

Stations compete, good and bad new rock vs. tried, true

By Anastasia Pantisios

For about two years, WMMS-FM (100.7) has reigned as the Cleveland area's No. 1 rock 'n' roll radio station.

It hasn't had any real competition since WNCB was knocked out of the running last year, when it changed its format to country music.

One can discount stations with a top 40 format as competition. Though top 40 was, at one time, the rock 'n' roll radio, it has long since become the middle-of-the-road melting pot that it was back in the early '60s before the Beatles broke.

Top 40 really isn't rock 'n' roll at all; it doesn't relate to a kid who's got a stack of albums by Grand Funk, Led Zeppelin, Aerosmith and Rush. That kid's only possible radio music source has been WMMS.

How much of WMMS's dominance in the ratings has been due to its own programming appeal, and how much has been due to the lack of an alternative is open to debate, but maybe we'll find out.

Early in March, WWWW (referred to as M105) went on the air with a format that is definitely rock 'n' roll, if not as "progressive" (whatever that means) as WMMS. It does relate to the tastes of a younger person who has



Eric Stevens, M105 program director.

an active interest in rock music, whereas a WIXY's appeal is far more general.

M105 is so new that it

probably has not jelled into what it is going to be, and it is doing some special programming to draw in an audience.

Program director Eric Stevens asserts that the station is currently playing a preponderance of well-known material including older material that could be termed classic ("Substitute" by the Who or "Wooden Ships" by Crosby Stills and Nash, for instance), so that the listener is almost always hearing material with which he is comfortable.

This will be augmented later with larger portions of untried music, Stevens says.

WMMS continues to follow its established pattern of playing a fairly broad selection of current and older records programed by the (hopefully) well-informed disc jockey. In the past, WMMS has devoted much air time to playing of new artists.

This format has resulted in large patches of mediocre and same-sounding material, but it also allowed the exposure of music that was not being played anywhere else of consequence. In an economic situation where new artists can't get signed to labels, can't get gigs and can't get air play if they do get signed, this can only be healthy.

Will WMMS retain its supremacy in the face of competition?

Undoubtedly, many people who like rock 'n' roll have listened to WMMS because it is the only real rock music station. The

question is, how many of those listeners are sophisticated enough to prefer a Lucifer's Friend tune to something by the Rolling Stones? It's human nature to lean toward what is known, and familiarity often makes things acceptable and even liked. Top 40 radio exploits this human propensity endlessly.

WMMS program director John Gorman feels that the kids in this area are too hip to revert to listening only to establish artists and well-known records. "Cleveland audiences are different from those everywhere else. And it's the kids who break artists, not us. If the kids weren't into listening to them, we couldn't break new performers. There've been things we've played to death that we couldn't get anywhere with; we played Nils Lofgren, but nobody bought it."

But, Stevens said that his station hasn't had many requests for some of the artists that kids here are supposed to like. "We've had thousands of requests, but no one asks to hear Sparks or Cockney Rebel."

Stevens believes that not every cut on an album ought to be passed for air play, while on WMMS the programmer is free to play whatever he feels is worthwhile. I certainly agree with Stevens when he says that often there is only a single good cut on an album and the rest really shouldn't be played on the radio.

The problem is in making the decision as to what is worthy. A person's tastes are arbitrary, and in borderline cases, this could be critical. Is it not perhaps worth putting up with some junk and someone's faulty taste on a particular matter, just so some excellent, neglected material will be played?

But, in the end, it comes down to how much borderline, uninteresting or just plain unfamiliar material will people put up with while waiting to be knocked out by something else?

My own feeling is that M105 has got the edge, appealing as it does primarily to people's already existing tastes; to the part of all of us that wants to be surrounded by familiar things. WMMS no longer has the advantage of a captive audience that will sit through unfamiliar material because it's bet-

I hope though, that John Gorman is right about this area's yearning for the new and different. It would be sad if Cleveland were to become like so many other cities, where you can hear Led Zeppelin or Ringo, but rarely Sparks and never Jöföri Cale.

According to Stevens, M105 will be exposing new artists, but not in the quantity that WMMS does. WMMS has the track record in this respect. The

Rock beat

question is, what quantity do we want it in?

In the end, only the listeners have the answer. And it won't be what they say they want that counts, but what they really listen to.

Nominated for 11 Academy Awards

- Best Picture
- Best Director
- Best Actor
- Best Supporting Actor (3)
- Best Supporting Actress
- Best Screenplay Adapted From Another Medium
- Best Art Direction - Set Decoration
- Best Costumes
- Best Original Dramatic Score

WINNER OF THE YEAR'S BEST DIRECTED FILM
FRANCIS FORD COPOLA
—DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA

The Godfather PART II



NOW SHOWING	CENTER-MAYFIELD
LA SALLE	NORTHFIELD PLAZA II
PARMA	VARIETY
WICK WILLOW II	WILLOW

"A PROVOCATIVE, SHREWDLY MADE SHOCKER!"



When Charles Bronson begins to shoot the bad guys, it's difficult not to cheer him on with loud shouts of encouragement. And so New York has its first vigilante and perhaps its first real crime deterrent. **IT ALL WORKS!**

"RARELY IN SCREEN HISTORY HAS A MOVIE CAUSED SO MUCH VIOLENT AND CONTROVERSIAL REACTION FROM BOTH AUDIENCES AND CRITICS! WE ARE READY FOR ACTION. BRONSON PROVIDES IT. THRILLER! A COMPLEX AND STARTLINGLY ORIGINAL FILM THAT WILL ANGER AND PROVOKE!"



"A TIME-BOMB OF A MOVIE, exploding at just the right moment in a glare of truth that will touch and terrify us all. It crackles with the electricity of dangerous big city streets, and is so timely in its terror that the switchblade seems to pick the viewer's skin, the bullet seems to whiz along his ear. **A WINNER!**"

A Paramount Release
RENÉ DE LAURENTIS Presents
CHARLES BRONSON
in **"DEATH WISH"**
Co-starring VINCENT GARDINIA, WILLIAM REDFIELD and HOPE LANGE
Music by HERBIE HANCOCK from the movie "DEATH WISH" by BRIAN GARFIELD. Screenplay by WENDELL MAYES
Producers: HALL LARDESS and BOBBY BOBERTS. Created and Co-produced by MICHAEL WINNER
TECHNICOLOR A Paramount Release

RESTRICTED

NOW!

AUTO DRIVE IN	CANAL ROAD D.I.
267-6600 1235 Brookpark Rd.	341-1551 Canal Rd. E. 43
EUCLID AVE. Dr. In	NORTHFIELD Dr. In
267-6600	341-1551