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Old KTWN sounds coming on WAYL

The KTWN sound — absent since the FM station was sold and its format changed — is about to return to local radio, and they've finally found a name for it.

It's called "Beautiful Music," and it will be heard on WAYL in increasing doses beginning sometime within the next two weeks. Plans now call for a version of KTWN's old "Mellow Till Midnight" to air on WAYL from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Saturday, featuring the music of Bob James, Tim Weisberg, Earl Klugh and the other artists who made KTWN such a cult favorite. Don't call it jazz, though, and don't call it KTWN. Station manager Alan Goodman of WAYL doesn't want to scare off the listeners that already make his station successful. He simply sees the move as a way to lower his demographics a bit and keep the KTWN listeners from scattering to other stations.

"The delicacy is, how do you protect one audience and appeal to another," Goodman said last week. "We can't be KTWN. All we'd do is put the beautiful-music listener off."

Goodman is convinced that the two formats are compatible, and there really is nothing frightening about the progressively soft music that KTWN specialized in before the station was bought by "adult contemporary" forces. Some of the former KTWN staffers are helping in the transition, and Goodman said that he's spent 90 hours in the last two weeks listening to records to determine exactly what sound his station is going to present.

At first, the station planned to broadcast the KTWN sound from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. "But there's not enough of that music compatible to both formats," Goodman said.

Goodman assures us that more of the progressive soft stuff is on the way at his station, however.

"We're taking the first step toward the evolution of beautiful music," he said. "Ultimately, beautiful music is going to come to where KTWN was. We're going to play more of that music within the next six months to a year, with no reservations, as soon as we clearly identify where the happy middle ground is."

WAYL will turn on to jazz; old KTWN format returns on cable



Nick Coleman

Come in off that ledge, jazz fans. It turns out that there is life after KTWN after all.

Progressive music lovers have been in mourning since late September when new owners took possession of KTWN-FM (108) and turned it into "The new B 108," substituting rock and moldy oldies for the soft jazz sound of KTWN.

But now comes word of not just one but two efforts to restore the KTWN sound to the Twin Cities.

The owners of WAYL-FM (93.7) plan to begin an evening jazz program next month that will be very similar to the popular "Mellow to Midnight" show on

the old KTWN. And former KTWN owner Jack Moore yesterday began broadcasting his old station's format to cable television subscribers in suburban Minneapolis.

Alan Goodman, WAYL's general manager, said the "easy listening" station plans to start an evening jazz program Dec. 1 that will run from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Monday through Saturday. Goodman said about 90 percent of the selections of the program, as yet unnamed, will be identical to tunes featured by KTWN's now-defunct "Mellow to Midnight" show.

"What KTWN did was another form of easy listening music," Goodman said.

"There's a lot of commonality for listeners between what WAYL does and what KTWN did if they're looking for easy listening, relaxing music."

Some jazz purists might cringe at the idea of WAYL, which used to call itself a "beautiful music" station, taking over the old KTWN format. But Goodman said his station no longer plays the kind of tunes identified with background music in elevators and supermarkets.

"We're not all Mantovani and 101 Strings anymore," Goodman said. "The image we've had of elevator music just doesn't work anymore. We've gone to a lot of pop vocalists and solo instrumentalists in the last

year and we're no longer playing 'Tea for Two' and 'I've Got You Under My Skin.' We think we'll be able to satisfy both groups of listeners with our new sound."

It's a bold move for WAYL, which is risking the loss of some of its listeners. The station has more than doubled its audience over the past year, thanks in large part to the decision of its main competitor, KEEY-FM (102), to abandon beautiful music and switch to country music. But Goodman said the move toward the old KTWN sound is good business.

"I'm taking an interesting gamble here but I always felt KTWN was onto

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something and that it was a couple of years ahead of its time," Goodman said. "As the only easy listening station in the market, we could sit back and generate good advertising revenue, but we think there's a need for what we're doing. A year from now, I can see 25 percent of the music in our daytime hours being this kind of music."

Ironically, WAYL was built in 1961 by Jack Moore, who sold it in 1969 before buying KTWN. Moore has now set up a cable radio operation called K-Twin Cable. His cable station began operations yesterday over Minnesota Cable Systems Southwest, which serves Edina, Hopkins, Richfield, Minnetonka and Eden Prairie. For a charge of \$2 or \$3 a month, cable TV customers in those communities can receive a stereo radio hookup featuring the old KTWN format 24 hours a day.

Moore said he is also proceeding with negotiations to add K-Twin Cable to other cable TV systems in the Twin Cities area. He said he is skeptical that WAYL can adopt his old format without losing its current listeners but he wished Goodman well. "I'm not going to cry about it or say they're stealing my business or anything like that," Moore said. "What the heck, that's their thing and maybe it'll give the city two different things. We feel we've got the library and most of the announcers and if listeners liked what we did before they'll like what we're going to do here."

Moore said three of the old KTWN announcers, Scott Thompson, Doug Solem and Moore's son, Robbie, are working for K-Twin Cable. And he said he hopes to rehire popular KTWN disc jockey Carl Bernards. Bernards reportedly will also host a weekly jazz TV program on KMSP-TV (Ch. 9) in the near future.