



SEAN ROSS

FRED JACOBS INTERVIEWED

Classic Rock: The Format/Slogan/Future

Many of this spring's most spectacular increases belong to AOR/Gold hybrids. "Classic Hits" WKLH/Milwaukee debuted with a 7.0 share. KKLZ/Las Vegas, billed as "Quality Rock of the '60s, '70s, and '80s," entered the market with a 9.0. Both WKLH and KKLZ edged their market's powerhouse AORs, WQFM and KOMP, respectively.

KKLZ, WKLH, and most AOR/Gold outlets of recent vintage owe something to KRQX/Dallas, which, under Fred Jacobs and Tom Bender, eventually prompted both the "degraftization" of Gold and the gentrification of AOR. KRQX, on AM, led to Jacobs's three FM "Classic Rock" clients: WMMQ/Lansing, (7.0-9.0 this spring), KCFX/Kansas City (4.8-5.9), and WCXR/Washington (4.1-5.3).

As with most consultants and the format booms they touch off, Jacobs profits from only a fraction of the Classic Rock bandwagon. At least two L.A. stations, for example, use the slogan but none of its formatics. Many of those who aren't cannibalizing the format have tried to write it off as a quick-fix solution, an assessment with which Jacobs, surprisingly, doesn't entirely disagree. He talks here openly about CR's development, its role in the radio marketplace, and why, to paraphrase George Allen, the future for many of his clients is now.

San Franciscan Nights

The roots of Classic Rock date back to 1979-80 when those on the KRQX team were all ABC employees seeking a new format for the troubled KSFX/San Francisco (now N/T KGO-FM). Says Jacobs, "Marty Greenberg told me, 'We may have to put KSFX up for sale.' And at that time, for ABC to dump an O&O would have been a major move. He asked if there was anything else KSFX could try. That was the point where it got put down in writing. A lot of that proposal, which was very crude, was done in conjunction with Tom Bender.

"One of the reasons I thought it might be appealing for San Francisco was that city's rich rock and roll history. It would've been a rock station for San Francisco, keying in on a lot of the older groups and the Fillmore West. AOR hadn't developed to where it would be a couple of years later, but there were signs of the corporatization of AOR which, to me, signalled the opportunity for somebody to get back to its roots.

"Obviously, ABC wasn't in the mood in 1980 to gamble on something like this and that was probably a very wise decision on its part. But Tom and I had been talking

One Market Problems

Jacobs still envisioned Classic Rock as an FM format. And there would be differences in the format once WMMQ became its first FM client, but he insists "there really was no concept of 'let's start it here and then build it up.' I was trying to help solve a one-market problem. I had no illusions then that KRQX would grow and become anything significant. When that happened, I wasn't even in business for myself at the time. I was on the tail-end of programming WRIF/Detroit and just working with Tom in a sort of helper capacity.

"At the time, (AORs) KTXQ and KZEW were really both fighting each other in the corporate rock wars and neither one was playing a lot of older stuff. They were also quite metallic at that point. The FMs had completely dropped the ball on servicing their 25-34 year-old, primarily male audience. We felt that there might be a couple of valuable share points and Belo Broadcasting at that point didn't see KRQX and KZEW as competing with each other. The two stations' demos, combined, have made a real good sell on the street for the past three and a half years."



Fred Jacobs

about it so that when something had to be done with WFAA/Dallas (then N/T), it wasn't as if somebody went into a back room and dreamed the whole thing up."

KRQX/ Dallas

(February '84)

- SLY & THE FAMILY STONE/ Dance To The Music
ASSOCIATION/Along Comes Mary
MOODY BLUES/Nights In White Satin
BOZ SCAGGS/What Can I Say
YARDBIRDS/Under Over Sideways Down
GRAHAM NASH/Immigration Man
TROGGS/Love Is All Around
EDWIN STARR/War
ROLLING STONES/Sympathy For The Devil
CHUCK BERRY/Rock & Roll Music
LOVIN' SPOONFUL/You Didn't Have To Be So Nice
AMERICAN BREED/Bend Me Shape Me
LINDA RONSTADT/That'll Be The Day

KCFX/ Kansas City

(August '86)

- SYNDICATE OF SOUND/Hey Little Girl
CROSBY STILLS & NASH/Long Time Gone
CHICAGO/Dialogue
SIMON & GARFUNKEL/ Homeward Bound
DAVE MASON/Only You Know & I Know
FLEETWOOD MAC/Say You Love Me
BEATLES/Golden Slumbers-Carry That Weight
NEIL YOUNG/Southern Man
ANIMALS/House Of The Rising Sun
EAGLES/Those Shoes
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN/Growing Up

Not A Kind Industry

"This is not a very kind industry," says Jacobs, "to people with new ideas. A lot of people

don't realize that from the time I put together my sales kits to the point when WMMQ became my first FM client was about 15 months. When I made the announcement to syndicate the Classic Rock format, it was a joke. 'Hot Hits' was everywhere, and yet here's a guy in Detroit nobody's really heard from who says, 'I've got a Classic Rock format and it's going to be a really big deal.'"

During the time it took him to find an FM for Classic Rock, Jacobs did research and consulted other clients, some of them outside the AOR arena. Having set up his Media Strategies during "AOR's dead period," Jacobs says, "I was quite concerned about being stereotyped as only an AOR person." Although he'd like to work outside the format again, Jacobs says he eventually gravitated back there because "it became clearer that I enjoyed AOR more from a pleasure standpoint. And by my industry reputation, there were more doors open in AOR, so I felt I may as well go where the strength is."

By the time WMMQ opted for Classic Rock, Jacobs says he was "at the point of just figuring this wasn't going to happen. Running into (owner) Bob Ottaway and Jeff Crowe was just the luck I needed." It was also a chance break for the station. WMMQ, licensed to Charlotte, MI with severe signal problems through much of the metro, had spent most of the '80s



AVALON ATTRACTIONS — XETRA (69 Xtra Gold)/San Diego was the recent sponsor of a "Golden Boys of Bandstand" concert featuring Frankie Avalon, Bobby Rydell and Fabian. Seen (l-r): XETRA's Dan Springfield, Avalon, grand prize winner Shawn Mendoza and her guest.