

# Fine tuning 'drive time' disc jockeys

Yawwwwwwn.

For the last few weeks, I've been filling in for my vacationing boss. Being an editor means a 9-to-6 routine, and that can be difficult for a nocturnal creature accustomed to scouring the bars until 1 a.m., coming to the office at 1 p.m. and lunching at 3:30 p.m.

My temporary new shift, however, afforded me a rare opportunity to scrutinize the much ballyhooed "morning-drive" disc jockeys around town. Morning drive is the time of day when most people are awaking and riding to work. The morning-drive rating period—from 6 to 10 a.m.—is considered the most crucial to radio stations.

For the past month, I spun the dial and punched the buttons. Not surprisingly, I discovered that radio program directors, like radio music directors, usually follow a formula that works elsewhere.

In the Twin Cities, the winning morning-drive formula is, in a word, tandem. (Frequent traffic and weather reports figure prominently, too.) Almost all morning-drive disc jockeys come in tandem because Boone and Erickson have been such a hit on WCCO-AM (830) for the past 19 years. Although their ratings have diminished some, they still pull about 30 percent of the radio listeners during morning drive.

I didn't listen to them during the past month. The reasons: they're on AM; everyone who cares about this institution knows what the show is like; they use guests to help carry the show, and, frankly, I can't accept Roger Erickson in any role other than T.N. Tatters, the TV clown he played in the late 1950s.

In the early to mid-'70s, Chuck Knapp and Charlie Bush were a dynamic duo in Twin Cities radio on KSTP-AM. It was a winning combo with the loose-lipped disc jockey and the rhyming news broadcaster, but Knapp left for a more lucrative spot in Philadelphia in '76. Enter John Hines, who teamed up with Bush til the former departed for a TV job.

Knapp returned to KSTP and its FM station (94.5) in '79 and teamed up with news director Michael J. Douglas. The show is called "Knapp and Donutts in the Morn-



Jon  
Bream

Music

ing" and it's No. 2 behind Boone and Erickson.

Now, it seems every major Twin Cities FM station has a duo—KQRS, WLOL-FM and WCCO-FM. Only KDWB-FM has forgone the duo because the station doesn't need one. But more on that later.

Knapp and Douglas deserve to be the top FM duo. They are a good combination of spontaneity, wit, silliness, entertainment, weather, sports and news. They toss news items back and forth in a free-flowing, stream-of-consciousness commentary.

"We take no official position on any issues," Knapp announced the other day after reading a sensitive political item. "We could be elected if we continued like that."

"We're like soggy white bread," retorted Douglas.

The chatter seems nonstop and often too fast to comprehend. Knapp and Douglas even talk during the instrumental introductions to songs, which is annoying. But then KSTP-FM's repertoire of Barbara, Barry, Billy, Bee Gees and Kenny isn't as lively as Knapp and Donutts' conversation. Regrettably, Donutts is excused one hour before Knapp and, subsequently, the show loses its momentum after 9 a.m.

WLOL-FM (99.5) offers a livelier fare of soft-rock (radio programmers call it "adult contemporary") with an emphasis on lightweight soul music. However, the rapport between disc jockeys Phil Huston and Bob Berglund seems uncertain. The repartee between this relatively new duo sometimes sounds awkward and forced, although the pair's TV previews have been consistently amusing.

Also, "The Almost Perfect Radio

Bream

Turn to Page 4B