

# Radio-TV programming

## WLS Girds For Chicago Top Slot

By EARL PAIGE

CHICAGO—WLS here is making its strongest bid ever to be the city's top-rated station with a tighter-than-ever contemporary format that basically means more-than-ever music.

After a little more than two months under new management, it has hired two new personalities, switched five to new slots and promoted one to an off-air position to whip up the format.

Actually, a very intricately-tuned mix of many ingredients have been re-mixed by new vice president and general manager Paul R. Abrams, a sales-oriented veteran of 15 years in radio, who transferred here from WABC, New York.

Just a few changes:

- Highly successful afternoon personality Chuck Buell to full-time music and production director;

- Switches in every time slot except morning drive (5-9 a.m.) where Larry Lujack continues his steady assault on once-thought-invincible Wally Philips, WGN;

- Hiring of John Records Landecker from WIBG, Philadelphia, and Bill Bailey of WWDJ, New York, the latter returning to his home town where he started at WVON here.

Of course, there's a lot more than this, just as there's a lot more to the change than was spelled out in a recent official release.

"WLS has long been established in the broadcasting industry as one of the best contemporary music stations in the country. Our two new air personalities, and our new schedule of shows will enhance an already extremely talented staff of on-air people and will further strengthen our programming," Abrams was quoted.

Several things made the change very appropriate. Early in a two-hour interview, Abrams said Harold Neal Jr., president of the ABC stations, "put WLS under a microscope" and was determined to make a "good station great." Mike McCormick, operations manager, described the change as, among other things, "adding a dash of brightness to the sound." He also said there had been no set policy. Many of the changes are nuances, very organic and spontaneous.

Chicago radio had been somewhat stunned by WIND's radical new, basically oldies format. There have been changes at almost every important station here.

Abrams, when asked about the WIND's strong showings, said: "I think that was a reflection of the so-called nostalgia mood that has taken place. Other stations, including ours, may not have been as competitive in their programming. I think (WIND's showing) is a very temporary thing."

### Monitor WLS Closely

Abrams and McCormick insisted that WLS, "does not program against any other station—we program against WLS." This is substantiated to a great degree by how much time top management spends monitoring the station.

Abrams said that except for two shifts of eight-hour sleep, he had the station on for 48 hours one weekend recently. "It was just too much radio at once. I never got so sick of hearing radio," he said. But he also did something he swore he wouldn't. He used the "hot line" phone to inform Lujack he had just done the best show "I have ever heard" (a Saturday shift). "The next Monday, Larry was chewed out though."

The format is indeed squeaky tight. But it requires very careful listening to detect any evidence of what must be fantastic pressure too, as Abrams puts it, "execute the format." After his first hour, recently, Lujack played 31 records, including long ones like "American Pie" (played twice) amid 41 regular spots (usually two back-to-back) with news at 55 and 25 and myriad spots plugging his show. In that same span, there were at least seven oldies (often the second record after the half-hour) among the 31 titles.

The oldies ranged from "Ruben Jones" (Lujack gave the years, too—1968) to titles as new as "Maggie

May," another long record. Is WLS playing more oldies? "We always have played oldies," McCormick said. "We have been for at least two years."

How is WLS programmed? The answer was "the public programs WLS." Abrams and McCormick go back to this theme time and again, explaining that the 30-record playlist printed "All Hit Music" plus 10 top LP's derives from station surveys of 30 Chicagoland retailers. "White Lies, Blue Eyes," which left Billboard's "Hot 100" Jan. 15 after 11 weeks, was still WLS's No. 8 song as of Jan. 31, so WLS is not a carbon copy of the national charts.

New records? There is at least one per shift. Actually, the number of new records depends on what's available, McCormick said. "How many have potential? Some weeks none, some weeks four or five."

### Rotating Stores' Call

Do reporting stores hype records? "I would never accuse any because we're not in the position to know or to prove it," McCormick said. "What we hope is that the people we work with are as honest as we are in trying to reflect accurate retail record sales." WLS calls various stores. "We rotate the calls," Abrams pointed out, so that a random factor is maintained.

McCormick said the decision as to which stores to call each week is made up on the spot. "We don't want to know (which stores will be called) because that makes it (survey) about as impersonal as it could possibly be." Stores may report from 20 to 40 top-selling singles (albums are reported as well). "Some weeks only 12 pieces may be moving that mean anything. Other times, 13 pieces may be tied for No. 26. What does that mean? At that point, you have to make a subjective judgment."

How often is a hit played? Deejays are required to play them once in a "three hour trick," Abrams said. There is latitude. In Lujack's four-hour shift, closely analyzed, he played "American Pie" (WLS No. 1) twice. He also played twice the No. 2 "Let's Stay Together," the No. 8 "White Lies. . . ." the No. 9 "Never Been to Spain" and the No. 10 "Down by the Lazy River." He played No. 3 "Day After Day" and No. 7 "Drowning in the Sea of Love" once. He did not play No. 4 "Black Dog," No. 5 "Stay With Me" and No. 6 "Clean Up Woman."

McCormick, who has solid background (KQV, Pittsburgh), a year stint at WLS in '68, and before that KOIL, Omaha; WIGY, Minneapolis; and KAAV, (Little Rock), claims WLS' secret is consistency.

However, said McCormick: "The biggest problem in contemporary radio today is the sterility of sound, the monotony of it happening." With this view, the challenge of WLS is apparent because both Abrams and McCormick insist that the sound is consistent around the clock. How do you maintain consistency without being monotonous? That could be the secret of this powerful 50,000 watt clear channel giant with its antenna in Tinley Park, Ill.

Much of the production is consistent. Variations come in via the spots. For example, there are no Tackel spots on Lujack's show, no appeal to the acne problem, only one Just Pants young people clothing spots. But Landecker, a top-rated Philadelphia deejay, has these kinds of commercials with no Sears sewing machine spots, no Preparation H, no Miracle White—so the demographics change and so does the sound; ever so slightly.

### Seek Top Jockeys

Of course, one reason for the consistency is another reason WLS is successful: personalities. Without disclosing salaries, Abrams claims WLS is after the best talent available. They are basically young, and WLS is shooting for the young audience or at least the audience young at heart (McCormick resists having audience age pinned down). Landecker is 25. So is Bailey, the first black deejay at WLS. Gary

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BUZZ ALLEN, left, and Dave Solomon, right, talk with Lionel Hampton in the studios of WIBF-FM, Philadelphia suburb station that specializes in the big band sound. Hampton was treated to a party at the station prior to his appearance at the Downingtown Inn, Downingtown, Pa. That night, Hampton introduced the two air personalities to his 1,250 audience. "It was a realization that our Big Band movement was not in vain after all," Allen said. Allen is director of jazz programming for the station.

## 3 Tulsa Stations Vie For Country Listeners

By DICK FRICKER

TULSA—A three-way country music race has begun here among stations KCNW, KVOO, and KTOW. Object of the scramble is the listening group that finds Top 40 too harsh and middle-of-the-road music too soft. The competition in this market may prove more interesting than anything since the days of the screaming rock jock.

The pilot men at all three stations say the trend here is toward country music and that Tulsa is unique because of its eastern business influence.

KCNW, owned by UNICOM Inc., a subsidiary of Tracy-Locke Advertising, was first in the market with the "new" country sound which they call Countryopolitan. KCNW began their programming slightly over three years ago when they bought KOMA.

Countryopolitan is described by operations director Dick Fain as, "The sound and rhythm of today with the basic country still there—in the lyrics as a story—and the same artist singing, but with an uptown sound."

KCNW has used its Countryopolitan to beat the Drake-Chenault programmed KAKC in some time slots during more recent ratings, primarily those taken before the departure of KAKC program director Lee Bayley, now with Drake in Los Angeles.

Fain explained the rating success, which occurred mostly during the day, by saying, "There was a lack of anything else in the market. Most rock played here is pre-teen, i.e., bubblegum, and the middle-of-the-road stations were too soft, so the middle people didn't have any place to go."

### KYOO Enters Race

KVOO, formerly a class II clear channel with an MOR format, broke the Countryopolitan monopoly in August and began programming on 50,000 watts with country music.

Jay Jones, program director, said the station will rely on a "Big Country" approach, referring to the watts of power, coupled with a strict country playlist that would be void of any "pop" or the crossover records used now by KCNW.

Jones recently told a listener over the phone, "I beg to differ with you, but while we were playing what you call good music, we suffered miserably and went broke."

KVOO kept its same staff for the switch and added Billy Parker in an all-night slot with a listener call-in type format. When a vacancy occurred on the staff last month, KVOO raided KCNW of its music director John (Wayne) Wagner and newsman-DJ Jeff (Peters) Luginbuel.

Wayne pulled good ratings for KCNW in the afternoon position, but fell during the first rating period following the KVOO switch. He is now holding down the afternoon drive slot for KVOO.

He said the only difference in programming is the lack of "pop" and the basic playlist rotation.

Jones explained the KVOO playlist rotation as one that gives the jock freedom to play and record on the list at anytime providing it hasn't been played within the past two hours.

KCNW has a stricter rotation which was designed by Wayne and calls for a Countryopolitan type play—a pop, Countryopolitan, strict country, and back to Countryopolitan.

### Names Buy In

The third side to the triangle is KTOW which was acquired this year by Roy Clark, Hank Thompson, their manager Jim Halsey, and Mack Sanders, who owns other successful country operations in Kansas and Nebraska.

Don Cameron, brought in from Sanders' Kansas station, KFRM, is heading the KTOW operation. Cameron said he won't be paying a lot of attention to ratings other than as a measuring device and will strike out for the local advertising.

KTOW is using a format similar to that of KVOO, by omitting a lot of the "pop country," but still using the more Countryopolitan sound. "We all use the same records," Cameron said. "The key will be

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THREE AIR PERSONALITIES OF KLAC, Los Angeles country music station, presented a plaque to Decca Records artist Loretta Lynn on behalf of the station commemorating her West Coast popularity with KLAC listeners, Miss Lynn was appearing at the KLAC-sponsored show at the Anaheim Convention Center. From left: Dick Haynes, Bob Jackson, Miss Lynn, and Sammy Jackson.

## Pa. CATV Uses Country Music

NORTH VERSAILLES, Pa.—"I feel certain there will be more CATV stations programming country music in the near future," said Roy Weaver, of Valley Cable TV. The CATV system has been spinning country music 20 hours a week for more than 14 months. "The response has been great," Weaver said.

While the record is playing, the visual on the TV screen includes pictures of the country music artist whose record is playing, scenery, the telephone number and address for the listener to make requests to, and pictures of the listeners. "We have no commercials, only station IDs and the weather report," said Weaver.