADIO KAOS challenged him to think, as well as tap his feet.

One thing Lynnsey and his roommates always looked forward to was the Dr. Demento dormitory ritual at the end of the week. Each Sunday night at six, these guys would open every door to every room in the dorm, crank up the Dr. Demento Show on their stereos, and transform the old ivy-covered rooming house into one huge sound chamber. Then everyone poured out into the halls for the promenade, laughing and joking and blowing off steam, while they listened to the most eclectic four hours of dementia on radio.

For these and other reasons, Lynnsey and his friends were KAOS loyalists, part of a family that bound the Southern California rock community together. And this is why Lynnsey was hanging on the telephone, waiting for someone to answer the request line. Something had happened to him today, something that could only have happened to a RADIO KAOS listener, and he wanted to share it with the station.

“RADIO KAOS,” answered Snyder. “Do you have a request?”

“Is this Jack Snyder?” asked Lynnsey.

“In person.”

“My name is Lynnsey Guerrero, I’m a student at UCLA and you don’t know me or anything, but I am a longtime fan of RADIO KAOS, and something happened at the beach today that you’re not gonna believe.”

“Can you hold on a second,” said Jack. “I have to get another record. I’ll be right back.” Jack set the phone down, pulled a George Thorogood album from the shelf, and cued it up. “Okay, back again, go ahead.”

“So check this out, I was riding on the bike path in Hermosa Beach when I passed a couple laying on the sand listening to their transistor, and I heard you announce that you were gonna play something new from Steely Dan.”

“You mean “Deacon Blues” from the *Aja* album?” offered Jack.

“That’s it,” said Lynnsey. “So dig this. Steely Dan is one of my all-time favorite bands, so when I heard you were gonna play their new album, I pulled my bicycle over and stopped so I could hear the song. But then I realized that the house just up the path was blasting you over their stereo, so I kept riding, and two houses down from them some other people were having a party, and *they* were listening to RADIO KAOS too!

“Well anyway, I just kept going, and every time I was almost out of earshot, I’d ride by someone else listening to KAOS. I made it all the way to my friend’s place without stopping, and I heard the entire song!”

“You’re puttin’ me on,” said Jack.

“I ain’t bullshittin’,” Lynnsey assured him. “Every single radio on that stretch of beach was tuned into KAOS! You dudes have definitely got some fans in Hermosa.”

“Man, this is the best call I’ve had all day,” said Jack. “Thanks for letting me know.”

“Whoo-ya, dude,” said Lynnsey. “Just keep rockin’!”

A few moments later, Jack opened the mike, back-announced the set of songs he’d just played, and said,

“This next one goes out to a guy named Lynnsey, and to all the partiers in Hermosa. I’m Jack Snyder with you until six, as RADIO KAOS rocks Hermosa Beach!”

By 1978, RADIO KAOS was at the height of its power and prestige. We were the first FM ever to break the two million mark in the ratings, and we were now the second most listened-to radio station in all of Southern California. The only signal with higher numbers than RADIO KAOS was the AM talk station at my old stomping grounds. Every single member of the air staff was kicking the holy shit out of the competition, and having the time of their life doing it.

These are the things that egos are made of, sins of pride in the guise of success, the building blocks of conceit. It would have been easy to become full of ourselves, to fall through the trapdoor of vanity and believe that we were invincible, but we were having far too much fun for that. To be on the air at RADIO KAOS was its own reward, a self-fulfilling prophecy which you created every time you entered the glass booth. We weren’t driven by the money, or the ratings, or the perks—we did this because we loved rock ‘n’ roll, and for the singular joy of sharing that music with our listeners.

By now there were some posers on the dial, of course, stations who’d changed formats overnight from easy listening to rock ‘n’ roll, trying to cash in on the success of the “KAOS Formula.” But you couldn’t copy what RADIO KAOS was doing. You couldn’t analyze it statistically, nor could you dissect it formatically. KAOS was the sum of its parts, but why

the gears meshed exactly as they did, no one could say. The competition was trying to duplicate the invisible, and all the charts and graphs in the world couldn't help them.

RADIO KAOS still had the Neil Young attitude: raw, independent, and true to itself. The disposition of these "media stars" was so anti-showbiz that it was almost like a Hollywood movie, a Capralike village devoid of avarice and rivalry, where everyone lived *It's a Wonderful Life*. We were working at our favorite radio station, listening to our favorite jocks, who played the best music in the most creative and unexpected ways, and to be a part of that was to be blessed indeed.

One of the best examples of this communal feeling among the staff came in the unlikely personage of Joanne Goodwin. Although Goldberry had been at the station well over a year now, she was still the most self-conscious human being on the planet. One would think this lucky coed wouldn't have a care in the world, but though Joanne's intellect made her a quick study, she had to fight a personal battle with shyness, and an almost debilitating need not to disappoint the people around her.

It would never have occurred to Joanne a year before to even approach Mega Turnon for the time of day, much less to ask her opinion on something. But in contrast to her Catholic school education, which had beaten the virtues of insecurity and vexation into her for the past fourteen years, the atmosphere at KAOS was like a warm and nurturing family. For the first time in her life, Joanne was beginning to emerge from the purgatory of self-doubt. So when a part-time air shift opened up at the station, Joanne mustered every ounce of courage she could find to ask Mega the undoable question: "Do you think Terri would laugh at me if I gave her a tape of one of my college radio shows?"

If it had been any other situation, if it had been any other woman, a prime-time star of Mega's importance would probably have dismissed such a ludicrous idea with some haughty put-down like, "Please kid, this is the big time. Try some little station in the boondocks, and maybe in a few years, if you're lucky, you might be ready." But instead, Mega not only encouraged her to submit a tape, but unbeknownst to Joanne, she went to Terri Belle and asked her to give Goldberry a try.

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To the everlasting credit of Terri Belle, she also took the time to see Joanne as a person, not an underling, as it was part of Terri's nature to try and give people a leg up whenever she could. What Terri saw was not only the spark of talent; she also recognized something of herself in Joanne, someone who might blossom if only given the chance. Joanne Goodwin was going to get that chance.

Joanne showed up at the station just after midnight, scared out of her mind. She was going to follow me at 2:00 A.M., and she'd come in early to keep from worrying herself to death sitting alone in her tiny studio apartment. This innocent-seeming child was physically trembling as she sat across from me in the glass booth, asking over and over again if she was in the way. I knew how she felt; we all knew what it was like the first time you had to open the microphone for real.

Terri had told me a couple of days before that Joanne would be starting tonight, and asked me to try and make her first show as easy as possible. So instead of letting her sit there and stew in her own paranoia, I turned on the guest mike, and kibitzed with her a couple of times during my last hour as a way of easing her into that first terrifying moment of "*being on the air!*"

Joanne was a list person, and like everything else she did in life, Joanne approached her radio debut as if she were preparing a postgraduate paper on clinical psychology. She'd spent weeks of painstaking research and rigorous study to ready herself for this moment, finally drafting a thick, handwritten compendium she would use to get her through the night. And as she bravely watched the studio clock tick away the remaining minutes of my show, I felt compassion for this frightened young woman. Dressed in her torn jeans and Tom Petty T-shirt, she looked as if she could break into a million little porcelain pieces at any second. Instead, Joanne forced herself to swallow the fear, put on a tiny nervous smile, and checked her list of things to do one more time.

After saying good night to my audience, I put on a long record to give her plenty of time to get settled, and when she was ready, I made up an excuse to leave the room. I felt that it might be easier on her if I wasn't standing right there in the studio when she had to open the mike for the very first time. So, I went down the hall to the newsroom, turned on the receiver, and crossed my fingers. By this time I was almost as

nervous as she was. When the moment came, I couldn't believe my ears.

"Well whoo-ya to ya everybody! I'm Joanne Goodwin, and this is my very first show on RADIO KAOS. I want to thank Jim Ladd for letting me sit in on his program tonight, even if it did cost me fifty dollars, and I had to wash his car.

"I hope you're ready to have some fun, because we are definitely gonna rock 'n' roll! Here's a little bit of heaven from the Who, as 94.7 rocks Southern California!"

What happened to the terrified little girl I had left all by herself in the big bad studio? This person sounded confident, professional, fearless. She was a natural. It was as if someone too frightened to speak was suddenly cured by the discovery that she could sing. Terri heard it, Mega heard it, Jack heard it, we all heard it. Goldberry had just reinvented herself over the air, and from that moment on, Ms. Joanne Goodwin was on her way.

Now as much as I hate sports clichés, I ask that you indulge a die-hard Dodger fan just this one analogy. As wonderful as it is to see a talented rookie get a break, it's always sad to watch an old veteran forced to leave the game.

The word on B. Mitchel Reed shot through the station grapevine at the speed that bad news always travels. He and his wife were to attend a benefit for the Will Geer Theatricum Botanicum theater group up in Santa Cruz. Beamer and the children had flown up ahead of Carole, with the idea of taking a few days to explore the picturesque little coastal village. While they were having lunch at a sidewalk café, Beamer felt a numbness in his left arm and the chest pains rip through his body.

Carole flew up that night, and when she arrived at the hospital, was shown to the intensive care unit. She tried hard not to reveal how frightened she was at the sight of Beamer's fragile essence, lying amidst the tangle of IV bottles and electronic monitoring equipment. He was only fifty-one years old, but the quarter of a century he'd spent in radio had brought him to this, and both he and Carole were terrified.

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Over her strong objections, he made Carole promise that she would attend the benefit tomorrow, if for no other reason than to ease the children's fears. He wanted them to believe that what was happening to Dad couldn't be all that serious, if Mom was still going to attend the concert. Finally, Carole agreed, and the next day left the children with her parents, gathered her strength, and went to the show.

Carole Reed tried her best to be courageous, greeting all their mutual friends, assuring them that Beamer would be fine, and trying to enjoy the Doobie Brothers as best she could. During intermission, Carole walked to the ladies' room, and went inside to collect herself. She'd put on a brave front all day, but now she needed a moment alone. As Carole washed her face she finally allowed the tears to come, mingling with the cool water in the basin. When she turned off the water and reached for a paper towel, she heard a voice from behind her ask, "I don't mean to intrude dear, but are you all right?" It was Jane Fonda, and she had entered right on cue.

Jane stayed with Carole for the remainder of the afternoon, comforting her, and trying to assure Carole that Beamer would be back on his feet in no time. Jane Fonda had listened to B. Mitchel Reed for years, and for the next several weeks, she would make sure that his room was always filled with flowers. It was the kind of friendship and support that the Reed family needed, and Jane helped in any way she could.

For some unknown reason, F. R. Glutman handled the situation by issuing a press release that said B. Mitchel Reed was on vacation in Hawaii. But when Beamer returned to Los Angeles and was admitted to Cedars for open-heart surgery, the press found out about it. And when the story hit the six o'clock news, the hospital was besieged with phone calls and letters of support.

Beamer spent ten days in the hospital. There was no broadcasting from the recovery room this time, but two weeks after he was released, BMR was back on the air. He had been a huge Top 40 star ten years before free-form radio was even invented, then gave it all up in the sixties for a vision of something far more noble than fortune or fame. Now, by the grace of God and medical science, he had been given a second chance, a few more precious years to play his music, and share the dreams within that very special heart.

B. Mitchel Reed was a great warrior, who had fought countless battles for his tribe. An old chieftain, now venerated for his many victories, but still young enough to rock 'n' roll. Beamer still believed in the Great Spirit that dwelt within the music, and the sacred medicine of the shaman's tent. It wasn't the glass booth that took its toll on Beamer, it was the corporate gamesmanship that beat him down, the brutal world of commerce which belittled the act of creation, and chipped away at his confidence. It was management's total absence of understanding for what the glass booth represented that plagued his heart. But the audience knew, and his friends knew, and that made the emotional cover charge worth any cost.

Two months after B. Mitchel Reed returned from his heart attack, he was fired by F. Reginald Glutman. You could tell that this one was difficult for Glutman; he said it was pressure from "upstairs." But whatever the reason, there was no offer of promotion to a less stressful job, no pension to help his family, no ceremony, no proverbial gold watch. "In the best interest of both parties, the time has come to sever this relationship," read the letter of termination. In the company's view, B. Mitchel Reed simply required too much maintenance to be cost-effective.

I don't even know why I was surprised. I'd seen how radio had discarded Raechel Donahue without a backward glance. Why should this disc jockey be treated any different?

Joanne Goodwin got the unenviable task of filling Beamer's time slot, but by the time it happened she was ready. Her style was completely different from the man's she was replacing, yet right on the money for RADIO KAOS. She was bright, cheerful, a fountain of musical information, and within a few short months, Joanne had made the shift her own.

It was an exponential leap from part-time to full-time air personality in just two months, and no one was more astounded than Joanne. The young lady in torn jeans was good, and finding her talent did wonders for helping Goldberry to find herself. She worked like a demon, as if to justify the faith Terri had shown in her, and it paid off both on the air and within herself.

As for Beamer, KASH felt he still had some "name value in the market," and hired him at a reduced salary. It was the end of an era, again.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

CIRCLE

THE

WAGONS

“Evacuate the area! Unplug the mobile studio! Women and children first!”

IT WAS a warm day in the late spring of 1978, and I’d dragged myself out of bed three hours early for a noon meeting with Terri. I was on my way to one of our favorite hangouts, a little Mexican restaurant about a mile from the station, called Lucy’s El Adobe.

Lucy’s was one of the many watering holes frequented by the air staff, as well as by people in the record business. The place was dark inside, with wooden tables and Naugahyde booths, which gave it the air of an old cantina. It was not unusual to spot California’s governor Jerry Brown having lunch there, or the occasional movie star shooting a film across the street at Paramount. By the time I arrived, Terri, Jack, and Mega were well into their second round of margaritas, and anxious to order lunch.

“Lunch?” I scoffed. “You mean breakfast.”

“It must be wonderful to sleep in till one in the afternoon every day,” Terri said, with a sidelong wink to the others. “Some of us actually have to be at work by nine in the morning.”

“Yes, I’ve heard rumors about a strange subculture of people who work in the daytime and sleep at night,” I said, pulling up a chair next to Mega. “But I thought it was just a myth. By the way, does anybody know what that big yellow thing is up in the sky?”

“That’s the sun, Jim,” laughed Snyder. “Have some chips.”

“No thanks. Hot salsa is not my idea of breakfast,” I said with a yawn. “Just coffee, and lots of it.”

“I’m starved,” said Mega. “Now that Rip Van Winkle’s here, let’s order.”

The table was overflowing with plates of enchiladas, burritos, and tostadas before Terri got around to explaining why we were “doing lunch.” After weeks of tireless negotiations, Terri was about to announce her biggest promotional triumph to date, and she wanted us to be the first to know. Terri had just inked a deal to make KAOS the official radio station for the year’s biggest concert event—Cal Jam II. It was an all-day marathon at the Ontario Motor Speedway, featuring some of the biggest rock bands in the world, and RADIO KAOS would be the *only* station allowed to broadcast from the event.

Beginning at noon on Friday, the day before the concert, and running through late Saturday night, RADIO KAOS would be broadcasting live from backstage. It was a major, major exclusive for the station. There would be weeks of promotional hoopla, leading up to a full day of interviews, concert updates, and special reports, all completely monopolized by RADIO KAOS. Needless to say, it drove our competition nuts.

These things, however, can be a logistical nightmare. Fourteen hours of live rock ‘n’ roll from twelve different bands, playing to an expected audience of 250,000 kids. Add in all the roadies, catering crews, security people, medical personnel, light and sound guys, and you soon realize how easy it would be to lose track of six disc jockeys—even if they have a backstage pass.

For this reason, Terri had called Hai Ku and asked him to come by for a meeting. Because neither Hai nor Terri were your typical radio assholes, they had been able to establish a friendship over the years, while still delighting in the chess game between professional rivals. Hai Ku was already a Cal Jam veteran, as KASH had been the official station for Cal Jam I. Terri wanted to pick Hai's brain about how to organize her troops, and since Hai no longer worked for KASH, he was happy to oblige. By the end of the meeting, Terri offered Hai a gig as a paid consultant to help coordinate the event—that is if she could figure out a way to make Glutman think it was his idea.

Two weeks prior to the show, Glutman called a meeting to go over the general plan of attack. When he walked into the conference room, he was confronted by the entire air staff, wearing dark glasses. Not knowing how to react, or even what message he was supposed to draw from this statement, Glutman let Terri begin the meeting.

Within thirty minutes, Terri and Hai Ku had laid out the entire operation. Hai was to be stationed in the press box on the upper rim of the stadium, and with a view of the entire field, he would coordinate events with Terri in the mobile studio parked behind the stage. Hai would also be responsible for moving people to different points around the speedway by walkie-talkie, while Terri kept in contact with the jock on duty back at the station. We would not be broadcasting the music itself, but cutting in and out of our normal programming throughout the day.

Some of us would be required to do two air shifts that day, one at the station, and another in the mobile studio at the site. It would require timing, teamwork, and everyone's full cooperation to pull this off. But Terri and Hai had done their homework, and everything seemed to be organized down to the last detail. When they had finished their presentation, everyone knew exactly what would be expected of them. All we had to do was follow the schedule, work hard, and have a good time.

"Well that's about it," Terri said as she straightened the pile of notes in front of her. "Reginald, is there anything you'd like to add?"

The Hound rose and walked over behind Terri. He was sweating his Nixon sweat again, and he stood so close to her

I was afraid he'd drip the briny fluid right down Terri's back. Glutman flashed a quick glance at the mute cluster of sunglasses before him and asked, "What about code names?"

There was a long pause as Terri and Hai looked at each other, "Code names?" asked Hai.

"We're going to need code names for the people using walkie-talkies," announced Glutman without explanation.

"I'm sorry Reginald," said Hai, "I'm not following you."

"A competing station could monitor our walkie-talkie transmissions, and steal information from us," Glutman said, as though he were stating the obvious. "They could even scoop us on the air."

"Reginald, the walkie-talkies are only used to move people from place to place during the show," explained Terri, as a collective snigger made its way around the room. "What is KASH or anybody else going to do? Go on the air and announce that RADIO KAOS is about to bring you another exclusive report from a concert they weren't invited to?"

"I want strict security on this Belle," snarled the Hound. "Here are the code names I've assigned to the staff, myself included, and I want you all to memorize these before the show. No one is to use the walkie-talkies without the proper codes. Hai, you'll be 'Papa Bear,' Terri you're 'Mama Bear,' Jack Snyder is . . ." The room exploded in a torrential outburst of guffaws, as if Glutman had just been hit in the face with a cream pie. We couldn't hold it in any longer. I mean come on—Papa Bear?

Cal Jam was the kind of thing F. R. Glutman lived for: a huge event at which he could be seen in all his glory. It was something to be in charge of, a moment in the sun. But KAOS's Captain Queeg had no patience for such annoying little details as lining up mobile broadcast trucks, arranging the food and transportation, securing hotel rooms for the staff, or dealing with concert promoters. He left those things for Terri and Hai to handle unassisted. He was going to do the important stuff. He was going to be in charge of *traffic reports*. And this meant that he would not only get to be on the air, it meant that he would be able to rent a helicopter!

Another one of the Hound's most endearing characteristics was his attitude toward spending the corporation's

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money on the radio station. When it came to bonuses for the disc jockeys, or new equipment for the air studio, he was tighter than a Klansman at an NAACP benefit dinner. But when it came to the toys that he was interested in, the check-book was wide open. And one of F. R. Glutman's favorite toys was the helicopter. He loved helicopters.

The one person not affected by any of this was Mega; she wasn't going to be anywhere near Glutman during the concert. In fact, she was going to be three thousand miles away on an island in the Bahamas. One of Mega's great passions in life was traveling; Reputa had seen more of the world than most rock stars, and having endured Glutman's antics at previous events like this, decided it would be a perfect time to take two weeks on the beach.

On the fourth day of her vacation, Mega was sipping a piña colada by the pool when she got a telephone call from Los Angeles.

"Mega? It's Terri."

"Terri, what a surprise, how are you?"

"Well, Cal Jam is only two days away so things are nuts," said Terri in exasperation. "How's it going with you?"

"The weather is hot, the drinks are cold, and the hotel is divine," said Mega, rubbing it in a little. "And the *food* Terri, it's absolutely magnificent."

"Mega, I've got something to tell you, and you are not going to like it one bit."

"What is it?"

"The Hound wants you to come back for the broadcast."

"Great joke, Belle, you must be nuts."

"I'm not joking, Mega. He said for me to tell you that if you don't fly home, you're fired."

"Well then I guess I'm fired. He can't make me do this, I have the time coming. I'm already down here for God sakes. Fuck him!"

"Mega, if you don't come back, it means I'm fired too."

Mega could make that career decision for herself easily enough, but Terri was her best friend, and she was left with no other recourse but to return to L.A. Seething with anger, Mega Turnon packed her bags and flew home the next day, not to attend the concert, but merely to work an air shift. Glutman knew that Mega wanted no part of the event, and

took it as a personal affront to his authority. So in a vindictive move that went far beyond the limits of a mere power junkie, the Hound had waited for Mega to start her vacation, *then* given the order for her to fly home—not because he wanted her at the concert, but merely so she would sit by herself in the studio and spin records. Even for the Hound, this move was beyond belief.

The concert would be festival seating, and to ease the crush of people vying for front row center Saturday morning, the promoters decided to open the gates on Friday afternoon. Those who chose to do so would be welcome to bring sleeping bags, stake out a place in front of the stage, and spend the night.

Ace Young began our live coverage at noon Friday, reporting on the incredible scene that was shaping up within the massive speedway. A gigantic stage had been constructed at one end of the oval track, with rows and rows of concession stands at the other. There were an endless line of semis loaded with instruments and amplifiers, a monstrous sound system large enough to qualify as a weapon, and huge projection screens set up on either side of the stage. Anticipation for the next day's show had built to a fever pitch, and now it was less than twenty hours away.

The link with the station was loud and clear, the mobile studio sounded fine, Hai Ku's command post was plugged in and working, and the sound guys had piped in RADIO KAOS through the gigantic P.A. Everything was going smoothly until about four in the afternoon, when Hai Ku got a call from the highway patrol. It seemed that the number of people who'd opted to come the night before was far greater than anyone had anticipated.

The freeway leading to the event was already at a standstill, and in less than an hour, the deluge of Friday night commuters would result in a hopeless gridlock. The highway patrol wanted KAOS to make an announcement asking people coming to the speedway to pull off the road, and wait there until after the rush hour traffic had subsided. It was the only way to prevent what could be an ugly situation.

Hai was extremely skeptical about the effectiveness of such a request. He didn't think that a bunch of hyped-up rock 'n' rollers, serious enough to camp out overnight on wet

grass, were going to pull off the road just because a radio station asked them to. He didn't understand the personal relationship we had with our listeners, nor did he imagine that literally nine out of ten cars on their way to the concert would be listening to the same station.

Hai called the hotline at the studio, and when Jack answered, explained the situation, and asked him to throw it to Ace at the end of his next song. When Ace went on the air from the mobile studio backstage, he laid it out as if he were asking a favor of an old friend.

"Thank you Jack. This is Ace Young with you live from backstage at Cal Jam II, and I have a favor to ask everybody who's listening to RADIO KAOS on your way here.

"More of you have decided to show up early than we were counting on, and we're beginning to have real traffic problems outside of the speedway. So were asking everyone on the 10 Freeway who's en route to Cal Jam to pull over to the side of the road until seven o'clock.

"It's important that we do this, because of the horrendous traffic jam it's going to cause when you guys meet the rush hour commuters on their way home from work. So please, if you're on the 10 Freeway heading for Cal Jam, just pull over to the side of the road until you get further word from us here at RADIO KAOS.

"Other than that, if the weather holds, everything looks great for tomorrow.

"So Jack, do you think you can find something to entertain the folks who'll be sitting on the shoulder?"

"No problem. We'll just have a giant tailgate party while we wait, and I got just the thing to get us started. 'Highway Star' from Deep Purple, on RADIO KAOS. Whoo-ya!"

As the song began, Hai Ku crossed his fingers and walked outside to the stairway leading from the press box. From here he could look up and down the ribbon of eight-lane highway, and what greeted him was a sight he would never forget. For miles in both directions, Hai could see the amber flashes of right-hand turn signals, as hundreds upon hundreds of cars began a slow, orderly migration off the freeway. He simply could not believe his own eyes—it was like Moses parting the

Red Sea. What was it about this radio station that inspired such loyalty in its audience? What kind of magic was at work here, anyway?

During the night, a storm front moved in, depositing large black thunderheads over the speedway, and threatening to dump a couple of inches of rain on the intrepid campers. But at 8:00 A.M., Jeff Gonzer greeted the crowd over the huge P.A. system, and began the day with "Stairway to Heaven." As if it were a sign from above, the moment Robert Plant sang the word "heaven" at the end of the song, the clouds parted and a glistening silver beam of sunlight hit the audience. The crowd let out a tremendous Gregorian cheer as it beheld the vision of God's flashlight, and Cal Jam II was under way.

The day started out like clockwork. All the bands seemed to rise to the occasion with inspired sets, each reaching a higher plateau than the group before. The crowd was joyous and well behaved. Terri and Hai had everything under control, our on-air coverage was going even better than expected, and everybody seemed to be having a great time. Everybody that is, save for the Hound.

F. R. Glutman had been drinking coffee and riding around in the helicopter since 6:00 A.M. The only time he came down was to ingest more caffeine or take a whiz, and by two in the afternoon, the Hound was wired to the teeth. He was running around barking orders that seemed to make no sense, to people who were not even affiliated with the station. It was driving us nuts, and it was beginning to affect morale.

"I wish we could drug the son of a bitch," said Hai to no one in particular. "We've got to get this guy out of our hair."

"I have some Placidyls," came a voice from behind him. Hai Ku turned around and watched as a pleasant-looking woman dug through her purse. Hai had seen her around the station before, but had never pegged her as someone who'd volunteer for this kind of covert operation. She handed Hai a capsule containing three times the sedative punch of a Quaalude, and smiled as if to say, "I hope this'll do the trick."

Hai sent someone to get hamburgers. When they arrived, Terri got a safety pin and punched a hole in the capsule, and Hai Ku squeezed the gelatinlike liquid onto the Hound's

lunch. The Hound ate it and we waited. And we waited. And we waited. There was enough Placidyl in that hamburger to deck Mr. Ed, but the Hound was so keyed up that it didn't seem to affect him at all. He merely continued to scream and sweat, and after yelling at a number of other phantom employees, went back up in the helicopter to continue his aerial surveillance.

The fact that the concert had already been under way for some four hours, or the fact that there were no traffic problems to report, would not dissuade the Hound. He insisted on breaking into the broadcast every fifteen minutes with another "live traffic update" regarding the smooth and orderly flow of non-concert goers passing by the stadium.

Glutman's traffic reports drove us nuts. He would insist on preempting whatever was going on over the air, convinced by now that the entire focus of the event had shifted from what was happening on stage, to his riveting descriptions of "the antlike appearance of the crowd." Finally, we got one of the engineers to reroute his transmissions back up to the helicopter without actually putting them on the radio, and just *told* him that he was on the air. The Hound was in his glory, orbiting the field in an endless waste of fuel, reporting back to himself on a closed-circuit audio loop of madness.

Once we'd worked out how to keep Glutman busy, the day progressed into night without a hitch. Cal Jam II was everything promised, one of those concerts that really did qualify as an event. On it went into the night—Aerosmith, Santana, Ted Nugent, and the rest, rolling a quarter of a million rockers well past midnight.

After eighteen hours of nonstop helicopter rides, our fearless cartoon character finally snapped. Something was going horribly wrong. From his vantage point, he perceived that our mobile studio backstage was about to be crushed by a rioting mob of crazed hooligans, bent on capturing our equipment and taking the air staff hostage. Panicked and confused, he ordered the beleaguered helicopter pilot to land the chopper backstage. As soon as they were on the ground, Glutman ran to the trailer, threw open the door, and began sputtering orders like Daffy Duck. "Evacuate the area immediately!" "Unplug the mobile studio!" "Women and children first!" "Drive right through the fence if you have to, but get out now!"

(((((RADIO WAVES)))))

.....1977-1988.....

It seems that we'd forgotten he was still up there, and when the last encore had ended, nobody thought to tell the Hound. The "mob of stampeding fanatics" was, in fact, merely the tired and worn-out audience, quietly milling back to their cars. The concert was over, and everybody was going home. F. R. Glutman, however, was convinced that we were about to be trampled by a rioting mob of Bolsheviks.

That a, that a, that's all folks! Shortly thereafter, F. R. Glutman was history. When word of his exploits reached Micro-media headquarters, the Hound was promoted *up* the corporate food chain to a desk job in New York—as "reward," they said, for his valiant service in the face of overwhelming odds.

That wasn't the only good news. To the delight of everyone on the air staff, Ira Steinberg was chosen to replace F. R. Glutman as the new general manager of RADIO KAOS.

Good-bye Daffy Duck, hello Elmer Fudd.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE
WALL

What shall we use to fill the empty spaces
Where waves of hunger roar
Shall we set out across this sea of faces
In search of more and more applause

—Roger Waters

"I CAN'T believe the Hound is actually gone," said Mega, as the waiter refilled her glass. "No more 'little girl' innuendo. No more puddles of sweat in the hall."

"No more of that fucking Aramis cologne he always drenched himself in," added our overnight jock, David Perry. "I got into the elevator once just as he was getting off, and I thought I was going to suffocate before I reached the parking garage. It took my wife Linda two weeks to get the smell out of my clothes."

The air staff had gathered at a nightclub called the Rainbow to celebrate our good fortune, and by midnight, most of us were pretty well lit.

"You know, I think what I'll miss about him the most, is those *thrilling* stories he used to tell about flying," said

Wiley, feigning an air of nostalgia. "Those long, pointless, rambling tales of derring do and adventure. Like the time he supposedly had to fly the three showgirls from Cleveland to Las Vegas, and was forced to land in the middle of nowhere while the weather cleared."

"Tell the truth, Terri," I said, lighting a cigarette. "Aren't you going to miss all of the invaluable support he gave you? All those heartfelt compliments for a job well done?"

Terri Belle almost choked on her whiskey sour as the table of intoxicated friends laughed and hollered.

"You know in all the years I've known him," said Jeff Gonzer, "I have never heard him mention one word about a good rating book, not once!"

"Well believe me, he certainly *mentioned it* if the numbers went down," laughed Terri, wiping the drink from her blouse. "You remember when we finally beat KASH, and how happy we all were? Well the same day that the book came out, he called Jack and me into his office and raked us over the coals for two hours. After carefully analyzing the numbers, he had found that women 35-49 had gone down slightly on the weekends."

"We had just beaten KASH across the board 12+," emphasized Jack Snyder, "and the Hound was pissed because a public service show at five o'clock Sunday morning had 'lost a portion of the upper female demographic.'"

"Well, hopefully all that's behind us now that Ira is the new GM," said Joanne, turning the conversation in a slightly less cynical direction.

"Here's to the new boss," said Ace, raising his glass for a toast. "Let's hope Pete Townshend was wrong, and he *won't* be the 'same as the old boss.'"

As the staff of RADIO KAOS celebrated its liberation from the Hound and looked forward to even bigger success in the future, FM radio throughout the country was struggling with its own prosperity. Rock radio had become serious business. It was now a big-time, stockholder-type investment machine, and those at the top were raking in their fortunes with a backhoe. Now millions of dollars in profits were on the line, and the more the owners made, the more they wanted.

I've always considered the radio business at its simplest level to be a fair game. If you get the numbers, they let you

stay on the air. They'll even pay you to do it. If you don't get the numbers, you're fired. Simple and fair. Talent gets a stage on which to perform, and the owners get to make a profit.

But as more and more FM stations switched to rock as a means of cashing in on the tribal drum, the pressure to deliver raw numbers began to overshadow everything. The new FM stations were no longer being put together out of a need to rock 'n' roll, but purely because the genre had shown itself to be so immensely profitable. The community ethic of the original free-form approach was now in danger of being consumed by its own success.

General managers could no longer trust a potential money-maker like this to people whose only concern was music. It might have been different if we were playing Glenn Miller records, but management was so alienated from the rock culture that discussing programming concepts, even with one of their own DJs, had become impossible.

FM radio had simply gotten too big to be left in the hands of the people who merely made it work. Sure, they got big ratings all right, but *how?* DJs didn't seem to have any real plan to speak of, and when someone from management asked a jock how he achieved such good numbers, he usually got an answer that made no sense. Air talent talked about things like "bands who had integrity" and those "who were just hype," and if you didn't know the difference between U2 and the Knack, the person answering your question may as well have been speaking in tongues. What management needed was hard data, facts and figures that could project profitability for the third quarter, not a bunch of "music experts."

The answer to management's dilemma was to be found in a newly mutated life form called the "radio consultant." Here was someone who spoke management's language. Someone who wore a suit and tie, drank martinis at lunch, and told a good joke. Most importantly, the radio consultant promised results which could be achieved through sound business practices, not instinct. With his graphs, spreadsheets, and pie charts in hand, the radio consultant could translate the unfathomable beast of FM rock radio into a concrete formula that management could understand.

A format.

The radio consultant imposed a statistical grid over the

psychedelic counterculture, and reduced it to demographic research. Do you want men 18-24, adults 18-49, women 35-49, or is your target audience teens? Whatever it may be, the radio consultant had a formula. He would deliver the ratings using a methodology that the general manager could relate to, and he didn't need to mention *music* at all.

Where once there had been only one or two rock stations in town, now there were four or five, all competing for a piece of the "younger demo." And these newer stations didn't need to carry any of that useless tribal baggage, a code of ethics which had barred most of the "really boffo ideas" that radio consultants and former salesmen seem to love—things like strict musical repetition, sophomoric jingles, and giant cash giveaways.

The radio consultant could show you, Mr. General Manager, a formula which would "cut through all that social conscience mumbo jumbo, and give the people what they want," a formula so foolproof that it could be applied to any radio station, anywhere in the country. And therein lay the genius of the radio consultant, a man who looked out onto the broad landscape of rock radio's beautiful and chaotic diversity, and saw the future: generic radio: safe, uniform, nonthreatening; an entire nation of independent voices, melded into a monotone of sameness, and all under the direction of the radio consultant and his formula.

By 1979, the consultants were beginning to have some success in the smaller markets, and their methodology was growing in popularity. Taking the now "established" artists free-form radio had discovered, and repackaging them into a rigid "tight and bright" Top 40 presentation, the consultant's cancerous approach spread throughout the nation. Cookie-cutter FM stations, each an exact duplicate of the other, were beginning to spring up all over America.

In big cities such as L.A., Boston, San Francisco, and New York, where there were well-established alternative stations, the audience remained loyal to the tribal drum, though its sound was becoming less and less distinct. At this point, RADIO KAOS itself had yet to be infected by this epidemic. We still retained a direct connection with our listeners, unlike those stations who'd partitioned themselves off behind a wall of abject procedure. Our only protection, however, was to re-

main strong and healthy in the ratings; and, so far anyway, we were.

Like FM radio, rock 'n' roll itself was in danger of losing its integrity to success. Rock was now such a huge business, and was becoming so ingrained in the mainstream, that it had all but forgotten the very counterculture from which it had emerged. The 1970s had given us some of the best music rock had to offer, with artists such as Led Zeppelin, the Eagles, and Bruce Springsteen, but the seventies also produced glitter rock, corporate rock, punk rock, and disco. There were no free concerts in the park anymore; rock had moved into the big arena. Through it all, FM stations such as RADIO KAOS were there, changing with the music, commenting on the times, and trying to hold on to their original mandate.

The seventies came to a halt with an act of musical symbolism, clearly visible only through the crystalline perspective of hindsight. It was a benchmark in rock 'n' roll time that foretold of the separation between rock and its audience, and in doing so, foreshadowed the loss of FM's sacred bond with its listeners. It was more than an album, it was a conceptual novel set to music, and it seemed to presage the entire decade to come: Pink Floyd's *The Wall*.

Pink Floyd worked harder at being an enigma than any other band in the world, and Roger Waters was the most adamant when it came to his privacy. Writer, singer, bass player, and the intellectual force behind rock 'n' roll's most tightly guarded mystique, Roger Waters had turned down requests for interviews from all the major print and broadcast media, including "Innerview."

I had been dogging Columbia's regional promotion man, Paul Rappaport, for years to get me an interview with the band. I liked Paul, because he was one of that rare breed in the record business, who never referred to music as "product." He was a fan of Pink Floyd's work, and he was a fan of "Innerview." Paul wanted to hear an "Innerview" of Pink Floyd almost as much as I did, but try as he might, Paul had never been able to get Roger to agree. However, since they were coming to L.A. to perform *The Wall* in concert, Paul vowed to give it one more try.

In his very British way, Roger Waters viewed Southern California as a cultural black hole, populated solely by Hollywood hustlers and moronic beach bums. He would play here,

but he didn't have to like it. One day, however, Roger turned on the radio, and while flipping around the dial, stumbled across the most bizarre piece of radio programming he had ever heard, something called "The Fish Report With a Beat." From that moment on, Roger Waters was a fan of RADIO KAOS. He understood perfectly what the station was all about, and it helped to soften, if only slightly, his snooty, contemptuous, stuck-up Limey opinion of where I lived.

Somewhere between Paul Rappaport's persistence, and "The Fish Report With a Beat," Roger Waters unexpectedly changed his mind, and agreed to his first-ever national radio interview. As Bogart said to Claude Rains at the end of *Casablanca*, "Louie, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

Arriving at the red brick mansion on a quiet street in Beverly Hills, "Innerview"'s producer Bill Levey and I were met at the door of their temporary home by Roger's lovely wife, Carolyne. A great deal of "Innerview"'s popularity and reputation was due to Bill Levey's talent as a producer and engineer, and I was glad to have him along to set the mikes and run the tape recorder. Carolyne Waters smiled pleasantly as she showed us upstairs to the large master bedroom. Lying there in bed, surrounded by stacks of blueprints, lead sheets, and phone messages, was rock 'n' roll's most covert superstar.

"You must be Jim Ladd then?" he said looking up from his work. "I'm afraid we'll have to talk in here. I injured my back yesterday, and I am in a good deal of pain just now. Pull up one of those chairs, we'll get started in a moment."

As Bill set up the tape recorder, I explained a bit about how the show worked, and told him my idea for what we were about to do. Normally, I tried to conduct these taping sessions in the most conversational manner possible, letting the subjects flow from one to another as the discussion progressed. In this case, however, we would be doing something quite different.

I had listened carefully to the album eight or nine times in preparation for this meeting. The more I listened, the more impressed I had become by the scope and breadth of the work, and it was obvious that there was only one way to do it justice on the radio. I decided therefore to break with my normal

style of questioning, and asked Roger to take us through the album song by song, in order, from beginning to end.

That session with Roger Waters would produce *the* most requested "Innerview" program ever aired in the eleven-year history of the show, and resulted in a friendship which I am still miserably enduring to this day.

What follows is a *brief* excerpt from that program. It deals with only one of the many "bricks" which the album explores, but it's a key, both to the state of rock 'n' roll, and to FM radio as well.

(Roger) "The piece, on its simplest level, is about the situation of a rock concert and feeling alienated from the audience. Which is the point of view that the character is expressing in that first song. And then when we get to the end of that first tune, everything else is then flashback.

"The starting point of this whole project was me feeling bad about being onstage in a big stadium, and feeling that there was an enormous wall between me and the audience, albeit an invisible one, but one that I really felt was there. And looking at the faces of the people I could see in the first fifty or sixty rows of swaying heads, it looked as if they were experiencing it as well.

"It's like when you're singing a very quiet song with an acoustic guitar on stage, and there's about ten thousand people shouting and screaming and whistling, which happened a lot on the *Animals* tour. There was always at least twenty people that I could see whistling and shouting. Maybe they were trying to kind of be 'with' me, if you like, but it doesn't help. They're going 'all right! yeah! hey! get down!' and you're trying to sing this quiet little song."

(Jim) "Does it make you feel like your audience doesn't understand what you're doing?"

(Roger) "Well obviously they don't, the ones who are making the noise. The problem is that you know there are thousands of other people there who *do* [understand], and who want to listen to it. If they were all like that, then you could just say, 'Okay, they're just a bunch of mindless pigs, let's just take the money and run.' But you *know* that there are people out there who do want to listen, and who are interested, and who understand."

(Jim) "How did you first conceive of actually using a physical wall as part of the concert?"

(Roger) "I thought, wouldn't it be good, theatrically, to physically construct this wall that I feel between me and them during the show. To just cut us off completely. Really antagonize the audience, and let them find out for themselves how they feel about that."

In February of 1980, Roger Waters had the world at his feet. *The Wall* was the number one album in the country, Pink Floyd had sold out seven shows at the L.A. Sports Arena, and he was a millionaire several times over. But for him, none of that mattered, if the alienation of his audience was the price of success.

Because of the enormous complexity of staging the live shows, *The Wall* would be performed in only three cities: L.A., New York, and London. RADIO KAOS sponsored all seven nights in L.A., and each member of the air staff emceed one of the shows.

We all went to the rehearsals over the next two weeks, and were awed by the unbelievably elaborate staging and special effects. There was an airplane that would fly from the back of the hall over the audience to the stage; giant puppet replicas of Pink's schoolteacher, his wife, and his mother that were to be inflated and deflated on cue; 35-mm films, animated sequences, sound effects, multiple set changes, and, most impressive of all, the wall itself: a mammoth thirty-foot-tall edifice stretching entirely across one end of the Sports Arena, which would be built, brick by brick, between the band and the audience during the show.

Everybody came down for opening night, and I was standing backstage before the show talking with Jack Snyder and Wiley Perch, when Jeff Gonzer walked up and said, "Who is that unbelievable chick over there?"

"Oh my God," was all that Jack could muster. Wiley and I turned to see a gorgeous woman, dressed in a very tight, very short, very low cut black cocktail dress. She had a wild mane of blond curls that fell past her shoulders, and legs that seemed to go on forever.

"I think it's Stevie Nicks," gasped Wiley.

"No, she's too tall," I said.

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“She’s got to be with the band then,” offered Gonzer.

“Even by L.A. standards, *that* is a stone fox!” said Wiley. “I wonder who she is.”

“Hey,” whispered Jack, “she’s coming this way.”

She looked like a Vargas painting in spike heels as she sauntered across the floor, past the catering tables and dressing rooms. It seemed like she was walking in slow motion, as her masses of blond curls bounced and spilled over her ivory shoulders. She was breathtaking in every way as she continued to approach, finally coming right up to the four of us and saying, “Hi, guys, how’s it going?”

“Joanne?” Jack said in slack-jawed disbelief.

“Goldberry, is that you?” I said.

“Well of course it’s me, what do you mean?” she said a little defensively, not understanding the question.

“You just look so, so . . . different,” said Wiley.

“Oh come on you guys, give me a break,” she answered with a nervous smile. “I know that I don’t wear dresses a lot at work, but this is a special occasion.”

“It certainly is now,” drooled Jeff. “I can’t believe it’s you.”

Joanne Goodwin had been hiding a pinup girl under tom-boy clothes all this time, and no one had suspected a thing. Goldberry hosted the show that night like an old pro and the audience loved her. She was graceful and sexy, and her attitude was infectious. She was a real-life Cinderella story, and it couldn’t have happened to a nicer kid. Amazing what a little self-confidence can do.

I was scheduled to host show number three, and I had been racking my brain trying to come up with something appropriate to say about the evening. Finally, I was reminded of what had happened three years ago when Pink Floyd came to L.A. for the *Animals* tour, and it gave me an idea.

Back in 1977, our chief of police vowed to make an example of those treacherous lawbreakers attending those subversive rock concerts high on pot. And in the process of demonstrating law and order in a civilized society, the police force beat the crap out of several people who were waiting in line. It was an ugly and bloody scene, and a lot of people got seriously hurt. Three years later, the members of Pink Floyd hadn’t forgotten, and this time took steps of their own to make sure it wouldn’t happen again.

When I walked out onstage to open the show, I introduced myself and welcomed everybody with a loud "Whoa-ya," and the crowd of fifteen thousand replied with a thundering "Whoa-ya!" of its own. I made a short statement about what a special event this was, and how proud RADIO KAOS was to be a part of it. Then I said, "Before we get started, I have an announcement to make. Most of you remember what happened the last time Pink Floyd was in town, and the huge hassles we had with the chief of police."

The crowd began to boo and hiss at the mention of the police chief, while some in the audience started chanting, "We want Pink Floyd. We want Pink Floyd!"

When they had settled down a little, I continued. "As you probably remember, the cops threatened to shut down all rock concerts in this town if people continued to smoke pot at the shows."

"Boo!" "Fuck them!" "We want to rock and roll!" came the responses.

"Well it's three years later, we're still here, rock 'n' roll is still here, but Ed Davis is gone!"

"Yeah!" screamed the audience.

"So tonight, in honor of the power of rock 'n' roll, I want to make a toast to our former chief of police, with this." I then pulled out a reefer so big you could see it from the nosebleed section in the very back of the hall, and when the audience recognized what it was, the entire auditorium fell silent.

Placing the oversized joint between my teeth, I lit up and took a long slow drag, held it in for about ten seconds, and then blew a huge billow of smoke right into the microphone. "I thought we might just pass this around in honor of us subversive potheads, and the fact that without the cops beating us with nightsticks, there doesn't seem to be any violence here tonight at all!"

The crowd went nuts, screaming and hollering with joy at the brazenness of the act. Bending down, I handed the doobie to a guy in the front row. "Now don't bogart that thing, just take a hit and pass it down the aisle." Finally, I got the cue that the band was ready. "Okay everybody, please give a warm L.A. welcome to Pink Floyd!"

I was prepared to be busted the moment I walked off-stage, but amazingly enough, the police didn't even bother.

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What could they do, go out into the crowd and try to find that exact same joint, somewhere in the middle of the L.A. Sports Arena?

The show was an overwhelming spectacle of lights and special effects, driven by the music and the message of this extraordinary piece of rock theater. The audience sat enraptured as the amazing chronicle unfolded before them, and at the end of the concert, when the wall finally came crashing down, the crowd went into a frenzy.

It was rock's greatest lament for the growing division between the people and the players, a warning of the dangers created by ramparts of power and success, and the specious adulation carried in their wake. Like Pink, the audience too was allowing itself to be walled in—or in this case, out.

Once we sat on wooden floors in the old Fillmore auditorium, and listened to the Jefferson Airplane. And when they had finished their set, they would come and sit amongst the crowd and listen to the Grateful Dead. Once we had free concerts in the park, where the audience was the star and musicians were part of the event. Once there was no separation between the "rock stars" and the fans. Once it was just us, and the music, and everybody was happy. Now it was big and expensive, and too dangerous to let the crowd get close. Now there were steel barriers between the ticket holders and the stage, and muscle-bond security guards, and we had to stay in our seats.

Neither Roger Waters, nor Jerry Garcia, nor Paul Kantner, nor anyone else had planned it that way. But the people's music, once a spontaneous celebration of life, had fallen under the control of market forces and radio consultants and corporate regulations. We were becoming separated from the very thing that had brought us all together.

Rock 'n' roll had hit the wall.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO
DECEMBER 8,
1980

And in the end, the love you take
Is equal to the love you make.
—the Beatles

IT WAS an ordinary Monday afternoon in April. On a whim, Jack Snyder had invited Wiley to come in and do a two-man show that day. Wiley brought in a blender, ice, tequila, Triple Sec, and some limes. By three in the afternoon, Terri Belle had confiscated their car keys, and “Margarita Monday” was born. It went something like this:

“Jack Snyder with you, along with Wiley Perch on a Margarita Monday here at RADIO KAOS. How’s the new batch coming Wiley?”

“We’re running low on Triple Sec and ice.”

Wiley reached over and turned on the blender. The War-

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ing whirled into action, mixing their third batch of high-octane lime juice. Undisturbed by the piercing din of the kitchen appliance, Snyder continued.

"I'm handling the turntables, Wiley is in charge of the blender, and we're declaring the rest of the afternoon a day off for everyone listening to RADIO KAOS. If you're at work, just go ahead and leave, we'll square it with your boss."

"Jack, you're beautiful, don't ever change."

Wiley turned off the blender, poured another round, and continued.

"Right now we have a special report from our own Ace Young. Ace is up in Sacramento on a very important assignment. He has been asked to testify before a state senate subcommittee on an issue that effects us all—a crucial bill aimed at putting an end to ticket scalping. We're all very proud of brother Ace for being chosen to speak at our state capital on this issue, so let's go now to RADIO KAOS's news director, Ace Young, who filed this exclusive report."

"In Sacramento, this is Ace Young reporting."

"Whoo-ya! Thank you so much Ace. This is Wiley Perch and Jack Snyder with you on a Margarita Monday, as RADIO KAOS rocks Southern California, baby!"

Being the number one rocker on the dial gave everybody something to shoot at. The FM band was saturated with stations now; some were "soft rock," some "pop rock," but all were simply variations on what their consultants' research told them was trendy. None of it worked. RADIO KAOS still had the magic and that was that.

Down at the far right end of the dial was a new station that played only punk rock and new wave. It referred to itself as the rock of the eighties, they had good jocks, and what we thought at first was an original approach. Certainly no one else in town was embracing the punk sound, so we thought, fair enough, at least they're trying something different.

Unfortunately for FM radio in general, the rock of the

eighties turned out to be just another Top 40 format, with a new-wave playlist. Just like all the others, this “new” station had a tight formula that dictated to the air staff what songs to play and when. No sets, no point of view, merely a new-wave machine pumping out the latest Eurorends, watered down for the American marketplace.

KASH was still around, but after a long string of different program directors, it continued to languish at the bottom of the pile. Corporate policy demanded the use of a strict format of some kind, so management did everything in the world except let their jocks pick the music. This resulted in one failed approach after another, until finally, in what I can only interpret as an act of sheer desperation, KASH adopted the strategy of outright theft. They couldn’t beat us with statistics, so they simply decided to steal pieces of KAOS.

One of the qualities that had always set RADIO KAOS apart from everyone else on the dial was how we presented the music. There was a flow and a continuity to our shows. We played sets of songs, audio vignettes that dealt with all areas of life, from love to politics, sex to religion. All the jocks did it differently, some concentrating more on sound and tempo, others on message and feeling, but all of us took great pride in not only what songs we chose to play, but just as importantly, how we put them together. We were creating a living, breathing art form, instantly born and instantly gone, twenty-four hours a day. It’s what made each of our shows different, yet at the same time, it was the very thing that gave RADIO KAOS its unmistakable identity.

Oftentimes you would hear a jock on KAOS do an entire set of songs from just one artist, six or seven carefully chosen tunes from Springsteen, or Led Zeppelin, or U2, which flowed together perfectly. I used to love to do this late at night, sometimes taking the show into completely unexpected places by weaving together just the right songs, sound effects, and bits of poetry into a thematic set with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

You could do a Stones set about getting laid, and the next night a Doors set on the transcendental journey of the spirit, or maybe Pink Floyd on the politics of the human condition. It required the most intimate knowledge of the artists’ work to make a set flow thematically as well as musically. You had

to love this music to do it justice. You couldn't treat these songs like they were just so many parts on an assembly line.

KASH took this concept and repackaged it into something called "the six-pack." It was nothing more than a promotional gimmick designed to trick the listeners into thinking that they were "hep." There was absolutely no attention whatsoever paid to presenting the songs. KASH merely took six cuts from the everyday format, typed a list onto the now computerized play sheets, and without regard for the juxtaposition of a hard rock tune followed by an acoustic ballad, told the jocks to play it. Just pick six random hits from any band, and call it "the six-pack."

Next, they attacked Wiley's five o'clock news show. For the past three years, Wiley Perch had been doing something of his own invention called "The Joke at Five," a nightly witticism phoned in from listeners which ran at the end of the five o'clock newscast. Suddenly, KASH began doing "The Five O'Clock Funnies," programmed directly up against Wiley. These guys weren't even subtle enough to do it at a different hour.

By far the most blatant rip-off was Rocktober. Though we didn't invent it, RADIO KAOS had been doing Rocktober for years, and now all of a sudden, KASH began using it too. It was unbelievable; KASH just went on the air one day and announced that, from now on, KASH was Southern California's Rocktober station, like it had been doing it all along.

It drove us nuts. Every time we would come up with a new concept, KASH would Xerox it, and in two weeks we were competing against a bad imitation of our own idea. It got so blatant that Terri Belle sent KASH a box of blank Xerox paper and a handwritten note which read:

Thought you guys could use a new supply of programming ideas.

Yours Truly,
Terri Belle

I felt sorry for the jocks at KASH. They had a staff of highly talented FM veterans, all of whom had done free-form in the past, and were perfectly capable of doing good radio. Now, however, they not only had to follow the latest in a long line of loser formats, but were being forced to do things that

were a direct rip-off of RADIO KAOS. I was glad that my old friends J. J. and Damion had left KASH—they could never have put up with that game. How anyone could program the music of Bob Dylan and the Beatles with that kind of mentality was beyond me.

By the end of the year, however, all of these “serious radio issues” would be made to seem horribly petty, as the result of a single act of madness on the streets of New York City.

As with Kennedy and King, the news seemed to make time stand still and speed up all at once. I was at home when the phone rang. I don’t remember who was on the line or what I had been doing, probably something that seemed important at the time. Now there was no time left. All that he would ever give us, was now what he’d left behind.

The day was December 8, 1980, and John Lennon was dead.

I sat down and prayed. Then I did what everybody else did, I turned to RADIO KAOS. The station was already playing a funeral dirge of back-to-back Beatles records. Jack Snyder was on the radio, barely able to contain his grief, just segueing from one Lennon song to another. I could feel death in the air—a sticky, blood-soaked tarp that blocked out the sun.

Shaking and sick to my stomach, I called my next-door neighbor to offer my condolences. Over the long years since Elliot Mintz had been a staple of FM radio, his friendship with the Lençons had become central in his life, and my friendship with him just brought the tragedy even closer to home.

“Elliot I’m so sorry. What can I do?”

“I’m leaving for the airport in twenty minutes,” Elliot said, the energy already drained from his voice. “If you could just look after the house for me, that’s all.”

“Tell Yoko—oh never mind—just go. I’ll take care of everything here.”

“Thank you, Jim. I’ll call you when I get to the Dakota.”

My phone started to ring again, and after the fourth call I just left it off the hook and got ready for work.

Mega was on vacation, and David Perry was sitting in for her. Neither of us spoke as I walked into the studio. He

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merely handed me a stack of wire copy and some taped reports, all confirming the worst. David started "A Day in the Life," looked at me as if to ask why the world was falling apart instead of coming together, and quietly left the studio.

I read the news today oh boy
 About a lucky man who made the grade
 And though the news was rather sad
 Well I just had to laugh
 I saw the photograph.
 He blew his mind out in a car
 He didn't notice that the lights had changed
 A crowd of people stood and stared
 They'd seen his face before
 Nobody was really sure
 If he was from the House of Lords.
 —the Beatles

I sat there listening to Lennon's voice coming through the monitors, just as it had on countless other occasions over the years. I thought about Sean and Yoko, and Julian and Cynthia. About Ringo, and George, and Paul. I thought about all the people who were calling the station in the hopes that someone would say it wasn't true.

Jack, or Terri, or someone had pulled all the Beatle records along with John's solo albums from the shelves, and put them in a box next to the control board. This lone cardboard box would serve as the entire record library for RADIO KAOS that night. It was all we had left. I searched through the stack of records, which began with *Meet the Beatles* and went through *Double Fantasy*, and cued up the beginning epitaph of the night's show.

As "A Day in the Life" soared into its final crescendo, I put on my headphones, opened the mike, and closed my eyes.

"This is K-A-O-S Los Angeles on one of the saddest days ever in rock 'n' roll. John Lennon, dead at the age of forty.

"I don't know whether it's grief, or the rage that I feel toward the asshole who did it, but I still can't believe that John Lennon is actually gone.

"He was a man who tried to uplift the human spirit, a man whose personal journey of enlightenment helped us all to look at things anew. A man who stood for an

(((((RADIO WAVES)))))

.....1977-1980.....

uncommon good against a common evil. Someone who sang for peace in a time of killing.

“And like so many others who tried to bring a light into the darkness, John Lennon was killed for his efforts.

“A working-class hero is something to be. But not in this lifetime.”

As soon as you're born they make you feel small
By giving you no time instead of it all
Till the pain is so big you feel nothing at all
A working class hero is something to be
A working class hero is something to be

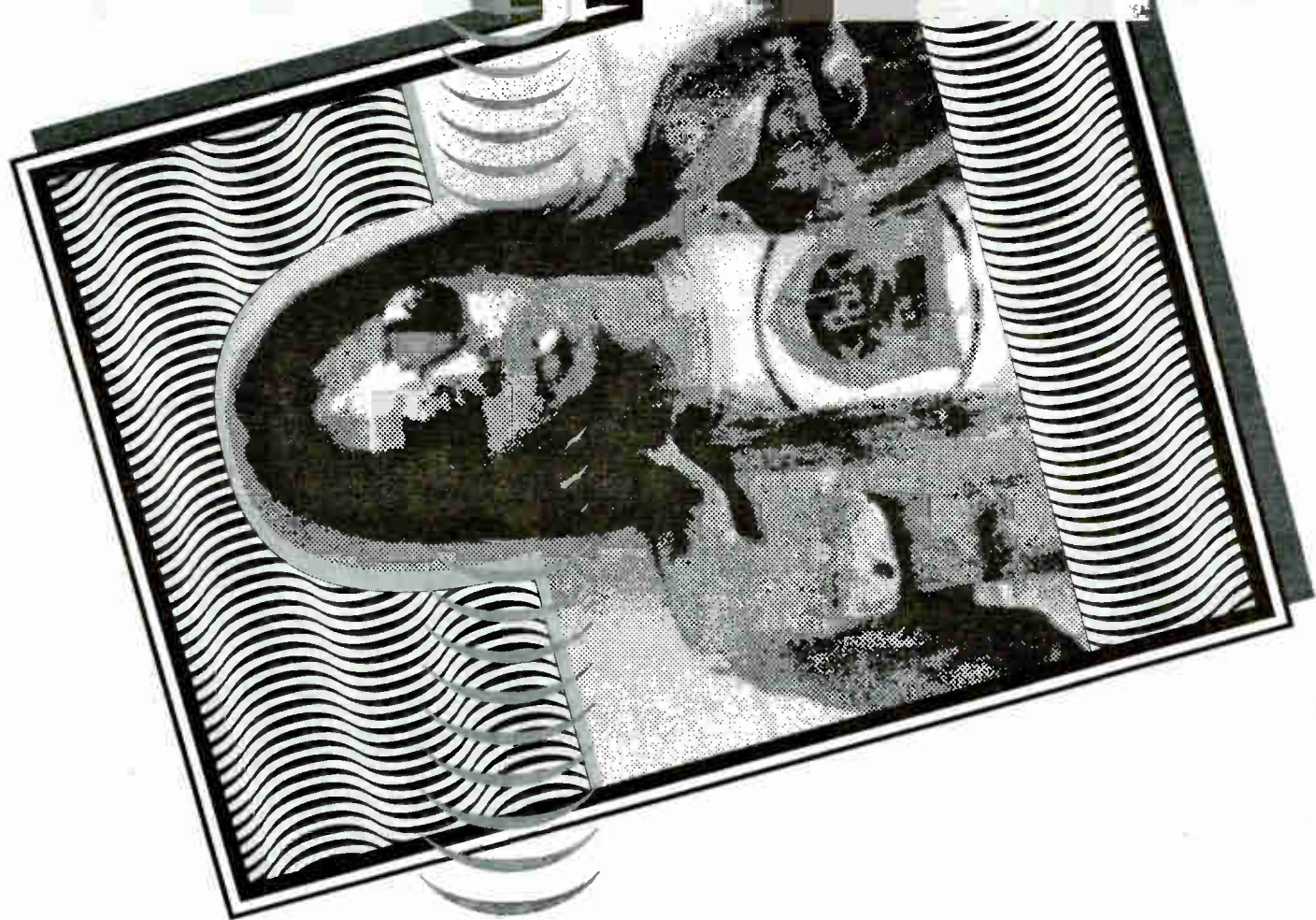
They hurt you at home and they hit you at school
They hate you if you're clever and they despise a fool
Till you're so fucking crazy you can't follow their rules
A working class hero is something to be
A working class hero is something to be

—John Lennon

On it went for the next seventy-two hours: RADIO KAOS, the tribal drum, beating a funeral march at the electric wailing wall, the songs like a caisson carrying the body to its final resting place. For three days and three nights, we played nothing but the music of John Lennon and the Beatles. The listeners clung to RADIO KAOS like a shroud, praying for some small word of comfort in the midst of their grief. For a moment we were a tribe again, huddled against the dark winter of our youth.

John's death marked the point where the political pendulum finally halted its two-decade swing toward liberal thought, and a month later, began its journey backward into the Reagan retrograde.

John Lennon was gone, and much of the essence that gave RADIO KAOS its magic died along with him.





PART FOUR

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

A BOWL
OF
ROSES

Ah what did you see my blue eyed son
Ah what did you see my darling young one
I saw a new born babe with wild wolves all around it
I saw a highway of diamonds with nobody on it
I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin
I saw a room full of men with their hammers a bleedin
I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken
I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children
And it's hard
And it's hard
And it's hard
And it's hard
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

—Bob Dylan

RONALD REAGAN was in the White House, and the long-abandoned hippie movement was being replaced by yuppies and punks. On one side you had the yuppie credo of “excess is everything,” while the punks declared that the “future was forfeit.” Welcome to the eighties.

It was the first time since its inception that RADIO KAOS was not on the cutting edge of rock 'n' roll. For almost fifteen years, RADIO KAOS had been the first to play every major new artist rock had spawned. From the days of Quicksilver Messenger Service and Moby Grape, through Bruce Springsteen and U2, RADIO KAOS had given new bands and new trends time on the air to find their audience. We not only welcomed the new, we felt it our duty to push the boundaries, so long as the music was *credible*.

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But now it was punk rock and new wave, and none of it seemed to ring true. We didn't ignore punk rock, we just thought it was ridiculous. A bunch of valley kids with safety pins? In London and Liverpool it was street—in Sherman Oaks it was a fad. Although we had always been outlaws, we saw ourselves as Robin Hood, not petty vandals. We broke the rules because we believed in something, and we couldn't relate to people who believed in nothing. Most of these guys were haircut bands whose main concern was image, not music.

But if the punk mentality seemed brainless, the yuppie idea of life as a sushi power lunch for investment bankers looked downright obscene. That's not to say we rejected the money and a few of the yuppie toys, however. Most of us were in our thirties now, and we had grown comfortable with the perks and paychecks that came with success. It was the yuppie *philosophy* that concerned us—the total and complete lack of regard for anything except the blind pursuit of money, and the implied blessing of the Reagan administration to get it any way you could. Ethics were out, sleaze was in.

Torn between the punks' new brand of fashionable anarchy and the jingoistic media blitz of Ronald Reagan's brave old world, the audience began to mutate from a tribal community into a mass of entertainment consumers. I can still remember my first encounter with a "rocker of the eighties."

"This is 94.7 K-A-O-S, and I want to dedicate this next song to our illustrious secretary of the interior, Mr. James Watt. This guy isn't in office six minutes, and he's already declared war on the coastline.

"Right James, we all feel that those pristine vistas off the coast of Big Sur could use a few high-tech alterations. And those offshore oil rigs are just the thing we need to improve the view.

"Where did Ronald Reagan find this guy anyway—clubbing baby harp seals in the Yukon? If James Watt is Reagan's idea of an ecological guardian, America is in big trouble. But then what can we expect from a president who actually said: 'Well, if you've seen one redwood tree, you've seen 'em all.'

"I'll bet the oil companies are licking their chops right now. On the other hand, why shouldn't they get what they paid for?"

((((((**RADIO WAVES**))))))
.....1981-1987.....

“Here’s a set of songs for planet earth. To some she is a lady, due the respect and protection befitting our mother. To others she is merely a victim, a thing to be raped and plundered at will.”

I started turntable number two, and Jackson Browne’s “Before the Deluge” filled the airwaves.

Some of them were dreamers
Some of them were fools
Who were making plans and thinking of the future
With the energy of the innocent
They were gathering the tools
They would need to make their journey back to nature
While the sands slipped through the opening
And their hands reached for the golden ring
With their hearts they turned
To each other’s hearts for refuge
In the troubled years that came
Before the deluge.

With the monitors cranked up loud inside the studio, the song felt like both an anthem and a prayer. I could always count on Jackson Browne when I needed something from the heart. He didn’t release product, he made music.

The request lines were blinking in the smoky darkness of the glass booth. Some suggestions to continue this theme, I thought to myself. This audience is not going to take James Watt lying down. Reaching across the control board, I punched up line number three on the speaker phone.

“Hi, this is RADIO KAOS. Do you have a request?”

“Yeah, I got a request. Why don’t you stop knocking Ronald Reagan? He is the president of the United States, and I don’t like it when you talk about him like that.”

“You’re joking, right?”

“No, I’m not joking,” retorted the somber caller. “I’m a rocker for Reagan and I don’t like the fact that you’re always downing him. Why don’t you just play the music? Nobody wants to hear all that political junk anyway.”

Knocked off-balance a little, I took a deep breath, and decided to try and handle this politely. “So is it because you don’t agree with my opinion that you don’t think I should

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have one? Or is it because I have one, but don't keep it to myself?"

"Both," he answered. "America should be strong and not wimp out to the those fucking Arabs. What's wrong with that? They're the main reason we need those oil wells in the first place. And the other thing is, I turn on the radio to hear music, I don't want to hear about the world's problems."

"Do you like the song that's on now?" I asked.

"Yeah, it's okay," said the caller.

Thinking I had him with this, I asked, "What do you think of the lyrics? I mean the way I hear it, it's saying the same thing I was trying to say—that we need to save the planet—only in a much more poetic way."

"Who gives a shit?" came the voice of the people. "Why don't you jam some Sammy Hagar or somethin'."

"Do you mind if I ask how old you are?"

"What's that got to do with anything?"

"Just curious."

"I'm eighteen," he said defiantly. "And when I listen to the radio I wanna party—not listen to a bunch of political crap!"

It was a cold and rude message, but somehow I couldn't blame the messenger. He was right. The time for idealism was over. It was time to get down to business. There was a new and bitter wind blowing across America. We no longer saw ourselves as a complex multiethnic family trying to live together; now it was simply survival of the richest. Basically, you had one of two choices: forget about such unfashionable ideas as saving the environment, stopping the arms race, or feeding the poor—become a yuppie; or get left behind.

Harbinger of the FM lobotomy, and champion of the new *Stepford Wives* audience, the radio consultant liked this new breed of listener. In fact, he counted on him. Here was an audience that could be bought and sold like stock, listeners who could be dealt with as "radio consumers," not members of a tribe. These listeners didn't want a challenge; they wanted a "comfort zone," a familiar pigeonhole in which to feel safe and entertained. In this, the best of all brave new yuppie worlds, being socially conscious would mean knowing what European sports car to buy.

At least the punks believed in nothing; the consultants were far more dangerous. They held a fanatical belief in the

Holy Grail of formula radio: research, repetition, and repetition. In their world, the ratings *always* justified the means, so if their research told them to go for the slick and meaningless, they were more than happy to start pumping the grease.

But yuppie consultants, fashion punks, and “rockers for Reagan” weren’t the only problems RADIO KAOS had to deal with. KASH was still using plagiarism as a format, the press was starting to give us a hard time, and pressures inside the station were beginning to affect morale.

Mega and I would usually spend a couple of nights a month chewing the fat. Either I would come into work early or she would stay for an hour or so after her shift, and we would just hang out and solve the problems of the world. More and more, though, it was shop talk, as we both had concerns about what was happening to the station.

“I think we’re going to get left behind if we don’t figure out how to handle this new music,” said Mega. “I don’t like much of it, but Terri has got to start adding some before it’s too late, and we get stuck in some kind of rut.”

“I talked to her about adding the Clash,” I said. “They can’t play worth a damn, but at least they’ve got something to say. She wasn’t real thrilled with the idea, though.”

“I know Jack is on her about Elvis Costello and Joe Jackson,” replied Mega. “But it’s more than just the music. I’m tired of the lunatics on the phones, and the money games with Ira, and having to deal with the jerks in this business. It’s not fun anymore, Reputa.”

“Well, things haven’t exactly been wonderful lately,” I said. “But we’ll come out of it, we always have.”

Mega took a deep breath, then let out a sigh of resignation. “I don’t know how much longer I can handle it, Reputa.”

“Come on, Reputa, you and I both know how much you like to grumble,” I said, hoping to prod her out of this funk. “You love this job and you know it. We all love doing this, and yes, I know that’s exactly why we’re such easy marks for people like Ira, but what the hell else would you want to do for four hours a night?”

Again Mega breathed heavily, then shook her head. “I

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just don't think I need it as much as I used to. I think I could live very easily without being on the radio."

Mega was the first to realize that things had changed on a fundamental level, and that the RADIO KAOS we loved was slipping away. She had been at the station for ten years, and for eight of them she delivered the highest nighttime numbers in the history of L.A. radio. Through her syndicated programs, and her weekly show for Armed Forces Radio, Mega had become a national radio personality. She was a hard-working professional who always delivered on the air; yet her tenth anniversary with RADIO KAOS came and went without so much as a note from upper management, or even a bouquet of flowers from Ira. She was tired of being overlooked, tired of being told that more was not enough. And Mega Turnon was not someone who ever let life get in the way of what she wanted to do.

I couldn't even imagine RADIO KAOS without Mega. We were partners, Reputa and Reputa, and I didn't want to lose that. As her friend, I probably should have counseled her more about following her bliss, but mostly I just tried to convince her that it would all work out. Mega and I had come a long way together, we'd made some noise in a joyous way, rocked Southern California from Santa Barbara to San Diego. And after eight years on the air together, I had come to love her as if she were my own sister.

Everybody seemed to be on edge, and as much as it pains me to admit it, I think, in a strange way, it was because we missed the Hound. F. R. Glutman may have been a tyrant, but he gave us a reason to band together as a team. Ira Steinberg was much more pleasant, but he was slick. A lot of promises had been broken, and the people who'd wanted to see Ira become the general manager were getting disillusioned.

The air staff had taken RADIO KAOS from nothing to number one, and despite the fact that we hadn't done it for the money, we felt it was time to share the wealth. We had trusted Ira Steinberg to understand this and to deal with us fairly. I certainly thought he would. But then I still believed that if one worked hard, did a good job, and was successful—one would automatically be rewarded.

What an asshole—this was the eighties.

In June of 1981, RADIO KAOS called the tribe together one last time, and for a fleeting moment, the airwaves would once again be filled with the scent of sandalwood and roses and hope. It was to be our swan song.

The Alliance for Survival had organized a massive “no nukes” benefit concert to be held at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena. It was called “Peace Sunday,” and it promised to be a memorable event.

The list of bands who’d already signed on to play read like a who’s who of musician-activists: Crosby, Stills & Nash, Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt, Stevie Wonder, Linda Ronstadt, Don Henley and more. Between acts there would be representatives from the Alliance as well as from the scientific community, speaking to the crowd on the dangers of our government’s nuclear policy.

It was the kind of occasion RADIO KAOS was meant for. We had been supporting the Alliance for years, and when it asked for our help, we threw the entire weight of the station behind the event. Ace and Wiley did in-depth stories on the pros and cons of nuclear power plants, the jocks talked up the concert and did sets of songs around the issue, while the station ran free commercials every other hour to promote the show.

It felt great to see the music industry come together for the community again. Lately it was getting harder and harder to tell where show biz ended and rock ‘n’ roll began. Pulling together behind Peace Sunday did wonders for relieving some of the tensions within the station as well. We forgot for a moment what was wrong with radio, and concentrated again on what we could do to make the world a better place. Our ambition was to fill the Rose Bowl with as many aging flower children as possible, a final act of beauty before the garden was sold.

On the day of the event, I arrived at the Rose Bowl at around one in the afternoon. The concert had been under way for just over an hour, and I needed to find somebody from the station. As I walked through the fenced-off area where the dressing room RVs were parked, I spotted Joanne and Gonzer standing by the food tent.

“Hey guys, what’s the happs?” I said in greeting.

“Ladd,” said Gonzer, “Terri’s been looking for you, I think she’s backstage.”

“See those stairs over there?” asked Joanne. “You go up to the second level, then through the tunnel into the bowl.”

Thanking them, I headed across the parking lot and started up the wide stairway. As I neared the second level, I could hear the sounds of angry voices. It was Jack Snyder, and he had some poor bastard bent over the railing two stories above the parking lot threatening to show him the quick way down.

“Jack!” I yelled as I rushed over, “What’s wrong?”

“Somebody let KASH in here, and I want to know why!”

“Well first, why don’t you let this guy off the railing before ya drop him,” I said, as the crowd inside the stadium let out a roar for the next band. “Just put him down and we’ll ask him. If he comes up with the wrong answer, I’ll help ya toss him over.”

Jack had been kind of tense lately, and the sight of a KASH microphone at a benefit concert which RADIO KAOS had sponsored was too much. Jack Snyder was fiercely loyal to the station. This wasn’t merely where he worked; RADIO KAOS was a part of him, and he regarded any threat to the station as a personal affront to his mother.

Completely unbeknownst to the Alliance for Survival people, KASH had sent a “news team” down to report from the show. KASH hadn’t so much as run a public service announcement for the concert, nor had anyone, save for their talk show host Michael Benner, even mentioned the word “nuclear” over the air. Now here they were trying to cash in on the event and present themselves as the “hep” station in town. It was sickening. Whereas RADIO KAOS saw this as an issue which concerned the safety of the planet, KASH regarded it as merely another Xerox ploy to increase their ratings.

After the wide-eyed member of the organizing committee had regained his sea legs, he explained that KASH had just shown up, claiming it was here to do a news story. Almost every newspaper and TV station in town had sent reporters; after all, that was the whole idea, to draw public attention to the nuclear issue. It wasn’t the fact that KASH had sent a “reporter” that bothered us; but that they would use this as a ruse to present a “special live broadcast” from the event.

After pledging his solemn vow that KASH would be confined to the press room and not allowed access backstage, we thanked him for his cooperation and let him go. Jack Snyder is one of the most levelheaded people I have ever met, and this kind of behavior wasn't like him, but I could understand his frustration. He and Terri put their hearts and souls into programming RADIO KAOS, and no one likes to see something they love get trampled, even if it is only radio.

Jack and I walked through the tunnel which took you inside to the stadium, and as we emerged about midlevel above the field, I stopped dead in my tracks. The entire Rose Bowl was SRO. Every seat in the stadium and every square foot of the field was crammed with over *one hundred thousand* of the faithful. It was far more overwhelming than Cal Jam II, because these people had come here for a reason. They had answered the tribal drum.

We walked down a broad stairway leading to ground level and the backstage area at one end of the field. The sun was blazing and the sky was actually blue, as a gentle breeze had washed the L.A. Basin clean. It was a glorious day for music.

I stood in the wings with Joanne Goodwin, and we took turns introducing the bands and the various guest speakers. There were scientists, and activists, and priests, and the crowd listened politely between each band. Jackson Browne did a set, and Bonnie Raitt, and Stevie Wonder, and Crosby, Stills & Nash. They sang their hearts out too, because they had been personally involved in this issue for a long long time.

These were some of the true believers, artists who'd put their music where their mouth was. At a time when commitment to a social cause was waning, Bonnie Raitt and the others continued doggedly to fight for a safer world. They had formed Musicians United for Safe Energy, released a triple live album benefiting the cause, and done a thousand fundraisers over the years. And here they were in 1981, still railing against the tide of public apathy. Peace Sunday made me feel good about rock 'n' roll again, and it reminded us all of what the music was really all about.

There was a rumor that Bob Dylan might show up, but there was always a rumor of some kind at one of these things. I was introduced to Ronald Reagan's daughter, Patty Davis, who, to the First Family's utter horror, had come to show her

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support for the no nukes movement. Even her secret service bodyguard seemed to be enjoying himself, although he looked slightly out of place with his three-piece suit and a wire coming out of his ear.

Joanne Goodwin introduced the next speaker, a nuclear physicist who had worked on power plant design. After years in the employ of the federal government, he had come to the conclusion that we must figure out a way to deal with the problem of nuclear waste, before we allowed any more plants to go on line. He wasn't a rousing speaker, but he knew his material. When he had finished, it was my turn to bring out Joan Baez.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to introduce a lady whose voice has helped to shape the very conscience of our generation. Please welcome—Ms. Joan Baez!"

The crowd cheered as the lovely grande dame of folk music glided out onto the stage. She looked beautiful standing there all alone under the bright Southern California sun. As the audience began to quiet down, Joan thanked the people for their warm welcome and began to strum softly on her guitar. She did one verse of Phil Ochs's "There but for Fortune," and then stopped. "It's okay Bobby," she said, as if welcoming an old friend who'd shown up late for supper. "Come on out."

The huge Rose Bowl stadium erupted with a thundering ovation as Bob Dylan walked out onstage. It was the first time in over twelve years that Dylan and Baez had appeared together, and the crowd went absolutely crazy as it realized what a historic moment this was. It took a long time for the audience to settle down, and when it did, it erupted once again as the two legendary minstrels launched into an acoustic duet of "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall."

The moment brought tears to my eyes, and I wasn't the only one. Every musician on the bill had piled into the wings to hear this. Jackson Browne was standing on a chair, while Stephen Stills climbed atop a speaker cabinet. Linda Ronstadt knelt down next to some equipment boxes, and Don Henley peered through a stack of amplifiers. Bonnie Raitt and Graham Nash stood on either side of Stevie Wonder, and the entire backstage crew stopped what it was doing. Tom Petty and Taj Mahal huddled with Stevie Nicks, while Jesse Jackson stood with Robert Kennedy, Jr., all mesmerized by what they were seeing.

It was a warm Sunday and the world was at peace, as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez held that bowl of roses in their hands.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR
A
LITTLE BIT
OF HEAVEN
TO
PURGATORY

When I find myself in times of trouble
Mother Mary comes to me
Speaking words of wisdom
Let it be

—the Beatles

SHE HAD kept the final decision from everyone, even from me. So when I found myself standing there, watching her tell Southern California that she was leaving RADIO KAOS, I didn't know how to react. I'd listened to her on my way to work that night like I always did, but I couldn't tell anything from her demeanor on the air. She had waited until the very last moment of her show to say anything. No long farewells, no walks down memory lane. It was time to cut the cord.

Mega stood up, and turned around to face me. "This is it, Reputa. I'm gonna miss you."

She stepped forward, gave me a hug, and with her head held high, walked out of KAOS forever.

"You're listening to 94.7. It's August 6, 1982, Mega Turnon's last night at RADIO KAOS."

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"Mega spent ten years in this chair, and for those ten years, Mega Turnon was rock 'n' roll radio in L.A.

"I gotta tell you, part of me is really pissed off at Mega. Part of me says that she doesn't have the right to take Reputa the Beauta away from us, that somehow she shouldn't be allowed to leave.

"That's nonsense, of course, because for reasons of her own, it's what Mega wants to do. And as her friends, we must wish her the very best of everything—and lots of it.

"I'm Jim Ladd, and tonight's show is dedicated to my friend and partner, Reputa."

I started turntable number one, and began a four-hour musical tribute to Mega.

Bright light almost blindin'
 A black night still it's shinin'
 I can't stop keep on climbin' lookin' for what I
 knew
 Had a friend she once told me
 You got love you ain't lonely
 Now she's gone left me only, lookin for what I knew
 —Led Zeppelin

I sat there numbed, as though I'd just witnessed some horrible accident—her perfume still clung to the air, for God sakes. The same dusky light still played over the glass booth, the turntables continued to spin clockwise, the double-paned window remained covered with grit and dust—but nothing would ever be the same again.

"This is the very Lonesome L.A. Cowboy with you. It's about 10:30 P.M., as in 'Post Mega,' on the night Reputa the Beauta said good-bye. If you just turned in, we're dedicating tonight's show to Mega Turnon, in a small attempt to mark the conclusion of her ten-year run with RADIO KAOS.

"As you can probably guess, this is hard for me, because no one will miss Mega more than I. Knowing her as I do she'll hate me if I go on in this vein—but hey, screw her—she's the one that left! I can do anything I want.

"Anyway, what I'm trying to say is this. I know that you're listening in your car Mega, and I know that you

((((((**RADIO WAVES**))))))

.....1981-1987.....

want to go out rockin'. So tonight, we're gonna shake this old place one last time for you.

"A-toot-a-lure Reputa."

Hitting the button for turntable number three, I slammed into a George Thorogood tune, and cranked up the monitors till the glass booth shook. The sonic blast lifted me out of my chair, and I paced around the booth like a restless gypsy driven by a song of the highway. I could almost feel Mega punch the gas pedal as George Thorogood began to sing.

I'm going back to Wentsville, have myself a real good time
Back to Wentsville, leave these Memphis blues behind
Do you remember Marie and sweet Betty Jean
They used to call me long distance from New Orleans
I'd ride 'em around in my Cadillac car
They were sweet rock 'n' rollers and I was their star
Cruising Highway Z in my coupe deville
Until the wee wee hours outside of Wentsville
Back to Wentsville, I'll take any airline
Back to Wentsville and leave these Memphis blues behind

I should have realized right then it was over, that RADIO KAOS could never be the same; but even though the handwriting was on the wall in letters twelve stories high, I guess I was standing too close to read it. I didn't want to admit that FM radio was dead, I wanted to believe that the tribe was still out there, waiting for the signal. Mega, however, was a pragmatist when it came to professional realities, and she decided to walk away while she was still at the top of her game.

There were lots of things that led to Mega's departure, but ironically, the trigger mechanism was Terri Belle. Terri was Mega's closest friend. They had lived next door to each other for three years, shared the secret language of women, and formed a bond of trust that only comes with the investment of time. Now, under the mounting pressures of competition, Terri Belle had made a business decision that would not only destroy their friendship, but would signal the final end of KAOS.

It probably seemed like a small thing to Terri at the time—a little white lie, done in an attempt to appease Mega's

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feelings, while doing what she had to do for the station. It all started when Terri asked Mega to emcee an upcoming concert. The group Mega was to introduce was a big heavy metal band from Europe that RADIO KAOS helped break, and both the record company and the promoter had requested Mega specifically to represent RADIO KAOS at the show. Mega didn't really like the band all that much, but at Terri's request, she agreed to host the event.

It was a hot sticky night, and Mega was in no mood to go all the way out to Anaheim, even if the record company had sent a limo. But she had agreed to do this, so she'd just have to make the best of it. The limo driver pulled into the backstage tunnel, opened her door, and Mega headed off down the long maze of concrete corridors to find Terri Belle. Terri was waiting outside the band's dressing room when Mega finally located her.

"Hey Megs," said Terri. "I was getting worried about you."

"I'm here, so let's get this over with and go have a drink," replied Mega, not attempting to hide her displeasure. "I still can't believe this band could sell this place out. Is there anybody in this audience over thirteen other than you and me?"

"What can I say," answered Terri. "Their last album went double platinum. Let me tell the manager you're here, and we'll find out when you're supposed to go on."

Terri knocked at the dressing room door and a burly security guard appeared. "Can I help you?"

"I'm Terri Belle, the PD of RADIO KAOS, and I have Mega Turnon here."

"So?" asked the beefy employee with an attitude.

"She's the emcee for the show tonight and—"

"Hold on," interrupted the tactless bag of muscles, as he slammed the door in Terri's face. A few moments went by and the door opened again. This time it was the band's manager. He was obviously not interested in who Terri was, or Mega for that matter—to him they were just another problem to solve before his band went onstage.

"What can I do for you," he asked.

"I'm Terri Belle and this is Mega Turnon from RADIO KAOS. Mega is the emcee tonight, and we need to know if there is anything in particular you would like said when she brings the band onstage."

((((((RADIO WAVES))))))

..... 1981-1987

“You’ve got to be joking,” he said with a sneer. “I don’t want some *chick* introducing this band. Don’t you know who the fuck we are?”

Terri and Mega couldn’t believe it. Did this guy really just refer to the number one FM personality in Los Angeles as “some chick”? Didn’t this guy know it was their radio station that had broken his piece of shit meal ticket in the first place? Without RADIO KAOS, this band would be lucky to get a club gig in L.A. How come this kind of thing never happens with the really big stars like Rod Stewart, or Bruce Springsteen? It’s always the assholes on their way up, who get one hit record and think that they’re Elvis.

The record company was on its knees when they found out what happened. The band may not know anything about American radio, but the promo men lived here, and they had lots of other acts which they were counting on RADIO KAOS to play. This was a major fuckup and they knew it.

Terri Belle pulled all of the band’s albums from the library. There was no way in hell that Mega was ever going to play them again, and after the air staff found out, you might as well have recycled the vinyl for Wayne Newton records. They had a top ten album and were extremely popular with our audience, but Terri promised Mega that the group would *never* be played on RADIO KAOS again.

The boycott lasted a week, and Terri folded. I don’t know what made her cave in, but without discussing it with Mega, Terri changed her mind. What was worse, what was indeed much worse, was that Terri tried to hide it from Mega. Terri didn’t return the albums to the library; she put them in my mailbox with a note asking me not to let Mega see them. Terri wanted me to wait until after midnight, then slip a song or two into my show when Mega was hopefully asleep.

What the hell was going on here? This wasn’t like Terri. This wasn’t the same woman who’d fought for her jocks, the one who’d saved my job a hundred times over the years when the Hound had threatened to fire me. Terri Belle didn’t treat her people this way, especially Mega. But the station was slipping in the ratings, and in this business you perform or die. The competition had gotten so fierce that even though it killed her to do it, Terri felt she couldn’t afford not to play the record.

I didn't know what to do. Both of these women were dear friends of mine. Terri was the best boss I had ever worked for. She was fair and honest, and she had taken the heat for me when I'd gone over the line, and never flinched. But Mega was my partner. I had shared the glass booth with her, spoken over the same mike, shared the same music. We had helped each other through the bad times over the years, and cheered each other's successes. In the end, I couldn't do this to Reputa. I walked into the studio, laid the albums down in front of her, and handed her Terri's note.

Mega never spoke to Terri Belle again.

To this day I know that Terri Belle never meant to hurt Mega. She was, in fact, trying to avoid hurting her. But she had broken their trust, and in doing so, injured the KAOS family as a whole.

"You know we've always talked about this place in terms of a family, and losing a member of the family is always traumatic. But we just have to adjust to the fact that the bitch has run out on her friends—I mean—we have to get used to the idea that Mega won't be here anymore.

"We're listening to RADIO KAOS. I'm Jim Ladd, no longer Reputa the Beata Part Two, now that my better half is gone."

All my life I never stopped to worry 'bout a thing
 Open up and shout it out and never tried to sing
 Wonderin' if I've done it wrong
 Will this depression last for long
 Won't you tell me, where have all the good times gone
 Where have all the good times gone
 Where have all the good times gone
 Once we had an easy ride and always felt the same
 Time was on our side and we had everything to gain
 Can't we feel like yesterday
 Guess those will be our happy days
 —Ray Davies

Mega wasn't simply leaving a job, or even a career. RADIO KAOS had been her special calling. Mega liked FM radio because you could stand or fall on your own talent. She liked not having a boss while inside the glass booth, and she delighted in that special autonomy which KAOS afforded.

She liked the ability to say no and mean it, because inherent within the freedom of KAOS, was the liberty of *not* doing bad radio.

Mega had a low tolerance for bullshit on or off the air. She had come out of the old school of FM radio where you spoke your mind, and played the music that you believed in. Now Terri was trying to slip something past her that neither of them believed in, and for all the wrong reasons. It tore at Mega to see the glass booth being sold for a plastic box, and she wasn't going to stick around and watch it turn into just another shoddy KASH machine.

"You know, for ten years Mega came into this radio station, and every night gave us something totally unique—herself. She didn't put on a radio face when she was on the air, what you heard was Mega Turnon, and that's why we loved her.

"I'm Jim Ladd, and you're listening to RADIO KAOS, on the night we say good-bye to Mega."

As turntable number two rolled and the opening bars of "The Wind Cries Mary" began, I leaned back in the chair, closed my eyes, and listened to the haunting refrain of another time.

After all the jacks are in their boxes
And the clowns have all gone to bed
You can hear happiness staggerin' on down the street
Foot prints dressed in red
And the winds whispers Mary
A broom is drearily sweeping
Up the broken pieces of yesterday's life
Somewhere a queen is weeping
Somewhere a king has no wife
And the wind it cries Mary

—Jimi Hendrix

I tried to keep the show upbeat at first, because I knew Mega would detest any overt sentimentality. But as the night wore on, the reality of her leaving began to sink in, and I was starting to feel melancholy. It wasn't like she'd died, or even moved to Detroit. I could still call her, we were still friends,

but what we had on the air could never be replaced, no matter how well the station might carry on.

“Bruce Springsteen on RADIO KAOS and one of Mega’s favorite songs of all time, called ‘Rosalita.’ We began that set with Jimi Hendrix and ‘The Wind Cries Mary,’ followed by Rod Stewart’s version of ‘Just Like a Woman,’ and Jackson Browne doing ‘That Girl Could Sing’—‘she wasn’t very good at sticking around, but that girl could sing.’

“As you can imagine, the telephones have been jammed with people wanting to send their regards to Mega, and I thought this was a particularly apropos request. I’ve always loved this song, and tonight it means even more to me than before.

“I’m Jim Ladd, and tonight we lost a little bit of heaven, at 94.7, K-A-O-S.”

Well I never thought I’d make it here in Hollywood
 I never thought I’d ever want to stay
 But what I seem to touch these days is turned to gold
 What I seem to want well you know I find a way
 For me it’s the only life that I’ve ever known
 And love is only one fine star away
 Even though the livin’ is sometimes laced with lies,
 it’s alright
 The feelin’ remains even after the glitter fades.

—Stevie Nicks

David Perry took over Mega’s shift, and the station plodded along. It was still getting big numbers, still making millions for the company, but no longer the RADIO KAOS it used to be.

It was almost a year later that B. Mitchel Reed signed off for good, when he died of heart failure on March 16, 1983. He had lived life in his time. He was an innovator, a revolutionary, and a great talent. B.M.R. had made it to the pinnacle of his profession on both the AM and FM dial. He had inspired two generations of listeners who were never quite the same after hearing the Beamer. Now he was dead at the age of fifty-six, not a long life, but he’d used it well.

Beamer was a person whose intellectual appetites had included a wide range of subjects other than radio, and he

counted among his friends such people as Herb Alpert, Derek Taylor, Lou Adler, and of course, Jane Fonda.

B. Mitchel Reed was a very complex man, a loner at heart, yet someone who never learned the lessons of being too open. Like many of us blinded by the artistic ethics of free-form radio, Beamer had always been as open and aboveboard in his dealings with radio management as he was with his fellow jocks. Over the years this principle had cost him dearly.

To Beamer, everybody in FM radio was on the same side, working for the same cause. Beamer clung to the naive belief that we were all in this for the same reasons, so to him, there was no cause to be circumspect with anyone. But his candor was never reciprocated by those in charge, who instead manipulated his sincerity like a precision tool with which to exploit the insecurities of a great talent. And it was this constant personal betrayal that finally wore down one of the great radio voices of all time.

His most important contribution to FM radio was his love for painting pictures with music. He spoke often of the joy he felt, knowing that somewhere out there he may have struck a chord in a future musician, or inspired a struggling painter, or even helped to heal a momentary wound in the soul of a young physician. He realized there was no way of knowing what effect his talents had on the audience, but he was a believer, and that's what made him great. Beamer thought about his audience *one person* at a time, and because of that, thousands of lives were made more joyful, some even changed.

Shadoe Stevens remembered B. Mitchel Reed as having "a charisma and a pleasantness that came through those mellifluous pipes, which set him apart from everyone else on the air." I remember Beamer for his kindness, and the fact that he was always supportive of his fellow jocks. Beamer may not have been a businessman, but he was a brother. He loved to see new talent make it, and never viewed another jock's success as a threat, but as a benefit to the station as a whole.

FM radio had lost one of its most important and dynamic pioneers, a voice which could never be replaced. Now heaven had a little bit of 94.7.

By the end of 1983, RADIO KAOS had slipped badly. The station had gone from a 6.7 share to a 4.0. In today's market a

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4.0 rating would be considered a major victory, especially if you began with a 1. But the guys at corporate headquarters had been used to owning the market in the 18-49 demo, and now we were *only* number one when it came to the 25-49 listeners. What this all meant, was that for the first time in her career, Terri Belle was in trouble.

“Jim? It’s Ira Steinberg.”

I lit up a cigarette and sat down at my desk. It had been my experience that getting a telephone call from the general manager at home always meant trouble. “Listen, before you say anything, that bit I did about Ronald Reagan last night was just a joke. Who’s really gonna believe that the president of the United States is senile?”

“I’m not calling about that,” said Ira, in a tone unusually serious for him. “I want to talk to you about Terri.”

“What about Terri?”

“Now trust me, this won’t go any further,” he said in a hushed voice, “I just want to know your thoughts about how she’s programming the station.”

“Ira, I must tell you I am not going to say anything against Terri,” I said, feeling the muscles in my stomach begin to tighten. “The problem with the station isn’t Terri.”

“Look, you know how I feel about Terri, ‘love-ya-babes-let’s-do-lunch,’ but we’ve got to do something about the numbers.”

“Ira, we’re still number one in the market 25-49.”

“But we used to own 18-49, and the head office feels that Terri needs some help in getting the station back up on top.”

“What do you mean by help?” I asked. “What kind of ‘help’ are they talking about.”

“Well, the head of the FM division wants to bring in a consultant to aid in revitalizing the station.”

“They want to do what?”

“They think it’s what’s needed to get the station back on track,” Ira answered, shifting into his salespeak. “Now I know how you feel about consultants, Jim, but we have to go through the process to determine what’s best for the station.”

“Ira, that is the worst decision they could possibly make,” I said, trying to stay calm. “How can you bring in someone who doesn’t even live in California, much less L.A., to program the one rock station most closely identified with Southern California? It won’t work.”

“No no no,” Ira said, trying to lighten the tone. “He’s not going to program the station, merely provide Terri with research data and music suggestions. Terri will be under no pressure to use his material at all if she doesn’t want to. Trust me, Terri will still be in complete charge of programming, that’s not going to change, it’s merely to help her.”

“If they want to help her,” I responded, “they should give her back the promotion budget they gutted, not hire a consultant. We haven’t had so much as a billboard in over a year, meanwhile KASH is running a huge TV ad campaign, and the punk rocker has boards up all over town.”

“Well, profits for the station are down and . . .”

“Ira, the station is sold out and you know it, and Micro-media just announced a record year-end profit. They should give Terri some help, but this is not the way.”

“All we’re talking about is research here, trust me on this.”

“I know what kind of research these guys do. They treat the audience like they were lab rats. It’s generic radio geared to the lowest common denominator. He’ll rape the library, and we’ll end up sounding like just like KASH. Nobody knows this market better than your staff, Ira. I know how Terri and Jack do research and believe me, it would take someone from out of town at least five years just to begin to know this market as well as they do.”

“Look, this isn’t going to affect you,” he said, realizing that he wasn’t finding any support for this idea. “You’re still number one at night and I won’t do anything to jeopardize that, but we have some problems overall.”

“Ira, anything that changes how this station is programmed affects me. Terri and Jack know what they’re doing, and so do the rest of us. We’re losing teens because punk rock isn’t right for the station, but believe me, punk ain’t gonna last forever. We have got to stay true to what KAOS is all about, and not do some knee-jerk reaction to every fad that comes along. Nor do we need some consultant trying to turn RADIO KAOS into one of his Superschlock stations. If we do that, we’ll lose our core audience, and then you’ll really have trouble.”

“Well, we’ll see what happens when the new ratings book comes out,” said Ira, in his “I want to get off the phone now” voice. “It’s just a matter of going through the process, but I swear that whatever we do, it won’t affect your show in any way. Trust me.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE
BIG
LIE

Well I try my best to be just like I am
But everybody wants you to be just like them
They say sing while you slave and I just get bored
I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more.

—Bob Dylan

NINETEEN EIGHTY-four—the perfect moment in history for the Orwellian nightmare that was about to engulf RADIO KAOS. The computer, the consultant, and the consequences of the two, were all about to come crashing into KAOS.

It was late afternoon as I sat in Terri Belle's office. The book had come out and the station had gone back up a little, but there was no celebration. The powers that be had decided to bring in the consultant anyway. Terri was extremely upset, and so was I. Although Ira swore that Terri would retain final say over programming, we both knew this consultant's reputation for slick repetitive formats, not to mention what it really meant whenever Ira used the words "Trust me."

"We can't let this happen Terri," I said, as she stared

blankly out her office window. "This guy hasn't got a clue as to what RADIO KAOS stands for, not to mention how it works."

"Ira swore that if we went back up in this book we wouldn't have to do this," she said, still gazing out toward Hollywood. "It's the first time in eight years that we haven't been number one, and they won't even give us a chance to fix it."

"Terri you know me, if this guy tries to bring in a format I won't do it. I can't do it."

"I know, Jim," said Terri, now turning to look at me, her eyes devoid of the happy glint of rebellion they usually contained. "I'll do everything I can to keep him away from your show. Fortunately the nighttime numbers are still strong, so he can't say that you need to change what you're doing."

"We can't let this happen," I repeated, not knowing what else to say. "We can't let this guy turn almost twenty years of progressive radio into a jukebox."

For nearly two decades, from 1968 to 1984, RADIO KAOS had been the outlaw, a thorn in the side of the establishment, and now they wanted us to put on a suit and tie like everybody else. We were the last bastion of real rock radio in L.A., a station that had built its reputation on pushing the boundaries of ideas and culture. If RADIO KAOS went, there would be no freedom left on the dial—no place for experimentation, no one to champion social causes or push the boundaries of bad taste. There would be nothing left but the automatic drone of safe prepackaged entertainment.

I decided to call a friend of mine who was working at our sister station in New York. Dean Brady did afternoon drive at the biggest FM rocker in the Big Apple. They too had been sentenced to work with the same radio consultant who was about to be forced on us.

"Dean, it's Jim, how ya doing?"

"Fine I guess, what's happening on the Coast?"

"They did it, Dean, they hired that same radio genius you guys got."

"So Ira finally gave in to the front office, huh? I'll bet that took all of thirty seconds."

"Dean, give me the lowdown on this guy, what does he want you to do?"

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“You ain’t gonna like it. It’s the same old thing—tight playlists, strict format rules, and lots of slick promotions.”

“You’re kidding. Terri was told that he was just going to provide her with music research, and that we wouldn’t have to do his format.”

“Oh yeah, we got that same rap at the beginning, but two weeks after he started we lost all freedom of choice over the music. Now we just sit here and do our shows off of a computerized list.”

“You’re kidding, you guys?” I asked in disbelief. “He makes you follow a *list*?”

I could hear Dean tense up at the other end of the phone. “Song by song, cut by cut, in order, twenty-four hours a day.”

“Man, it’s like a disease eating up FM from the inside out. I’ll bet that RADIO KAOS and WBCN are the only two major market stations left in the country that aren’t robot controlled. And from what you’re saying, that may not last long.”

“Haven’t you heard? Reagan has declared that it’s okay to do anything for money. In fact, it’s downright unpatriotic *not* to sell out.”

After the deregulation of the broadcast industry, radio stations could be bought and sold like junk bonds, by people whose idea of a hero for the eighties was Ivan Boesky. Prior to deregulation, anyone purchasing a station was required to hold on to it for at least three years. This ensured that those who would be broadcasting over the public airwaves must take a long-term, responsible approach to the community they served. But once deregulation opened the floodgates to speculators, owning a station no longer carried the responsibility of “servicing the community.” The get-rich-quick guys who came into the field were not interested in buying a broadcast facility; to them, it was merely investment property. If you had the bucks, you could treat a radio station like any other hotel on the Monopoly board.

Freed from the constraints of “broadcasting in the public interest,” the Reagan administration had unleashed a buying frenzy that drove the price for an FM station through the roof. These new owners were not interested in broadcasting, merely the buying and selling of “broadcast properties,” and the *quicker* you got numbers, the faster you could resell the

station for a profit. This resulted in the use of every get-rated-quick scheme in the world, by hungry investors whose only concern was to drive up the market value of their facility.

By this time the other stations in town were literally trying to requisition an audience. KASII, who now had a consultant of their own, had totally debased itself with a big hoopla Porsche giveaway, in an attempt to bribe its audience into listening. They must have given away over \$750,000 worth of German sports cars to get people to tune in to KASH—this at a time when American autoworkers were being laid off in droves. There was a new Top 40 dance station at the far end of the dial, and their idea was even more to the point; if you want listeners, go out and buy them. They gave away ten thousand dollars a week in cash as ransom for the ratings.

There were no ethics in FM anymore. The frequency modulation band was no longer an alternative to the AM Top 40 approach; the only difference now was that they did it in stereo. But the worst part, the most disheartening part, was that the audience of the eighties fell for it.

In this best of all yuppie worlds, money and Porsches were what it was all about. Fuck Bob Dylan and all that social consciousness bullshit. Yuppies wanted the cash and the cars. Music to them was just something else to consume, like tofu and fashion. This, above all, was the hardest part for me to accept. Hypnotized by the Great Communicator, and worn out by almost two decades of social upheaval, the audience had become bored with issues like ecology and civil rights. Social activism was now “totally out of fashion.”

It was the era of the credit card and corporate takeovers and the photo opportunity. The audience bought into Reagan's greed creed like a junkie who'd just won an all-expense-paid trip to the poppy fields of Turkey. And FM radio was tripping over itself to get in on the new smoke and mirrors prosperity, which trickled down from the top, and polluted everything.

The first thing the consultant did when he arrived in town was rape the KAOS music library. The Southland's most extensive biblioteca of rock music was reduced overnight to a

couple of hundred hits. From Chuck Berry to Bruce Springsteen, the Jefferson Airplane to U2, anything that wasn't a national Top 40 hit was eliminated, taking away not only the variety but the very character of KAOS.

Two weeks after that, he had convinced the gentlemen in New York to force Terri Belle into implementing his Super-schlock format—a tight computerized list of songs calculated to repeat like dull clockwork, with no regard for how or why one cut followed another. It would be one thing to take over some middle-of-the-road station that had been dying in the market, but this guy was dicking with RADIO KAOS. To him, of course, we were just another customer on his national client list of jukebox outlets.

Terri did her best to juggle this guy's plastic approach, the front office's demands for numbers, and Ira's career paranoia, while still trying to keep some semblance of KAOS alive. But it was useless. The consultant kept *saying* how much he respected RADIO KAOS's reputation, and that he wouldn't do anything to lose that "image of integrity." Only a consultant could look at a station like RADIO KAOS and come up with a phrase like "image of integrity." Meanwhile, of course, he was systematically dismantling the very essence of what had earned RADIO KAOS that "image."

Needless to say, the magic was gone. Life at RADIO KAOS was now a humiliating daily struggle of justifying techniques we had crafted over the years to a bureaucrat whose only concept of magic was card tricks. Never once did this guy even try to figure out what had made RADIO KAOS so important to its listeners. All he was interested in was a quick hit in the ratings, so he could add KAOS to his list of "winners."

As the other members of the air staff struggled with the shackles of a sterilized playlist, I continued to do my four hours as best I could with the skeleton record library left to me. It was like working with both hands tied behind my back. Every set was a compromise, every song a substitute for something that would have worked better. For the first time since my days at KASH, I was actually embarrassed to go on the air. I felt like I was lying to my audience every time I opened the mike. The only thing that kept me going was that I didn't have to follow his inane format. Even though we had only a tenth of the songs to choose from, at least I was still picking my own music. I kept telling myself that if I could

maintain the ratings at night, and the rest of the station went down, they would have to give us KAOS back.

This went on for the next two ratings books—six months of Ira Steinberg kowtowing to his bosses instead of standing up for his troops, while Terri Belle placated the bean counter who called in his ill-calculated musical statistics from a hotel room on the road. And what were the results from the absentee consultant's brave new plan? After all his charts and graphs and spreadsheets, after plundering the most carefully compiled record library in Southern California, the ratings went down.

Somehow I was able to maintain my audience at the pre-consultant level, and after the second disastrous book came out, I thought surely that the guys at corporate headquarters would see the light, and discontinue this misdirected experiment in simulated chaos. It was obvious now that if I was able to maintain my audience while the format's numbers went down, that it was the format that didn't work, not KAOS.

Reversing their decision, however, would mean that somebody at the corporate level would have to admit they had made a mistake. And no matter how much history was on the line, or how many social causes we had fought for, or how many careers were affected, or even how badly the ratings fell, no one at corporate headquarters was going to admit even a slight error in judgment.

So instead of returning power to the people who had built the station, they fired Terri Belle. After all, it couldn't be the fault of this genius they were renting, and it certainly wasn't the fault of the person three thousand miles away who'd hired him. Something must be wrong with the people who had been there, made RADIO KAOS the number one FM station in L.A., and were struggling against bad leadership and increased competition to keep it afloat.

Like Raechel Donahue, and B. Mitchel Reed, and hundreds of others across the country, Terri Belle had been used up and spit out. All she had to show for her eight years was the obligatory bullshit memo about "moving on to other opportunities." It's hard enough to lose your job, but when you've put your heart on the line for something like RADIO KAOS, leaving is like losing a loved one.

Terri had made her share of mistakes, to be sure. Like most of us, success had bred a level of complacency and an

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interest in extracurricular activities, which clouded her judgment and dulled her concentration. But for eight years she had helped to make RADIO KAOS a broadcast legend, and with a little support, she might have done it again. In the end, however, Terri Belle was thanked for building the most successful FM station in the Micromedia chain, with a pink slip.

Even though the ratings were going down, the consultant had won. The charts and graphs had triumphed. All that remained was to insert the first in a long string of programming puppets, who would simply take orders from the consultant and pass them along to the staff.

Ira's first choice for the job turned out to be a walking Napoleon complex, called Lucifer Le Rock. At first I was relieved when Ira told me that he was promoting someone from inside the station. Lucifer had been doing an early morning talk show on the weekends for the past few years, and although we weren't close friends, I'd always gotten along well with him. He seemed like one of us, someone who was knowledgeable about music and cared about the station. But something happened to Lucifer when he got into a position of power.

Lucifer was a guy who knew in his heart of hearts that he was a genius, and now, as the leader of RADIO KAOS, he would have the opportunity to get back at all those who'd not yet acknowledged his obvious mental gifts. Now he was the program director of a 58,000-watt radio station in Los Angeles, and he would show them all.

Lucifer had been a weekend jock all his life, a fringe player, envious of anyone who had achieved the recognition he had been denied. He was a guy who actually thought "Lucifer Le Rock" was a cool radio name. Lucifer's very first act as program director was not to rally the air staff, or replenish the record library; no, Lucifer's first priority was to get his voice on the air as much as possible. To him, this is what the L.A. audience had been praying for: the wit and wisdom of Lucifer Le Rock. Every promotional announcement, every station identification, and every local commercial now began, "This is Lucifer Le Rock speaking," twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Never mind that he had the best-known staff of voices in L.A. He wanted to hear himself on the radio, and this seemed to take precedence over everything.

Lucifer saw himself as the commanding general of an undisciplined military unit, which he and the power of his voice

were going to whip into shape. RADIO KAOS would no longer be a collective effort of pooled knowledge and team play. It was now a group of employees who were to fall into lockstep behind his vast leadership capabilities. And like the consultant whose ass he was kissing while pretending to be in charge, Lucifer wanted the station to be “regulated, repetitious, and redundant.”

Lucifer and I mixed like oil and water. He hated the fact that I refused to give up creative control of my show; I hated him for trying to transform what was left of this special family into his personal company of robots. The station began to change immediately under Lucifer’s megalomania, and almost overnight, RADIO KAOS was catalyzed into a gimmick-riddled, boot-licking joke.

Under Lucifer’s leadership genius, RADIO KAOS plummeted to its lowest level in seven years, and mercifully, Lucifer Le Rock was sent back to his own private hell of obscurity.

The next guy they tried was a twenty-five-year-old suit from Chicago who had never heard RADIO KAOS in his life. Bill Kelly was from the “games, glitz, and giveaways” school of radio, and to him, the consultant (still providing his invaluable absentee research) was the kind of guy who knew the score. Kelly’s goal, as he was so often found of saying, was to “make KAOS the McDonald’s of radio”: uniform, convenient, predictable.

We fought it out tooth and nail, five days a week. I’d taken my stand against selling out RADIO KAOS a long time ago, and I wasn’t about to lay all that aside now to become a Big Mac. Besides, I had Ira’s word that no one would ever be allowed to interfere with how I did my show, as long as I maintained the ratings. As with all systems freaks, this lack of direct control over one of his jocks drove Kelly nuts. What made me crazy was having to discuss FM radio with someone who had never even heard of Tom Donahue. One night on the air, the hotline rang inside the studio, and I found myself engaged in one of our typical debates.

“Hello?”

“Jim, this is Bill Kelly, what the hell are you playing?”

“You mean the song on right now?”

“Yes, who is that?”

“This is some kind of joke, right? You’re recording this conversation aren’t you?”

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“I’m dead serious. We had this discussion twice this week. If you’re going to pick your own music, you at least have to confine yourself to the most recognizable artists. This is the very reason you should be following the format like everybody else!”

“Bill, this is Jimi Hendrix.”

“Well I’ve never heard it before, what is it?”

“It’s ‘Voodoo Chile’ from *Electric Ladyland*. You must have heard this song before.”

“It’s much too obscure for our station. We should be banging out the hits. I want this place to be the McDonald’s of radio. This song isn’t even on the format.”

“Look, for the last time, I don’t do the fucking format! And as for this song, it may not have been a hit single in Chicago, but it was one of the biggest FM hits ever in L.A. It’s *Hendrix* for Christ sakes!”

“I still say it’s too obscure for our audience. The days of people listening closely to the radio are over. Nowadays people just want to feel good, and it makes them uncomfortable when you play something they aren’t familiar with.”

“Bill—it was a listener’s *request*.”

So there we were: me trying to explain why after fifteen years on the air in L.A. I wanted to do the show my way, and he, two weeks off the plane, just as convinced that what Southern California really needed was McRadio.

Over the next two years, Ira Steinberg hired three more of these guys, each with a worse new idea than the last, each a carbon copy of somebody else’s image of what a “winner” should be, each in turn driving the station further and further into the toilet. They kept hiring variations of the same guy, a systems man who played the consultant’s game and followed the blind path of statistical research without ever bothering to see where it was leading.

The irony is that the problem did not lie in the data, or even the methodology. There is nothing inherently wrong with using call-out research, or focus groups, or statistical trends, or any of the rest of it. Both Terri Belle and Jack Snyder had relied on a highly sophisticated formula of local sales, national record charts, and the like to determine what songs were appropriate for RADIO KAOS, and which tracks should get the most airplay. The key is what you *do* with that information.

Consultants, believing that an audience can be herded like

sheep, seek to create a rigid structure that never varies. They would take the results of their lab tests, print them out on a computer spreadsheet, and demand that the jocks on the air play the data in the prescribed manner.

What we had done at KAOS was to take that same data and go one step further. We provided a staff of highly creative professionals with the information, and it was their job to *interpret* the data and transform it into a living, breathing radio show.

In the broadest of terms, RADIO KAOS and KASH were both playing the same music, so why had RADIO KAOS been so dominant for so long? KASH had an air staff of great jocks, talented people who, left to their own devices, could have done wonderfully inventive shows. The difference was that the jocks at RADIO KAOS were encouraged to explore new frontiers with the music, while the people at KASH were forced into the role of assembly line workers. The curious thing was that the more Ira Steinberg and Micromedia tried to make RADIO KAOS fit the bureaucratic mold, the more the ratings went down.

By 1987 morale was at an all-time low, and I was getting fed up with the daily battles over creative control of my show. I was torn between losing my job and the loss of artistic freedom, and each day became a struggle within the very studio which had once set me free. How could I go on the air and *not* speak my mind? They wanted us to smile while we lied to our listeners, and that was something I just could not do.

By the time Ira and the corporate brain trust in New York had gone through their *fifth* program director following Terri Belle, the station had lost all semblance of KAOS. No longer a beacon of the L.A. airwaves, RADIO KAOS was now merely a whisper amongst the cacophony of hucksters and pitchmen that crowded the FM dial. The end of RADIO KAOS was near, but not before one final betrayal.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

WHEN
THE
MUSIC'S
OVER

Suddenly, my mind hit critical mass. My thoughts began to explode outward, like radio waves shot from some powerful atomic transmitter.

A NEW category of rock station was about to try its hand in the L.A. market: something called “classic rock.” Basically, classic rock was yet another eighties marketing ploy that would repackage the very music RADIO KAOS had pioneered into a tightly formatted station that played only the “hits” of the sixties and seventies.

The theory was that the people who had grown up with stations like RADIO KAOS had reached an age where they were no longer interested in new music, and wanted nothing more than to relive the salad days of their youth. This meant the endless repetition of songs hung with the “classic rock” label—such as “Layla,” “Aqualung,” or “Stairway to Heaven”—until you were brain dead. The idea itself was abhorrent to those of us who still clung to the belief that pro-

gressive radio should *progress*. Although we still loved the Jefferson Airplane, even they were now known as the Starship.

It was rock 'n' roll, however, and the owner said that they were serious about giving this "new" kind of FM radio a shot. Within a two-week period most of the full-time jocks at RADIO KAOS had been offered jobs at the new station, and along with the chance to make better money, was the implied promise of a more creative environment in which to work. Who knew? Maybe if we all went together we could build something, perhaps even recapture some of the spirit which had been programmed out of KAOS. By the time Ira Steinberg was ready to hire his sixth new program director, most of the air staff was seriously considering the move.

Instead of just leaving, however, we made a fatal business mistake—loyalty. RADIO KAOS was such a part of us, that we felt we owed it to the station as well as our listeners to make one final attempt to save KAOS before we quit. So we asked Ira Steinberg for a meeting. Our plan was to lay it out once and for all that we needed to stop this revolving door of program directors and jive formats, fire this mutant life form of a consultant, and get back to what made RADIO KAOS unique. It was a last-ditch effort to hang on to FM's integrity, and rebuild the station that we loved.

By mutual consent, we decided to hold the meeting on neutral ground, away from KAOS. So we got a hotel room, and gathered together for the showdown on a Saturday afternoon in January of 1987.

We hadn't gotten together like this in a long, long time, and as I looked around the room at the friends I'd made over the years, I thought about that first meeting at Terri Belle's house right after she took over. I remembered how happy and alive we were then, intoxicated with the joy of rock 'n' roll, and the feeling of unity we shared in being a part of FM radio. A group of people, different from this one, but with the same basic vision, who'd built something they were proud of. Now it was up to us to try and hold on to that vision, and keep the promise Tom Donahue had made twenty years ago.

The entire air staff was there by the time Ira Steinberg arrived at the door. He looked understandably nervous as he entered the room, and greeted everybody with a joke and a handshake. Ira always tried to lighten confrontation with

humor, and because we were nervous too, we did our best to comply with polite laughter, while Ira found his seat.

“So what’s this all about?” asked Ira, with a jittery smile. “I hope you’re not planning to hang the general manager out the ninth-floor window or anything.”

“Actually Ira,” I said lightly, “nobody’s mad, but we are concerned. First, I think I speak for everyone when I tell you that we appreciate you agreeing to meet in this rather unorthodox way. But what we want to say to you is important, and we didn’t want any distractions.”

“We’re worried about what’s happenin’ to the station,” said Jack Snyder. “We know that you’re under pressure from your bosses, but we can’t take another lame program director. We seem to keep getting people who have no idea what RADIO KAOS is all about.”

“Either the guy turns out to be a power freak or a robot,” said Wiley Perch. “This is a staff of human beings who are willing to do anything to help get this station back on track, but I think we’ve been going about it all wrong.”

Ira fidgeted in his seat, then asked, “Well, how do you mean?”

“Well the consultant for one thing,” offered Joanne Goodwin. “You can’t program RADIO KAOS in exactly the same way as you would a station in Cleveland and expect it to work.”

“Ira, Southern California is unique. It’s unlike anywhere else on the planet,” said David Perry. “This guy that the company has hired to consult the station is not only adding the wrong music, he’s taken away half of the most popular bands in L.A.”

“It would be like me taking a job in New York after living in L.A. all my life, and not bothering to learn anything about what made that city tick,” added Snyder. “You cannot program this station simply by national statistics. You have to know what music is hot in town, and what it means to live here, and most importantly, you have to know your audience.”

“Look at the numbers,” said Ace. “Every one of these guys has taken the station further and further down since Terri left.”

“Well, I think you’re really going to like the new man I’m bringing in,” Ira said, trying to meet everyone’s eyes at

once, thus looking at no one in particular. "He has some great new ideas, and he did take his station in Dallas from a 2.0 to a 3 share in just two books so. . ."

"Ira, Mega and I were once pulling 12 shares at night, and the station used to have a 7 share overall," I injected before he could continue down this well-worn path. "We're aiming too low, and we're being given the wrong ammunition to fight with."

"So what are you suggesting we do?" Ira asked, searching the room for the other shoe to drop.

"All we want to do is to offer you our help," said Jeff Gonzer. "We want to have input into programming the station like before. If you let us, we can bring RADIO KAOS back."

"We can't keep bringing in people with just another 'boffo' idea, but no clue as to what makes the station work," explained Wiley. "It's driving us all crazy to see KAOS go down the tubes like this."

"We aren't saying that we won't try to work with whoever you bring in Ira," assured Joanne. "But it needs to be a two-way street."

The discussion went on for several hours. Nobody got upset, and Ira seemed to listen attentively to everyone's point of view. By the end of the meeting, Ira had come around. He had worked with this crew for a long time, knew the emotional investment we'd all made in KAOS, and knew that we sincerely wanted nothing more than to make the station successful. This wasn't about salary, or perks, or profit sharing. Money wasn't mentioned once. We only wanted to save KAOS.

Finally, he agreed that the consultant had run his course, and he would recommend to the head office that we go back to programing RADIO KAOS at the local level. He also agreed to talk to the new program director, and explain to him that he wanted the air staff to have not only input regarding the music, but most importantly, greater creative control of their shows. He promised us that this would be a new beginning, that instead of blindly following whatever this new guy said, he would again seek the input of the people who knew the station best.

"Things are going to change," Ira said. "I'm very excited about this, but keep in mind that everything is a pro-

cess. So I'm asking you to have patience while we bring in the new PD, and figure out a way that we can all work together."

"Now does this mean that we can count on you to talk to this guy and explain things, Ira?" asked Ace. "Because we really have to know."

Again Ira shifted nervously in his chair before answering. "I give you my word, but as I said, everything is a process, and we have to go through the process of letting this new PD get acquainted with the station."

Jack Snyder rose and began to pace slowly around the room. "We're going to lay our cards on the table, Ira. Several of the people in this room have been approached by another radio station. It's a good offer for more money, but as you can see, none of us wants to leave. We would prefer to stay here, *if you're really going to give us a fighting chance.*"

"No, no, no, I don't want any of you quitting," said Ira emphatically. "I understand what's been said here today, and I agree completely."

"Ira, there is another reason for us telling you this," I said, looking him straight in the eye. "There's a rumor on the street that Micromedia is going to dump rock 'n' roll and bring in some completely different format. Now if that's the case, please tell us here and now, while we still have an opportunity to go to this new station."

"That is complete nonsense," said Ira. "You know how rumors are in this town, there is no truth to that whatsoever."

"Ira, some of us here have children to support, I have to think of my wife and daughter," responded David Perry. "So if you have heard anything about the company getting rid of rock at KAOS, please, let us know now. We've been totally honest with you about the job offers, and you owe us that much."

"RADIO KAOS will be a rock station forever," announced Ira Steinberg. "That will never change. I'm just as committed to this place as you are. Now I want you to know two things: one is that I thank you all for your candor and your loyalty to the station, and two, I'm going to give you guys, and you Joanne, my full support. Trust me."

After Ira left, the rest of us stayed to talk over what had been said. The consensus was, with some reservations, that we had gotten our message across. Everyone decided to stay.

There really wasn't all that much discussion about it, because none of us wanted to leave KAOS. This was our home, and if there was even the slightest chance that we could revive the station, that's what we were going to do. The next day, everyone who'd been offered a job at the classic rock station made his or her phone call, and politely declined the offer. After all, Ira had given us his word.

The new program director's name was Arnold Quisle. A short sharp suit, he was slick to the point of being slimy. He made a big deal about how honored he was to be working with such a "legendary staff of talent," and kept telling us over and over again that "his door would always be open" to any and all suggestions. Then he disappeared.

No one could figure it out. A new program director, even the bad ones, usually spent ten to twelve hours a day at a station for the first few months at least. This guy had come in, met everybody, and simply evaporated. He was never in his office, never available by phone, never called a meeting. Major new albums went unadded to the library, and the music that did trickle in was usually so off-the-wall that it made us suspicious of where this guy was going. No one was complaining about being left alone, we were just uneasy about why.

For the next two weeks, RADIO KAOS floundered along without direction. The music library seemed like a forgotten catch bin of old songs and inappropriate new releases, thrown together without rhyme or reason. Finally, after leaving repeated messages with his secretary, Arnold Quisle called me on the air one night to explain that he'd been monitoring the station from his hotel room. He said that he was working on a big promotional campaign that would mark a brand-new beginning for KAOS. It was an idea, he assured me, that the air staff was really going to love. "In the meantime," he said, "just keep doing what you're doing. You sound great!"

What we were doing was the same stupid format that the last guy had installed. Something was very wrong here. Something was going on and I didn't believe it was a new bumper sticker campaign. I was tired of the false promises, tired of the half-truths, and tired of the lip service. Something had to give.

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It was almost midnight. The lights were turned down even lower than usual, and the air inside the glass booth was thick with cigarette smoke. I started my next song, and wondered what it was like outside. I remembered how beautiful the city had looked as I drove in to work that night. Covered in a luxuriant blanket of fog that disguised the grease paint, it reminded me of San Francisco and where it all began. It was Indian summer, and L.A. seemed to be making a vain attempt at holding back the inevitable coming of winter. The days were hot and sticky, but by nightfall, the steam from its famous boulevards had turned into a thick vapor. And tonight, it felt like rain.

Winding down out of the Hollywood Hills, I had looked at the multitude of lights now fused into an enormous opaque beacon, and thought of all the lonely pilgrims waiting down there in dreamland, millions of the faithful who'd come here to the edge of the world, to throw a coin of faith into the Pacific and make a wish. This is where the dreamers came, and I wondered how many dreams might be evaporating right now, each adding yet another tear to the mist which enveloped the city.

Descending into the great cloud of carbon and water vapor, I had considered the atmosphere of this strange night in Los Angeles, and the music that would best reflect the soundtrack of Southern California.

Leaning back in my chair, I lit another cigarette and looked round the room. I was alone in the glass booth at RADIO KAOS, surrounded by an array of high-tech equipment, blinking and flashing to its own silicon time signature. Fifteen years ago, I would have given anything for a state-of-the-art studio like this: turntables that didn't feed back, tape decks that ran at the proper speed, the clarity of compact discs and digital recording. Technology had progressed beyond our wildest sci-fi fantasies all right, but with it came the rigid order of the format. Nietzsche was right, order does come out of chaos. But in this case, KAOS was a hell of a price to pay.

FM radio had lost the rhythm of the tribal drum, and the communion it once evoked from a chorus of "Give Peace a Chance." Formats don't care about tribal drums. Formats aren't interested in social issues. Formats aren't moved by the beauty of Indian summer. But the format was in control now, and the CD machines were forever hungry.

There was no time to play a set of songs for lonely pilgrims, no room for causes, controversy, or even a little herbal humor. The days of telling stories around the electronic campfire had vanished like smoke in the mist. The very essence of free-form rock radio had disappeared, not with the sudden mercy of a .38, but slowly, a little compromise at a time, like cancer. Rock radio had been consumed from the inside out, and all that was left of this once revolutionary and irreverent medium was its shiny outer shell.

I stood up and walked over to the CD rack, which was slowly taking over the back wall. Not long ago, this studio had been filled from floor to ceiling with thousands upon thousands of LPs, all crammed into huge custom-built record cabinets. The music library at RADIO KAOS used to be famous for its unequalled depth and variety of artists, all carefully compiled over the past twenty years of rock 'n' roll superstars and one-hit wonders. Seeing it gutted like this tied my stomach in knots.

They were twenty years of vinyl memories, some of them scratched, some a little dog-eared, some brought in from home; but when the format arrived, the vast majority of these priceless archives were scrapped. Now, the entire musical spectrum of RADIO KAOS had been reduced to a handful of CDs, housed in a store-bought rack. The only exception was one small cluster of albums, left behind in a dusty forgotten corner of the studio.

I was saddened by the hollow empty feeling that now pervaded the glass booth. Although the room seemed much larger now that all but one of the record shelves had been removed, staring at this miniaturized version of the library made me feel extremely claustrophobic. This room used to inspire those who entered. It kindled some spark of insight which we were drawn to like eager children. Now it felt like jail, and the knot in my gut was turning to nausea.

Foreigner? Journey? Night Ranger? The CDs I had to choose from all looked the same. Bands made up of fine musicians, who produced immensely popular, well-crafted hits. They were perfect for what FM radio had become: safe, non-threatening corporate rock, with the emotional and intellectual depth of a prom queen. This was "hey dude" music—product for people whose definition of party never included anything more political than a fashion statement. The humanity of our music had been drowned out by the din of its success,

and I didn't know why. I didn't even know if it had started to rain yet, only that it was midnight inside the glass booth.

Again, I thought about how the city had looked from high up in the Hollywood Hills, remembered the sensation of seeing L.A. as one great multitude, waiting for something real to happen. I thought about how it had reminded me of Tom Donahue and San Francisco, and the enchantment that this medium had once invoked. Waves of memory came rushing back: the sheer bliss I used to feel when the show hit overdrive, and broke through the sonic barrier between audience and DJ; the sensation of free fall, when you stepped out into the public airwaves without a net; the feeling of being connected to a vast invisible community huddled in the dark, listening to the sounds of KAOS.

Finally, something within me snapped, and I felt as though I was awaking from a long, fitful, etherated sleep. It was a moment of pure clarity. There was no decision required—I simply could not do this anymore. My love for FM radio, and the euphoria that came from performing in this once holy medium, were the only things that mattered now. Everything else was just fear: fear of losing my job, fear of losing my show biz status, fear of losing my backstage pass.

Suddenly, my mind hit critical mass. My thoughts began to explode outward, like radio waves shot from some powerful atomic transmitter. I stepped back to the control board, picked up the playlist, and set it on fire. I had decided to burn out, rather than fade away.

Searching quickly through the one remaining record rack, I found an old copy of *American Beauty* by the Grateful Dead. With the exhilaration that overtakes you just before stepping out into the unknown, I dropped the needle onto the black vinyl record and cued up the first song on side one.

It was the midnight hour, time to wake up!

Thirty seconds to air. I stole a quick look at the bank of telephones. Out of eight lines only one was silently blinking, patiently waiting to make a request that would never get played, unless it happened to appear on the playlist. The Foreigner song was almost over. I picked up my headphones, put them on, and brought the microphone into position. Ten seconds.

So many thoughts racing back and forth across the synapse grid: song titles, lyrical combinations, segues, the need

to break from the predictable. Suddenly, the powerful speakers inside the glass booth fell silent. The song had ended. It was time.

Alone inside the once magical glass booth, I took a deep breath. Then I opened the microphone, and it all came pouring out over the air.

"We just heard Foreigner with 'Hot Blooded,' before that, it was Night Ranger on K-A-O-S.

"I'm Jim Ladd, but this is not RADIO KAOS. Not the real RADIO KAOS. The real KAOS died the day that the owners hired a radio consultant to program the station.

"That means we no longer pick the records you hear, no longer play your requests, are not even allowed to talk honestly with you like I'm doing now.

"Do you remember when we used to think of RADIO KAOS as the tribal drum? When it was the innate and primitive signal that marked a time step unique to us, and us alone?"

"Can you recall how we used to dance by the light of the FM dial? Radiant and alive, intoxicated with the music. We were proud then, proud to be different.

"Remember the first time you heard Crosby, Stills and Nash, or Pink Floyd, or the Doors? The first time Grace Slick filled our heads and Jimi Hendrix kissed the sky?"

"I remember how close the music used to make us feel, like a 'new language' or a holy chant. Like the ring of truth with a backbeat.

"Not so long ago, I used to come to this station filled with the fire of revolution, and the zeal of an explorer. We used to believe that somehow, if we just played the music long enough and loud enough, we could change the world, evolve ourselves into something higher, brighter, more aware.

"One cannot format passion. Passion, like real rock 'n' roll, must come from the heart. We used to play these songs with passion, now it's done by computer.

"This will probably be my last show, but that's not important. What's important is that it moves you. That for just one moment you are willing to open up your imagination, and let the music take you away.

"Listen again with fresh ears to the mystic rhythm of the tribal drum—beating from the heart of KAOS."

I felt relief, rapture, peace, like I had just been absolved

from some great sin of deception. Reaching over to the control panel, I pushed a button which started the turntable on its ancient journey of revolution. It rumbled into action like an old car that hadn't been driven in a long time, and the sound of the Grateful Dead began to fill the airwaves. I turned off the mike, closed my eyes, and the Dead began to sing.

Look out of any window
 Any morning any evening any day
 Maybe the sun is shining
 Birds are winging, no rain is falling from a heavy sky
 What do you want me to do?
 To do for you to see you through?
 For this is all a dream
 We dreamed one afternoon long ago . . .
 . . . And it's just a box of rain
 I don't know who put it there
 Believe it if you need it
 Or leave it if you dare
 And it's just a box of rain
 Or a ribbon for your hair
 Such a long long time to be gone
 And a short time to be there.

The song was halfway through before I opened my eyes. Focusing again on the glass booth, I noticed there were more lights flashing than usual. All eight request lines had exploded in a torrent of uneven signal flares, vying for a response. I hit line number one, and turned on the speakerphone.

"RADIO KAOS," I said as I rose to find my next song.

"Jim?" came the voice over the little speaker box. "Is this Jim Ladd?"

"Yes," I answered. "What can I do for you."

"I was just listening to what you said over the radio. I can't believe that somebody actually had the balls to do that! I got to tell you I had just about given up on radio—you know mostly I just listen to tapes—but that reminded me of how this station used to be."

"Well thanks man," I replied as I chose a CD from Pink Floyd.

"You really think they'll fire you for what you said?"

"I hope not, we'll see."

(((((RADIO WAVES)))))

.....1981-1987.....

“Well, we’re behind you out here. Keep it up.”

I thanked him and hung up the phone, but the line immediately lit up again. The Dead song was almost over, and when it ended, I carefully segued into Pink Floyd’s bitter commentary on the corporate takeover of rock ‘n’ roll, “Have a Cigar.”

The speakers were blasting at full volume as I answered the phone again.

“Hi, this is RADIO KAOS.”

“Well it’s about fuckin’ time. I was beginning to lose faith in you guys with all that Top 40 shit you’ve been playing lately. How about that tune from the Kinks, you know the one about radio? I think that would fit with what you’re saying.”

“You mean ‘Around the Dial’?” I said screaming over the speakers as they pounded out the Floyd. “Great idea, thanks for the call.”

Once again I hung up the phone, and once again it began to ring. All the lines were jammed. The glass booth had been transmuted into a real radio studio again. It was vibrant, electric, teeming with a life of its own.

“Have a Cigar” was still blasting over the monitors, as David Gilmour’s angry guitar solo signaled the end of the tune. I opened the mike, and lowering the music to a level I could speak over, began a satirical impression of an upper management clone.

“Ladies and gentleman, please disregard the statements made a few moments ago by our late night announcer. It is not the policy of this company to condone the stimulation of thought, or discussion, of any kind.

“As vice-president of the parent company which owns and operates K-A-O-S radio, I assure you that this kind of thing will never happen again.

“We are in the entertainment business, and it is not the policy of this radio station, nor that of its management, to upset our audience in any way.

“Thank you for your attention, and don’t forget our giant ‘Rip off the Radio’ contest beginning this Monday morning at nine!

One beat later, Ray Davies began to sing.

.....

The radios of the world are tuning in tonight
 Are you on the dial are you tuned in right
 One of our DJs is missing
 Are you listening?
 Are you listening to me?
 Can you hear me?
 Can you hear me clearly?
 Around the dial
 I been around the dial so many times but you're not there
 Somebody tells me that you've been taken off the air
 Well you were my favorite DJ
 Since I can't remember when
 You always played the best records
 You never followed any trends
 FM AM where are you?
 You gotta be out there somewhere on the dial
 —the Kinks

Well that did it. The big red light on the ceiling went off like a fire alarm—someone was calling on the hotline. It could only be one of two people, Arnold Quisle or Ira Steinberg, and either way, I didn't want to hear it now. If they were going to fire me, it could wait until tomorrow. Right now I couldn't care less. I just wanted to beat the tribal drum.

"I'm Jim Ladd, and tonight, for better or worse, we're talking about what's happened to FM radio, and in turn, what's happened to you. You're being taken for a ride. You're being spoon-fed pabulum in the guise of formula radio. Don't you remember when RADIO KAOS stood for something? You used to believe in us, and I used to believe in you.

"Well, I can no longer sit here and lie to you night after night, pretending to be having a 'bitchin' time,' when in reality, I'm bored stupid. More than that, I'm pissed off. I'm mad that I've sat here pretending I care more about my job than I do about the music. And I'm disappointed in you for letting us get away with it.

"Rock 'n' roll shook us out of blind obedience in our youth, and set us on a path of discovery. Well somewhere along the line we left that path for the safety of a smoothly paved highway to mediocrity.

"We need to wake up. We need to shout from the rooftops and make a joyful noise again. We're losing something that's extremely precious and you don't even know it.

((((((RADIO WAVES))))))

.....1981-1987.....

"Listen again with fresh hearts—to the soundtrack of Southern California. 94.7, RADIO KAOS."

I want to run
I want to hide
I want to tear down the walls
That hold me inside
I want to reach out
And touch the flame
Where the streets have no name

—U2

"We're listening to RADIO KAOS for what may be the last time, because unlike the RADIO KAOS we used to know, the powers that be will no longer condone real rock 'n' roll radio. They want us to be something less, something we swore we would never be."

"I can't do it anymore. I can't just sit here and play it safe anymore. Either rock music has something to say or it doesn't, and if it doesn't, then maybe the guys from New York are right. Maybe FM radio should be just a machine, endlessly dispensing prepackaged bait to attract as many of you so-called listeners as possible."

"But if that's true, I'm not sticking around and watch it decay into just so much media hype; telling you we stand for something, as we bribe you with flashy cars and wads of cash."

"We are the generation who walked with King and Kennedy and Lennon. We know it can be better than this. Remember who you are. You're the ones who tried to change the world."

"FM radio and rock 'n' roll have given more to me than I can ever repay, and so have you. And if this is to be my last night on the air, I want to go out like I came in: believing in the magic of KAOS."

"I'm Jim Ladd. Thank you for listening, and for being my friend."

And with that, I pressed the button for CD number two, and started my last song.

The atmosphere is thin and cold
The yellow sun is gettin' old
The ozone overflows with radio waves
AM, FM, weather and news
Our leaders had a frank exchange of views
Are you confused, radio waves.

—Roger Waters

The next day, the entire air staff of RADIO KAOS was

abruptly fired by the very people who had promised us a “new beginning.” All of us were gone—Jack Snyder, Wiley Perch, Joanne Goodwin, Ace Young, Jeff Gonzer, David Perry, Dr. Demento—all of us. Three thousand miles away, the people who owned RADIO KAOS looked down at the ledger books, and decided to pull the plug.

Ira Steinberg and Arnold Quisle had known it all along. They had never intended to reestablish RADIO KAOS at all. It was merely a business ploy, a hustle to buy time as they prepared to launch a secret new format, a format that would prove to be the ultimate insult to the medium of free-form radio, and the antithesis of everything that FM stood for.

RADIO KAOS was replaced with a computer-programmed Valium tablet, dentist office music for yuppies. The ad campaign for this “revolutionary” new approach to automated radio said it all: No Live Disc Jockeys.

They called it “the Wave” of the future: soma radio for a new age. They even had the gall to use my own words for the billboard campaign, hailing this new approach as “the soundtrack of Southern California.” The very words I had used so often over the years to describe something I believed in, were now used to promote the very thing I had fought against.

The shock was staggering, a blow to the solar plexus for which none of us was prepared. The bastards had finally done it, they had killed the greatest rock ‘n’ roll radio station that ever lit up the FM dial. More than that, they had put an end to our childhood, the final fade-out of innocence. Jack Snyder said it best: “They didn’t just kill a radio station, they took away our culture.” Now we were left with “power radio” for breakfast, and KASH for lunch, and waves of soma for dinner.

Without question, the most painful part of all of this, was that after two decades as a bullhorn for the rock ‘n’ roll counterculture, they didn’t even allow us the dignity of saying good-bye. There was no ceremony, no announcement, no farewells. One moment RADIO KAOS was there, and the next moment it was gone. It was as if the last twenty years had never even happened.

During the next two weeks, the air staff stayed together as we made the rounds of TV and radio talk shows. Every television news program in town covered the story, as did all

the major newspapers and magazines. The *Los Angeles Times* did a cover story in the "Calendar" section, *Rolling Stone* printed a great piece on the death of KAOS, and all of the industry weeklies ran editorials about what this would mean for FM radio in general.

I was never so proud of my fellow jocks as during those gut-wrenching two weeks, as we tried to say good-bye to our listeners via the press. Unless you have actually been on the air and felt that bond with your audience, you have no idea how it feels to be stripped of those precious hours within the glass booth, to be denied the ability to play your music, and feel the magic of transformation which takes place inside the studio. Nothing could replace that. We were refugees without home or country, cut adrift from everything we had believed in.

With a stubborn determination not to let RADIO KAOS merely fade away without a proper wake, we decided to throw a good-bye party for the old girl at the Hollywood Palladium. A lot of good people pitched in, including my manager Michael Ameen, Bryan Murphy of Avalon Attractions, and Jeff "Skunk" Baxter. Together, we organized a benefit concert which we dubbed: The Jobless for the Homeless Present: A Night of KAOS.

Ozzy Osbourne, REO Speedwagon, Little Steven, and Al Kooper were just some of the artists who played for free to a sold-out house, with the money going to those less fortunate than ourselves. Even Bob Geldof and the city attorney James Hahn showed up to lend their support.

It seemed fitting that the last gathering of the KAOS tribe would be a benefit concert—a final act of community that I think Tom Donahue would have been proud of. Terri Belle came to the show, but try as we did, she refused to come onstage and let us introduce her to the audience. She couldn't stay away from the concert, but she didn't want to go through the trauma of saying a public good-bye.

As the evening came to an end, and the air staff took the stage for its final bow, someone in the audience held up a homemade banner. On it were the hand-lettered words: LONG LIVE RADIO KAOS

And with that, the light went out on the FM dial, and the electronic campfire that had helped to spark a generation was extinguished.

They had silenced the tribal drum.

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