

Rockin' in the buzzard nest

By Joe Crea

Downtown looks a bit like Oz tonight, and in Oz everything's all right. Under a hazeless, full-moon sky, Euclid Ave. appears respectable, even inviting. Winter encases the city with snow, and diamond lights sparkle from drifts. The city is stopped.

"Water Song" is playing across the air from an open car window. A lady and her man hold one another in the icy stillness while Hot Tuna's California guitars tinkle and muse...clear, light sounds to brighten the night. It's nearly dawn.

Down the road, in a tower near Playhouse Square, 12 stories up, is a nest of buzzards where the wizards of Cleveland radio reside.

They're just a bunch of hippies, really, some hip cats and trippy ladies who suddenly, and yet not totally unexpectedly, have a very powerful rein on northern Ohio's airwaves. They're the people from WMMS-101 FM, one of the rarest radio station in the United States.

"We're commercial as hell," says station disc jockey Denny Sanders, Cleveland's rock authority laureate. "Let's face it, we're a commercial station. But we're commercial art, and we attempt to put some flair into what we do."

Modern day America is a world of mass-marketing, and for the media-weaned post war generations — the kids who are in their teens and 20s today — rock 'n' roll music is one of the commonest commodities. You hear it everywhere. Half or more of the radio stations in town have a rock orientation, while more and more rock artists who have superstar-status, receive airplay on all kinds of stations.

The struggle for listeners can generate some pretty hot competition among station programming staffs, and WMMS has



Betty Korvan—She did her initial stint at Cleveland State University's radio station.

placed its money on a simple but currently unique approach: personality.

The Buzzard Nuclear Army was born out of Hinkley Township's annual bird-return, which the station formerly co-sponsored. An anonymous artist sent in a depiction of a bloodshot-eyed buzzard perched in a field of mushrooms, fungi that then constituted the WMMS logo. Station personnel were intrigued, but the artwork bore only the signature "David," with no address. Only by accident did Denny Sanders uncover the originator's identity, and David Helton eventually became WMMS staff artist.

Cleveland's always had its share of characters as well as a storehouse of genuinely ebullient personalities. Historically, Bill Randle and Allen Freed were early local proponents of both rock and personality back in the '50s when the whole rock 'n' roll

thing was starting up.

But nationwide, ever since those venal payola scandals of 1959 engulfed the radio world, there's been a trend towards "play-the-hits-and-keep-your-mouth-shut" programming. Station managements began pre-selecting all tunes for airplay, usually concentrating on popular, familiar hits. Chains of radio stations, chiefly AM outlets, began to program nationally. No matter where you'd travel in America, rock 'n' roll radio would sound pretty much the same.

The momentous mid-'60s youth movement exploded that trend. On both sides of America, Flower Power flourished. California became a spawning ground for psychedelia, ranging from the searing urban shove of L.A.'s Doors, as well

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WMMS-FM
is betting
on its
personality cult
to hatch a
batch of
high ratings



PHOTOGRAPHY/ROBERT E. DORKSEN



WMMS
101-FM



TOP RIGHT: Lawrence 'Kid Leo' Travagiante.

CENTER: Left is Dan Garfinkle, Travagiante and John Gorman.



Jeff Kinzbach, left, and Ed 'Flash' Ferenc.

as the Mamas and Papa's airy dreaminess; to "The San Francisco Sound," the highly-touted "head" music, acid rock: Quicksilver Messenger Service, born out of the Haight-Asbury scene late in '65 . . . the Grateful Dead, Hashbury communal leaders . . . and the Jefferson Airplane, proponents of chemical ecstasy.

The music was drawn out. No more 2-minute and 20-second cuts...goodby steady, sensible, danceable beat.

And blessed be the Beatles! The dynamic inventiveness of their 1967 spectacular, "Sargeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," heralded a new, grand sophistication for rock-and-rollers. Rock had grown up.

AM radio picked up a couple of cuts and played them, but the solo riffs were too intricate, too long, too uncommercial. And how could wholesome AM programmers air lyrics colored with barely-disguised sexual

and drug innuendo?

College radio stations could, and there was plenty of room on the FM band. Underground radio cropped up. Early on, pioneer stations began to broadcast in major cities where substantial youth populations resided — Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Seattle were all in the vanguard. University stations under non-commercial licenses faced weaker Federal Communications Commission (FCC) restraints. Across the country underground was programmed in; local college stations, notably WBWC at Baldwin Wallace and WRUW at Case Western Reserve around Cleveland provided pre-'70s "new wave" to fairly limited audiences.

Anything was apt to crop up during those days of wholly "free form" programming and underground radio — and a later incarnation, "Progressive" rock radio.

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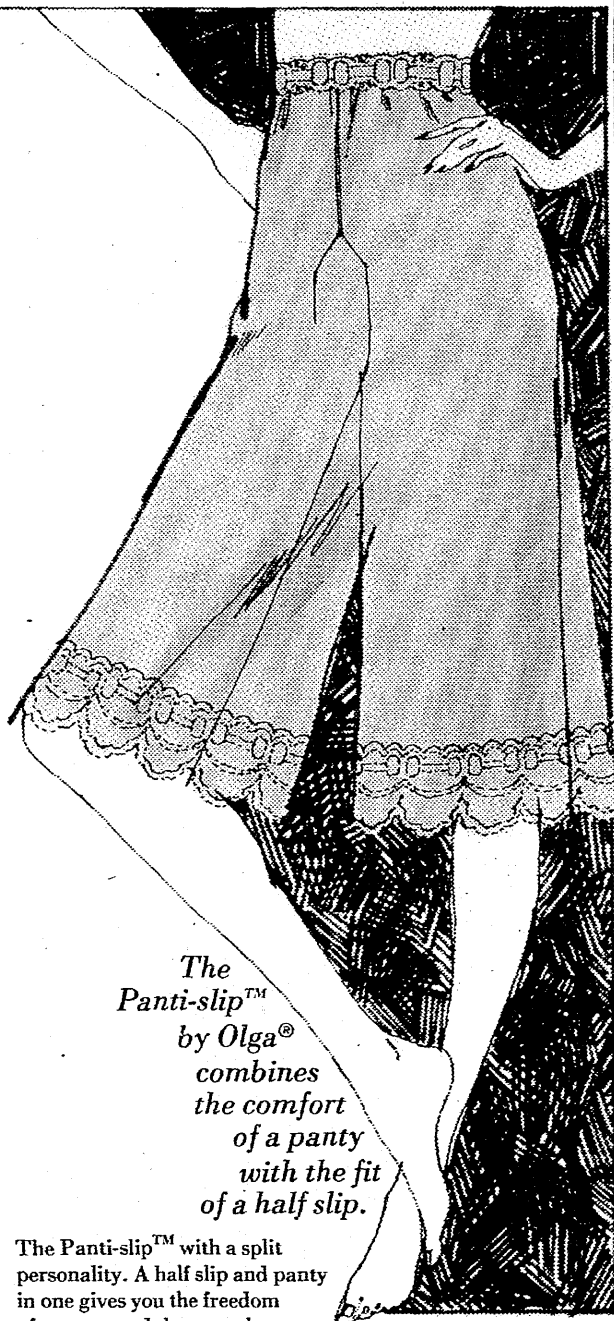
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BUZZARD CONTINUED

By the late 1960s, underground-progressives operated in Cleveland. But it wasn't until September of 1968, when WHK-FM was rechristened WMMS, that a "commercial underground" entity existed in town.

That format lasted about three months. Then under Metromedia, a national firm, WMMS dumped underground in favor of "contemporary rock." In September of 1970 'MMS abandoned its "Hit Parade" formula and switched to stereo rock.

Like most underground-progressives broadcasting under commercial licenses, WMMS was no financial bull. During its free-form, counter-culture days creativity took precedence over strict financial stability. Hippie entrepreneurs who bought commercial time on the station often couldn't, or didn't, pay their bills — or their small businesses folded. Even though the size of its audience was edging upwards, WMMS finances remained limp.

The establishment advertising agencies didn't look kindly on progressive-rock stations, but the most disturbing revelation came when more and more counter-culture business-people refused to contract airtime on 'MMS.

"You'd go into these places, head shops and clothing stores, and there we'd be — WMMS coming over their radios," Denny Sanders recalls.

"Eventually we'd get around to talking business and 'Hey, how about buying some time on the station?'"

"'Nope, sorry man, can't do it,' he'd reply. Well, why not? 'Well, I listen to 'MMS and I really dig what you people are doing, but I buy WGAR.' Why? Cause 'GAR had a 7.4% share of the audience in the ratings and we had a 2%. For a few extra dollars he could reach all kinds of additional people.'"

So much for "solidarity." When it comes to making money, dollars and ideals don't mix.

In December of '71 it was announced that Malrite Broadcasting Co. of Detroit had agreed to purchase WMMS, and her sister station WHK (Ohio's oldest radio station), for \$3.5 million. Uproar boiled when it was revealed that all Malrite AM stations played country-and-western music, while their FM holdings played soft-pop.

Instead of instant, routine approval of the sale by the Federal Communications Commission, a year-long delay ensued: a petition of protest, signed by 7,100 'MMS listeners, and 80 letters were filed by the Committee to Retain the Community Service Format of WMMS-FM.

After a study of the Cleveland broadcast market was made, Milton Maltz, head of Malrite, assured the FCC that WMMS would continue to broadcast progressive rock. The sale went through at the end of 1972.

Within weeks Billy Bass — station manager, air personality and driving force behind the station's growing popularity — left, angry over budget changes and because "the new owners took away my power to make decisions." Other staffers joined in the exodus.

Denny Sanders stayed. He had joined the station in September of '71, transplanted from the Boston area where he'd started in radio at age 16. Early on at 'MMS he revealed an acute sense of contemporary broadcast communications. Figuring that some aspects of radio are vital to all listeners he instituted the hitherto unhip practice of working old-school info — time, temperature, news and traffic reports — into his drive-time slot. The move stole listeners from other stations and boosted his 6-to-10 a.m. ratings.

He moved into position as station program director, but a procession of disc jockeys came and went. The station was losing listeners, and profit-minded Malrite was not amused.

Sanders telephoned John Gorman, an old friend from Boston who'd explored prospects for employment in Cleveland when Sanders first arrived here. "When he called me," says Gorman, "I was driving a station wagon for \$130 a week and I told him, 'Yeah. I need something really badly.'"

Gorman — the G'man — came to 'MMS as music director in June, '73, and replaced Sanders as program director a month later.

"When Bass and that crew went out the door," says Matt Lapczinski, better known as Matt the Cat, "we started a whole metamorphosis, and it didn't come overnight."

The desire to build a cohesive team dominated any thoughts that G'man and "Swordfish" (Sanders' alter-ego) had about winning in the ratings. Their selection process was arduous.

"We have finally, over the last four years, weeded out the right people from the wrong ones," says Sanders, "and have come up with a staff that are all very good friends and who enjoy doing their work well."

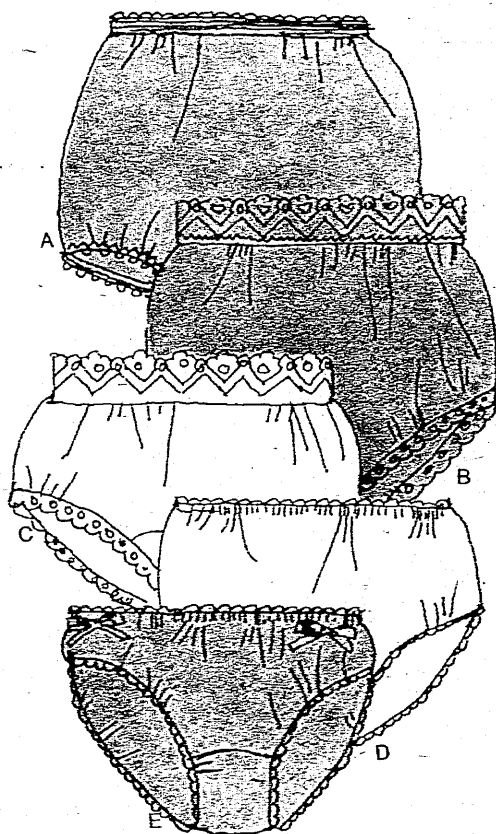
Initially, jocks were imported from Boston. Cleveland State University's radio station proved to be a successful training ground: Matt did his initial stint there, as did Betty Korvan; newsman Ed Ferenc, and Lawrence Travaglini, a fellow better known to folks on the street as Kid Leo.

Leo digs the team. "I think we're the Oakland Raiders of radio," he says. "We yell at each other; we associate with each other; we like each other."

"And we're intelligent about what we're doing. We've got a plan that we follow, sometimes actually a laid-out thing. But there are spaces, holes in that game plan that're undefinable: those 'holes' are room

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BUZZARD CONTINUED

we make for each personality's style — their emotions, feelings, gut reactions. It's like any championship team — it's the chemistry, it's the coach."

"And Cleveland's always been a rock-and-roll town," adds Matt. "It's been like that even before Allen Freed coined the term 'rock 'n roll' back in the '50s here. Some people say that it's the industry — the 'heavy metalness' with the Flats and all; maybe it's cause there's nothing much else to do..."

"I think the reason why Cleveland is the so-called 'capital of rock and roll,'" observes 'MMS morning loony Jeff Kinzbach, "is because the weather's not the best.

"A city can't have everything and unfortunately we don't have the weather. Come to think of it, we don't have the nightlife either, which is too bad... So people here go inside, and they're into their own parties, their own lives, and music."

For plenty of young people WMMS is their only link with the information network made up of television and radio, magazines and newspapers.

Example: in a journalism class a while back we were discussing the previous evening's presidential election. One student asked, "Who won?" As instructors we were incredulous. His response? "Hey, I was listening to WMMS all night and they didn't say anything about it."

As a youth force — indeed, as a media force — WMMS is dynamic. Ten years ago not that many people were listening to progressive radio. The demographics have changed.

Of the 23 commercial AM and FM stations ranked in the Arbitron rating agency's four-county survey area, WMMS comes out No. 1 in listeners aged 12-64. More than half of the men aged 18-34 listen to the station, while nearly 36% of the female radio audience in that age bracket tunes in.

What has most amazed observers of the radio industry is that WMMS won those stunning ratings while so far defying FM rock's growing trend towards formatted programming. 'MMS jocks still are relatively free to select their own music and program their own shows — though there are jocks who admit that there are gentle pressures, lobbying, and even "vigorous persuasion" within the air staff to push some artists and tunes.

The number of free form, no-playlist stations in the country has dwindled to fewer than a dozen. In fact, "progressive rock radio" is no longer an operative term: today it's called "Album Oriented Rock," a term coined by Radio & Records's Mike Harrison. When he had decided that the term "progressive" had become "archaic," he came up with AOR.

In most every sector of the rock industry, AOR has come to mean format rock radio. Playlists are devised by consulting firms,

notably "FM Superstars" out of Atlanta. During a given hour the DJ has instructions to play one from Column A, one from B, C, D, etc.

"It's awfully sterile radio," says Gorman. "There's no spontaneity, no immediacy, no difference whether it's snowing or sunny outdoors.

"For a long time I was opposed to the term AOR. I wanted to think that there still was progressive radio. But in order for us to have totally progressive radio stations, the music industry would have to be progressive.

"Record companies are another form of assembly line — press those LPs, push them out, hype them, and hope they'll make it. It's down to the bottom line — they don't care for artistry."

The AOR approach, perfected by "Superstar" founders Lee Abrams and Kent Burkhardt, is hardly hit-or-miss. Record purchases are the key to determining what gets played on one of the dozens of Abrams stations around the country, and the firm carries on extensive research to see what's selling. Programming has become a science.

In our age of mass-marketing the success of this AOR approach boils down to chicken-or-the-egg: do people buy it, and it gets played on the air, or do they buy their records because they've heard them on the radio?

"You know, it's a funny thing," says Matt, offering an ironic aside. "People will like what they hear, and if they don't hear it they won't like it."

"The Top-40 and AOR-type formats like M105 (WWWM, 'MMS's closest prog rock competition) have let the technology take control over them so much, they become nothing more than automated juke boxes," claims Gorman. "There's as much soul in that kind of format, as much flesh and blood as there is in a piece of tin."

"I feel that we're a 'small p' progressive radio station because we don't cut everything down to the lowest common denominator — you know, 'play the hits, play the hits,'" Sanders said. "The thing that bothers me most about virtually every AOR programmer is that they have absolutely no regard for the announcer as a creative person."

Slender and tense, Sanders smolders with keen mental energy. An hour spent talking with him about music and media is not only captivating, it's invigorating. Of all the staffers at 'MMS, his selection of music for the air tends to be most sophisticated (though hardly stuffy) and he consistently chooses music for his 6-to-10 p.m. shift, which is finely and originally produced.

In conversation he knows his music backwards and forwards, not merely intellectualizing about how different forms and eras of rock happened, but by revealing a gut grasp of why the music is so exciting, so compelling.



Denny Sanders: "...you have to express some kind of a positive life force."

Hovering around age 30, Sanders fully grasps the impact of mass broadcast communication and he speaks with great emotional intensity when discussing it.

"Rock radio is one of the most important media in which to have personalities (as opposed to androids) because it reaches out to so many kids who are living through the most impressionable times of their lives.

"Not only do you have to play good music, but you have to express some kind of positive life force. As a person broadcasting you must make an impression. That conveyance of distinction is imperative, or else you haven't left your mark on the world, and what was your life for?"

Leo takes a looser view. He's a big guy, Italian, and if he weren't so polished he'd be a hulking presence. "Street wise" is the term he applies to himself, and it's true; Leo knows the scene.

"I look at myself as an entertainer, and an entertainer has to do his act. Any comic or musician performs and, hopefully, the public will like it. Sure, we have an obligation to serve the listeners — give them information we think they may need, and all that — but we have a responsibility to entertain them. That's our first priority.

"All the things that Kid Leo might be to the people out there aren't necessarily what I really am, but I draw everything out of where I came from, and I knew guys who were hustlers, characters like that, and I draw from them.

"I've never been a good pool player, ever, but everybody would assume 'the Kid, oh yeah, he probably plays a good stick.' I don't shoo! stick, man. The fact is, I'm not a bad poker player.

"When I started doing sports on the air, a lot of people yelled 'you can't do

sports on a progressive station! It doesn't belong there.' You talk about serving the people . . . there's a big sports audience out there. I'm also entertaining them."

The rock radio scene today is ultra competitive. If a DJ, or a station manager, or an entire air staff want to stay on the air, they had better sizzle.

"It's a fun business," said Leo. "But, it's also damned cutthroat."

Tension and excitement fill the studios on the Cleveland Plaza Hotel's 12th floor. As soon as you pass through that foyer, walls carpeted in wonderful supergraphics, and into a long corridor of corporate offices — don't be misled by the candy-corn color carpeting; those offices are filled with statisticians and they've got profit margins on their minds — it becomes quickly apparent that business is the byword.

In this realm, ratings are all holy. Big ratings mean top money — you can charge more for your air time and have accounts dying to get their ad spots scheduled into your shows. Ratings drop and the station loses its competitive edge in vying for advertising dollars. The more listeners, the better your ratings. You want to catch more listeners, and hold 'em.

"I think that we've tried to maintain a great degree of free-form. By the same token, we think that if you're going to do anything very well, you have to have some discipline too."

That's Gil Rosenwald talking about how the music for an AOR station like WMMS should be programmed. Rosenwald is vice president and general manager of WMMS-WHK, having originally joined Malrite's sales force after a good many years with Proctor & Gamble. His function at the station is "to keep our status in the market," while running the station's overall business.

"From where I sit, we want to maintain the position of both stations in terms of the total numbers (of listeners) . . . As far as I'm concerned, WMMS is competing with every other radio station in town, be it WCLV or WDOK, and exactly the same thing with WHK."

In order to gain a larger share of the audience, Rosenwald explains, "We're probably much tighter than we were a year ago. But we haven't taken away any of the decisions of the individual announcers, we've just tried to lay out some guidelines and polish the format."

"This is a flesh and blood radio station without a confining format," insists Gorman. "We're trying to appeal to a very large demographic area — anywhere from teens to people in their mid-to-late 30s. And we're trying to make everything as palatable as we can but still remain creative."

"We're exposing everybody to everything," he concludes.

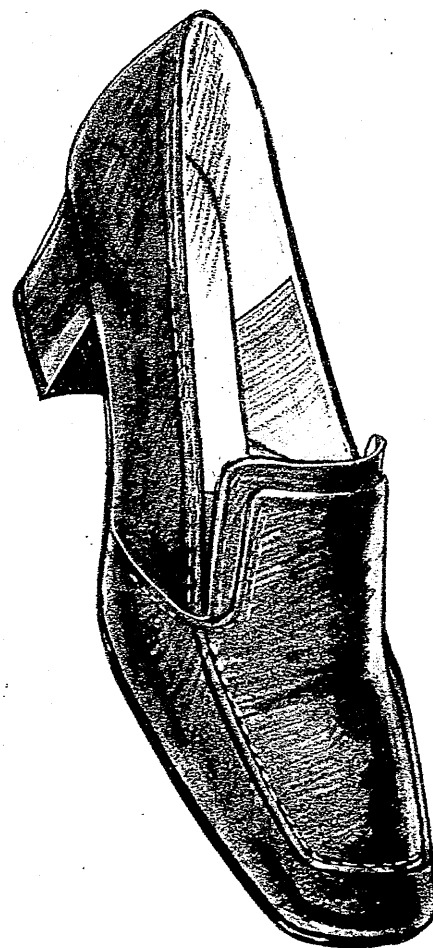
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How did WMMS get to be No. 1...

without a format, yet!

Discuss the concept of format with the personnel of WMMS and you hear one uniform reply — 'MMS has no set format' — but all staffers offer their own interpretations of the formula that brought the station to position No. 1.

Basically, the components of a plausible format in any given hour go something like this... (no particular order)...

SOMETHING NEW: The station prides itself in introducing, or "breaking," new artists. It will take a chance on records that it thinks are hot. You're apt to hear these hits fairly often.

SOMETHING CURRENT: "Entertainment," according to Denny Sanders, "is certain proven things which people like repeated. In our case it comes with a certain song." And certain acts are extraordinarily popular.

SOMETHING BY YOUR REQUEST: You dial 578-1007 and occasionally somebody answers the phone (it comes out to about twice an hour, but that's only an average: Matt the Cat does an all-request on Saturdays, Sanders does them on Sundays, all-request weekends, etc.). They tally those requests and they're weighed in programming but, more immediately, they represent songs that people want to hear now.

AN OLDIE: Maybe a couple of oldies — even three or four or five. These'll be scattered, according to the jock. It is his show after all.

SOMETHING A LITTLE OFF-THE-WALL: "There are all these little ingredients that go into every hour," says John

Gorman. Sparks is off-the-wall. Amazing Alex Harvey Band is definitely off-the-wall. Anything "New Wave" is sufficiently trendy to spice up a given hour — but not too often.

How many choices for airplay? You count 'em. A collection of around 10,000 lps, a reasonable number of 45s, toss in a stash of concert tapes — many excellent, and rare. How an accomplished disc jockey puts together an air shift is truly an enigma, nearly magic.

Jeff Kinzbach says: "Your music mix has to be perfect; it's the foundation of the show. It has to be progressive, but it also has to be familiar."

"I'm a musician," says Matt — the Cat — Lapczynski, "and on the air I try to put music together that sounds good, has a feel and a flow. You do that by putting together tunes that're in the same key, making the transition smooth from tune to tin."

Good radio is not just some jock slapping records onto a turntable and babbling between cuts. There's art to it.

"Working with audio," says Kinzbach, "is like working with TV — except that there's no picture. You just have to make the audio form the picture in your head."

Commercials are a necessary, though irksome, facet of everyone's shows. Says Kinzbach, "They're poorly produced, by agencies outside of Cleveland, by people obviously not very well equipped when it comes to creativity. They're produced fast, loud, raucous, and completely devoid of any 'consciousness' of today's youth. In terms of relating to us as humans — they're screaming at us."

Though "eight minutes an hour don't belong to us," as Gorman puts it, some of the jocks grouse that the station's commercial commitments often extend past that limit. "The salesmen promise too much,"

one announcer complains. "They get behind in their commitments to clients, maybe by promising more than they can deliver. They oversell, so they have to load up the station."

What's more, if you still happen to subscribe to those — faded? — values of voluntary simplicity (the old counter culture "badge of principles") then ol' 'MMS certainly has sold out.

Dial soap commercials blast you from your chair with a staccato horn barrage that'll slam you across the room. There are commercials for bridal salons, replete with a syrup-voiced bridesmaid singing of her adulation of some dressmaker. And one of the 'MMS jocks, in defiance of the Student Mobilization, extolls the virtues of an armed service career.

Eager promo men frequent the foyer, always ready to glad hand and grease. It's a jive business. They've got products to sell, and they can oil their delivery with plenty of hype.

"Nobody here's taking nothing from nobody." Simple declaratory statement on the part of a key station figure who bristles at the mention of dread payola. The offerings are tempting, however; some are trashy, a lot are insignificant trifles, and quite a few are exquisite items — a first edition medallion in silver, privately minted, a replica of one supergroup's winged logo, commemorating "the fine role that X-station has played in the Progressive AOR Community."

Value? Significance? Maybe it's standard operating procedure — but if it's in any way determining the kind of music we

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hear...well, people give in to some pretty unfortunate circumstances.

Whatever. The biggest thing that promo men do is show up to hype their firms' latest releases. A company like Columbia Records is apt to release 25 new lps in a week.

Figure maybe a dozen companies do that, while several more send out 10 or 12 premier discs and additional mailers arrive daily, with single releases and homemade tapes, studio tapes, tapes to audition for a Coffeebreak Concert (Creative Affairs director Sanders hears those) — there's a flood of new music to review.

"I'll listen closer to new acts than I will to established artists, because I know that the established artist is going to be added to playlist anyway," says Leo, music director. "If Paul McCartney comes out with a new lp I'm not gonna sit here and say 'hey, I have to hear it first,' or 'I'll think about it' — it's gonna go right into the studio.

"Whereas if it's a new group, Rented Tuxedo or whatever, I'm going to sit down



WMMS program director John Gorman: "We were faced with probably our one chance to 'make it', and yet we wanted to do it our way. And, here it is."

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and listen to see whether there's anything there. Same with a marginal group — take Wet Willies."

WMMS has managed to break its share of national chartbusters. A little way down the hall from the one-room monastery asylum that houses G'Man's Program Direction Headquarters is a veritable chapel of gold and platinum discs. Awards for breaking Queen's "Night At the Opera," Aerosmith's "Toys In the Attic," the first Foreigner lp, Phoebe Snow and "Frampton Comes Alive"; a Bowie gallery — "David Live," "Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust" and "Diamond Dogs."

Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run" is a special prize, as is Gorman's happiest acquisition, a platinum lp for Al Stewart's "Year of the Cat."

"In the course of a week, between Leo and myself, we'll listen to every new release that comes in," says Gorman. "We leave no stone unturned."

"We take a little unknown label like Janus with an obscure British folksinger —

Al Stewart — and that label has everything going against it because they're so small and so broke . . . And we hear something in those grooves, and we're out to expose it."

Introduction of new music is a calculated venture. People like the familiar, say the 'MMS programmers. They're apt to tune out if barraged with alien sound. When new music is presented in a style never heard before — when Jamaican reggae first came around, or raw Lou Reed, Eno, Roxie Music, even today's New Wave — it's uncommercial.

Unknown artists, however talented, may be dismissed — the listener "touches that dial" and switches stations. So WMMS announcers sandwich those songs between familiar and older music.

Frankly, WMMS plays less new music than it has in previous eras — that's the commercialization of the station. It's tougher for a new artist to break in. In a way artists face a bottleneck they discovered long ago back in AM radio: a hitmaker's always going to get better airplay.

But, say an especially good record comes

in, one that the air personnel feel that the masses will grab onto, it goes on the air. All cuts played are recorded on a tally sheet. A week later the staff looks at these "sound waves" and ponders.

"Say it's Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers," Sanders observes. "Okay, we gave it 13 plays, which is medium airplay. But what did the sales do? 'Nothin'. Okay, next week we check again. Still a great record, and a week's testing is still a little too early...but after two or three weeks, and no upswing in sales, we have to figure that we're just a little wrong."

There are plenty of demands on the radio jocks. "The pressures suck energy out of you," Korvan observes. "At the end of a ratings period, everybody is like — drained. One show can do that to you. But where else would I put my energies if I didn't put them here?"

When I ask program director Gorman whether WMMS still is community oriented in the '60s sense, he unhesitatingly replies, "More so. We're reaching a larger audience."

CONTINUED

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NO. 1 CONTINUED

How's that? "We're beginning to realize our power. All of us have had our offers to go to other cities, but we've each decided to stick this thing out because we think we've got something here. We're just scratching the surface right now."

"Suddenly, five years ago, we were faced with probably our one chance to 'make it,' and yet we wanted to do it our way. And," he beams, arms outstretched "here it is."

"We're successful, and we're also personality," says Kinzbach. "We have the opportunity to motivate people to do things."

"We're going to have to deal with pollution in this city; it's a terrible problem, and let's hope that a young mayor can handle that."

"I like to think that his consciousness of being young will help him concentrate on those kinds of problems — we're losing our tax base... look at our school system...and there are even people starving in this city. We've got some pretty heavy problems going, but in our way I think we can help by getting young people moving."

WMMS is in good shape. Compared with the rest of the industry, the station is still progressive. It continues to bring unique music, inventive music, obscure and new music to its listeners, and in plenty of other cities that kind of sound isn't available.

Consensus has it that there's little danger of 'MMS going all-playlist format, but if they do — and all you hear are the "big hits" tossed out at you by fat cat record executive hypesters, I'd book that most of the 'MMS jocks would eventually straggle away. Music's their paint, and they're not going to settle for spray cans.

Culturally, WMMS boosts folks, aesthetic senses with intelligent film reviews (critic Dan Garfinkle's been on ice till he joins AFTRA), by promoting the Cleveland Ballet, and by sponsoring "nights out" at the Orchestra.

But here is a station with innovative, at times even brilliant, young people who are in tune with an energy-filled generation.

It could produce intelligent public service programming, say in three minute segments, and sandwich it into prime time using the same psychology that enables WMMS to sell new recording artists. As Cleveland's only "alternative" mass outlet it owes its young audiences more thought-provocation: segments on health and nutrition, more on legal rights, and updates on job and career availability. These are all things that young people are going to need to survive.

The 'MMS jocks are purveyors of hip — they set styles. If they choose to make healthiness hip, this unique station must just blow the top off the AOR market twice: Not only as a "freak free-form" that's made it to the top, but as a music machine with a mind.

Joe Crea

PI