



CYNDEE MAXWELL

The Format's Brave New World

Major markets PDs discuss heritage stations' swing toward new music

Most heritage Rock stations tend to play it safe musically, relying heavily on a familiar, researched library. But a change is brewing as several orthodox Rock outlets recently instituted sweeping changes, primarily by dropping the majority of classic rock titles, adding a lot of new music, and playing those currents in a high rotation. These PDs agreed to share the philosophy behind their current evolutions.

Carey Curelop KLOS/Los Angeles



Carey Curelop

Curelop cites audience burn as the primary factor for the Cap Cities outlet's transformation. "We found a majority of our listeners were tired of the music we were playing: traditional AOR classics with a few currents thrown in. We discovered they want to hear new music and music they're not sick to death of.

"We started to see this trend about a year ago, but there wasn't a seri-



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- Carey Curelop



ous enough erosion to cause a major reaction. But when Arrow [KCBS] went on the air, three stations [with Classic Rock KLSX] now were playing a fairly core rock library, which just increased the burn. But we made the change for other reasons also — we wanted to differentiate ourselves between Arrow and KLSX and be more rock-driven and contemporary."

Ageless Aging

Curelop's take on aging with the audience: "Growing with your audience doesn't necessarily mean you'll just continue to play old records. The 25-34s or 25-44s are the most burnt on classic rock. So automatically assuming you're growing with your audience by playing library records is incorrect.

"Stone Temple Pilots, Soundgarden, Pearl Jam, and many other acts are making quality music that 30-45s can listen to along with 20-30s. There absolutely are some common interests musically. You have

a generation of adults overexposed to AOR library music who can get it on four different formats; it stands to reason that there's a lifespan to those records. They were and still are great records, but many people don't want to hear them in the current multiformat repetition.

"About 20% of our mix is classic rock with the balance from the '80s and '90s. In order to segue the music, the artists must be compatible. The Doobie Brothers and Soundgarden would be a train wreck, but certainly Van Halen, AC/DC, and some Led Zeppelin and Eric Clapton still are compatible."

Today's Top 40

Though alternative artists' cross-over appeal attracts both men and women, Curelop believes in targeting a strictly male audience. "Alternative radio has replaced traditional Top 40 — which always has had a pretty good male-to-female split. The Alternative stations of today are really the Top 40 stations of tomorrow, and that's why so many are so beat-oriented.

"We don't target women. We certainly love them and like to have them, but our focus is males 20-30. The music, presentation, and attitude all will reflect that target. In doing that, we not only will maintain a good amount of our current listenership and partisans, but we'll create new ones — particularly males who don't like the dancey, beat music heard on [Alternative] KROQ."

Oedipus WBCN/Boston

Infinity's WBCN has a Classic Rock ally in sister WZLX, and according to Oedipus, WBCN's franchise was ripe to expand its music-leader image. "The nature of the music industry was part of it, too. When CDs first came out, record company attention was on the rerelease of the classics. And they did well because everybody had to update their record collections — including radio. The new music wasn't strong at the time.



Oedipus

"Another aspect to our evolution is that playing a lot of currents is a different way of competing with a station you own. Classic rock, '70s stations, TV commercials, bumpers, sporting events, etc. all have contributed to burning out the classics. Much of the '80s music is over, partly because it was 'cult' and partly because it was overexposed on every level with MTV figuring prominently in that burn out. But the real turning point for us was Woodstock. When we saw its impact, we started to adjust our format. Clearly the industry is investing in these new bands — 'heritage rock' as we once knew it is over."

'MTV Is Frightening'

Oedipus is concerned about MTV. "There's certainly the fear that MTV will contribute greatly to burning out this music, too. MTV is frightening



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in terms of its limitations on the imagination. Whereas radio engages the imagination and provides for associations with events in people's lives, MTV only provides associations of passive TV viewing. Radio is more active and engaging."

WBCN has evolved into a new kind of mainstream. "We don't play a lot of hard music, nor do we play artists like the Eagles, who we call an 'HBO band.' No Billy Joel, Elton John, Fleetwood Mac — they're all AC. We play some Soundgarden, but not Queensryche, Megadeth, or 'teeny-bop' metal.

"We target 18-34s, but still do well among men 25-54. We're not totally ignoring the past, but rather showing the history of rock. It's an important continuum. We're proud that we played Led Zeppelin as a white-label test pressing. But while we're proud of our heritage, 'heritage' doesn't have to equal 'old.'"

High-Profile Personality

Oedipus says the common ingredient between long-time morning host



HOME JONES — The Freddy Jones Band recently stopped by WWCT/Peoria for an on-air interview and acoustic set for their homestate fans. Enjoying the event are (l-r) FJB's Wayne Healy, Jim Bonaccorsi, Simon Horrocks, and Rob Bonaccorsi, OM Rick Hirschman, FJB's Marty Lloyd, and WWCT's Tim Ylinen and Joe Calgaro.

Charles Laquidara and syndicated personality Howard Stern (who's on during afternoon drive) is timelessness. "They both fit our format adjustments because they appeal to this generation. Howard doesn't come off as 'old'; one of his favorite bands is Porno For Pyros, which he uses for bumpers. His attitude is punky and irreverent, and he is modern.

"Charles is a perpetual adolescent. His favorite band is L7 — he took his whole staff to see their show. If Charles came off as 'old,' then he should be at 'ZLX, not 'BCN.'"

Andy Beaubien KLOL/Houston



Andy Beaubien

When Beaubien arrived at KLOL, the station already was moving away from a classic direction. "We're about one-third alternative, one-third mainstream, and one-third classic — probably even less classic. The reality was all around us — there's a new music revolution going on. This music is a dramatic improvement over the releases six to 10 years ago. There's an entirely new generation of rock artists producing a very high-quality product. The only problem lies in how to mix in some of the classics.

"We only play the classics the audience considers to be consistent with the newer music. Certain '70s artists flow well with Pearl Jam or Alice In Chains, such as Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin. I can't say the same for the Doobie Brothers or Elton John. With the quality of today's music, there's no doubt we'll still be playing these artists in the next decade. Bands like Pearl Jam, Nirvana, and Alice In Chains are the future of rock 'n' roll, plain and simple. Even some music from the '80s, such as Guns N' Roses and Def Leppard, are starting to sound dated.

"We're not about to abandon them or Van Halen or ZZ Top — far from it. They're still very important artists, but it's clear the future of Rock is with many of the newer artists. The '70s material is becoming increasingly irrelevant. Granted, Led Zeppelin will be around for a long time, but they'll be the exception. We play no Beatles, virtually no Who, nor a

tremendous amount of older Roll- ing Stones."

Demo Course

Regarding target demographics, Beaubien says KLOL has "chosen to stick with the 18-34 base. If this format is going to be hip, current, and cutting-edge, I'm not convinced that growing old with the audience is an option. KLOL can't be a 'museum of the air' — it's not our image nor our audience's expectation. For a short period about a year ago, KLOL attempted the classic direction — the results definitely weren't encouraging."

Crosstown KZFX recently flipped from Classic Rock to Alternative, and Beaubien says many KZFX listeners who prefer the harder side of classic rock segued to KLOL. But he cautions, "When a station goes off the air and a particular format



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ceases to exist, the audience rarely — if ever — goes en masse to one specific station. Usually they scatter to different stations or disappear completely. Another change in Houston will be when Z-Rock [KKZR] goes off the air. They were sold and will switch to Christian. In that case, we're in a position to get the majority of their listeners. I'm happy and excited with our posture in the market and our musical stance

Editor's note: See Street Talk (p.xx) for info on KLOS/LA.'s new on-air lineup.

Also, in last week's issue (11/18), KLBJ/Austin's ratings should have read 5.9-6.2, and not been listed with stations with the biggest losses. The Alternative Market Format Shares for Summer '94 were actually 3.9, bringing the average to 3.4.