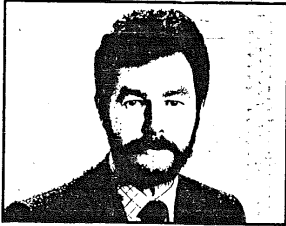


Variety

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Radio/TV

Noel Holston

WWTC will return

Call KSNE's musical format what you will — new age, soft fusion, progressive pop-jazz, yuppie elevator music. It will go out with "The Breeze" Friday at 3 p.m., and so will the station's call letters.

The station (1280 AM) is reclaiming its former identity — WWTC — and the rock 'n' roll oldies format that was dropped several years ago in favor of (in order of their brief appearances) urban contemporary music, all-weather information, the "Stardust" musical nostalgia format and "The Breeze."

The latter, distributed by the Minneapolis-based Progressive Music Network (PMN), has had more success in cities where it's heard on FM outlets. KSNE became a PMN customer six months ago.

General manager Mike McAnally said the kickoff date and time for the WWTC revival were chosen because, for the baby-boom audience at whom the format is aimed, the arrival of Memorial Day weekend "is kind of the legendary beginning of summer. It's 3 o'clock, school's out, so let's rock 'n' roll."

To get things rolling, WWTC is putting together a 15-minute montage of rock's greatest hooks. "I imagine the first hook line we'll play will be from 'Rock Around the Clock' by Bill Haley," McAnally said. "Then we'll go into something like Bob Seger — 'Just take those old records off the shelf.' In 15 minutes we'll take you from puberty to high-school graduation and your prom, through college. We'll get you in and out of Vietnam real fast, and take you on your way to being a mom and dad."

McAnally said the popularity of "The Big Chill" soundtrack and the

widespread use of '50s and '60s music in commercials convinced him and WWTC owner Brian Short that the time couldn't be better for golden oldies. And, thanks to program director Del Roberts, McAnally said, WWTC will have a much greater variety of oldies than any other station in town.

Roberts, a former KDWB and WWTC disc jockey who resurfaced several months ago as host of the live "Frogtown Saturday Night" on KLBB, brings with him a collection of nearly 5,000 records dating back to the early '50s. He'll be the afternoon-drive host as well as program director. Bob Lang will be on in the mornings, Brian Turner at midday and Michael O'Shea at night.

WWTC will play compact-disc reissues of the oldies or cassettes dubbed from "the most pristine vinyl we can get," McAnally said. He hopes to covert WWTC to AM stereo within 18 months.

McAnally said that although WWTC was attracting only about 2 percent of the listening audience when it dumped the golden oldies, the format at its peak had averaged nearly 4 percent of the audience. McAnally said he'd be very happy to get that size share again.

No doubt he would. During the most recent radio ratings period (winter) KSNE didn't attract enough listeners to make the Arbitron book. PMN president Jack I. Moore said he believes "The Breeze" format would have succeeded here if the station had given it time, but he expressed no serious regrets about the mutually agreed termination of his company's affiliation with KSNE. Among other things, he wasn't happy with the absence of an AM stereo signal.

Moore said the format has effected stunning turnarounds for stations such as KEYF in Spokane, Wash., which went from .9 percent audience share to 4.5 percent share in the first ratings period it broadcast "The Breeze." But KEYF is an FM station, as are most of his company's customers, Moore said. And those that aren't FMs are stereo AMs — except for KSNE.

Moore said his company's research indicates that "The Breeze" could pull nearly a 6 percent share in the Twin Cities if it were on an FM outlet. He said he is looking into three FM possibilities here, but he declined to name the stations.

One of those possibilities has to be KMGK (FM 108), which Moore sold in 1983 at the urging of his business partners. It was KTWN then, and it was there that Moore initiated the playlist that has evolved into "The Breeze." KMGK is being sold to a company in Missouri and, considering the station's 1.7 percent audience share in the winter Arbitrons, the new owners may be open to something new.