

# MUSIC

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Radio Programming. With so many radio stations in the area, why is there so little variety in programming? A twist of the AM and FM dials reveals that most local programmers have opted for one of five formats: beautiful music (WKEZ, WFOG), rhythm and blues (WOWI, WRAP, WPCE), country music (WCMS, WHNE), and classical music (WGH-FM, WHRO-FM).

And just about every other station plays contemporary music. This boils down to the same current Top 40 hits over and over again, and even casual radio listeners must surely deplore the lack of imagination shown by local programmers and music directors.

nation's most competitive radio markets. Currently, there are 18 AM and 16 FM stations broadcasting locally. And with the exception of WHRO-FM, they are all seeking pieces of the same lucrative advertising dollar. This fierce competition causes stations to be extremely concerned with their audience ratings - a concern which heavily influences decisions by station programmers regarding the musical format which should be adopted.

This problem has become so acute that the so-called "album stations," (WMYK K-94, WZAM and WNOR-FM 99) which formerly were known for their willingness to expose new artists and a wide variety of music, have become increasingly indistinguishable from their more Top 40-oriented competitors. Music directors usually answer any question or criticism regarding their programming with statements to the effect that the majority of listeners

want only well-known songs or artists. This music receives the highest ratings; therefore it is the most saleable to advertisers. Can the radio stations be blamed? Probably not. After all, they are private businesses trying to make a profit, not public service organizations.

If there is a solution to this dilemma, it possibly rests with the programming practices of public radio, locally WHRO-FM. Supported by government funds and public contributions, public radio is freed from the pressures of advertising sales. It is this freedom which makes public radio the ideal source of alternative programming, offering the diversity of jazz, folk and progressive adult contemporary music, such as the music of Richard Kerr, Kim Carnes, or Rupert Holmes.

Does public radio currently serve the public's need for these alternatives? Absolutely not! On the contrary, at least 90 per cent of WHRO-FM's music programming is devoted to classical music. If the area were not already served by an excellent full-time classical station (WGH-FM), public radio's programming would be more understandable. As it is, instead of offering alternative music, WHRO-FM essentially competes for listeners with WGH-FM, a private enterprise, which for many years has done an outstanding job of serving the needs of classical music listeners.

The situation can be changed. But without strong encouragement from a public willing to express a desire for a change in programming philosophy through contributions and letters, it is probable that the "Top 40 takeover" will continue to flourish indefinitely.