

Pop/Rock, but we usually don't touch stuff with a harder edge.

WHAT CRITERIA DO YOU USE WHEN YOU ADD RECORDS?

The first thing I look at is balance. We try to keep the station extremely well balanced as far as tempo and types of music, so before I can add anything new, I have to determine my balance. If I don't need another ballad, while there may be 2,455,000 good new ballads out, that's not what I'm looking for.

Obviously, after looking at the call-out research, sales and requests, I determine how many drops we have. My only criteria for adds are what songs best fit into those slots. I'm not as concerned about chart position or whether a record got 42 or 62 adds or whether B96 in Chicago moved it 25-21, even though there are certain stations I like to look at, and they will play a factor in my decision process.

"Whoever said Top40 is only a 12-24 format? It has always performed well in the money demos when it was programmed well."

I don't get into the numbers games as a sole basis of determining what we're playing. I'm looking at whether the record fits the balance of the station and whether the artist has a track record or not. If he does, it's certainly a lot easier to move on it earlier than with an artist who doesn't have a track record.

But that doesn't mean we don't play artists without a track record. We added Mr. Big over the holidays; it's one of our most-requested records, it fits the balance and it sounds great, so who cares who Mr. Big is?

ARE THERE OTHER PROGRAMMERS WHOSE OPINION YOU RESPECT AND WHO YOU NETWORK WITH REGULARLY?

Yes. Unfortunately, I haven't had a lot of time to do that since I came here. From time to time, I talk to the Mike Blakemores, Tom Gjerdrums, Scott Wheelers and Joe Crains of this world. The people I pay attention to and respect are at stations that are similarly focused on what we're doing here in Des Moines and in Champaign, which is a very mass-appeal and slightly adult-leaning contemporary format.

To be successful in the 1990s, from a business standpoint, advertisers demand certain demographics and no matter what your format, you have to deliver portions of those demographics, and that's what

we're doing in Des Moines. We do extremely well 25-54 as well as 12+, while still maintaining 60+ shares of teens. Knock on wood, hopefully we'll continue with that success.

WHO'S YOUR DIRECT FORMAT COMPETITOR IN THE MARKET?

There isn't a direct format competitor. Various forms of Top40 have gone up against Q102, and all of them have failed miserably. What's left is KGGG, an outstanding well-programmed AOR that's very Classic-oriented. They don't play a whole lot of currents, but the ones they play fit the station very well. They're very promotionally active, have a good morning show and I have respect for the PD, Phil Wilson. They've done very well in this market for many years. On the AC side is KLYF, which hasn't had much rating success. Hopefully, I'll keep them in that position. Those are the two closest competitors. There is a very well-programmed Oldies station, KIOA, that has some effect on our upper end.

HOW DOES COUNTRY DO IN YOUR MARKET?

Extremely well. KJYJ is a very good Country station. They're always near the top of the ratings. They have a good morning show, and they market themselves very well. As long as Garth Brooks keeps on putting out records, they'll continue to do well. And there's nothing much we can do about them.

We have played around with a couple of Garth Brooks' tunes. We haven't put any of his songs in a regular rotation. Perhaps we should do that, as there is no denying that Brooks is the music superstar right now, and that helps Country stations. You just have to ride out the Country wave. A good Top40 plays the top songs of the day, and Brooks may have to fit in the mix at some point, depending on the song, at least maybe in the midwest and the south. Garth might get Top40 radio thinking that we should start playing appropriate songs from that genre if the song is truly mass appeal.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF THIS BUSINESS, ISN'T IT?

That makes it fun. Top40 has always been a fun format and, let's face it, look at how many superstars are on the charts. Luckily, Michael Jackson has returned and Michael Bolton still puts out records, but the number of Top40 superstars is certainly not as great as it was in the mid-'80s, so maybe people like Garth Brooks will fill that void until some legitimate top Pop/Rock superstars return to the scene.

AND THE ROD STEWARTS HAVE NEVER GONE AWAY.

Thank goodness, programmers have not ignored people like Rod Stewart

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