

enough adults to make it one of the few top 40's rated number one over-all in its market.

Coming down the Pacific Coast, KFRC(AM) San Francisco should begin to come on strong just as the traveler crosses the California-Oregon border. Sebastian Stone went to San Francisco to program KFRC in the beginning of last year in a massive shift of RKO programmers that saw the ill-fated attempt to change classical station WGMS(AM) Washington into a rocker. Mr. Stone, who started on the air as a jock on then WOR-FM New York (now WXLO[FM]) and became its program director by the time he left for San Francisco, runs perhaps the most "laid-back" major-market top 40 in the country. Residing in the birthplace of underground music and radio, KFRC, though exciting and foreground, talks softer—and wields a bigger stick—than is expected of similar operations. In a day when the sound of top 40's in major cities is growing more alike, a traveler would know he was in San Francisco—with all that implies—when he listens to KFRC. It too is among those few top 40's occupying the over-all number-one spot in its city.

Julian Breen, who served his apprenticeship with ABC Radio, is heavy on the progressive sounds at KYA(AM) San Francisco. KYA has been rocking since the mid-fifties, and even though its "jingle-free," hard-underground-rock days are over, it is still to the left of KFRC.

Still farther down the Coast Highway is Los Angeles—perhaps the toughest market in the country for a radio programmer. In L.A. the radio screams, yells, coos, promotes like a circus-owner with the creditors beating down the back door, promises trips to the moon (almost) for lucky contest winners and generally does everything humanly possible to grab the attention of the almost three million people who climb into their automobiles every weekday morning and evening. It was against that backdrop in 1966 that Bill Drake and KHJ(AM) raked out everything that could possibly be distasteful and bolstered everything they knew audiences liked and went to first in less than a year. "Much more music" was born there, as was "20/20 news" and "boss

radio." Faced with massive competition in the past three years, KHJ stumbled last year, and Bill Watson returned as keeper of the format.

In the town Buck Owens and Merle Haggard turned into "Nashville West," the husband and wife team of Jim and Brandy Price (he's the programmer and she does the music) at KAFY(AM) Bakersfield have kept country music from ruling there. Buck Owens's station, KUZZ(AM), still hasn't beaten them.

And to the east of Los Angeles, Bill Rhodes has preserved KMEN(AM) San Bernardino as one of the most important secondary stations for breaking records in the country.

If the traveler turns south in California travel, he can pick up one of the newer, more conservative top 40's, Bartell Media's KCBQ(AM) San Diego. Jack McCoy took over the programming of KCBQ from the mercurial Buzz Bennett and immediately came into national prominence for his development of "The Last Contest"—a super-prize promotion that was syndicated with great success. By virtue of a format tailored to different target audiences at different times of day, KCBQ has been able to garner a total audience large enough to remain number one in that market—with some heat from KGB(AM), now programed by Ron Jacobs.

Through Texas on the southern route back, one cannot help but marvel at the handiwork of Gordon McLendon—although he no longer owns the two stations he made number one in the two biggest cities in Texas, KLIF(AM) Dallas and KILT(AM) Houston. At KLIF can be heard perhaps the most personality-oriented top 40 in America. It has been raising eyebrows all over Dallas in the last several months with a two-way sex talk show hosted by program director Dave Ambrose. And KILT's Bill Young was the only active top-40 programmer singled out for a Bill Gavin award of achievement in 1972. With a broad playlist, selected for balance and color, Mr. Young has improved a ratings picture that had seemed beyond improvement.

Out of Texas and into the Deep South, the top-40 journeyman must devote some listening time to the grandfather of top

40 that doesn't act its age, WTIK(AM) New Orleans. Validating the concept he had proved in Omaha at KOWH(AM), the late Todd Storz found major-market success with an idea he got sitting in an Omaha bar listening to the same songs over and over on a juke-box. Morning man and program director Bob Mitchell made sure the music world would not forget WTIK when he broke perhaps the biggest record of 1972, Roberta Flack's "First Time Ever I Saw Your Face." New Orleans audiences enjoy WTIK's large playlist and strong news, which has filled several cabinets at the station with awards.

Bill Sherard in Atlanta at WQIX(AM) follows a "personality" top-40 route in this major Southern market, along with a tight (22-25 records) playlist. It's up against stiff MOR competition from the dominant WSB(AM).

Further north:

To George Klein at RKO's WHBQ(AM) Memphis, Bill Drake—RKO's programming vice president—is a newcomer. Mr. Klein has been at WHBQ for more than 10 years now. Memphis is the capitol of rhythm and blues and WHBQ's playlist reflects that fact.

And in Charlotte, N.C., Stan and Sis Kaplan headquarter their Sis Radio Inc. at WAYS(AM). WAYS has the unfortunate habit—unfortunate for Jay Thomas, its programmer, that is—of training and developing exciting disk jockeys only to have them spirited away to major markets. "Big WAYS" also sports a tough news department.

Scott Shannon, who programs WMAK(AM) Nashville, is usually done with hit records when they are going on playlists elsewhere around the country. He's a strong believer in programming to regional tastes and hardly ever looks at the national charts, he says.

And, as the journey swings north again and reaches the bottom of the eastern corridor in Washington, D.C., the keen top-40 competition has been between Tom Bell's WEAM(AM), "Big" Wilson's WPGC(AM) and Pierre Eaton's WINX(AM). Now there's a new contender: NBC-owned WRC(AM), programed by veteran Lee Sherwood, which has taken on the rock ambitions WGMS(AM) was forced to abandon after listeners protested a change from its classical format. Ron Riley, at WCAO(AM) Baltimore, is just out of range of most of the slugging going on in Washington and remains the top rocker in that city.

The trip across country reveals that if dominant stations in each region are playing primarily the same music, each has a method of presentation and, at least, a small group of records that appeal to distinctly regional tastes. They all have good signals, they all appeal to a broad range of people, they are all playing in the same game. But each has a character of its own.

As Alden Diehl puts it at CKLW:

"You can no longer be all things to all people. The rules are really still the same. You have to put a clean, simple product on the air that exposes the best popular music available." **END**

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