

Kent Burkhart: He Did It All



Kent Burkhart

In 1974, Kent Burkhart established himself and Lee Abrams as one of radio's first programming consulting firms, Burkhart/Abrams. The two had a profound effect on the radio industry over the next two decades.

The day after their first phone call, Kent Burkhart met Lee Abrams. Abrams was still in his teens, Burkhart wasn't. It began in the early '70s with a handshake. By the end of the decade it was the largest and, some say, most influential radio consultancy in the nation, Burkhart/Abrams.

Bay City, TX is south of Houston. Burkhart was south of 14, and Johnny Long owned a radio station. "I went to him and said, 'Listen, I'd like to play music for 15 minutes a day for all the kids,'" says Burkhart.

"Sure. When do you want to be on?" Long replied. By the time Burkhart graduated high school in 1952, he had his jock chops down.

In 1956 Burkhart was 22, had been in radio for nine years and had already worked for Gordon McLendon. He was about to come face to face with Todd Storz, the other Father of Top 40. There were major discussions in the Storz group about rock 'n' roll.

"Todd wasn't in favor of it," Burkhart says. "How the hell do you ignore Elvis Presley?" They compromised by playing only the softer Elvis, but the cat was out of the bag.

In 1958 Storz sent Burkhart to WQAM/Miami to clean up a payola mess. Then Burkhart bought KXTL/San Angelo, TX and learned how to do everything. Earl Fletcher, GM of KXOL/Ft. Worth, TX needed programming help. It wasn't full-time, it was consulting for \$200 a month, but Fletcher upped the ante by calling in markers with friends who had stations in Little Rock and Lake Charles, LA.

After eight months Burkhart realized he needed a real job. "In the spring of 1961, Barry Sherman, *Esquire* magazine's radio guy, told me *Esquire* was going build a radio group," he says. The first station was WQXI/Atlanta, and it was in trouble.

Burkhart cleaned up 'QXI, and things were on a roll until John Smart, *Esquire's* Chairman of the Board, heard a Preparation H spot on the air. Within 24 hours the station was on the block. New owners came in, fired the GM and gave Burkhart six months to prove he could be a large-market guy. During his tenure, WQXI's ratings doubled. When the company expanded, Burkhart was named President of Pacific and Southern Broadcasting.

Fast-forward. The chairman of the parent company wanted a New York City presence. Burkhart told him the station he'd selected had a lousy nighttime signal. When the station started hemorrhaging red ink, Mr. Chairman blamed Burkhart. "The next day I was jobless," Burkhart says.

Now we're back to the birth of Burkhart/Abrams, and Burkhart gives the impression that that's what he holds most dear, "I couldn't have asked for anything better in my life," he says.

Radio & Records

R&R Year-End Charts Debut

There were three formats in R&R's first year-end recap: Rock (now CHR), Pop (now AC) and Country. Much like the rest of the '70s, 1974's charts were powered by what seemed like an endless list of one-hit wonders — Terry Jacks, Carl Douglas, Blue Swede, Paper Lace and Billy Swan are but a few examples.

But some very successful recording legends also had a big year in 1974. Elton John, for example, reached the top 10 four times. Stevie Wonder, Barry White, John Denver and Olivia Newton-John also had a multiple hits.

Thirty-one songs topped R&R's Country chart in 1974, and Conway Twitty had three of them: "There's a Honky Tonk Angel (Who'll Take Me Back In)," "I'm Not Through Loving You Yet" and "I See the Want To in Your Eyes." Charlie Rich was anything but behind closed doors in '74: He landed six top 15 hits that year.

Classic Rock staples that hit in '74 included "Sweet Home Alabama" by Lynyrd Skynyrd, "I Shot the Sheriff" by Eric Clapton, "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet" and "Takin' Care of Business" by Bachman-Turner Overdrive, "Can't Get Enough" by Bad Company, "Radar Love" by Golden Earring and Grand Funk's cover of Little Eva's "The Locomotion," which was the No. 2 song at Rock.

Another notable entry from '74: "Rock the Boat" by Hues Corporation, which has been credited with starting the disco craze that would dominate much of the mid-to late '70s.

RADIO

Dave Sholin swing man at KFRC/San Francisco ... Al Brady Law Asst. PD at WNBC/New York ... Steve Warren PD at WHN/New York ... Jim Price KGB/San Diego GM ... Paul Kirby PD at WRKO/Boston ... Mel Phillips KQV/Pittsburgh PD ... Chuck Buell PM drive at KFRC/San Francisco ... Bob Shannon KDWB/Minneapolis PD ... Frank Wood GM of WEBN/Cincinnati ... Rick Devlin GM at WXLO (99X)/New York ... Allan Chlowitz KRTH/Los Angeles GM ... Steve Rivers to RKO Radio ... Dennis Constantine to KTLK/Denver ... Steve Dahl



Frank Wood



Rick Sklar

mornings at KSFM/Sacramento ... Rick Sklar Dir./Operations ABC O&O AMs ... Scott Shannon Mooney National PD ... Cousin Bruce takes Wolfman's slot at WNBC/New York ... John Lund WNBC/New York PD ... Mark Driscoll WBBF/Rochester middays ... Steve Rivers, Dan Mason join WZGC (Z93)/Atlanta ... Don Ste. John PD KFRC-FM/San Francisco ... E. Alvin Davis WAXY/Miami PD ... Dan Vallie to all-nights at WSGA/Savannah ... Bobby Rivers KTLK/Denver PD ... Shadoe Stevens PD at KMET/Los Angeles ... Bob Hamilton National PD for Shepard Broadcasting ... Todd Wallace KLIF/Dallas PD ... Lee Abrams joins Kent Burkhart in new syndication venture ... Charley Lake joins Bob Pittman, Dick Booth in consultancy ... Scott Shannon now PD at WQXI/Atlanta; Don Benson is MD ... New KRTH/Los Angeles PD is Dick Bozzi ... Jerry Clifton now Bartell National PD.

ROCK

- 1 TERRY JACKS Seasons In The Sun
- 2 GRAND FUNK The Loco-Motion
- 3 OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN I Honestly Love You
- 4 ELTON JOHN Bennie And The Jets
- 5 PAPER LACE The Night Chicago Died
- 6 GORDON LIGHTFOOT Sundown
- 7 HUES CORPORATION Rock The Boat
- 8 WINGS Band On The Run
- 9 PAUL ANKA (You're) Having My Baby
- 10 BO DONALDSON & THE HEYWOODS Billy Don't Be A Hero



POP

- 1 MARIA MULDAUR Midnight At The Oasis
- 2 HARRY CHAPIN Cat's In The Hat
- 3 OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN I Honestly Love You
- 4 ANNE MURRAY You Won't See Me
- 5 JOHN DENVER Annie's Song
- 6 ROBERTA FLACK Feel Like Makin' Love
- 7 DAVE LOGGINS Please Come To Boston
- 8 PAUL ANKA (You're) Having My Baby
- 9 MARVIN HAMLISCH The Entertainer
- 10 BOBBY VINTON My Melody Of Love



COUNTRY

- 1 CAL SMITH Country Bumpkin
- 2 BILLY "CRASH" CRADDOCK Rub It In
- 3 HANK SNOW Hello Love
- 4 BILLY SWAN I Can Help
- 5 OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN If You Love Me (Let Me Know)
- 6 CONWAY TWITTY There's A Honky Tonk Angel...
- 7 TANYA TUCKER Would You Lay With Me (In A Field Of Stone)
- 8 MICKEY GILLEY Room Full Of Roses
- 9 CONWAY TWITTY I See The Want To In Your Eyes
- 10 DON WILLIAMS I Wouldn't Want To Live If You Didn't Love Me



Clive Davis

Neil Bogart back in business with Casablanca Records ... Harold Childs to A&M VP/Promo ... Gil Beltran new MGM President ... Billy Bass becomes Manager/Nat'l Album Promo at RCA ... Dick Wooley Capricorn VP/Promo ... Marc Nathan Nat'l Promo Dir. for Bearsville Records ... Bill Pfordresher 20th Century Asst. Nat'l Promo Dir. ... Joe Galante Manager/Administration at RCA ... Al Coury Sr. VP/A&R and Promo, Don Zimmermann Sr. VP/Marketing, Bruce Wendell Nat'l Promo Manager at Capitol ... Louie Newman DisCreet

Nat'l Promo Dir. ... Clive Davis Bell Records President ... Al Teller to UA President ... Rick Blackburn Exec. VP/GM Monument ... Tom Cozzi RCA Division VP/Promo ... Ray Anderson to UA as VP/Promo ... Don Whittemore Nat'l Promo Manager/Singles at RCA ... Dick Kline Atlantic VP/Promo ... Ron Alexenburg VP/GM Epic ... Vince Faraci Nat'l Pop Promo at Atlantic ... Tony Martell new VP/East Coast Operations at ABC.

IN MEMORIAM

Dick Weber, Asst. Nat'l Promo Dir. for Epic.

RECORDS



Al Teller