

KLRB Radio . . Defiant And Successful

By GREG BEEBE
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CARMEL — The Barnyard in Carmel is an unlikely place for a rock and roll radio station. Amidst the earthy wooden shops hocking Monterey Peninsula chic napkin rings, place mats and teriyaki-on-a-stick sits KLRB, Monterey Bay's only official "rock" station and one of the most off-beat businesses of its kind on the West Coast.

One listen to KLRB (FM-102 on the dial) quickly proves that this is not your average radio station. In these days of ultra-gloss polyurethane disco commercialism, KLRB stands out like a pimple on Cheryl Tieg's cheek.

Going against the grain is almost a matter of policy at KLRB, a station which often defies the traditional rules of radio and comes out a winner.

It is a relatively quiet Wednesday afternoon at Klerb. Chuck Gardiner, KLRB's jester-station manager, talked about the business' growing pains during the Vietnam war, the inherent problems of broadcasting and about KLRB's unique philosophy.

The station began in the more polarized days of the past when the Hippies hated the Rednecks and vice versa. Advertisers thought of KLRB listeners as "those people," as in "Oh, we don't want to advertise to 'those people'" (rock 'n' roll addicts), Gardiner said.

Still, Gardiner and the other KLRB forefathers were able lay a solid foundation in the Monterey Bay community, selling good respectable ads to good respectable businesses ("and no head shops," Gardiner said).

As a station gets better, its ads get worse. Palatable advertisements used to be one of the major appeals of FM radio, as it always seemed much easier letting a mellow DJ try to sell you tires than a shrill, fast-talking hustler.

Now, most FM commercials are taped assaults no different from AM radio, which spawned FM's popularity in the first place with slickness and decreased music allotments.

FM radio is the latest broadcasting bonanza, and most FM stations now sound peculiarly like their AM AM counterparts — except KLRB.

If one single item makes KLRB stand out

from the rest it's the station's policy of letting the disc jockeys choose what they play.

After the AM radio payolla scandals of the '60s, most stations took the responsibility of music selection out of the hands of the disc jockeys. To this day, few stations operate without a playlist of tunes which must be regularly played at certain intervals.

Through staff elections and an nifty little system of musical sets, KLRB deejays still can choose what they think the listening audience wants.

KLRB's programming is a mixture of new tunes, familiar songs, current hits and the jockey's own choices. It is possible at KLRB to hear the Rolling Stones sandwiched between Emmylou Harris and Count Basie. The programming policy makes KLRB a never-a-dull-moment station which often "breaks" new acts.

The staff does not operate without occasional disagreements about what should be played, but those once again are handled via vote. Said Gardiner of his voting power, "It's really no different than most Latin American elections."

SEE PAGE 33

Carmel's KLRB Radio . . . Defiant And Successful

FROM PAGE 21

Gardiner speaks in a buttery tone and wears a Howdy Doody haircut. Besides being the station's resident yuk-yuk man, he is a master of promotional gimmicks.

"We'll do almost anything for promotion," Gardiner said. "In fact, low budget promotions are our specialty."

Gardiner has even gone so far as to race Vicki McGinnis, the KLRB program director, on two giant elephants. When he's not drag racing pacheyderms, Gardiner is busy dreaming up new promotions and working on local concerts with Bill Graham Production's local representative Hector Lizardi.

KLRB has prepared for the upcoming DEVO concert at the Civic Auditorium by giving away an authentic DEVO yellow plastic DEVO jumpsuit ("for wet chemicals and messy job protection," Gardiner said).

The station also gives away 15-20 record albums a week through mutual agreements with the music labels — a real treat for listeners now that discs sell for \$6.98.

The life of a rock disc jockey is not quite as glamorous as it's cut out to be. The station has eight full-time deejays, all of whom make about as much as your average Safeway bagger.

"The money keeps me here," said evening jockey Robert Stock, casting a sarcastic glance at Gardiner.

Stock has been at KLRB for quite some time and is one of the station's more colorful personalities. Sitting barefooted on a short revolving chair in a black t-shirt and blue jeans, Stock handles records as if they were a mere extension of his hands.

Stock's in-person voice does not seem particularly unusual during an informal conversation. As the music plays, Stock talks about the state of the radio art, demoing "oatmeal over the airwaves."

When it's time to go back on the air, though, he furiously rushes back to the microphone, throws on the headphones and assumes his best mellow FM deejay voice.

He talks softly because he's not competing to be heard. His slightly smokey radio persona seems like the prototype voice of FM radio. Stock said he's "centered" by the radio. "Turning the mike on really brings me around," he said before yanking out some of the more obscure releases for Sentinel inspection.

The KLRB music library is a music maniac's dream come true. Any record worth its weight in vinyl can be found in the station's massive collection.

But, you can only play em one at a time, which is what KLRB does, 24 hours a day.

KLRB is known throughout the United States and England for its ahead-of-the-crowd programming. Many of today's hits were broken yesterday by KLRB disc-spinners.

When the superstar Dire Straights band recently received their first gold record — they did not keep it — instead the group gave it to KLRB morning jock DJ Donna, who was the first American radio person to play the band's smash debut album.

Evening deejay Nigel Brandwell (formerly of the BBC) was also the first person to play Elvis Costello's latest album "Armed Forces," proof to the notion KLRB does not wait to follow others — they lead.



Station manager Chuck Gardiner (left) has been known to light Robert Stock's news copy on fire.

Willie Nelson Here July 15

FROM PAGE 21

Ironically, though, as the apparent unruly disregard for authority of the last decade has given way to a seeming return to older conventions, Babitz sees former activists now working inside the system to carry out some of the changes first envisioned during that period of unrest.

Noting that "the tremendous body of people — the war babies" spearheaded the political activity of the '60s, she observed that that group was still a powerful demographic force within the total population.

"We have come into the system . . . now we are the system," she went on, pointing to the former activists who now wield power in business and the professions.

"We're working within the system because we couldn't bust it down. Hopefully our idealism will get us through the rough spots."

Besides protesting nuclear and promoting solar energy, CED has also put the rock n' roll connection to work for other causes. A February concert featuring the Grateful Dead in the Oakland Coliseum raised \$40,000 for CED's "campaign against corporate causes of cancer."

Saying that corporate — and environmental — causes of cancer "will probably be the biggest thing CED is involved in this year," Babitz summed up the thrust of these efforts by asking, "Do we really have to pay with our kidneys and lungs for somebody's profit motive?" She said that the thrust of these efforts is "to get public awareness high enough to pressure the people in Sacramento into doing their jobs."

And one way of getting that awareness high enough is through the show business connection — especially the energetic personal efforts of Jane Fonda herself.

"What we have is Jane," Babitz said, characterizing this

terested Nelson in the Laurel Springs Camp.

The camp is described in an informational brochure as "a gathering place for children from across the state. They are children of all cultures and backgrounds, learning through living together — not only traditional camping skills, but the

deeper values of cooperation, democracy and social justice."

Although Nelson didn't find himself in complete agreement with Fonda's politics in other areas, he did like the Laurel Springs idea well enough to agree to do a benefit for it — and to think about signing up his kids.

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9:00 PM to 1:00 AM
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Semi-Formal Dress
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Friday, June 15

FIRST COURSE: Gnocchi Verde (Spinach and ricotta cheese dumplings served with a fresh buttery tomato sauce)

SECOND COURSE: Incoltini alla Fugazi (Sauteed beef rolls filled with chestnut, Italian sausage, raisins soaked in vermouth, apples and parmesan cheese and served with a red wine sauce).

Saturday, June 16

FIRST COURSE: Pomodoro e Zucchini (Baked tomato and zucchini stuffed with ricotta and parmesan cheeses, chopped olive, pimento and bell pepper, served with a fresh, buttery tomato sauce).

SECOND COURSE: Bistecca Cognac (Sirloin steak sauteed in butter with brandy, worcestershire and mustard).

Sunday, June 17 - HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!!!

FIRST COURSE: Soup of the Day

SECOND COURSE: Pollo Cardinale (Boned, breaded chicken breast, stuffed with prosciutto and fontina cheese, sauteed and served with a lemon-parsley butter) or...Crespelle Colombo (Italian crepe filled with