

KWST Rock Signs Off As Station Switches To Country

Dear Industry Colleagues, Clients, Friends and Fans of KWST:

...After 12 years of "progressive" AOR (album-oriented rock) as KLRB and KWST, our owners, Walton Broadcasting Inc., have decided to go satellite-automated Country Western on or around Sept. 9, 1983. This puts to an end the Monterey Bay area's *only* rock and roll radio station ...

...The station has made money for virtually all of its 12 years, but automation alone probably will save \$20,000 a month in overhead...

...We wish to sincerely thank from the bottoms of our hearts the hundreds of industry contacts, business clients, and colleagues that have come to mean so much more than just "business acquaintances" to us; and the hundreds of thousands of loyal and loving listeners to whom we owe the fact that we have survived and prospered for so long in a business known for its insecurity...

...Rock and roll will re-surface in your neighborhood soon; nothing has been able to stop it yet, and nothing ever will ... That empty space on the dial will remind you how easy it is to lose what you take for granted because it has always been there, and you guess it always will.

Sincerely,

Rosalie Smith, Music Director

Those excerpts from a letter written on official KWST stationery and signed by Rosalie Smith, music director,

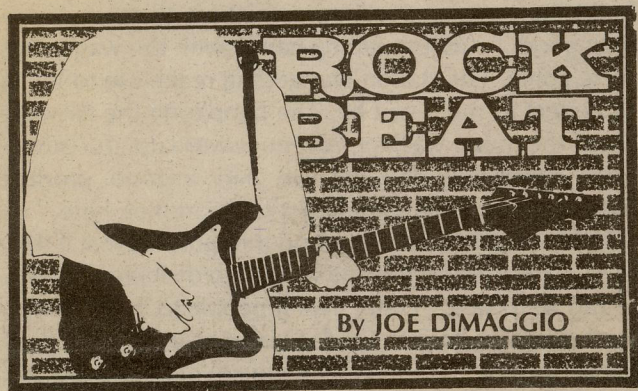
and the speakers of listeners tuned into KWST, Arnett, a pensive, serious look on his face, started to give the last farewell of a day filled with KWST and KLRB disc jockeys saying "so long."

"Rocking the coast to the very end was KWST 101 with 'Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll,' Arnett began in his polished nasal voice. "It's sort of an anthem we've held around here with KWST slash KLRB. (pause) It's been a great party. (pause) It's lasted 12 years. But all parties have to come to an end. It's been nice to be behind the "bar" four years, serving up the platters of rock 'n' roll. It's been a pleasure. (pause) But it's time to go home, sober up and wake-up and find another place to party because we know the Monterey Peninsula loves its rock 'n' roll and we know we're going to have another place to do it. But for now the KWST 101 slash KLRB FM 102 and 101.7 song is over but long live rock."

Arnett pushes a button that starts a turntable spinning The Who's "This Song Is Over." The slow, poetic; melodic piano beginning of the song eases through the station's monitor speakers.

As "This Song Is Over" begins to fade, Arnett pushes a button to the station's other turntable that has the song "Rock Is Dead/Long Live Rock," also by The Who, cued up. The song's repetitive refrain is sobering and appropriate—"Long live rock, be it dead or alive."

When "Rock Is Dead/Long Live Rock" abruptly ends, so does an era. Arnett turns down all the volume switches on the control board. An eerie silence engulfs the studio as "white noise" hisses over the air waves and into the speakers of KWST listeners.



and circulated to local media and KWST business clients confirmed rumors of the past few week—KWST (formerly KLRB) was abruptly bringing to an end an intimate 12-year relationship with its listeners as a rock 'n' roll radio station.

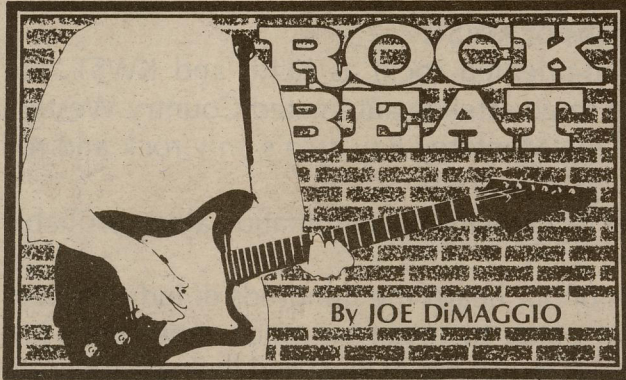
An era has definitely ended.

Sign-off Amid TV cameras, photographers, journalists and members and friends of KWST or KLRB drinking beer or champagne outside the control booth's window or bunched up inside the control booth itself, Matthew Arnett at 10 minutes before KWST's 8 p.m. sign-off last Friday night flicked a switch on the elaborate board, opening up the microphone.

Immediately, neon signs flashed for quiet. As the classic rock anthem, "Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll" began to fade over the station's monitor speakers

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KWST/KLRB Enjoyed Almost 12 Years of Consecutive Format



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The silence stands thick for five minutes. It is replaced by a nameless disc jockey playing rock 'n' roll. This "lame-duck" rock format is only temporary. On Sept. 9, when the satellite equipment has been installed, KWST will no longer play rock 'n' roll; FM 101 will be a country and western station.

Muddy Transition

Mark Kaufman, the former program director at KWST, would have liked the transition from rock 'n' roll KWST to country and western KWST to have been more abrupt. Since KWST is still playing rock 'n' roll after having said "good-bye" listeners who expected the country and western music format to immediately follow are probably a little confused.

"It was kind of muddy," Kaufman said. "We would have liked it to have been more distinct."

The news of the station's format change had leaked sooner than Walton Broadcasting Inc. had wanted. Because people found out about the format switch before the satellite equipment arrived, a lack of morale and stamina among the staff had necessitated the official KWST signoff as a rock 'n' roll station a week before the country and western format was to begin.

"Once news of a format change leaks in a business like this, it's over," said Rosalie Smith, the former music director of KWST. "Once you find out you're looking at an end, there is no incentive to continue because to be in radio you have to give your all over the air—your personality, your push."

Two weeks ago, Kaufman, who had been hearing rumors of a format change, asked top level management if they were true. Management confirmed it.

"Rumors had been around since we changed our call letters that our new Texas owner would change the format to country and western," Kaufman noted. "At the time we changed the call letters, several months ago, I was told that as long as the station was profitable we would continue with rock 'n' roll. The station wasn't profitable enough apparently and they felt they could make more money with a country and western format."

"The whole radio industry is mercurial, whimsical," added Smith. "Every single day a station changes format. It's no big deal. Everyone is used to it. We here have enjoyed an almost unheard of 12 years of the same consecutive format. The security here has been almost unheard of in the industry. Most stations change formats every couple of years."

"When I found out for sure that we were going country and western, it was such a shock," Kaufman said. "Everything I had worked 12 hours a day for, that we all worked long hours for, was going to end."

"As program director I felt that I was beginning to build the radio station into something that was sounding good; I was just getting happy with the way things were going. The station was getting real close to being as perfect as radio can be. The people on the air were great, the music was hot, revenues were up, our advertisers apparently thought we had a good product because they were spending a lot of money here."

Kaufman said that his second thought was that if they had to go off the air then he wanted to do it professionally and with class. "I didn't want people to break things, steal things or go into tirades about management over the air. I think we proved that we are professionals and that we can leave the air with style."

Smith said that top level management has agreed that the rock 'n' roll albums accumulated at KWST/KLRB over the past 12 years would be donated to the next local radio station that goes to a progressive, album-oriented rock format. She insists that another station will soon pick up their music format and even some of KWST's disc jockeys.